



Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the Upcoming Federal Budget

August 2020

By: Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (CPRA)

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation #1

CPRA calls upon the federal government to create a community sport and recreation recovery fund to support the full return of facilities and programs across Canada both in the short- and long-term; providing essential social services, contributing to public health and wellness and serving as community economic drivers.

Recommendation #2

CPRA calls upon the federal government for direct-to-municipal infrastructure funding for public sport and recreation that generates community economic stimulus, contributes to the productivity and physical/mental health of Canadians and provides essential services to the most marginalized citizens.

The CPRA is the national voice for municipal parks and recreation. We are the arenas, pools, sport fields, trails and playgrounds in your community and we are the summer camps, yoga classes, sport leagues and swimming lessons in which you and your family participate. We are the direct link for Canadians and communities to a safe return to normalcy.

The objective of our recommendations is to return safe (real and perceived) community sport and recreation spaces and places to Canadians resulting in economic benefit, increased productivity, community connection and citizen health.

Role of Community Sport, Parks and Recreation in Economic and Social Recovery

As the Government of Canada unfolds an economic and social re-start strategy, it is essential to recognize the critical role that parks, recreation and sport play in supporting the mental and physical health recovery of Canadians and the economic recovery of communities.

As past crises have shown, sport, parks and recreation are one of the first and most crucial services to return to communities. Equitable access to public recreation programs and facilities is fundamental to Canadians, especially for the most vulnerable in our society. It must be understood that the social costs that will result without the re-opening of these services will be profound.

The economic contributions that municipal sport, parks and recreation make to the local economy have been absent throughout the pandemic, from youth employment to sport tourism to facility/program user fees. Further, Canada's economic recovery relies heavily on the productivity of parents who require safe and secure childcare, camps and programs for their children or day programming for their aging family members.

Returning community sport, parks, recreation services fully, safely and quickly in a post-pandemic context must be a priority for all levels of government. As this occurs, traditional jurisdictional roles must not be a barrier.

The public has an renewed appreciation for the benefits of community sport and recreation services and especially community parks. The need is acute -- especially for the most vulnerable members of our society -- including children and seniors.

The challenges of returning community sport, parks and recreation are significant. Municipal systems will struggle to return to the same service level under new operating conditions and small rural communities may not be able to return these services at all. As noted below, government funding announced to date are appreciated and well intentioned, but are not accessible to our sector.

Unfortunately, municipalities did not qualify for the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS), and as a result thousands of parks and recreation employees were laid off, and thousands more including summer students, were not hired. Returning to a full staff complement for re-start and in the longer-term will be difficult and costly. In addition, municipal parks and recreation departments did not qualify for the federal financial aid programs announced for business and not-profits.

The Government of Canada's funding (\$72 million) for sport in response to COVID-19 has unfolded into support for elite sport not recreational grassroots sport. Yes, funding to support national sport organizations to prepare for the return to play was important. But, the return to play in the short- and long-term cannot easily happen without access to municipally owned and operated sport and recreation facilities -- facilities that are challenged to re-open and stay open after suffering dramatic revenue losses and now struggling to integrate new public health requirements. This includes multi-use recreation facilities that are the homes for many daycares centres and day programs for children, seniors and those living with a disability.

And while the re-allocation of existing infrastructure funds towards a new COVID-19 Community Resilience stream is greatly appreciated, this is not new funding and there remains a significant infrastructure gap left unaddressed for community sport, parks and recreation. Municipalities will continue to face the same difficult decisions on how to allocate infrastructure funds that do not equate the infrastructure needs - especially in a post-COVID 19 scenario. In addition, municipalities are not always consulted before the province/territory determines how federal infrastructure contributions are spent. The same is true for the advancement of \$2.2 billion on municipal infrastructure funding.

As highlighted above, access to public parks and recreation is an equity issue and many municipalities will chose not to fully re-open facilities and programs due to financial concerns even after public health restrictions are lifted. It must be understood that the social costs that will result without the re-opening of these services will be significant and will be felt throughout the entire population regardless of age, ability, identity or ethnicity.

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Recommendation #1

CPRA calls upon the federal government to create a community sport and recreation recovery fund to support the full return of facilities and programs across Canada both in the short- and long-term; providing essential social services, contributing to public health and wellness and serving as community economic drivers.

