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Community by Community

Ontario Walks With a Purpose

Across Ontario, and around the world, students took to their local sidewalks to celebrate International Walk to School Day 2000 (IWALK). **More than 80,000 students from 400 schools in all regions of Ontario used foot power to get to school on October 4, 2000!**

On IWALK children, parents and community leaders walked to school together with a purpose-to promote safety, health, physical activity, a clean environment and ultimately a more walkable world, community by community.

Ontario children walked with students from 446 other Canadian schools, and from seven other countries-the U.S. & Puerto Rico, the United Kingdom, the Isle of Man, the Republic of Ireland, Gibraltar, South Africa and Cypress. Students felt they were part of an international movement where their walk to school contributed to a healthier global environment.

Greenest City coordinated Ontario IWALK 2000 activities with the help of an amazing network of 200 supporters from 35 Ontario counties, including: school boards, Public Health Units, Ministry of Health representatives and health related groups,



environmental groups, Ministry of Environment representatives, Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation reps., community groups, and police.



St. Simon Catholic School, Toronto

Along with this network, the incredible efforts of hundreds of volunteers, including principals, teachers, parents, children and Greenest City volunteers, contributed to the success of Ontario's IWALK. A big thanks to all!

Feedback from participating schools indicates that healthy and footloose celebrations were taking place across Ontario on October 4th. Schools have commented on the great community and spirit building that took place. And what a powerful experience it was to see school drop off areas and parking lots safely car-free, sometimes for the first time!

The kids who participated sum it up best. Naveer, of Morton Way PS in Brampton says, "The best part of my walk was to see all the birds and animals, walking with my friends, breathing in the fresh air...you should walk to school because it's cool and helps the air be clean that we breath." The last word goes to Emma from River Oaks PS in Oakville, who simply says, "**It was REALLY fun!!!!!!!!!!!! I loved it!**"

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Greenest City and Ontario Communities, Walking Together

Participating schools celebrated IWALK with creative activities that got everybody involved in reclaiming Ontario's community streets for walking. Greenest City provided registered schools with organizing materials, including a poster, flyers, a banner kit, stickers and the 5-Steps to Organize Walk to School Day booklet. Schools used the materials to make their own unique celebrations, based on their communities' issues and characteristics. Greenest City supported schools as they organized their events, both directly and through the GC web site, which contained lots of useful resources.



Painting footsteps at Avon PS in Stratford

And, for the first time, IWALK was announced in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario by Brenda Elliott, MPP for Guelph-Wellington. She reviewed the event's aims and then said, "It's my view that this is a terrific initiative. I heartily congratulate the schools in my riding that have decided to partake in this heart-healthy and environmentally friendly event."

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Unique Celebrations

Schools adapted the event to their particular communities in a variety of ways:

- At urban schools, where many students already walk, issues of personal and traffic safety, and community building, are important. IWALK was an opportunity to emphasize safety, and to celebrate the positive contribution students make by walking, through activities like adopt-a-corner or a Safety Breakfast (see Toronto).
- At suburban (and some urban) schools traffic jams in the drop-off areas can be a big problem. Schools were amazed at the difference on IWALK. Some schools even banned parking in the school lot for the day! IWALK

was also a good time for suburban schools to promote No Idling in the school zone.

- At rural schools many students are bussed to school from long distances. On IWALK busses dropped students off at a safe meeting place close to the school and everyone walked together. Or bussed students did laps of the school ground to participate.

“Our entire school is bussed...once everyone arrived at school we set out to walk down the county road...We walked 25 minutes one way and 20 minutes back.”

St. Anthony Daniel School, Scotland

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The Results

It is estimated that over 80,000 Ontario students from 400 schools actively participated in IWALK 2000, a **78% increase** from last years participation. Wow! Other statistics gathered from Event Feedback Forms are equally encouraging:

- **A full 10% of the total number of schools in the province participated in IWALK activities!**
- At these schools an estimated 64% of students walked to school on October 4th.
- There was an approx. 5% increase in students walking to school after the event!

In total:

- 24 schools in the northern half of the province, and 366 in the southern half, participated. *Note that in northern communities significant bussing occurs, decreasing the number of students who can reasonably walk or bike.*
- 10 French schools participated.
- 4 private schools participated.
- 74 of 187 Toronto Catholic schools, and 90 of 478 Toronto Public schools, participated.
- 159 schools provided feedback and received a Cross Canada Walking Challenge poster map.
- All 400 schools received an IWALK 2000 Participation Certificate soon after the event.

Almost all schools expressed a keen interest in participating next year, and had positive feedback for the organizing materials they received from Greenest City. Many thanks to all schools who provided feedback

61.2 kilotonnes of carbon dioxide (a greenhouse gas) was kept out of Ontario's air on IWALK 2000!

