

UK diplomats in Canada take part in 24hr Global Relay Marathon

On Saturday 9th May 2020 British Government staff in diplomatic posts around the world will take part in a live 24hr global relay marathon to raise money for charities on the frontline battling COVID-19.

From Samoa to Vancouver the #diplomile will cover 101 countries over 23 time zones travelling from East to West. More than 3000 UK government staff and their families will run, walk or ride one mile over a 24-hour period creating a global wave that will be shared on social media.

Here in Canada we're using this event to mark Mental Health Week, with a target to raise \$2000 for the Canadian Mental Health Association and Canadian Women's Foundation.

How will it work?

- UK government staff in Apia, Samoa, will kick off the marathon at 1000 AST on 9th May. Participants will take a picture or video of themselves which will then be shared on social media using #diplomile. The virtual baton will then be passed on via text message to the next participant in Fiji and so it will continue around the world.
- The Canadian leg of the marathon will begin in Ottawa at 0800EST at the British High Commissioners residence. It will then pass through Toronto, Montreal, Calgary, BATUS, the British Army base in Suffield, finally ending in Vancouver at 1700PST

Why are we doing this?

- The Coronavirus has changed lives irrevocably. From social distancing and unemployment to daily updates on those who have died, many are feeling the strain on our mental health.
- Our teams have also been on the frontline, ensuring the safety of British nationals in all corners of the world, and helping the most vulnerable to return home to the UK.
- Research also indicates that women and girls are more vulnerable during this time, with reports on gender based violence on the rise across the country.
- For these reasons and more the UK High Commission in Canada is proud to support this marathon and the important work done by the Canadian Mental Health Association and the Canadian Women's Foundation.

Where can I find out more?

Quotes:

Susan le Jeune d'Allegre, UK High Commissioner to Canada:

The @UKinCanada network is delighted to be taking part in the #diplomile global marathon with colleagues across the world. The COVID-19 pandemic has made it even more important than usual to look after our mental health – anxiety about loved ones, isolation and fears about our jobs and our future all contribute to new, difficult stresses for many of us. Mental health charities complement the vital work undertaken by our wonderful health professionals, and that is why @UKinCanada is delighted to be raising funds for the Canadian Mental Health Foundation and the Canadian Women's Foundation as we run, walk and scoot this weekend.

Caroline Saunders, Consul-General to the British Consulate-General in Calgary:

Our global network has worked tirelessly on our COVID-19 response and now we are uniting in a 24-hour virtual marathon across the world to raise money for good causes. British government staff across the globe and across Canada have shown a real desire to come together and support COVID-19 related charities.

Andreanne Lafrance, Political and Public Affairs Officer, British Consulate General in Montreal:

Raising awareness on mental health is very important for me, as I've experienced over the years the toll anxiety and grief can take in someone's life. And in those disturbing times, it is crucial that people have the tools and resources to get the help needed. Don't suffer in silence. And for that reason, I'll be running in the #diplomile.

Background:

The British High Commission in Ottawa, is the UK government's main diplomatic mission in Canada. Along with Consulates-General in Montreal, Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver, we work closely with the Canadian government and partners across the country to develop and maintain a wide range of substantive partnerships of real value to both countries. These partnerships cover business, defence, climate change, science and innovation, education, and culture.

Media Contact: Tom Walsh tom.walsh@fco.gov.uk