

Introducing Winter Green

A program of Go for Green—the Active Living and Environment program—Winter Green aims to bring Canadians out of hibernation, awakened to Canada's diverse winters that are too good to miss! Winter Green encourages Canadians to enjoy the outdoor experience in winter, improving their health, and the health of the environment.

This web site is a complementary to two other resources that will help you become more Winter Green: Making Your Event or Activity Winter Green, and Get Winter Active: Tips, Tools, and Cool Ideas for Leaders.

The Winter Green concept evolved with input from participants from across Canada with interests in media and communications, winter activity programs, business, municipal infrastructure, and not-for-profit, environmental and community groups, who were invited to contribute ideas about what might be done to encourage the average family to don their toques (scarves, hats, mitts and boots too, of course) to experience all the benefits of our Canadian winters while protecting the environment. So, join Go for Green and take the roof off of winter.

Who We Are.....

Brainstorm Participants

George Assaf— Department of Urban Planning and Public Works, Ottawa, Ontario

Adele Black—Communication Coordinator, Go for Green, Ottawa, Ontario

Dot Bonnenfant—Active Living Canada, Ottawa, Ontario

David Chernushenko— President, Green & Gold Inc., Ottawa, Ontario

Jody Conrad— Trails Coordinator, Sport and Recreation Commission, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Barbara Czech—Go for Green, Winnipeg, Manitoba
Jim Evanchuk— Fitness Directorate, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Dave Feener—Department of Tourism, Culture and Recreation, St. John's, Newfoundland

Doug Gableman—Greenvoice Strategic Consultants, Ottawa, Ontario

Steve Grundy— Executive Director, Go for Green, Ottawa, Ontario

Pat Hunt— Facilitator, Ottawa, Ontario
Active Transportation Manager, Go for Green, Ottawa, Ontario

John MacDonald— Township of West Carleton, Ontario

Anna McCarron— Winter Green Coordinator, Go for Green, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Donna Munroe— Centretown Community Health Centre, Ottawa, Ontario

Susan Onid—Health and Wellness Program, YM/YWCA, Ottawa, Ontario

Sheila Pepper—formerly with Winter Cities, Ottawa, Ontario

Anne Robinson— National Project Director, Go for Green, Ottawa, Ontario

Gary Schauerte— Sport and Recreation Programs Advisor, Yellowknife, North West Territories

Ted Scrutton—Outdoor Coordinator, Sport and Recreation Commission, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Diane Thompson— Cross Country Canada, Ottawa, Ontario

