

Speaking Points

CPRA Appearance Before Finance Committee May 19, 2020



Thank you for the opportunity to outline the role that municipal parks and recreation can play in the societal and economic recovery of our communities from COVID-19.



The Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (CPRA) is the national voice for municipal parks and recreation. We represent 13 P/T associations and 1,000 of municipal, non-profit and private sector members. We are the arenas, pools, sport fields 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.



The municipal parks and recreation sector provides facilities, services and programs for both a social and financial return. During this pandemic as facilities and programs are shuttered, we are losing both revenues and the value we bring to communities and individuals



Returning these services fully, safely and quickly in a post-pandemic context must be a priority for all levels of government. Traditional jurisdictional roles must not be a barrier during this time of crisis for municipalities and non-profits.



The financial impact of COVID-19 on Canada's parks and recreation sector is \$221M monthly; due to the incurred fixed costs of operating recreation facilities against zero financial and social return.



When facilities and programs do resume operations, new public health requirements (hygiene, cleaning, social distancing) could raise Canadian facility operating costs by as much as \$226M annually. And, lower revenues are expected due to capacity restrictions on facility and program. The true impact of this is yet to be determined.



Since municipalities do not qualify for the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS), thousands of parks and recreation employees have been laid off and thousands more, including summer students, will not be hired for summer programs.



When restrictions are lifted, Canadians will want and need community recreation, parks and sport. But this will be a financial challenge for municipalities including:



- Post-pandemic public health requirements will result in additional infrastructure investments and operational costs.
- Due to not qualifying for the CEWS, municipal parks and recreation will require new hiring and training.



- Public fears about returning to facilities will result in costs for enhanced procedures and cleaning as well as communication efforts to overcome the “stigma” of being in busy facilities and spaces.
- Due to physical distancing requirements -- classes, camps, teams will have smaller numbers of participants but municipal programming yet will still incur the same costs to run the programs.
- Some rural communities simply will not be in a position to return these services and it is possible that some may be closed forever.
- The issues around the pandemic will be adding to the complex pre-existing problem of ageing infrastructure already impacting the sector.
- The parks and recreation sector will play a key role in furthering federal government including climate change, enhancing physical activity levels and providing a medium for reconciliation.

We call upon the federal government for two avenues of support:

- 1) A community sport and recreation recovery fund
- 2) Investment in sport and recreation community infrastructure

Community Sport and Recreation Recovery Fund

We call upon the federal and provincial/territorial governments create a joint single transfer funding program that municipalities can immediately access to help support the costs of returning parks, recreation and sport services to communities.

The federal government recently committed \$72 million to the amateur sports sectors. Funding amateur sport is important for the return of play. But, without the re-opening of municipal sport facilities, where will they play? Fields, pools, rinks come first - then comes play. Funding one and not the other does not work. Not to mention, that municipalities are also key advocates for and supporters of community-level sport and recreation groups.

Investment in Sport and Recreation Community Infrastructure

An investment in community sport and recreation infrastructure will not only address the existing multi-billion dollar deficit but also address new infrastructure needs in a post COVID-19 setting. Recreation has long been identified as the infrastructure system in most need of investment. Unlike roads, water and bridges that have not been impacted by COVID-19, recreation is in further need of support. The announced re-profiling of existing infrastructure funds by Minister McKenna to create a COVID-19 fund is appreciated but only a first step: NEW money is needed to appropriately address the size of the challenge.

We need these infrastructure funds to be:

- Direct to municipalities to allow for timely and direct funding to communities
- Earmarked for sport, culture and recreation, preferably to reinvest in ageing facilities - similar to the envelope created in the 2017 federal budget.

Thank you to the Finance Committee for inviting CPRA to appear. We welcome any questions you may have.