



Children's Charter Report 2006

More Kids, More Active, More Often

A Message from
Thunder Bay Children's Advocate

As the Children's Advocate representing the City of Thunder Bay I am honoured to work with the Children's Charter Coalition to ensure that our children are raised in a healthy, supportive community that keeps their needs at the forefront. Working to create an environment in which families can raise healthy children is one responsibility that, done right, will benefit our City now and in the future. Children are entitled to fundamental rights and their best interests should be considered in all decisions made within a community.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted unanimously by our federal government on November 20, 1989. It has since become the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history. This demonstrates that national governments across the globe recognize the role they play in ensuring that children's rights are recognized.

City Council's support of our local Children's Charter shows our City's recognition of local government's role in protecting the interests of children.

Joe Virdiramo
City Councillor

A Message from
**Co-Chairs of the
Thunder Bay Children's Charter Coalition**

The Thunder Bay Children's Charter Coalition is pleased to bring you our second annual report. Each year the Coalition reports to the community on one aspect of the Charter. This year our report looks at safe places to play and access to affordable recreation opportunities. This report will be useful in tracking our city's progress towards improving and maintaining the health and well-being of our children.

The Thunder Bay Children's Charter Coalition is made up of individuals and organizations that are passionate about creating a community that puts the best interest of children first! The Thunder Bay Children's Charter was developed to state a vision for the children of Thunder Bay, based on the United Nations convention on the Rights of the Child.

We would like to extend a special thank you to the Take Heart Coalition for partnering with us to raise awareness around physical activity for children.

Tara Gauld
Health Promotion Planner
Thunder Bay District Health Unit

Lawni LaBelle-Paynter
Community Health Worker
NorWest Community Health Centres

Children's Charter Report 2006

More Kids, More Active, More Often

Less than half of Canadian children are active enough every day. At age 12 activity levels drop even more. In this report we will look at areas that support activity in children in our community and where we can make improvements.

We need to work together at getting **more kids more active more often** at home, at school, and in the community.

What is keeping our kids on the sidelines?

- **Poverty** ~ in Thunder Bay 14.1% of families are living below the low income cut off line. In Ontario 52.1% of urban Aboriginal children live in poverty. Research shows that children living in poverty are less physically active.
- **The amount of time children spend watching TV, playing video games and using the computer.** 80% of children spend more than 2 hours per day involved in screen related activities.
- **Perception of unsafe neighbourhoods.** Parents are not as comfortable sending their kids outside to play by themselves as in the past.
- **Families are busy.** This means less time is spent being active together. Only 36% of families report that they are regularly active with their children.
- **Challenges with scheduling, space and staff** affect activities and programs that run in elementary and high schools.

Health Canada
Recommends:

- 30 minutes of vigorous activity each day
+
 - 60 minutes of moderate activity each day
- Blocks of 5 to 10 minutes count
- Start slowly and build up!

Most Popular Physical Activities 5-12 year olds

- biking
- swimming
- swings, slides, teeter-totters
- walking
- tobogganing
- skating
- soccer
- roller-blading
- jogging, running

Most Popular Physical Activities 13-17 year olds

- walking
- biking
- swimming
- basketball
- social dancing
- roller-blading
- skating
- tobogganing
- jogging, running



Safe places to play and access to affordable recreation opportunities

Active Kids at Home

Parents are role models to their children in many ways and being physically active is no different. Children with active parents are more active themselves.

Being active with your child gives you the chance to chat about little things. We know it's not always easy and there's not always time. Connecting like this lets them know they can come to you when they need to talk about tougher topics.

How can parents get their kids to be more active?

- Send your kids outside to play! Get them simple things like balls, hoops and skipping ropes.
- Limit the amount of TV time, video games and computer use. Doctors recommend no more than 2 hours of screen time per day.
- Get your kids helping with chores such as raking the leaves or shoveling snow.
- Explore drop in programs, parks, rinks, pools and trails close to home.
- Turn family time into active family time. Turn movie night into walking night. Allow your kids to take turns choosing activities.

Community Supports for families

- Local friendship centres, early years centres, community health centres and community centres offer programs that help parents develop strong parenting skills. Visit www.ctctbay.org or call 807-624-5690 for a list of parenting programs in Thunder Bay.
- The "Let's Play" Activity Trunk is a trunk full of equipment, crazy games and craft ideas for families and children aged 4-14. It can be borrowed from the Thunder Bay Public Libraries.
- There are many free community wide family events and festivals. Check out www.thunderbay.ca or call 807-625-2351.

Fact:
Girls are less
active than boys.

Call for your free trails
map at 807-625-5923.

Why be active?

- new friends
- better grades
- a healthy body
- improved self-esteem



Safe places to play and access to affordable recreation opportunities

Active Kids in Schools

The school setting provides a great opportunity to reach kids in all segments of our community. Physical education programs teach skills, rules and social skills. Additional opportunities at schools are necessary to build fitness and the love of being active.

Schools that provide daily opportunities for kids to be active see improved concentration, lower stress levels, and a better attitude towards school. Yet only 15% of Ontario youth take part in intramurals, and 25% participate in inter-school sports; this has declined since 2000.

Our schools cannot do it alone. They need the help of parents, school administrators and the community to get **more kids, more active, more often!**

Strengths

- Most inter-school sports are still offered in Thunder Bay schools at no cost to students.
- High school cross-country running, wrestling, cycling / mountain biking, and track & field have a “no-cut” policy. This means that any student can train and compete.
- The Ontario Ministry of Education’s new “Daily Physical Activity” policy requires elementary schools to provide 20 minutes of moderate activity every day during classroom time.
- Some elementary schools have taken steps to promote physical activity, run active games at recess and “create” green playgrounds with more shade and places for active games.