Basia Ujejska—Director of Programming, The Weather Network, Mississauga, Ontario

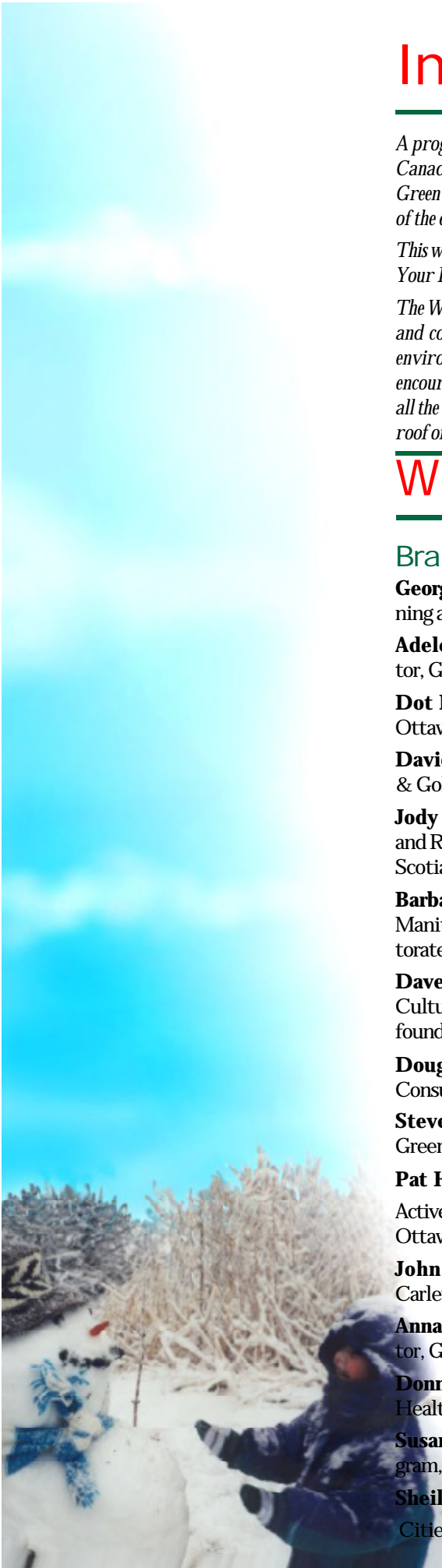
Winter Green Staff

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Winter Green Is . . .

- an initiative to move Canadians to be active outdoors, in winter, connecting with their environment;
- a theme that everyone can identify with, and integrate into existing daily activities, winter events and festivals, transportation and infrastructures;
- a concept - a mind-set that has come and gone and is on the rebound; and a resource to help you become Winter Green including;
- tools and winter resources for winter activities, programs, transportation options and infrastructure;



- information on things to do - both structured and unstructured; and
- great ideas on what's already happening across Canada!!

. . . And It's For You!

Being active in the winter is not reserved for the ski enthusiast any more or less than being "green" is reserved for the environmentalist. Winter Green is for everyone; children, parents, students, physically or mentally challenged, employees, employers, people with a little or a lot of free time or resources.

Canada's winters are as diverse as its people. Let's celebrate that diversity with a fresh perspective on winter. For some, this may mean a change in lifestyle during the winter. For others, it may mean challenging themselves further to explore more diverse levels of outdoor physical activity and "greener" behaviour in the winter.

There are lots of fun and active things to do outdoors in winter that will also help protect our environment. Winter Green can show you how; the choices are yours for the taking.

What Does It Mean To Be "green"?

No, it's not about becoming an amphibian, it's about lessening our impact on them! Human activity affects the environment. Simply driving the car has an impact because burning gas—a fossil fuel—releases greenhouse gases into the atmosphere which causes global warming and, many believe, causes changes in our climate. Winter activities take a more significant toll on the environment than other times of the year. Because we tend to drive more often, need to heat buildings, and use fossil fuels to generate some forms of electricity, more fossil fuels are being burned in winter. Being "green" is about considering the effects that everyday activity has on the environment and making changes to lessen that impact.

What Is Winter To Canadians?

Winter has shaped our history, defined our customs, directed our architecture, and influenced our recreational pastimes. Com-

pared with the summer unpleasanties like heat, mosquitoes and black flies, the impassable roads brought with the spring thaw; and the business of the fall harvest, historically, winter was preferred over the other seasons because of the ease of transportation and sporting activities to amuse people left with more leisure time and the abundance of flat, firm surfaces on which to play and travel.

Canadians discovered the pleasures of the wintery outdoors, with outings to the nearest toboggan hill, joining a community skating party, taking a leisurely stroll in the warmth of the February sun, watching the birds that chose to bear the winter weather, going out for fresh air after hours of being cooped up in closed quarters, and falling backwards into the freshly fallen snow to make snow angels with the children. These activities were the norm in bygone days. But for many Canadians in recent years, these activities have somehow become more of a novelty.

