



BC's Public Health Plan Consultations 2012

Submission from the BC Recreation and Parks Association

October 16, 2012

The Role of Recreation in BC's Public Health Plan

The BCRPA fully supports the Ministry of Health's creation of a Public Health Plan. As a key stakeholder in health we ask that Recreation not only be asked to support the plan and its outcomes, but be given an active role in shaping its development.

The vision of the Recreation sector aligns directly with that of BC's health plan: A high quality of life for all British Columbians through healthy individuals and communities and sustainable environments and economies. Healthy individuals create healthy communities. Healthy communities strive to protect and sustain a healthy environment and they contribute to a healthy, sustainable economy. Recreation plays a vital role in each of these four elements, and is a province-wide leader and strategic partner in enhancing the quality of life in British Columbia.

As a major contributor and delivery agent to good health, Recreation plays a significant role in the achievement of many of the public health plan's goals.

Participation in recreation is a key determinant of health status and positively affects Healthy Lifestyles, Mental Health & Substance Use, Healthy Communities & Community Environments, and Injury Prevention.

- Activity is known to: reduce risk of heart disease and stroke, help prevent certain types of cancers, help combat type 2 diabetes, reduce occurrence of youth and adult obesity and help reduce incidence of fall-related injuries and chronic conditions in older adults. It can also foster social opportunities and contribute to mental health by reducing stress, combating depression and building emotional well-being.
- As a promoter of health, Recreation builds stronger individuals and families by reducing negative, self-destructive behaviours such as smoking, substance abuse and juvenile delinquency.
- It engages people and builds social cohesion, generating healthy, inclusive communities. People feel an emotional connection to the places that bring them enjoyment, making our recreation nodes truly a heart within our communities.
- Recreation goes hand in hand with environmental protection. Parks and natural areas protect habitat, improve air quality and clean water resources. Active people seek opportunities to incorporate exercise and recreation into their daily lives, often choosing to walk and cycle rather than drive.

Recreation is a key stakeholder in health promotion, disease prevention, and intervention and is available within virtually every community throughout BC. This unique attribute makes Recreation an effective and judicious delivery agent.

The British Columbia Recreation and Parks Association is a not for profit organization dedicated to enhancing quality of life in our province. The BCRPA and its extensive network of members, in the parks, recreation, physical activity and culture sector support the development of healthy individuals and communities and sustainable environments and economies. Since 1958, the Association has provided leadership and training, fostering the principles of accessibility and inclusiveness, to help members meet provincial and local priorities.

The more we drive people to healthy lifestyles, the more they access and demand from their community recreation facilities – indoor and outdoor. Community recreation infrastructure is a means through which people achieve the benefits of recreation and reach their healthy living goals and as the need for recreation services increases, so too does the need to support these facilities.

Recent investment has not kept up with rising and changing demands. Investment in our Province’s recreation facilities is now critical. In BC, upwards of 70% of indoor recreation facilities are over 25 years of age. These older buildings and amenities no longer meet the needs of our new lifestyles, current recreation trends, and an increasingly diverse population. They require significant investment to adequately address the recreation facility infrastructure deficit and population growth.

Investment in recreation infrastructure is an investment in public health. It is a preventative approach for individual and community health that offsets spending on reactive investments in health care. Resources required to provide adequate recreation facilities are significantly less on a per user basis than medical facilities such as hospitals, medical laboratories and care facilities.

Ensuring equitable, reasonable, sustainable access to indoor and outdoor recreation facilities, services, and programs will help achieve the public health plan’s visionary goal of Healthy Communities and Community Environments. Measuring access to facilities via various attributes, such as geographical location and mobility features, will inform our success in reaching the provincial targets. The BCRPA has developed a comprehensive inventory of our municipal recreation infrastructure which would provide the baseline data you require.

The creation of a new public health plan offers the opportunity to reintroduce health impacts in ministry service plans. We value the work the Ministry of Health is doing across ministries. Establishing health goals within all service plans will strengthen the government’s commitment to health and demonstrate its understanding that there are a broad range of public sector initiatives that impact health – such as Active Transportation, Environmental Protection, and Recreation Infrastructure.

In BC, we cannot have an effective health system without community recreation. For decades Recreation has worked within and across all the goals identified with the Public Health Plan. The Recreation sector works collaboratively with the Ministry of Health, BC’s health authorities, and other health stakeholders in identifying and addressing the health issues most seriously afflicting the citizens of BC. Strategies are developed through federal, provincial and community based partnerships that leverage the resources and abilities of community recreation.

Including Recreation in the development and implementation of BC’s public health plan will ensure the public health system reaches its vision of a healthy and thriving BC.

On behalf of the BC Recreation and Parks Association,



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Chief Executive Officer