

NEWS RELEASE



For Immediate Release

WALK BC LAUNCHES NEW INTERACTIVE MAP TO GET BC COMMUNITIES MOVING

The BC Recreation and Parks Association's (BCRPA) Walk BC initiative is launching its newest venture and online resource, an interactive walking route map. As the first map of its kind, it features walking routes and recreational facilities from around British Columbia. Powered by GOOGLE™, it enables people to find the right walking route for their level of physical activity, assists communities in highlighting their unique features like accessible walking routes and recreational facilities, and helps individuals incorporate active transportation into their daily activities or travels.

When searching facilities, users can locate a facility within a certain community or distance from their current location. They are also able to view what features and amenities are available at each facility. When looking for walking routes, users can search communities for walks based on location and level of difficulty.

"The Walk BC interactive map is a unique tool that profiles easy to moderate community walks which are accessible to individuals with a range of physical activity levels," states Suzanne Strutt, Chief Executive Officer of the BC Recreation and Parks Association. "This free and exciting tool will help British Columbians get active by enabling them to find appropriate places to walk or engage in recreational and leisure programs."

To continually build the Map, and have detailed walking route information for each community, Walk BC is inviting the public to submit walking route information. A simple online survey, accessed from the map, allows contributors to enter a variety of data such as: walk location, level of difficulty, route amenities, topography, utilization, accessibility and safety. Knowing the level of difficulty, length of a route, the grade and number of hills, and whether or not there are benches to rest on, can help prepare and motivate individuals to get out and start walking.

Walking is one of the most popular forms of active transportation, enhancing mental wellbeing, helping control body weight, reducing the risk of coronary heart disease and lowering blood pressure. Finding the right place to walk can be a challenge and take precious time away from walking even before that first step is taken. With the introduction of Walk BC's interactive walking route map more people will be able to find and plan for their next community walk or share their favourite routes with others. Being web based, the map can be accessed wherever the user may be through handheld web-ready devices.

"The Walk BC website and interactive walking route map are fabulous tools allowing you to search for new and exciting walks in your community," said Gillian Goerzen, Nanaimo walk and run leader. "The map allows you to upload your favorite routes which in turn helps other walkers, so everyone benefits!"

The Map is located on the Walk BC website at www.walkbc.ca. The site supports and educates walkers and walk leaders by providing program, leadership and marketing resources; information

about events, grants and training; as well as success stories to inspire others to follow in their footsteps.

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Background:

Walk BC

Walk BC encourages individual and group walking to increase overall health in communities through a range of programs that promote walking.

Walk BC is a joint initiative between the Heart & Stroke Foundation of BC & Yukon and the BC Recreation & Parks Association. Funding is provided by the BC Healthy Living Alliance, with support from ActNow BC

BC Recreation & Parks Association

The British Columbia Recreation and Parks Association (BCRPA) is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to building and sustaining active, healthy lifestyles and communities. For more than 50 years, the Association has been a central resource for its members, providing leadership, training and support. BCRPA's diverse network includes parks, recreation and culture professionals; volunteers; students; fitness professionals; local governments; business interests; and other community partners. Working together, BCRPA's members support healthy individuals and communities, and sustainable environments and economies. Together, we are creating a high quality of life for everyone in BC.

BC Healthy Living Alliance

Formed in February 2003, the BC Healthy Living Alliance (BCHLA) is a coalition of organizations that came together with the mission to improve the health of British Columbians. A fundamental and unprecedented element in the formation of the BCHLA was the agreement amongst the member organizations to focus activities on the three major risk factors which underlie much of the chronic disease through leadership that promotes physical activity, healthy eating and living smoke-free.

Collectively, BCHLA members capture the attention of over 40,000 volunteers, 4,300 health and recreation professionals, and 184 local governments across British Columbia. The BC Healthy Living Alliance is funded through the Provincial Government and ActNow BC.