Being Winter Green Means Being Healthy And Happy In Winter

Prepare the mind for winter

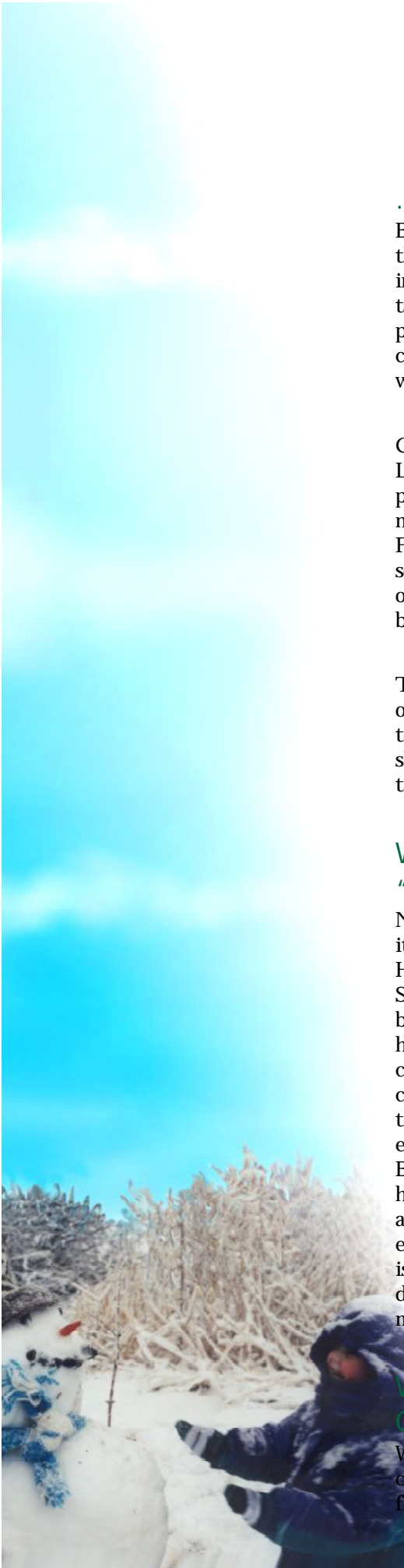
Think Positive!! Don't ask "How cold is it?". Ask, "How warm is it?" It is unrealistic to think that we will be comfortable outdoors in winter at all times, any more than we can expect to be comfortable outdoors in the summer at all times—just think, no flies!

Find something about winter that interests you

There are many outdoor winter activities, from a walk in the park to star gazing to downhill ski racing. Winter Green can give you lots of ideas for activities where you live.

Preparing your body

Dress appropriately!! Compensate for the lack of warmth in the outside air by encapsulating the warmth generated by your own body. Nothing can put a damper on a winter outing better than frostbitten noses and numb toes. Winter Green shows how to keep you and your family warm without breaking the bank.



Make “Green” Choices

- compost your greens (yes, even in winter)!;
- turn down the heat when leaving the house or retiring for the night;
- walk rather than drive for those short distance trips;
- use the clothes line rather than the clothes dryer - Did you know that letting your clothes freeze on the line kills bacteria that the sun takes out stains from spaghetti sauce; and using the dryer shortens your clothing’s life-span?;
- cycle or cross-country ski, instead of using a car;
- use natural vs artificial play surfaces like back yard skating rinks;
- wear or share second hand winter and sporting equipment.

Go For Green’s Winter Green Program Aims To

- **reduce the impact of winter lifestyles on our environment;**
- **demonstrate the economic benefits to communities of making winter lifestyle changes;**
- **increase the levels of outdoor, winter, physical activity of children/youth, and adults;**
- **demonstrate the link between our history and our sustainable future;**
- **highlight winter lifestyle strategies, and unique, Canadian winter special events;**
- **encourage individuals, families, neighbourhoods, community groups and government agencies to be active in the outdoors in winter, while protecting the environment.**

Why Be Winter Green?

For The Health Of It

Because the majority of Canadians tend to practice either indoor inactivity or ‘hibernation’ in the winter, the health of young and

old alike is challenged. The health of the environment, is also easy to forget “at a time of year when the ground is covered in snow, water is frozen, and most plant and animal species are dormant in hibernation.” (From Making your Event or Activity Winter Green).

Physically speaking . . .