Funding Amount Requested: \$880 million

- Municipal sport, parks and recreation did not qualify for the majority of financial relief programs announced by the federal government amidst the pandemic.

- Municipal governments are facing significant financial strain from the loss of revenue during the pandemic. As a result in many municipal sport, parks and recreation services are being eliminated and reduced to address budget needs in other municipal areas such as water, roads and transit.
- A multi-year burst of funding will ensure that that sport, parks and recreation services can be returned to the most vulnerable in our society and that rural communities are not left without these fundamental services.
- This investment will have direct positive impact on all Canadian parents, children, seniors and those facing social-economic barriers.
- This recovery fund will help public recreation facilities and programs recover from financial hardship already incurred and allow for the preparation and adjustment of policies, practices and protocols to adapt to new and changing regulations and expectations.
- Specific examples of the activities this fund will support include
 - Purchase of PPE and cleaning supplies
 - Training for enhanced cleaning / operating protocols
 - Planning for pandemic recovery and readiness
 - Communication for de-stigmatizing the return to facilities and activities
 - Adaptations related to reduced facility and program capacities
 - Investment in the capacity and resilience of community grassroots sport and recreation groups to help them adapt to post-pandemic realities.

Delivery Alternatives

- Federal government delivers funding earmarked for sport, recreation and parks recovery direct to municipalities on per capita basis.
- CPRA serves as official administrator and delivery arm of the fund through project application process.

Recommendation #2

CPRA calls upon the federal government for direct-to-municipal infrastructure funding for public sport and recreation that generates community economic stimulus, contributes to the productivity and physical/mental health of Canadians and provides essential services to the most marginalized citizens.

Funding Amount Requested: \$900 million over 3 years

- Prior to COVID-19, the infrastructure deficit for essential only repairs or replacements for existing sport and recreation infrastructure was over \$16 billion -- this did not include any new builds or the new costs associated with pandemic recovery.
- For many years, the sport and recreation sector strived toward creating facilities that use less energy and cleaner technology. In recent years, the sector created facilities that are resilient to natural disasters and equipped to support communities through these disasters. Now, the sector must create facilities that are pandemic resilient for the immediate and the long-term.
- Pandemic Resilient facilities will need to consider that:
 - Physical distancing will become prerequisite for the foreseeable future and will affect facility entry points, corridors, parking areas, etc.
 - Mid-door spaces (i.e. artificial ice surface with no structure walls) may represent a solution to new air circulation and/or ventilation standards.
 - Automatic doors or elbow bump pads may become required for facility doors.
 - Entry card swipes or keypads may be replaced by facial recognition.
 - Numerous and widely available hand sanitizing terminals will become standard.
 - Inclusivity features will be more challenging in the context of social distancing.
 - Air quality and air filtration will need to be improved to maximize safety.
 - Plexiglas will need to separate program areas, pieces of exercise equipment.
 - Single person work out zones will be demanded.
 - Choice of building and equipment materials will take into account frequent cleaning and disinfecting.
 - Building capacity restrictions may require that portions of the facility be closed.
 - Open-air design will become the norm for change facilities and washrooms.
 - The carbon emissions issue will not become less important as a result of COVID.
 - Many requirements have yet to be determined as facilities just begin the restart process.

Delivery Alternatives

- CPRA recommends that the funds be delivered directly to municipalities. Past infrastructure funds delivered via provincial and territorial governments have resulted in bottlenecked funds, unnecessary red tape and spending on only a handful of large projects.
- Funded projects would need to align with pre-identified priorities of the federal government: i.e. active transportation, climate change, inclusion, reconciliation, women and girls and other social outcomes.
- Funded projects would need to align with one of the five goals of the *Framework for Recreation*. <https://www.cpra.ca/about-the-framework>
- Funded projects would need to demonstrate that a substantial portion of project costs address future pandemic resilience.
- Government of Canada delivers direct to municipalities on project application basis.

- CPRA serves as official administrator and delivery arm of the Fund on project application basis.

Conclusion

Thank you for your consideration of CPRA's recommendations that will deliver to rural, remote and urban communities the fundamental services of sport, parks and recreation and the economic benefits that will follow.

Please note that our recommendations are designed to compliment the submissions of ParticipACTION, Sport for Life and the Canadian Olympic Committee - all sharing the same goal of healthy and active Canadians.