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The Media Coverage

Media coverage is instrumental in getting the word about walking out to the general public. Greenest City, our partners, and funders, have worked hard to secure effective media coverage for IWALK, including:

CityTV - CBC TV - Era-Banner Tribune (Markham) - Sioux Lookout Bulletin - Perth Courier - Sudbury Sun - Sudbury Star - St. Thomas Times-Journal - Toronto City Parent - Bloor West Villager - The Magazine Not For Adults - This Week (Oshawa/Whitby) - 101.5/980 KRUZ (Peterborough) - The Examiner (Peterborough) - Lakefield Katchewanooka Herald - Peterborough This Week - Durham Region Rogers Cable - Magic 94.9 Radio (Durham)-

Belleville Intelligencer - Niagara Falls Review - CKLW AM 800 Windsor - OPHA News - Stratford Beacon Herald

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A Very Big Thank You

Many thanks to Greenest City's funders, sponsors, partners, and donors, without whom IWALK in Ontario would not be possible:

Funders:

Canada Trust Friends of the Environment Foundation - Laidlaw Foundation - Transport Canada Moving on Sustainable Transportation Initiative(MOST) - Ontario Ministry of the Environment - Toronto Atmospheric Fund - Toronto Community Foundation - The Trillium Foundation

Sponsors:

Binney & Smith/Crayola - City of Toronto's Healthy City Office - Loomis & Toles - York University's Centre for Applied Sustainability

Donors:

Chapters/Random House of Canada - Cyclepath - Mountain Equipment Coop - Ontario Place - Ontario Science Centre - Playdium Entertainment - Scholar's Choice - Sporting Life - Toronto Blue Jays

Partners:

Active Schools - Go For Green - International IWALK Organizing Committee - Partnership for a Walkable America - Way to Go! School Program

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The Community Walkability Survey

This year, for the first time, Ontario schools participated in a Community Walkability Survey on their walk to school. The survey-the only one being done in Canada-is a project of Greenest City, York University and the Ontario Ministry of the Environment. Students from 78 schools filled out the survey on their walk to school on October 4th. Results from the surveys will help evaluate possible air-quality risks to children, provide data on the walkability of communities across Ontario and will be used by community leaders for identifying problems and planning solutions.



Jacky Kennedy and Robyn Hall, of Greenest City, draw the winners of the Walkability Survey prize.

Although the data is just now being analyzed at the York University Centre for Applied Sustainability, at least one eye-opening trend has become apparent. A noticeably large number of children would, if they had a choice, ride a bike to school!

The Walkability Survey Report will be available in the spring. Participating schools will receive individualized reports, and overall results will be posted on the Greenest City Web site at www.greenestcity.org.

And the winners are...

The three lucky winners of the draw for schools that completed and returned Walkability Surveys are:

Ignace PS, Ignace (Keewatin-Patricia DSB)
 Rosedale PS, Sarnia (Lambton-Kent DSB)
 Elkhorn PS, North York (Toronto DSB)
 These schools will receive gift certificates for shrubs to green up their school yards!

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Ontario Regional Round-Up

Here are some of the highlights from across Ontario:

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Toronto

In spite of, (and sometimes because of!) the rainy weather, Toronto's IWALK was a rip-roaring success. For the second year Toronto Mayor Mel Lastman officially proclaimed October 4th as Walk to School Day. One hundred and eighty-four schools from both the Public and Catholic school boards held events:

- **Media Event at Swansea Public School:**

This year's big event was held at Swansea Public School, in the High Park area of Toronto, in partnership with the Toronto District School Board. Local dignitaries Councillor David Miller, MPP Gerrard Kennedy, School Board Trustee Irene Atkinson, Superintendent, Student & Community Services Darlene Leaver, Superintendent Ralph Cuthbertson, Richard Christie, District-Wide Coord., Environmental Education, and others, were in attendance along with the Toronto Police Service, the Road and Trail Safety Ambassadors, Toronto Public Health, the Heart Health Lion and a moose! Both CityTV and CBC TV covered the event, with Cynthia Mulligan of CityTV providing an excellent report that appeared on the evening news. A special thank you to Principal Zoriana Bunga, Fareshteh Hashemi and the other parents and staff of Swansea for their hard work and support.



MPP Gerard Kennedy with the Heart Health Lion and students of Swansea PS

- At **Winchester PS** in St. James Town most students already walk, so the school decided to **adopt-a-corner** to build community spirit. Walkers met at four designated street corners in their neighbourhood, and walked together to the school where music, refreshments and fun were taking place. Adopt-a-corner helps neighbours to become neighbourly, and walk in groups to increase visibility and safety.
- **Blessed Sacrament School** in North Toronto held a **walkathon** in conjunction with IWALK. "Many children were eager to walk even if they are normally bussed."

