



From A to B

EMPLOYEE WELLNESS & OUR ENVIRONMENT



A Guide for Bringing Health and Sustainability to your Workplace

MARCH 2018

About

Green Action Centre is a non-profit, non-governmental organization, based in Winnipeg and serving Manitoba since 1985. They are a registered charity, governed by an elected community board. They promote greener living through environmental education and encourage practical green solutions for households, workplaces, schools and communities. Their primary areas of work are green commuting, composting and waste reduction, sustainable living and resource conservation.

Contact: gohappy@greenactioncentre.ca | 204.925.3777

Downtown Winnipeg BIZ is the friendly and hardworking host that improves the perception of downtown by providing a welcoming environment, keeping things clean and safe, and advocating for continuous and positive change. Established in 1989 by the City of Winnipeg, the Downtown Winnipeg BIZ is the oldest of Winnipeg's 16 business improvement zones. Directed by a management board of 15 business owners/leaders and a representative from city hall, the Downtown Winnipeg BIZ markets the city centre on behalf of the 1,300 businesses and runs programs and provides services that target downtown image, cleanliness, safety, transportation and parking. They also host events and promote downtown as a great place to work, shop, and live.

Contact: info@downtownwinnipegbiz.com | 204.958.4640

.....

This document was originally created for **From A to B: Employee Wellness & Our Environment** hosted by Green Action Centre and Downtown Winnipeg BIZ. Our goal is to bring businesses, organizations, and institutes together to promote the health and wellness of employees through the promotion of sustainable practices.

The following resource guide will provide you with insight on sustainable and health best practices for the workplace, as well as an opportunity to document what you've learned throughout the event and breakout sessions. This resource document will be an excellent tool to reflect on in the future and to share with your colleagues as you work towards a healthy and sustainable workplace.

Contents

1	Connecting Workplace Wellness and Our Environment
2	Work Sheets
5	Transportation Healthy Transportation at the Workplace
9	Health Promoting Health and Wellness at the Workplace
13	Connecting the Dots Connecting Workplace Health to Environmental Impact
17	Terms and Definitions
18	Works Referenced

Connecting Workplace Wellness and Our Environment

The promotion of health and sustainability in the workplace is closely linked, and making the case for one often leads to benefitting the other. When employees commute in a sustainable way they are reducing their carbon footprint and improving local air quality. When employees actively commute to work, they are increasing their daily physical activity and therefore have better overall physical health. Increasing wellness as a priority at your workplace will enable employees to improve both their mental and physical health, making them more productive overall. Healthy employees work harder and take less sick time which can benefit employers financially.

By offering incentives for sustainable commuting, employers can experience overall savings. Employers can reduce demand for parking and spend less on subsidized parking for their employees by offering incentives for transit, carpooling, cycling and walking that cost less and have positive health and environmental impacts. Providing a range of commuting options can also assist in recruiting and retaining employees, which can help reduce costs associated with employee turnover.

The following resource guide will provide you with insight on sustainable and health best practices for the workplace, action items you can work towards and space to document your priorities throughout the workbook. Consider this resource a tool that you can use and refer to while working towards a healthy and sustainable workplace. This resource is available as a PDF for digital reference or share with your colleagues at www.greenactioncentre.ca/WorkplaceGuide_FromAtoB

Work Sheets

What does your workplace do well in terms of promoting and supporting sustainable commuting?

On a scale of 1-10 how do you rate the health and wellness at your workplace, and why?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10

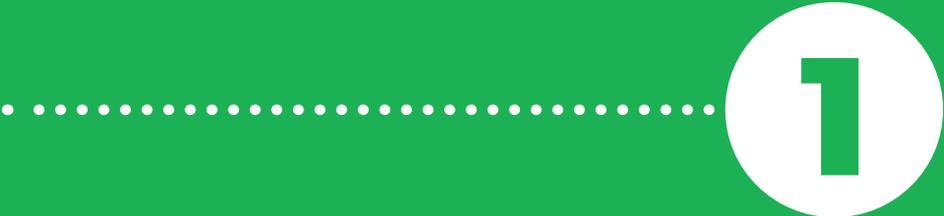
What are you working on now to promote health and/or sustainability at your workplace? What do you think is missing?

