

MEDIA RELEASE

Ontario's first WALK Friendly Community designations awarded today at provincial healthy communities conference in Toronto

(TORONTO - NOVEMBER 13, 2013) – Five Ontario municipalities have been recognized by an expert panel for their walkability.

[Canada Walks](#), a national organization dedicated to encouraging municipalities to be more pedestrian friendly, today named the City of Ottawa, City of Hamilton, Town of Richmond Hill, City of London and Town of Wasaga Beach as the first recipients of WALK Friendly Community designations.

The awards were given at [HC Link's](#) conference, *Linking for Healthy Communities: Collaborating for Change*, where more than 150 participants from across Ontario gathered to learn new strategies and strengthen networks that support healthy communities.

"We offer our congratulations to all of the communities that have achieved a designation and hope that the recognition they receive will inspire further action, and a little healthy competition, to create a culture of walking in cities and towns across the province," said WALK Friendly Ontario program manager Kate Hall.

Ottawa and **Hamilton** received silver designations while **Richmond Hill**, **London** and **Wasaga Beach** achieved bronze. Honourable mentions were also given to Ajax, Aurora, Kingston and Markham for their efforts to be walk friendly.

The application for the designation requires communities to report their progress on more than 200 key walkability indicators including sidewalk policies and networks of connected walking infrastructure, progressive design standards, street festivals, public art, staff training, and citizen engagement to name just a few of the criteria. All applications are reviewed and scored by a panel of experts.

The Ontario government and the Metcalf Foundation currently fund this initiative.

"Walkable communities contribute significantly to healthy and active lifestyles for Ontarians of all ages and abilities," said Michael Chan, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. "What's more, offering welcoming, walkable routes give residents and visitors alike unique ways to explore and experience communities all across the province."

Applications will be accepted for the 2014 designations in February-March and in August-September. The Application Guide to help communities prepare is available at www.walkfriendly.ca.

WALK Friendly Ontario is a project of Canada Walks, a department of Green Communities Canada.

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For more information: Kate Hall, Program Manager, WALK Friendly Ontario, 705-489-2110 (home office), 705-457-7201 (cell) khall@greencommunitiescanada.org.