



**Take the day off for the sake of your health
- and print your doctor's note while you're at it!**

**What all Canadians, and the rest of the world,
need to know about health**

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If you regularly read the newspaper (or watch television or follow the internet) you may have seen the following headline:

National Health Day

**Health and Wellness Expert Declares February 15, 2010 as National Health Day
Mayor of Ottawa Proclaims it for Nation's Capital**

Six years ago I spearheaded a movement to finally accomplish what many Canadians had been asking for over the last 2 decades. Canadians have always prided themselves on their health care and have always wanted an extra holiday between New Year's and Easter over our long winter. Instead of waiting for the continual debate on who to name the holiday after, I simply combined the two and did something unique in government circles – I took action. Hence, we now have **National Health Day**. The Mayor of the city of Ottawa, his worship Larry O'Brien, has once again joined my quest in proclaiming National Health Day for the nation's capital as have previous mayors for the sixth year in a row.

Each year I write letters to every Member of Parliament including the Prime Minister and Minister of Health although this will be the first year that I haven't given that Parliament has been prorogued. I have made numerous television appearances including CBC and the A-Channel as well as nation-wide newspaper and radio coverage. I wrote to Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty almost five years ago with the idea and while he turned me down at that time I was both surprised and pleased to see that "Family Day" suddenly appeared the very next year.

What is National Health Day all about?

It's very simple. As much as Canadians claim to be health conscious, the truth is that the majority of the public, the majority of health professionals and the vast majority of politicians don't even know what the word **health** actually means. Please appreciate that I'm not talking about serious genetic problems or severely under-privileged people who deserve much better. I'm speaking of the majority of industrialized nations who have the means and ability to be far healthier than they are. If you disagree then explain our "health care system" which is really a sick care system that attempts to manage disease. One simply needs to look at demographics to realize that such a system is doomed to failure.

There is a dictionary definition to the word health.

“HEALTH”

The optimal state of physical, mental and social well-being – and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity

It is necessary to understand that there are 3 key points to this definition;

1. The definition doesn't just tell you what health is, it also tells you what health isn't. The fact that you don't have a disease or that you're not sick or not in pain does not mean that you're healthy. I know of no other word in the English language that is defined in this manner. It would be like defining an apple as a fruit that is not a banana.
2. It is a completely holistic approach (physical, mental and social well-being – I would even add spiritual).
3. By its definition health is “optimal”. Therefore, there is really no such thing as being “fairly healthy” or having “average” health. In fact, even using the phrase “optimum health” is really being redundant.

Hence, on National Health Day all Canadians need to do two simple things. One, learn the actual definition of the word health and two; Canadians are encouraged to do anything healthy on this day (although they should obviously practice health every day of their lives).

I take this a step further where I actually close my office for the day and give my employees the day off with pay encouraging others to follow suit. While some business owners will complain of the cost of a new day off please remember that I am a business owner too. More so, this is really not about the government or employers; it's a personal decision that each person must make as they are ultimately responsible for their health and should make it a priority for the rest of their life. Even without the day off we need to understand that our entire system still misses the mark on health and it's up to us to change that. To continue to wait for the government to take quick action on our health is really an oxymoron.

Finally, I invite the public to visit my website at www.excellenceinhealth.com to print my doctor's note encouraging that people take the day off. I would challenge all employers to be proactive and give their employees the day off with pay for the sake of their health as a healthy workforce will provide many other benefits to employers.

If all Canadians, especially politicians and doctors understood what the word actually meant, and more importantly acted on it, our country would be a much better place.

Dr. John Zielonka, well known health and wellness expert and author, has treated many Olympic and professional athletes including the world's fastest man and past prime ministers. He is the director of Health & Wellness Canada and owner of the Ottawa Chiropractic & Natural Health Centre in the World Exchange Plaza in downtown Ottawa. He has made numerous television appearances and is the founder of National Health Day in Canada. His past book, “Healthy Beliefs – Deadly Choices” examines people's health beliefs and his new book “Nutrition Insanity” is just being released. He can be reached at (613) 688-1036 or visit www.excellenceinhealth.com or www.healthybeliefs.ca