|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Province*** | ***Législature*** | ***Session*** | ***Type de discours*** | ***Date du discours*** | ***Locuteur*** | ***Fonction du locuteur*** | ***Parti politique*** |
| Nouvelle-Écosse | 60e  | 2e  | Discours sur la santé | 12 Décembre 2007 | Barry Barnet  | Minister of Health Promotion and Protection |  |

Mr. Speaker, I rise in my place today to address what can only be referred to as a crisis in our province. That crisis is the physical inactivity of our children and youth. Letting kids be kids used to mean allowing them the freedom to play outside and to use their imagination to create new and spontaneous games, to stay after school for a pickup game of soccer or baseball or hockey. Getting home on time for dinner was a challenge for many of us growing up. Now that same call for the dinner is no longer made by our mothers or our fathers on the porch outside to the local playground; it's made to the local TV room or the computer room. The reply of five minutes is the same, but now it's wanting to get to the next level of a video game, not to do one more lap on their bicycle.

Mr. Speaker, childhood inactivity and obesity is not a unique concern in our province, it is a nation-wide challenge. Today, I was proud to announce the launch of the province's renewed Active Kids Healthy Kids strategy. This $5.3 million strategy is aimed at continuing to improve the opportunities and support for our communities across the province to help our kids become more active and healthy. Like all strategies that come from the Department of Health Promotion and Protection, it is based on strong research, evidence and best practices.

Research has told us that a greater focus must be placed on our teenagers, especially our young women. The most recent physical activity levels of children and youth in Nova Scotia showed that we have a positive impact with children in Grade 3; however, it also showed that we have work to do with our high school students. This renewed strategy will address those gaps and build on our successes. We are committed to meeting the challenge head on and we will re-evaluate our progress again in 2009.

As I stand before my colleagues, I know there's not one simple answer that is going to solve this issue. That is why this strategy is only one part of the overall plan to make physical activity accessible to all Nova Scotians.

Getting children active is about more than just telling them to get outside and run around. We need to create a culture that will support healthy choices. We have a vision for a "new" Nova Scotia and that vision includes providing safe, accessible, healthy places for our children to go and to be active. This renewed strategy is another thread in our government's overall social policy framework for Nova Scotians and will support the goal and themes of children and youth strategy as well as the crime prevention strategy. By providing children with new opportunities and places to be more physically active, we are providing them with further support and mentors to help them grow and become well-rounded and responsible teenagers and adults.

We invest $3 million annually toward recreation facility development. These investments help communities build new playgrounds, update existing sports and recreation facilities and support healthy and safe communities.

We have also started a new program called, Building Facilities and Infrastructure Together, or, BFIT. This is a $50 million, 10 year commitment that will be used specifically for the construction of, or renovation to major sport facilities. The "new" Nova Scotia includes $600,000 for a new indoor soccer field in Pictou County; $400,000 for a new outdoor track and field facility in the Annapolis Valley; over $800,000 for a new multi-sport recreation field house in Bridgewater; and $5 million for a new sports facility in Queens municipality.

The "new" Nova Scotia will have more safe and accessible places for our children, for our youth and families and our seniors to go and be active. We also know that one barrier to children participating in physical activity is the associated costs. That is why we introduced a tax credit that will be used for sport and recreation registration fees. Since the launch, we have increased that tax credit to $500 per child, per family. We also fund Kids Sport programs where children and families can access up to $300 to cover their child's registration fee.

All school boards have access to sport animators program that is run in partnership between my department and the Department of Education. These animators are the bridge that gap between school and recreation programs and help facilitate new opportunities for kids to participate and get active.

Four years ago, these positions did not exist and today, they have implemented programs across the province that help get more children outside and moving. These are just some of the initiatives and programs already underway to help our communities become healthier and safer.

Mr. Speaker, as I close my remarks, I want to ask for the support of all members of the Legislature, we all have a vested interest in this. Inactivity leads to child obesity which can also lead to chronic diseases, such as Type II diabetes. Inactivity has the potential to put an increased demand on our health care system and it is all preventable. We have a role toplay in setting an example for our children and youth. I encourage everyone to get active and to become a role model for physical activity.

I thank everyone involved in the Active Kids Healthy Kids - my staff and the community leaders across the province. I also want to thank the Premier, who held this portfolio before me and whose support has been invaluable in the development of this renewed strategy. Thank you.