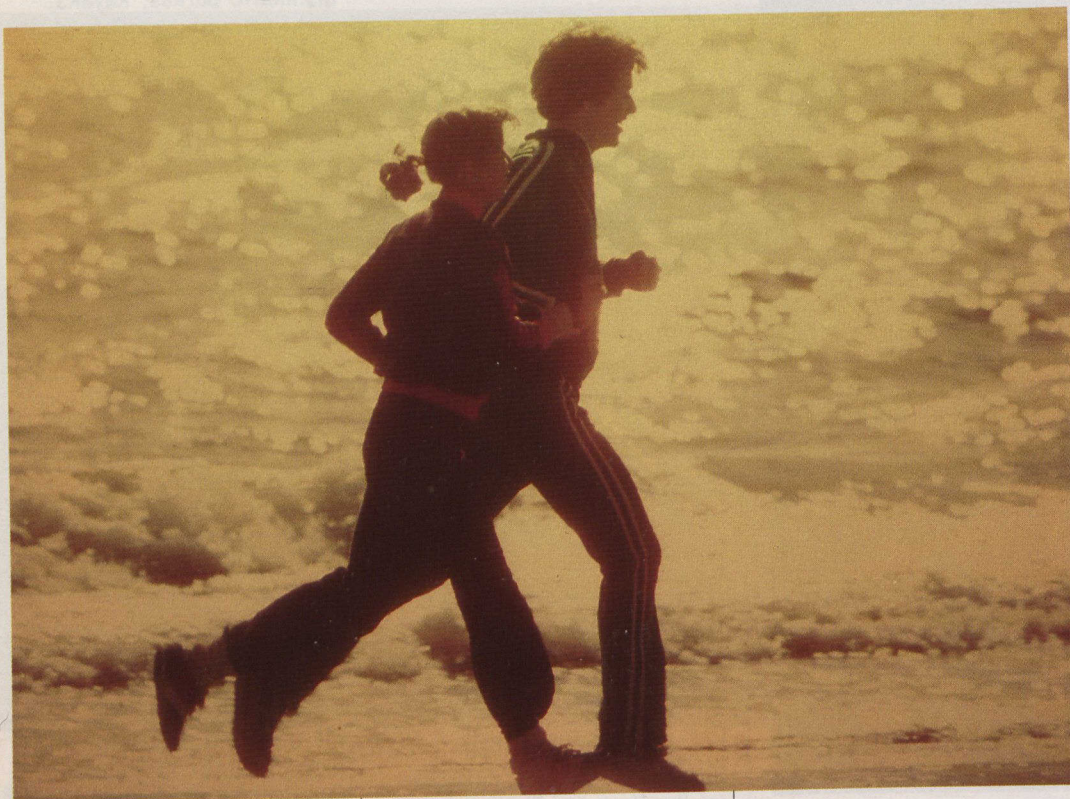


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Nation's Flip from Flab to Fit



Seventeen years ago, a study commissioned by the Government of Canada concluded that Canadians were in terrible physical shape — among the least-fit people in the world. The future health and well-being of the country were in jeopardy, and to all appearances, Canadians could not have cared less.

Thus in 1971, Participaction was founded and developed the idea of a fitness and sport-for-all promotion agency. Created as a private, independent, non-profit, national communications company, Participaction had a single goal: to encourage Canadians to become more physically active.

By 1972, it persuaded the Canadian government

to provide "seed money" to test the feasibility of an independent company, involving both government and the private sector.

The initial catalyst for the emergence of the idea of a fit Canada was Participaction's 1972 declaration that the average 30-year-old Canadian was less fit than the average 60-year-old Swede. It was a cause for embarrassment and an indictment of Canadian lifestyles. Moreover, it was a call to personal action.

Since 1972, Canadians have moved from a position of almost universal inactivity to the point where, as a nation, they are now more physically active and more fitness-conscious than ever before. And Participaction — the proverbial mouse that

roars — has been widely acknowledged as the single most important force in bringing about this revolutionary change.

"Our mandate is to promote increased physical activity and improved fitness among Canadians," says Russ Kisby, President of Participaction and a man who has been with the organization virtually since its inception.

Indeed, Mr. Kisby's people have been successful in generating a major national campaign for the fitness message. And the Canadian public has responded with genuine enthusiasm. In numerous cities and towns, individual Canadians do not just run, bike or swim, but "participact," a term coined

by people who feel a part of the fitness movement.

In May 1983, some 600 000 Canadians joined in the Great Canadian Participaction Challenge making it the biggest one-day mass participation event in Canada's history. In 1984, this grew to 1.7 million participants and in each of 1985 and 1986, more than 2.6 million (one out of every ten) Canadians, in over 200 cities, were involved. In 1987, the trend continued with 257 cities joining this popular sport-for-all event and over 3.5 million Canadians registering their participation.

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Today, a number of communities across Canada have made fitness a local campaign through special fitness promotion and events. Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, for instance, is now recognized internationally as "The Fit City" and has conducted several mass participation fitness events with "sister" communities from Sweden to Japan.

There is no question that fitness has now come to play an important role in the collective life of this country. Not only has it had a major impact on the way Canadians think and act, but the shock