Winter Green provides ideas and answers on various health and safety considerations:

Regular activity

Canadians are realizing how easy it can be to integrate physical activity into daily life, whatever the season. The physical activities most popular amongst Canadians, over the last decade, have been unstructured, unorganized, lowcost activities such as walking, gardening, bicycling or home exercise.

Only 30-60 minutes (depending on the degree of intensity) of physical activity in 10 minute bursts is needed to decrease the likelihood of developing illnesses like diabetes, colon cancer and breast cancer. Moderate physical activity also reduces anxiety, depression and stress. Physical activity encourages social interaction, fosters friendships, and one’s overall well-being and quality of life.

Health of children and youth

Obesity in children has already been identified as a major Canadian problem. “Twenty percent of Canadian children and teens are overweight enough to threaten their future health and the fiscal health of an already-overburdened health care system.” (Dr. John Lefebvre, Canadian Medical Association Journal; January, 1994)

“In the past 15 years the prevalence of obesity has grown by more than 50% in Canadian children aged 6 to 11 years and by 40% in those aged 12 to 17.” (Canadian Medical Association Journal; January, 1994)

The rise in the incidence of childhood obesity is another reason why daily activity is so important. With the advent of video games and the TV remote, children are not making movements to even get up to change a station let alone go outdoors. Day after day, year after year, the calories otherwise burned are accumulated instead.

Furthermore, children need physical activity to help them to develop into healthy adults. When you participate in healthy, outdoor, win-



ter physical activity with your child, you have given them a gift for life.

“Recreation is essential to the development of our children and youth. We learn motor skills (physical) through play and sport; we learn social skills through play and sport; we learn creativity through play and arts/cultural activity; we develop intellectual capacities and concepts through play—and many lifelong skills”. (From the Northern Recreation Coordinating Committee, Northern Benefits Catalogue Resource - Mummery et al., 1994)

Mental health

People who remain indoors for long periods of time become vulnerable to the “winter blues” or a more serious problem known as SAD or Seasonal Affect Disorder www.lightandions.org/sad/sadfaq.htm. Whether suffering from winter blues, cabin fever, or holiday blues, the common remedy supported by researchers and medical doctors, is light therapy. If people suffering from this type of depression would include outdoor physical activity in their daily routine, they would get a daily dose of natural sunlight and experience the other health benefits of being regularly physically active.

Feeling of security

After the school and work day is over there is less incentive to go outside when it is cold and dark. Issues of safety and security in dark winters can be a major challenge. Seniors, for example, are not the only ones who are timid to walk on icy surfaces. Winter Green has ideas to help you keep your feet on the ground!

Winter activity accessibility

Canadians tend to participate in winter activities in the sheltered climates offered by arenas and gyms rather than in the perceived harsher climate of the great outdoors. For many, it is difficult to get motivated when the sidewalks (if there are any) are icy, the streets are slushy and the temperatures are frigid!

Winter Green provides some tips on winter walking and some fun, home grown, regular, winter outdoor activities.

Dressing for the occasion

The most obvious perceived obstacle to going outside in winter is the weather. Naturally it means that we have to dress warmly if we want to be safe and comfortable outside in winter.

Winter Green has lots of information on dressing warmly in winter. “*Get Winter Active*” also includes useful tips about What to Wear From Head to Toe; Avoiding Cold Injury; and A Guide to Winter Comfort. For some people, acquiring the proper winter gear may be difficult for a variety of reasons. Winter Green has tips on how your family can enjoy the winter weather without breaking the bank on equipment and outer wear.