Work Sheets

Is the division of resources equal for both the health initiatives and sustainability initiatives at your workplace? Why or why not?

Does your workplace support a culture of wellness and/or sustainability, or does your workplace depend on a few champion employees to make things happen?

Which sustainable modes are most popular at your workplace: bike, bus, walk or carpool? Why do you think that is?



1

**Sustainable
Transportation
at the
Workplace**

Sustainable Transportation at the Workplace

A healthy workplace is a sustainable workplace!

Through supporting alternative transportation options at your workplace you can meet important health, wellness and sustainability targets in addition to reducing costs for employers by limiting the supply of parking while encouraging other modes of travel. A healthy and sustainable workplace can be achieved by doing outreach with employees about their commuting options, promoting transportation events (such as Commuter Challenge and Bike to Work Day) and by hosting commuting events onsite at your workplace to increase visibility and participation of sustainable commuting options. Many employers choose to track employee travel behaviours to gain a better understanding of how their employees use the programs.



Sustainable Transportation Actions You Can Take at Your Workplace

- Join GoManitoba as workplace (customized sub-site) and support employees to use the service to make ride matches for carpool, bike, walk and bus commuting to work
- Gather commuting data with GoHappy Workplace Commuter Consulting
- Book a workplace presentation with Green Action Centre
- Take part in the annual Commuter Challenge
- Take part in the annual #BusIsBetter campaign
- Bring the Winnipeg Transit EcoPass program to your workplace
- Add secure bike parking to your worksite
- Provide basic tools for cyclists to make small repairs at work
- Organize an Emergency Ride Home program at your workplace so people do not need to rely on a personal vehicle in the case of an emergency
- Replace subsidized parking with a monthly sustainable transportation allowance
- Allocate the most desirable parking spots for carpools
- Allow flexible start times and work schedules to accommodate eco-travel time (bus schedules, bike maintenance, traffic, etc.)
- Register as a Bike Friendly Business (currently only workplaces within Downtown Winnipeg BIZ or Exchange District BIZ boundaries)

DID YOU KNOW?

- Cycling commuters and walking commuters have 52% and 36% lower risk of developing and dying from heart diseases, respectively. [1](#)
- Because most transit trips begin and end with walking, transit use is considered active travel: A Montreal study found that a public transit round trip travel averaged 2,500 steps, accounting for 25% of the physical activity recommended each day. [2](#)
- Active travel improves mental health. When someone walks or cycles for transportation, it increases their overall levels of physical activity, having a positive effect on their mental health. [3](#)
- Owning your own vehicle in Canada costs between \$8,600 and \$13,000 a year, which is the second biggest expense for families. [4](#)
- Researchers in England found adding an additional 20 minutes of commuting per day has the same negative effect on job satisfaction as receiving a 19% pay cut. Also, each extra minute of commuting time reduces both job and leisure time satisfaction, increases strain, and worsens mental health for workers. [5](#)
- Employers report a reduced demand for parking, an improved corporate image, and improved employee morale with regard to organizational benefits derived from offering commuter services programs. The top reasons why organizations provide transit benefits to their employees are to comply with trip reduction ordinances, to satisfy requests of employees for transit benefits, and to recruit and retain employees. [6](#)



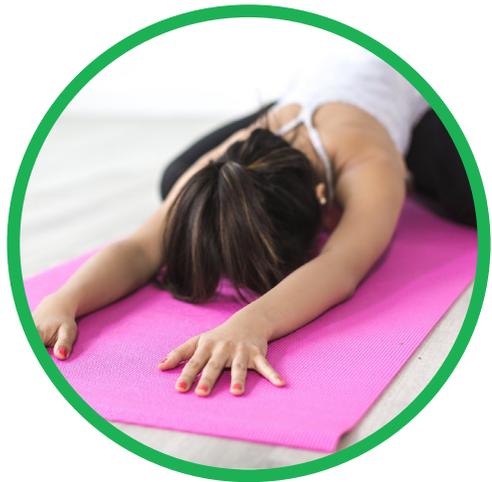
2

Promoting Health and Wellness at the Workplace

Promoting Health and Wellness at the Workplace

There is a strong connection between the health and well-being of employees and their work environments.