"A tremendous day for community involvement."

St. Nicholas of Bari School, Toronto

- At **Highfield PS** in NW Toronto, concerns for the street safety of over 900 students led the school to hold a special "**Safety**" **Breakfast** on Walk to School Day. Special guests, parents and students had a chance to meet, eat and get info on forming their own Walking School Bus.

"It was great to realize that other schools were participating in International Walk to School Day...it was a great feeling to be participating in a broader worldwide effort."

Fairmont Junior PS, Toronto

Heart Health International Challenge

Sixteen Toronto schools launched Walking Challenges with schools in England on IWALK. The North York and Etobicoke-York Heart Health Networks have funded this new project, which promotes walking through the winter months. North York and Etobicoke schools have been matched with a partner school in Canterbury, Dorset, Bournemouth or Brighton, and will use email to compare participation rates on Walking Wednesdays held each month until Earth Day in April. Each student has received a passport, and will get a stamp every month they walk. They will also record their heart rates, and learn about heart health. This is a great new initiative and Greenest City is hoping to obtain funding to offer this program to all Toronto schools next year.

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York Region



Rolling to school at Highview PS in Aurora

This was York Region's second year of participation in IWALK and a whopping 49 schools took part. The event was coordinated by York Region Health Services, with support from the York Region Planning Department and York Regional Police. The York Region Catholic and District School Boards both played an active role in promoting the event to all elementary schools. Thanks to funding from the York Region Heart Health Program, each school received a goodie bag of prizes for their

students, including t-shirts, zipper pulls and water bottles, all proclaiming the message "It's Really Cool to Walk to School".

Excitement for the event across York Region was kicked off when the Town of Aurora proclaimed the day and organized a **Walk with the Mayor** on September 27. Hundreds of local students and parents responded to the initiative and declared they weren't going to be car potatoes! Several students qualified to be Mayor for a Day.

- **E.T. Crowle Public School** in Markham used the IWALK event to relaunch their successful Walking Wednesday and Kilometre Club programs.
- Local media was on hand at **St. Mary Immaculate, Highview, Summitview** and **St. Paul's** schools providing good regional coverage of the events.

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Peterborough

Peterborough IWALK was a big success, due to the efforts of the Peterborough County-City Health Unit, and Peterborough Green-Up. Twenty schools participated, and the event was proclaimed four times! - by the City of Peterborough, County of Peterborough, Village of Lakefield and Township of Cavan-Millbrook-North Monaghan. There was lots of fabulous local media coverage through the Peterborough IWALK media sponsor The Wolf 101.5/980

KRUZ, and local print media.

“We are really pleased with the level of participation and enthusiasm in our community. This was our first time participating and we are looking forward to expanding the program next year.”

Jill Ritchie, Peterborough County-City Health Unit

- To add to the excitement, **Queen Elizabeth PS** in Peterborough received the national **Elaine Burke Award** for highest participation (100%) on International Walk to School Day from the national ASRTS coordinator, Go For Green! An awards ceremony was held at the school on November 10th, with several special guests in attendance.
- **Ridpath PS** in Lakefield received the County of Peterborough Highest Participation Award at a ceremony on November 17th.

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Sudbury

The Region of Sudbury kicked off their IWALK celebrations on September 28 with a walk around the new YMCA track with Sudbury Mayor Jim Gordon. A student from each participating school walked with the Mayor and local media were on hand to help with promotion. Participating schools were provided with prizes that included water bottles, pencils, hats and scarves. Continued on page 6

Eight schools in the Sudbury region participated in IWALK 2000 and it is hoped that this will kick-off a year-round Active & Safe Routes to School program in the area. Community partners in the initiative are the Regional Municipality of Sudbury, ECOaction Sudbury, Sudbury and District Health Unit and the four local school boards.

Kanata

(Region of Ottawa-Carleton)

In Kanata, in the former Region of Ottawa-Carleton, IWALK 2000 proved to be a smashing success, thanks to the coordinating efforts of Kanata's Traffic Safety Committee. Twelve schools participated with very high participation rates. For example at Katimavik Elementary School 211 of 364 students walked on October 4.

“The children who were able to participate were very enthusiastic! They each proudly displayed their “shoe award” on our Century “Walk of Fame” hallway display.”

Century PS, Nepean, Region of Ottawa-Carleton

Organizing materials were generously provided to schools by the Region of Ottawa-Carleton's Travelwise program and were adapted from Greenest City and Go for Green IWALK resources. The region translated many of the resources for use by their French-speaking schools and an IWALK section was added to their Travelwise Web site. Across the region, 23 schools participated.