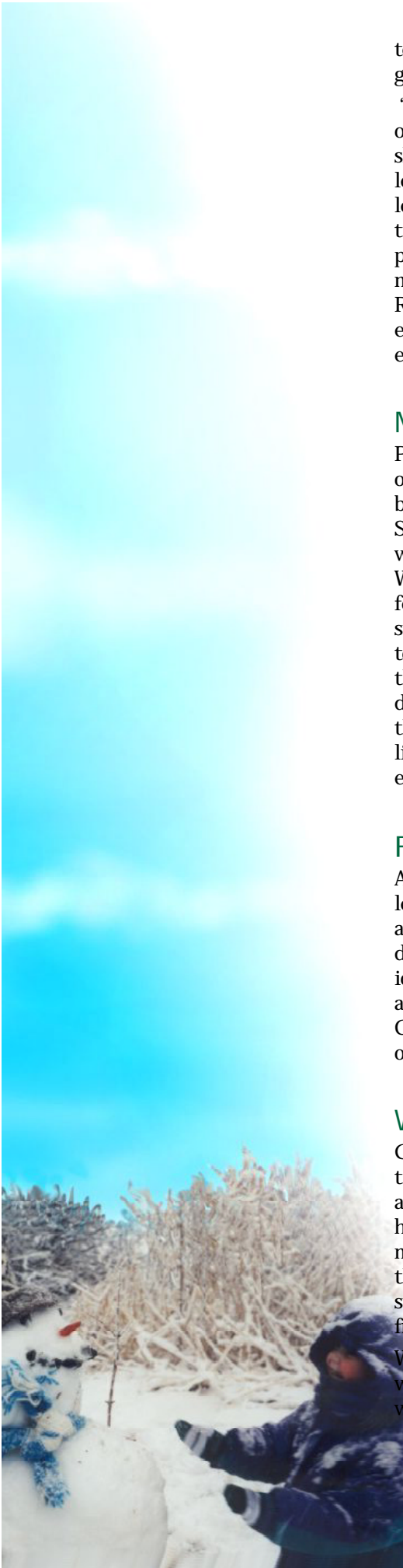
For more information on how you can be more physically active in the winter click to [Get Winter Active: Tips, Tools, and Cool Ideas for Leaders](#)

Environmentally speaking . . .

Consider the effects of winter activities on the environment and how we typically react to winter weather: cars idling, parents driving kids to school, building and home heating, snowmobiling, hiking off the trails.

Outdoor winter activity threats to the environment can include:

- destruction of natural vegetation
- soil compression
- pollution of soils and water
- solid waste generation
- noise disturbance
- disruption of wildlife
- transportation-related issues including air pollution and traffic congestion



Environmental threats to winter active participants can include:

- outdoor air pollutants
- indoor air pollutants
- noise
- ultra violet radiation (UV-B)
- climate change

Darkness doesn't have to be a liability

Treat darkness as an opportunity to do something different and spontaneous. Bundle up the family and go out stargazing for example! Or, what about installing solar lighting in parks and along trails so people can safely take advantage of them all year long.

Some winter activities have moved to an indoor setting

Over the past fifty years, some outdoor winter activities have moved indoors, such as hockey or curling. These large indoor facilities are high consumers of non-renewable resources. It's rather ironic, bigger and better artificial winter sport and recreation facilities may ultimately contribute to global warming, which results in fewer opportunities to enjoy what winter has, in the past, provided naturally. Let's take the roof off of Winter!

For more information click to [Making Your Event or Activity Winter Green](#).

To Bring Back The Child In Us

It's SNOWING, let's PLAY!! That's the spirit of Winter Green!

Make special events an everyday occurrence

A skating or tobogganing party, an ice sculpture contest, a candlelight walk along the paths in the woods, a neighbourhood snowman making contest, or pond hockey game doesn't have to wait for a winter carnival and be a one time thing—make it a regular occurrence!

Get back in touch with nature

Children and adults alike need to be more actively in touch with their natural surroundings to help foster, develop, or maintain an appreciation and a respect for all that nature has to offer. Observe nature in winter and discover what the plants, the insects, and the animals are doing in their cozy winter habitats. See the Winter Treasures Nature Adventure Guide, an activity booklet for children.

Children can lead the way, showing parents and community leaders what it's like to skate on a lake or a pond, make a snow angel, watch the stars come out, or walk to school in a snowstorm! "Even walking to work through the softly falling snow can be a joy because it is fresh, pure, delicate and reminds you of childhood." Joanna Brown, Nova Scotia Go for Green Fund Committee Member