When people feel valued, respected and satisfied in their jobs and they work in safe, healthy environments, they are more likely to be productive and committed. Both the employer and the employee benefit from a healthy workplace.



Actions you can take to promote health in your workplace

- Make the case to upper management first, and then bring it forward to staff at your next all-staff meeting.
- Designate workplace wellness champions by forming a health and wellness committee, appointing a champion in each department, or designate a wellness coordinator and work it into their job description.
- Incorporate wellness into workplace policies and into meeting agendas.
- Plan and promote walking meetings instead of the boardroom.
- Encourage staff to stand, walk and stretch on a regular basis. Try strategically placing commonly used items like a printer, recycling bin, and garbage bin in areas that they have to walk to (*bonus when it includes taking stairs!*).
- Introduce standing desks to shared spaces or offer incentive/policy to promote staff adding it to their workspaces.
- Designate a room or space in your office as a relaxation/meditation zone that people can go to unplug and relax in a quiet environment to recharge.
- Do yoga at lunch once per week.
- Plan a lunch club: once a month, plan to have a nutritious staff lunch. Rotate who's in charge of bringing lunch or have everyone contribute something.
- Make half your meetings in the month walking meetings
- Plan 5 to 10 minute stretch breaks every hour or two. Ensure longer meetings and conferences have planned stretch breaks too.
- Support mental health: encourage employees to de-stress with a relaxing activity once a day for 5 to 10 minutes (e.g. colouring, writing in a journal, meditating, etc.).
- Find a caterer that offers healthy food choices when you need to order food.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Promoting use of public transit is an important strategy to increase routine physical activity. Users of public transit walk 8 to 30 minutes more daily compared to non-transit users. This time spent walking means that people who use transit are more likely to meet the Canadian physical activity guidelines of 150 minutes per week and achieve the associated health benefits. [7](#)
- For every dollar spent on workplace health promotion programs, more than triple the savings were observed in medical costs. The same report found that health promotion programs in the workplace - including ones that create healthy eating environments - have been shown to increase employee productivity, reduce sick leaves and improve employee retention. Employees that eat healthy have fewer chronic diseases and ultimately incur less benefit-related costs. Plus, they retire later. [8](#)
- In a report by the Health Communication Unit at the Centre for Health Promotion at the University of Toronto, a Canadian company reported \$7 for every \$1 invested in health related programs. [9](#)
- Employees in poor health are 20% less productive than those in good health - this is comparable to a productivity reduction of one day per week! [10](#)
- Canada Life in Toronto showed a return of \$6.85 for every \$1 invested in its Workplace Wellness program. [11](#)
- Stats Canada states that 85% of Canadian adults do not get the recommended minimum of 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per week. A 2011 study determined that partaking in physical activity outside was associated with greater feelings of revitalization, increased energy and positive engagement, together with decreases in tension, confusion, anger and depression. Basically, exercise is great for mental health. Exercise outside? Even better. [12](#)



Connecting Workplace Health to Environmental Impact

Connecting Workplace Health to Environmental Impact

Transportation is the largest contributor of greenhouse gas emissions in Manitoba.

These greenhouse gases absorb and trap infrared radiation, heat the atmosphere, and ultimately contribute to climate change. If the majority of people drive to work alone, this results in a significant abundance of vehicles on the road, heavy traffic congestion and idling at peak times of the day. Stats Canada states that 85% of Canadian adults do not get the recommended minimum of 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per week.

Based on the 2016 Census, 72% of Winnipeggers drive to work as their main method of commuting. This is higher among males (78%) than females (66%).