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Durham Region

The Durham Region IWALK initiative was led by the Durham Region Health Department with support from the local school boards. The Mayors of Pickering, Ajax, Whitby, Oshawa, Brock and Uxbridge showed their support for the event by declaring October 4 Walk to School Day in their municipalities. Nineteen schools across the region participated in the event and many are continuing to

promote walking through the school year by holding regular Walking Wednesdays.

Community support for the event was excellent: Whitby Mayor Marcelle Brunelle walked with the students of John Dryden Public School; three Public Health Nurses attended events; and several school trustees, councillors and police officers actively participated. The local media were on hand at several schools and coverage included Roger's Cable, Magic 94.9 radio and some newspaper articles.

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Stratford

Six Stratford area schools participated in IWALK 2000. The initiative is supported by the Stratford Civic Beautification and Environmental Awareness Committee (CBEAC), Perth County GreenWorks, Stratford Police Services and Perth County Health Unit.

CBEAC introduced Walk to School Day in 1999, when four schools participated. CBEAC formed a Walking School Bus committee and, with their help, two schools have been working to implement the program. This year's IWALK event was launched on September 18 with a celebration and initiation of the first Walking School Bus in Stratford, at Avon Public School. Students and parents painted footsteps on the sidewalks around the school and mounted their beautiful banner along the fence. The local media were on hand to provide regional coverage of the event.

A Walking School Bus was launched at Romeo School on October 4. The Heart Health Perth Mascot (THUMPER), Stratford's Mayor Dave Hunt, walking with his grandchildren, Police Services Representative Dave Askanese, and CBEAC members accompanied students and parents on the walk to school. The Giant Tiger mascot walked with the students and parents at Hamlet and St. Joseph's Schools. A Banner contest was held among the participating schools, with the winner (Avon Public School) receiving a cheque for one hundred dollars for resource materials! A jingle contest was organized and the winning songs were sung during the launching of the Walking School Bus.

IWALK was a huge success across the city and enjoyed by hundreds of students, and made the front page of the local Stratford Beacon Herald for the third time this year! Local organizers are hoping to expand participation in IWALK to more schools for the 2001 event.

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It was a Banner Day!

Greenest City provided the materials, and the kids provided the inspiration for these creative and colourful IWALK banners. A special thanks to **Binney & Smith/Crayola** and **Loomis & Toles** for their donations of materials.

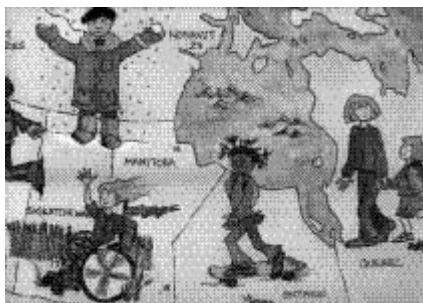


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Fun is Measured in Feet!

How many kids can boast that they have traveled all the way across Canada? Many more might be able to after this school year. All schools who returned IWALK feedback forms received a Cross Canada Walking Challenge poster map, to encourage schools to hold Walking Wednesdays throughout the school year. For every Walking Wednesday held students fill in a footprint on the poster and learn a little about that part of Canada.

It's a great way to encourage students to keep walking and learn something new about our country!



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Small Schools Take Big Steps

The two smallest participating schools walked to school in a big way on October 4th! At the **Dokis Day School** in Monetville in NW Ontario all 20 students walked. Teacher Mrs. Hansen relates,

"The best part of our walk was the togetherness we felt."

It was a beautiful fall morning! We had warm weather and gorgeous fall colours to look at. Parents, babies, grandparents and other community members joined us in the walk. We are proud of our commitment to our planet and to ourselves. I think that more of us will walk to school. I hope that everyone who walked to school understands how a small group of people can make a big difference in our world."

At the **Caramat District School**, also in northern Ontario, all 17 students got involved. The school bussed all walkers to a distance greater than their farthest daily walker. Even though the weather was close to snow, everyone had a good time. According to Zoe in Mr. Morris' Gr. 5-8 class, "The best part of the walk was that we got other people involved. We got some fresh air and were with our friends!"

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Why We Walk

Jacky Kennedy, Coordinator of the Active & Safe Routes to School Program in Ontario, sums it all up,

"On International Walk to School Day we walk together with students from around the world to say we want to live in safe, clean and healthy communities, wherever we may live.

The International walking movement grows each year because it makes sense, for the health and safety of our children and for the environment, to leave the car at home and walk (or bike, blade, run or hop) in our own neighbourhoods."

Finally, a special thank you to Becky Aaron and Robyn Hall, Greenest City's IWALK staff for their invaluable contribution to the success of the event.

So everybody lace up your shoes, or pull on your boots, and keep walking!

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Intergenerational IWALK: Winifred Bias, 87 walks to Morton Way PS in Brampton every day with her great grandson, Vincent Lewis. Here they are celebrating IWALK together!