



## YOUR TURN TO GET INVOLVED

The Go For Health Windsor-Essex coalition seeks to improve the health of our community, but we can't do it alone. Seven sectors have been targeted: municipal governments, educational institutions, business and workplaces, health sector, community recreation facilities, food service industry, and the media.

Representatives from each sector will be asked to meet with their colleagues to engage in the process of developing policies that will enhance the well-being of our community.

The Steering Committee of the coalition will identify sector champions to keep the momentum going. Perhaps you or a member of your organization would be willing to lead your sector.

Volunteers from a variety of sectors have already devoted considerable time and talent to launch and implement the preliminary and planning phases of this initiative. Now it's time to act. Now it's your turn to get involved.

We thank you in advance for doing so.

### EXECUTIVE

Gordon Smith	Chair
Gary McNamara	Honorary Chair
Elizabeth Dulmage	Vice Chair
Celso Oliveira	Coordinator

### PARTNERSHIPS

Cancer Prevention Network, Erie St. Clair  
Health Action Windsor-Essex  
Windsor-Essex County Health Unit  
Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario

For more information, please call 519-982-4854  
Or visit us online at: [www.goforhealth.ca](http://www.goforhealth.ca)

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### ORGANIZATIONS THAT PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS CALL FOR ACTION

- City of Windsor, Leisure and Recreation Services
- District Stoke Strategy Windsor Essex, Hotel Dieu Grace Hospital
- Greater Essex County District School Board
- Hargreaves Mandal Stewart Inc.
- Leamington District Memorial Hospital
- Multicultural Council of Windsor and Essex County
- Town of Tecumseh
- United Way/Centraide Windsor-Essex County
- Windsor-Essex County Health Unit
- Windsor FOCUS Community, Teen Health Centre
- Windsor Regional Cancer Centre Windsor Regional Hospital
- YMCA of Windsor and Essex County



### AN URGENT GREEN-LIGHT INITIATIVE FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH

### A CALL FOR ACTION, EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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## WHO ARE WE?

Go For Health Windsor-Essex is a coalition of concerned community partners. We're committed to reducing the high rate of chronic disease in Windsor-Essex. These diseases rob many of us of quality of life, reduce our productive years, and drive up health care costs beyond sustainable levels. As you'll see, it's an extremely important initiative in terms of lifestyles, life expectancy, and simple dollars and cents.

The coalition was founded in 2005 by three partners: Health Action Windsor-Essex Coalition, the Cancer Prevention Network, Erie St. Clair, and the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit. It now includes representatives from many key sectors in the community including: municipal governments, education, hospitals, business, and non-government organizations; and from two other key networks: the District Stroke Strategy Windsor-Essex and the Windsor FOCUS Community. But that's not enough. We also need the support and participation of community leaders like you.

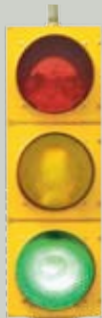
To that end, Go For Health Windsor-Essex is launching a "Call For Action" to get everyone involved in reducing the rate of preventable chronic disease in our community.

## WHY A CALL FOR ACTION?

Because the simple facts demand that we do something *right now* and delaying will only increase the magnitude of the problem.

Four major chronic diseases – heart disease, cancer, respiratory diseases, and diabetes – account for two-thirds of all deaths in Canada and one-third of all health care expenditures. These chronic diseases share five modifiable risk factors that accumulate over time:

tobacco use and exposure, excess alcohol consumption, obesity, unhealthy eating, and physical inactivity. Unless we take action now to reduce these risk factors, the burden of health care will become less and less manageable as our population ages.



Many communities across Ontario have already initiated Calls For Action, most to address obesity. Windsor-Essex is taking a leadership role in addressing a much broader range of critical risk factors.