Actions to connect the dots at your workplace

○ Take a policy approach:

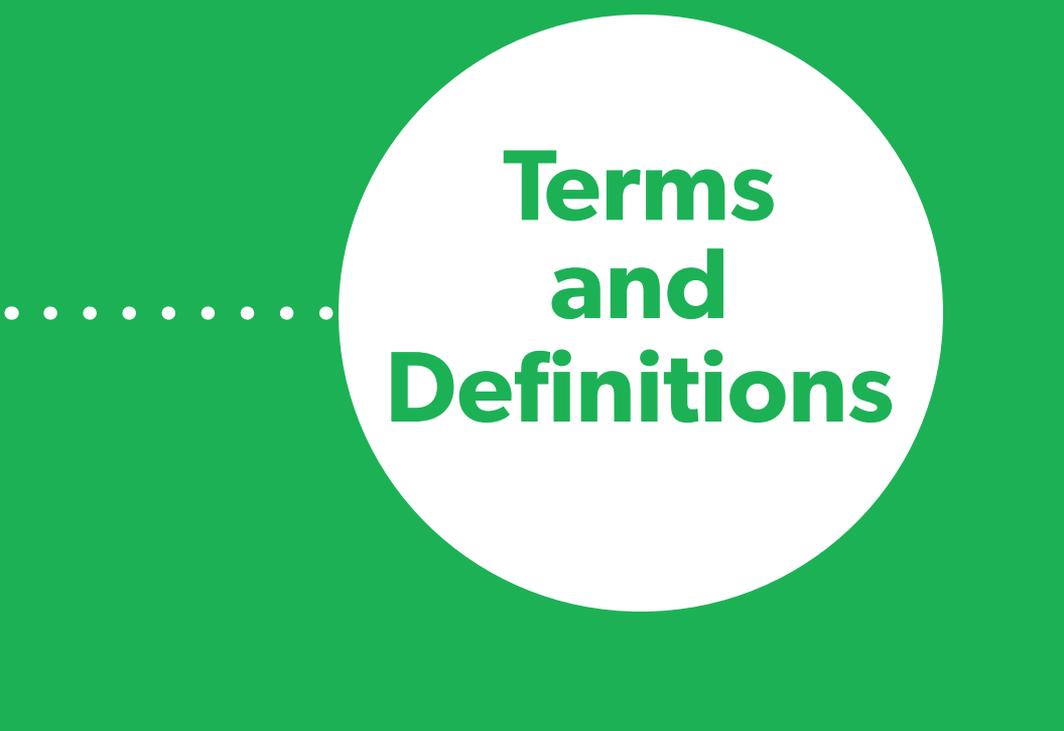
- Provide flexible work arrangement for employees (e.g. flexible start times for employees to come in earlier or stay later, telecommute options, etc.).
- Provide subsidies for sustainable transportation with the Eco-Pass and/or discounted gym memberships or recreation passes. Create/adopt policies that target active commuting specifically to achieve both environmental and health benefits at your workplace.
- Introduce policies that aim to reduce prolonged sitting (e.g. breaks in meetings lasting more than one hour, walking meetings, encouraging breaks, avoiding meeting during lunch, etc.).

○ Create a Supportive Environment:

- Provide facilities that support daily physical activity and active transportation such as secure bike storage, on-site showers, lockers/change rooms and access to safe, clean stairwells.
- Map out the various walking/biking routes around your workplace and promote them during employee orientation and through regular communications through email or bulletin boards. You can also promote casual dress code days to encourage active commuting or being active during breaks and lunch hour.

DID YOU KNOW?

- The American Public Transit Association suggests that the use of public transit saves an estimated 1.4 billion gallons of gas and 14 million tonnes of carbon dioxide annually.
- Health Canada has warned that air pollution makes it difficult for people to breathe properly and can make existing lung or heart-related symptoms worse. The World Health Organization has also linked air pollution to seven million premature deaths per year.
- The American Heart Association has conducted research that found people who take public transit are 44% less likely to be overweight, 27% less likely to have high blood pressure, and 34% less likely to have diabetes, when compared to people who drive.
- A Time Magazine article noted that the negative health impact of such long commutes can include increased stress, elevated blood sugar, higher cholesterol, a heightened risk of depression and anxiety, decreased happiness, spikes in blood pressure, decreased cardiovascular fitness, decreased sleep quality, and back pain.



