



**International Walk to School**



# Nova Scotia Organizers Guide

Presented by:



A partnership of:



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## Contact Us:

Active & Safe Routes to School  
Ecology Action Centre  
2705 Fern Lane, Halifax, NS, B3K 4L3  
Tel: (902) 442-5055  
Fax: (902) 405-3716  
asrts@ecologyaction.ca  
www.saferoutesns.ca

## About International Walk to School Month

The biggest event of the year for Active & Safe Routes to School is International Walk to School Month during October. Around the world, the month of October is dedicated to taking active transportation to school and other places kids go. Active transportation means any non-motorized mode such as walking, cycling, in-line skating, skateboarding, scootering, wheel chairing, cross-country skiing, canoeing, etc.

Students from countries of all continents participate in International Walk to School Month. In 2007, a record 42 countries took part. The event encourages students to walk, cycle, in-line skate or skateboard to school with parents, school staff and community leaders. Walking to school is an easy way to add more physical activity to the daily lives of students, reduce traffic congestion, improve air quality and fight climate change. The event is a terrific opportunity to learn safe routes to school and safety skills for walking and wheeling, make friends, help out the environment, and increase safety in and around schools zones – plus, it's tons of fun!



## What is Active & Safe Routes to School?

Active & Safe Routes to School (ASRTS) in Nova Scotia encourages more children, youth and their families to use active transportation – such as walking and cycling – for the environment, physical activity and traffic safety.

ASRTS aims to:

- ✓ Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution from cars
- ✓ Increase physical activity
- ✓ Increase traffic safety

Active & Safe Routes to School is coordinated in Nova Scotia by the Ecology Action Centre in partnership with the Nova Scotia Department of Health Promotion and Protection as part of the Active Kids Healthy Kids Initiative.



## Why walk?

- ✓ It rocks!
- ✓ It's fun!
- ✓ It's healthy!
- ✓ It reduces stress and increases attentiveness!
- ✓ It's non-polluting!
- ✓ It's social!
- ✓ It teaches safe pedestrian skills!
- ✓ It's educational!
- ✓ It's economical!
- ✓ It takes back the streets!



## Who's doing it?

ALL schools as well as youth-serving organizations can participate in International Walk to School Month! Urban, suburban, rural – everyone can join in! Distance or infrastructure may be an obstacle for some schools, so all we need is a little imagination. What really counts is that students start walking! Bussed students can participate too! Involve them in walking activities at school.

## How to include bussing students:

- ✓ Involve your bussing population at lunch time for 20 minutes.
- ✓ Walk around the school (bicycles, skateboards and roller blades welcome if facility permits).
- ✓ Have a group walk in the local community.
- ✓ Take a trek on a nearby trail.
- ✓ Walk around the gymnasium.

Remember school bus safety at all times. See [www.schoolbussafety.ca](http://www.schoolbussafety.ca) for details.

## **Steps for organizing an International Walk to School Month event**

This guide covers six easy steps to “walk” you through organizing your International Walk to School Month event. Join schools around the world as they celebrate walking during the month of October. Make the event your own by encouraging physical activity, safe transportation, environmental stewardship and walkable communities in a unique way. Pick a day, a week, one day per week or the entire month to celebrate. Get ready to be creative, healthy and have fun. This event will knock your socks off!

Actively promoting Walk to School for a month could also transition smoothly into the launch of a year-round program. For more on Active & Safe Routes to School throughout the year, see [www.saferoutesns.ca](http://www.saferoutesns.ca) or contact us at (902) 442-5055 or [asrts@ecologyaction.ca](mailto:asrts@ecologyaction.ca).

### **Step 1: Partners**

Recruit parent volunteers:

- ✓ Make a call for volunteers at Parent Council meetings, through newsletters and through any form of communication to parents.
- ✓ Sign them up to walk to school with the students.
- ✓ Enlist their help with coordinating the event by delegating tasks.

Invite public authorities to join in to walk with the students to school:

- ✓ Invite the mayor, municipal councilors, police officers, firefighters, Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT), Members of Parliament, Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA/MPP), professional athletes and local celebrities.
- ✓ Invite guest speakers to address safety, health and/or environmental issues at your event (police officers, public health nurses, bike safety groups, etc.).