Areas of Concern

- Most physical education classes in elementary schools are 30-40 minutes, twice a week, and are taught by the classroom teacher, not a physical education specialist.
- Ontario only requires one physical education credit to graduate from high school.
- Intramural sports are limited in Thunder Bay due to the shorter lunch periods in secondary schools, and the use of gyms for eating lunch in elementary schools.



Safe places to play and access to affordable recreation opportunities

Active Kids in the Community

Parents are concerned about their children's physical and emotional safety. Parents want safe neighbourhoods for their children to play in and sport and recreation programs for their children to participate in. Research shows that youth living in low income families report safety as a concern to participating in physical activity in their neighbourhoods.

Playgrounds, sidewalks, trails, parks, rinks and pools all make it easier for children to be active. However, local parents report that neighbourhood safety affects their comfort level in sending their kids outside to play.

Families report the following barriers to participation in physical activities: program fees, equipment, distance to programs, transportation and a lack of awareness of programs.

Community Resources for Active Children

- The Key is a one-stop shopping guide of programs and activities in Thunder Bay. It is produced 4 times per year and is delivered to each home free of charge. Check out www.thunderbay.ca.
- Check out free or low cost programs offered by the Urban Aboriginal Strategy, early years centres, youth centres, boys and girls clubs, community health centres and City of Thunder Bay's Recreation & Culture Division.
- The HIGH FIVE initiative provides recreation leaders with training and resources to design quality programs that develop healthy active children. www.highfive.org has information for parents, kids and community leaders.

P.R.O. Kids

Research shows that fees can be a barrier to participation in sport, art and recreation programs for children and youth. Program spaces are donated to P.R.O. Kids by local sport, art and recreation organizations for the children of low income families. P.R.O. Kids is supported by the Recreation and Culture Division of the City of Thunder Bay. Visit: www.prokidsthunderbay.com or call 807-625-3212.

Free places to play!
Thunder Bay has...

- 124 parks
- 34 km of paved trails
- 50 km + of hiking, biking and cross country trails
- 3 outdoor pools, 2 beaches, 1 Splash Pad
- 84 maintained outdoor skating rinks
- 1 Tennis Centre, 29 tennis courts
- 6 skateboard parks, plus one portable

Media coverage about violence against children is a big worry for parents. Did you know that most of these situations do not involve strangers but someone who is known to the child?



Safe places to play and access to affordable recreation opportunities

Take Action!

At Home

- Be a role model for your children.
- Find out more about what's available in your community.
- Explore new ways to be active as a family.
- Call the Thunder Bay District Health Unit at 807-625-5923 to get your FREE Canada's Physical Activity Guide for Children & Youth.

In the Community

- Get involved with making your neighbourhood safer. Get to know your neighbours and the Community Police Officer. Learn more about projects like Action for Neighbourhood Change at work in the Simpson/Ogden area by calling 807-626-1765.
- Are you hooked on a sport? Become a volunteer coach or train to be a paid official for interschool athletics. Call 807-625-2351 to learn about the next coaching course.
- Attend public meetings and make your voice heard when important decisions are being made about programs, facilities and neighbourhood design.
- Walking and cycling are forms of travel that offer tremendous benefits for our health and for the environment. Let your City Councillor know that you value community planning that promotes the completion of a recreational trail network and dedicated bicycle lanes for commuting. Visit the www.goforgreen.ca website for more information.
- P.R.O. Kids helps children in need get involved in a sport, art or recreation activity. P.R.O. Kids raises funds to ensure that no child is left on the sidelines. To make a donation call 625-3212 or visit www.prokidsthunderbay.com.

At School

- Start a "Healthy Schools Club". Talk to your school's public health nurse about getting teachers, parents, principals and students working together to address barriers and run creative active programs. Call 807-625-5972.
- Encourage school boards to hire teachers who love to be active and are interested in coaching and leading activities in the schools.
- Take a look at school policies to see how they impact physical activity and the health of students. Speak out for change!

Congratulate decision makers when positive changes are made!



Safe places to play and access to affordable recreation opportunities

Thunder Bay Children's Charter

All children deserve basic rights and freedoms. A fair share of society's resources must be devoted to ensuring this. Families are responsible for raising their children. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child clearly states that working in partnership with communities, all levels of governments have a duty to assist families to fulfill their responsibilities.*

All Thunder Bay children deserve:

- ✓ a quality of life that meets their physical, intellectual, emotional and social needs.
- ✓ to have enough nutritious food every day.
- ✓ to have a safe and comfortable place to live.
- ✓ quality child care and/or early education programs.
- ✓ **to have safe places to play, and access to affordable recreational activities.**
- ✓ quality primary, secondary, and affordable post secondary education.
- ✓ the resources to ensure life-long good health.
- ✓ to be served by governments that put the health and well-being of children first by ensuring enough funding for children's programs.
- ✓ to be protected from neglect and abuse.
- ✓ to be safe from exploitation.**

* For the purposes of this Charter children are defined as being from birth to eighteen years of age.

** For the purposes of this Charter being exploited means to be used unfairly by someone else to meet their own needs.

Thunder Bay Children's Charter Coalition

Fair Start

Our Kids Count

Healthy Early Years Network

Children's Centre Thunder Bay

Thunder Bay District Health Unit

NorWest Community Health Centres

Lakehead Elementary Teachers of Ontario

City of Thunder Bay – Community Services Department

Children's Advocate, City of Thunder Bay

Communities Together for Children – Ontario Early Years Centre

www.tbdhu.com