## CHRONIC DISEASE RATES IN WINDSOR-ESSEX ARE SKYROCKETING

Windsor-Essex is in crisis. We have a high rate of preventable chronic disease, which can affect every one of us. For example:

- Ischemic heart disease (heart attacks and angina), other cardiovascular diseases and stroke are higher in Windsor-Essex than the provincial or national averages. Three out of four adults in Windsor-Essex are at risk. You or someone close to you may already be affected. Why? Because more of us smoke and have high blood pressure, we have higher incidences of obesity and diabetes, and we're physically inactive. These risk factors are all modifiable – we can choose to reduce them.
- Our rate of lung cancer is significantly higher than the provincial average in both men and women. Because this cancer is often aggressive, we have a higher mortality rate from cancer than in Ontario overall. Not surprising – more Windsor-Essex residents smoke than the provincial average. Smoking accounts for 80% of lung cancers.
- The rate of type-2 diabetes – largely due to excess body fat and physical inactivity – is higher in Windsor-Essex than the provincial and national averages. Diabetes increases the risk for heart disease, stroke and pancreatic cancer – all causes of death in our community which are significantly higher than in the province as a whole.
- Obesity is also significantly higher here; we exceed the provincial and national averages. Nearly 57% of Windsor-Essex residents are either overweight or obese and nearly half are physically inactive. Obesity is directly related to poor eating habits and physical inactivity. It is a major cause of some cancers and of our high rates of heart disease and diabetes.

## CHRONIC DISEASE IS LARGELY PREVENTABLE

The news isn't all bad. Up to 80% of illnesses, disabilities and preventable deaths from chronic diseases are attributable to *factors that we can change*. These include tobacco use and exposure, excess alcohol consumption, being overweight, unhealthy eating, and being physically inactive.

These five lifestyle choices must be addressed if we hope to stem the rising tide of chronic illness. That's why they are the focus of our Call For Action. By taking action now to improve these behaviours in our community, we can help prevent suffering and early death from chronic disease. Prevention is also more effective and efficient than treating diseases after they occur.

## THE \$80 BILLION PROBLEM

Chronic diseases account for two-thirds of all deaths in Canada and one-third of all health-care expenditures, which directly affects your tax burden. The total estimated cost of illness, disability and death attributable to chronic disease in Canada now stands at over \$80 billion annually.

Moreover, the risk of developing a chronic disease increases with age. As our workforce ages, lost productivity from illness will increase, as will the costs of benefits for drugs, hospitalization, and disability. And as these costs escalate, so again will your tax burden.

Can we afford to continue funding these growing expenses through taxation, knowing that up to 80% of chronic diseases can be reduced through simple lifestyle changes?

Not without a fight.  
Not without an effort to make a difference.  
That's why we need to take action right now.



## WE NEED YOUR INVOLVEMENT

Go For Health Windsor-Essex is calling for support from leaders and key decision makers in business, education, health care, municipal government, and other community sectors to adopt a Call For Action to make Windsor-Essex a healthier community. As a key influencer, you can make a positive difference in the health and overall well-being of our community.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

You can help by developing and supporting policies that foster healthier lifestyles. Without new policies, changes will simply not take place. You have the power and the authority to advocate, create and implement policies that promote and support healthy living. You have the power and authority to create a healthier environment and to enable change.

## WILL THIS ACTION BE COSTLY?

Perhaps in some instances. But considering the astronomical costs of not acting, there really is no alternative. Investing in our community's health now will pay off in reduced sickness benefits, higher productivity and a healthier community in general.

## CONCLUSION

Too many of the people who are close to us are sick and dying as a result of preventable chronic diseases. We shouldn't accept this and we certainly can't afford it. That's why we're spearheading a Call For Action to address a major health care crisis in Windsor-Essex.

Addressing the problem requires the collaboration of municipalities, businesses, workplaces, school boards, and health-based institutions. It requires a pooling of resources and a strong commitment to work together to make the healthy choice an easier choice. Most importantly, it requires the commitment and participation of people just like you. People in a position to make a meaningful difference.

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