Find community partners:

- ✓ Approach local businesses for donations of prizes or incentives.
- ✓ Approach local businesses for juice and snack donations for the event.
- ✓ Recruit community groups such as Rotary Clubs, Block Parents or other community volunteers to help organize and promote the event.

### **Step 2: Path**

Establish a safe route to school:

- ✓ Outline the safest route to school and notify participants and their parents.
- ✓ Be sure to mark Block Parent houses and other safe havens on your route map.
- ✓ Determine a meeting place or specific pick-up zones so that everyone can walk together.
- ✓ Invite community police officers to provide extra road safety during the event.
- ✓ Ask volunteers to form a crosswalk patrol or act as crossing guards for the event, and continue the patrol throughout the year.

### **Step 3: Promotion**

Spread the word:

- ✓ Put up International Walk to School Month posters wherever possible.
- ✓ Have students create colourful posters with the date of the event and post them in public and school libraries, in grocery stores, in community centres, in sports centres...you name it!
- ✓ Send out Public Service Announcements (PSA), municipal proclamations and news releases (see appendices for examples).

Invite local media:

- ✓ Media often have special sections or segments for community events -- have local newspapers, news stations and radio stations cover the event by calling them up or sending them a news release.

### **Step 4: Participation**

Have fun stuff for the students:

- ✓ Create an intra-school competition by awarding a Golden Shoe Award (spray paint or decorate an old sneaker) to the class or grade level with the highest participation – make sure that teachers keep track of who participates!
- ✓ Dress up the school mascot and cheerleaders in fun outfits, and make sure they are in attendance for the event.
- ✓ Order International Walk to School hats, t-shirts and other materials for students from <http://www.mprusso.com/iwalk/home.asp>

Get students involved:

- ✓ Have students compose poems, songs, skits, stories or paragraphs about active transportation to present as a Public Address or at an assembly.
- ✓ Hold an assembly or set aside class time with an active transportation theme to teach students the benefits of walking and cycling to school – clean air, increased physical activity, better health, a sense of community, increased pedestrian safety and more!
- ✓ Have students create an International Walk to School Month banner to display outside of the school.
- ✓ Encourage students to make signs, buttons, hats, scarves, sashes, etc., to wear and hold while walking to school.

### **Step 5: Put on the Event**

Here are a few ideas of things you can do during your International Walk to School Month event:

- ✓ Adopt the WOW program and designate weekly walking days to encourage walking one day a week and potentially extend the event to a month- or year-long activity. Register at [www.saferoutesns.ca](http://www.saferoutesns.ca).

- ✓ Develop walking themes for each day of the week: bright, highly visible colours day; “walking hat” day; bring a healthy lunch day; etc.
- ✓ Fill the month with activities that pertain to staying physically fit, eating healthy and caring for the environment.
- ✓ Offer an option to students who ride the bus or carpool to walk once they arrive at school.
- ✓ Organize a walking school bus from nearby neighborhoods. For information or to register go to **www.saferoutesns.ca**.
- ✓ Organize pedestrian, cycling, in-line skating or skateboarding safety skills workshops – contact Active & Safe Routes to School about the new Making Tracks safety training at (902) 442-5055 or [asrts@ecologyaction.ca](mailto:asrts@ecologyaction.ca) (see **www.saferoutesns.ca**).
- ✓ Use Active & Safe Routes to School program resources to teach students about healthy living, transportation safety and the environment (see **www.saferoutesns.ca**).
- ✓ Have games outside...make it a play day!
- ✓ Plan a school-wide event to recognize the day such as a picnic, an assembly, an awards ceremony or a pizza party for the class with the most walkers.
- ✓ Have a walk-a-thon.
- ✓ Supply healthy snacks.
- ✓ Host safety and activity booths.
- ✓ Set up a competition with awards for the classes with the most walkers - make it an inter-class or inter-grade friendly competition.
- ✓ Challenge another school.
- ✓ Have a shoe fashion show.
- ✓ Carry signs.
- ✓ Wear hats.
- ✓ Have a special assembly with songs, special presentations and guest speakers.
- ✓ Use your imagination!
- ✓ Send your pictures and anecdotes to us!
- ✓ There are even more ideas online at **www.iwalktoschool.org**.