**Terms
and
Definitions**

Terms and Definitions

Transportation Demand Management (TDM): the flipside of infrastructure. It focuses on understanding how people make their transportation decisions and helping people use the infrastructure in place for transit, ridesharing, walking, biking, and telework. It is cost-effective in guiding the design of our transportation and physical infrastructure so that alternatives to driving are naturally encouraged and our systems are better balanced. (Mobilitylab.org)

Placemaking: strengthening the connection between people and the places they share, placemaking refers to a collaborative process by which we improve a neighbourhood, city, or region. More than just promoting better urban design, placemaking facilitates creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support is ongoing evolution. (www.pps.org)

Walkability: is a measure of how friendly an area is to walking.

- A center: walkable neighbourhoods have a center, whether it's a main street or a public space.
- People: enough people for businesses to flourish and for public transit to run frequently.
- Mixed income, mixed use: affordable housing located near businesses.
- Parks and public space: plenty of public spaces to gather and play.
- Pedestrian design: buildings are close to the street, parking lots are relegated to the back.
- Schools and workplaces: close enough that most residents can walk from their homes.
- Complete streets: streets designed for bicyclists, pedestrians, and transit. 13

Works Referenced

1. "Association between active commuting and incident cardiovascular disease, cancer, and mortality: prospective cohort study", British Medical Journal, 2017. Accessed from: <http://www.bmj.com/content/357/bmj.j1456>
2. "Briefing for Canadian Policy Makers", Lancet Report, 2017. Accessed from: https://www.cpha.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/advocacy/2017_lancet_canada_brief.pdf
3. CAPE - A Toolkit for Health Professionals, March 2017
4. "Own a car? You won't believe how much that's costing you every year", Global News, 2017. Accessed from: globalnews.ca/news/3832649/car-ownership-costs-public-transit-canada/
5. "Commuting and Wellbeing", University of the West England, 2017. Accessed from: <http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/et/research/cts/researchprojectsbytheme/influencingbehaviours/commutingandwellbeing.aspx>
6. "Employer Benchmarking Survey", Centre for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR), 2016. Accessed from: <https://www.cutr.usf.edu/>
7. WRHA, 2017 Accessed from: <http://www.wrha.mb.ca/extranet/publichealth/files/PublicTransportationandHealth.pdf>
8. American Journal of Public Health, 2010. Accessed from: <https://www.healthaffairs.org/toc/hlthaff/29/2#ref-22>
9. "The business case for healthy and happy employees" The Globe and Mail, 2014. Accessed from: <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/careers/career-advice/life-at-work/the-business-case-for-healthy-happy-employees/article18877107> and <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/>
10. "Investing in Workplace Physical Activity Policies: A Business Case for Hamilton Employers", Hamilton Public Services, 2017. Accessed from: <http://www2.hamilton.ca/NR/rdonlyres/A42C6E42-9880-4164-842F-FA221DB514C3/0/BusinessCaseforWorkplace20121.pdf>
11. "Investing in Workplace Physical Activity Policies: A Business Case for Hamilton Employers", Hamilton Public Services, 2017. Accessed from: <http://www2.hamilton.ca/NR/rdonlyres/A42C6E42-9880-4164-842F-FA221DB514C3/0/BusinessCaseforWorkplace20121.pdf>
12. "Benefits of outdoor exercise confirmed", The Peninsula College of Medicine and Dentistry, 2011. Accessed from: www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/02/110204130607.htm
13. "Walkable Neighbourhoods", Walk Score, 2018. Accessed from: <https://www.walkscore.com/walkable-neighbourhoods.shtml>



Photos supplied by Black and Gold Photography & Green Action Centre



GREEN ACTION CENTRE

3rd floor, 303 Portage Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R3B 2B4
204.925.3777

gohappy@greenactioncentre.ca
greenactioncentre.ca



DOWNTOWN WINNIPEG BIZ

426 Portage Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0C9
204.958.4640

info@downtownwinnipegbiz.com
downtownwinnipegbiz.com

