

## Canada's Recovery from the impact of COVID-19 Role of the Parks and Recreation Sector

Past crises have proven that parks and recreation are one of the first and most crucial services to return to communities. Parks and recreation play a critical role in the mental and physical health recovery of citizens and play an equally important role in community economic revival. Access to recreation facilities and programs is a fundamental service for Canadians that will usher in a return of normalcy after COVID-19 -- especially for children and seniors.

However, the municipal parks and recreation systems across Canada are losing millions in revenue every week due to the required closure of facilities and the suspension of programs/classes. Post COVID-19, parks and recreation systems will struggle to return to the same service level and in small rural communities they may not be able to return at all.

In addition, Canadians will have new expectations and concerns as it relates to the public health and safety of recreation facilities and programs.

Government funding to restore municipal parks and recreation services is essential. Resurrecting these services as quickly as possible will provide much-needed social, mental and physical benefits to Canadians. Post COVID-19, the public will have a new and greater appreciation for the benefits of community parks and recreation services.

Parks and recreation services will also return and create important jobs in all communities across Canada.

### *Proposed Recovery Mechanism: Youth Employment in Municipal Parks and Recreation*

Post COVID-19 economic stimulus provided by government should include a youth employment program targeted at jobs in municipal parks and recreation. Providing financial support (via 75-100% wage subsidy) to municipalities and community organizations would:



- Create jobs for youth experiencing a slow up-take in employment post COVID-19;
- Support municipalities who will have endured tremendous revenue and would not otherwise be able to hire for these jobs;
- Connect youth to their communities as part of the societal recovery from COVID-19;
- Increase the speed by which municipalities can ramp-up the return of their parks and recreation services.

***Proposed Recovery Mechanism:  
Community Sport and Recreation Fund***

Municipalities will face multiple challenges and significant costs in resurrecting the parks and recreation services in a post COVID-19 environment, including:

- Re-hiring/hiring/training of new staff;
- Cleaning of parks and facilities for public return;
- Preparing major infrastructure (pools, arenas) that has been unused for several months;
- Addressing new and enhanced public health concerns about facilities and programs.

Federal and provincial/territorial governments should create a funding program that municipalities can immediately access to help support the costs of ramping-up recreation services to support individual and societal recovery of COVID-19.

***Proposed Recovery Mechanism:  
Investment in Sport and Recreation Community Infrastructure***

A government economic stimulus program to support community sport and recreation infrastructure will not only address an existing multi-billion dollar deficit but also address new infrastructure needs in a post COVID-19 setting.

The public may have hesitations in returning to large public recreation facilities and thus this new 'normal' may require infrastructure adjustments (i.e. hand washing stations) that will require financial investments.

In addition, recreation has been long identified as one of the municipal infrastructure systems in most need of investment. And now, unlike road, water and bridges that have not been impacted by COVID-19, recreation is in further need of support.

Stimulating jobs and the economy through investing in community sport and recreation infrastructure addresses multiple economic and social government priorities and would be an investment that the public would prioritize in a post-COVID-19 environment.

The federal government has an existing infrastructure envelope dedicated to sport, culture and recreation that it can utilize as an efficient mechanism to deliver funding or can use a 'gas tax' structure to allow for the more direct funding straight to communities.

***Proposed Recovery Mechanism:  
Funding Support for Not for Profits***

The economic impact of COVID-19 on not-for-profit organizations is monumental. The cancelling of conferences, fundraisers and programs for the foreseeable future has major financial impacts, as these are often the only generator of income for organizations. While the federal wage subsidy program has been a critical first step, without additional federal and provincial/territorial government stimulus, there will be many not-for-profits (including in the parks and recreation sector) that will not have the financial capacity to keep doors open after the COVID-19 crisis.

The government must provide an emergency and stabilization fund of grants and interest free loans is required to ensure the survival of these fundamental community services.