## **Step 6: Pat on the Back**

- ✓ Complete the feedback form for a chance to win prizes in a Walk to School Month prize draw. The form is available online at **www.saferoutesns.ca** and must be submitted by October 31st.
- ✓ Share your experience! Send us your artwork, photos, articles, highlights and memories of the event. Be sure to fill out the permission form and send them to [asrts@ecologyaction.ca](mailto:asrts@ecologyaction.ca).
- ✓ Continue using active transportation to and from school!
- ✓ Start a walking club and use WOW to promote it.
- ✓ Continue your project throughout the year with a Walking or Cycling School Bus.

## Appendices

### Appendix A: Municipal Proclamation Sample

[City/Municipality letterhead]  
Proclamation

International Walk to School Month  
(date)

Whereas: [City/Municipality name] annual International Walk to School Month will be held in October.

Whereas: this event, taking place across Canada, will focus on the benefits of walking rather than driving to school, creating cleaner, safer and environmentally healthier school neighbourhoods for our children; and

Whereas: this event affords parents and caregivers the opportunity to spend more time with their children; reduces car use and traffic hazards; promotes physical activity and contributes to a safer community.

Now therefore: I, [Name of Mayor], Mayor of [City/Municipality name], do hereby proclaim October as International Walk to School Month and encourage everyone to participate in this very worthwhile event.

[Signature of Mayor]  
[Mayor's name]

### Appendix B: Public Service Announcement Sample

Attention all parents and caregivers! If you have children in school, get out your favourite walking shoes! In October, students at [insert your school's name], across Canada and all over the world will be participating in International Walk to School Month. This special event is being held to demonstrate support for increased physical activity, cleaner air, the fight against climate change, and less traffic congestion around schools. So join us and walk your kids to school. [Insert date, time, meeting place, contact information, etc. for your event.]

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[Insert name, phone and email of a school contact for the media here]

## Appendix C: News Release Sample

### **[Insert name of your school] Participates in International Walk to School Month:**

Students and parents walk for safety, health and a cleaner environment

On [insert date], [Insert name of your school] will join hundreds of schools across Canada as they participate in International Walk to School Month in October. The special event will see parents and students leave the family vehicle at home in favour of getting to class on their own two feet. Students that are bussed to school will participate in walking activities at school. International Walk to School Month is designed to make streets and communities safer, increase physical activity levels of students and improve our environment.

[Insert other details of your event here: date, time, meeting place, contact information, etc.]

It is hoped that the campaign will begin to reverse the habit of driving to school – a habit that has clearly become ingrained. In Canada, neighbourhood schools report that more than 50% of the student body is frequently chauffeured to school.

Active Healthy Kids Canada recently released a report which showed that Canadian kids are falling behind in physical activity levels and only about 23 percent of Nova Scotia children are using active transportation to school. Some of the health risks of inactivity include earlier onset of heart disease, osteoporosis, type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure.

Improved health is not the only benefit of walking. Additional advantages include a healthier environment and safer communities. Greenhouse gas emissions are reduced when people choose non-motorized transportation, which is an important factor in improving air quality. Traffic congestion around schools is also reduced, and neighbourhood life is revitalized by the increased presence of people on the streets.

For more information on International Walk to School Month visit the Active & Safe Routes to School at [www.saferoutesns.ca](http://www.saferoutesns.ca).

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[Insert name, phone and email of a school contact for the media here]

**Appendix D: Permission Form**

Active & Safe Routes to School of the Ecology Action Centre has my permission to use my photo(s), video, artwork, document, profile and/or story in future publications, web pages and other promotional materials produced for its affiliated programs. I understand the circulation of the materials could be worldwide and that there will be no compensation to me for this use.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent Signature (if under 18) Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Document/Photo Date:

Description:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_