

press release

Growing Healthy Places: Mississauga to support children's health and well-being across the city

- *Many children in Canada lack access to adequate and healthy food¹*
- *Only 39% of children and adolescents (5-17 years old) get sufficient physical activity²*
- *Community interventions aim to increase quality of life, physical activity, access to nourishing food among children*
- *Three-year partnership aims to benefit school-aged children (6-13 years old)*

Mississauga, ON – March 20, 2025 – Ophea, 8 80 Cities, Brock University and Novo Nordisk Canada Inc. today announced a new partnership to support children's health and well-being. *Growing Healthy Places: Mississauga* aims to improve physical activity, access to nourishing food, and overall quality of life in underserved urban communities. Bringing together partners such as school communities, municipal governments, academic institutions and non-profit organizations, the initiative will support the city of Mississauga in the co-design, implementation, and evaluation of tailored solutions that meet community needs.

Food insecurity among children and youth has increased in Canada.¹ In 2022, 18 percent of Canadian families reported experiencing food insecurity in the past 12 months, with families living in urban areas and from racialized and immigrant populations disproportionately affected.³ Further, only half of children aged 5-11 years old meet the recommended physical activity levels.²

These challenges in childhood can impact long-term health outcomes and quality of life.³ Promoting access to nourishing food and physical activity in childhood is critical to support healthy growth and development, and to reduce the risk of developing a range of health issues into adulthood, including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, sleep apnea, cancer, and depression.⁴

Prioritizing initiatives that promote physical activity, access to nourishing food, and improved quality of life has the potential to make a substantial difference in supporting children's well-being, improving lifelong health, and strengthening communities. Through evidence-based interventions, co-designed within communities to deliver real and sustained impact, *Growing Healthy Places: Mississauga* will support the health of school-aged children by building a portfolio of initiatives to increase access to nutritious food and safe places to be physically active. To achieve this, we are engaging communities, fostering trust, and building respectful relationships among key service providers to co-create environments that better support the well-being of children. A three-year partnership, *Growing Healthy Places: Mississauga* will be tracked and evaluated at three different timepoints into 2027.

Growing Healthy Places: Mississauga is the Canadian implementation of Novo Nordisk's global [Cities for Better Health \(CBH\) Childhood Obesity Prevention Initiative \(COPI\)](#), which will see six cities across six countries prioritize cross-sector partnerships with the goal of promoting health and overall well-being among children and youth.

Partner Statements:

- "In a city as diverse as Mississauga, we know that equal access to healthy food, safe spaces for physical activity, and opportunities to thrive should never depend on a child's postal code or economic background. *Growing Healthy Places: Mississauga* is more than an initiative; it's a commitment to addressing the systemic barriers that prevent too many children from reaching their full potential. By working together with our community partners, we're taking meaningful steps to create a future where every child in Mississauga has the opportunity to grow up healthy, confident, and ready to succeed." – **Mayor Carolyn Parrish, City of Mississauga**
- "The announcement of the Cities for Better Health initiative to improve health outcomes for children globally is exciting news for Mississauga. Our city is always exploring new ways to keep residents healthy and active and partnering with Cities for Better Health is a meaningful step toward achieving this vision. I look forward to the implementation phase and the collaboration of all community partners working together to make a real impact." – **Ward 9 Councillor Martin Reid, City of Mississauga**

- “Every student should have access to the opportunities and support they need to be healthy and active, but not all do. *Growing Healthy Places: Mississauga* is working to change that by fostering culturally relevant and accessible supports for historically underserved communities. By collaborating with local organizations, we’re creating solutions that strengthen school communities and help children feel valued, included, and set up to flourish.” – **Chris Markham, Executive Director and CEO, Ophea.**
- “We're thrilled to be working on this exciting project and partnership that aims to improve the health outcomes for children in Mississauga. *Growing Healthy Places: Mississauga* will directly engage communities in the co-design of neighbourhood-based initiatives that will provide valuable research and insights that directly support our healthy city advocacy efforts and position Mississauga as a healthy city leader.” –**Amanda O'Rourke, Executive Director, 8 80 Cities**
- “I was attracted to this project by the community-driven and intersectoral approach to promoting children’s health. Central to the evaluation is a focus on whether the interventions impact inequitable distribution of health outcomes over time. The evidence gained, and the project’s focus on sustainability and scale up, will support the promotion of healthy communities well beyond the study, helping to ensure all children have the opportunity to thrive.” –**Karen A. Patte, PhD, Canada Research Chair in Child Health Equity and Inclusion, Associate Professor, Health Sciences, Brock University**
- “Every child deserves the right to grow up healthy, regardless of who they are or where they live. The best way to improve physical activity, healthy eating, and overall quality of life is with collaborative, evidence-based approaches like *Growing Healthy Places: Mississauga*, which Novo Nordisk is proud to partner on.” –**Vince Lamanna, President, Novo Nordisk Canada Inc.**

About Ophea

Ophea is a registered charity that champions healthy, active living in schools and communities through quality programs and services, partnerships and advocacy. Since 1921, we have worked in partnership with school boards, public health, government, non-government organizations and companies to develop ground-breaking programs and services. Our vision is that children and youth value and enjoy the benefits of healthy, active living. To learn more visit ophea.net.

About 8 80 Cities

8 80 Cities is a nonprofit organization based in Toronto, Canada. Our mission is to ignite action and challenge the status quo to create healthier, more equitable and sustainable cities for all people. We are dedicated to contributing to the transformation of cities into places where people can walk, bike, access public transit and visit vibrant parks and public places. Our approach is to engage people and communities across multiple sectors to inspire the creation of cities that are easily accessible, safe, and enjoyable for all. We achieve our mission through grant projects, research and advocacy, and our innovative services. For more, visit: 880cities.org.

About Brock University

Brock University is a comprehensive institution with rich academic programs and world-class research activity. Located in Ontario's scenic Niagara region on the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples, Brock is situated in a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. With nearly 600 full-time faculty members and researchers, Brock's robust academic scope offers more than 70 undergraduate programs and 50 graduate programs in seven dynamic Faculties. The University's 19,000 students come from across Canada and around the world. Brock's renowned student experience is enriched by an emphasis on experiential education, as illustrated by community partnerships, volunteerism and one of Ontario's largest and most successful co-op programs. Learn more at brocku.ca

About Novo Nordisk

Novo Nordisk is a leading global healthcare company, founded in 1923 and headquartered in Denmark. Our purpose is to drive change to defeat serious chronic diseases, built upon our heritage in diabetes. We do so by pioneering scientific breakthroughs, expanding access to our medicines, and working to prevent and ultimately cure disease. Novo Nordisk

employs about 63,400 people in 80 countries and markets its products in around 170 countries. For more information, visit [novonordisk.ca](https://www.novonordisk.ca), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [YouTube](#).

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¹ Government of Canada. Canadians are facing higher levels of food insecurity. May 16, 2024. Accessed January 24, 2025. <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/o1/en/plus/6257-canadians-are-facing-higher-levels-food-insecurity>

² ParticipACTION. <https://www.participaction.com/the-science/children-and-youth-report-card/>

³ Government of Canada... Accessed January 24, 2025. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2023001/article/00013-eng.htm>

⁴ Government of Canada. Food insecurity among Canadian families. Accessed January 24, 2025. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2023001/article/00013-eng.htm>