



## Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (CPRA)

### Submission to the Standing Committee on Finance

#### Pre-Budget Consultations - 2014/15

#### Executive Summary

#### CPRA

The Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (CPRA) is the national voice on the social, health, economic and environmental benefits of parks and recreation.

CPRA's work fosters individual well-being as well as community health and sustainability.

#### Opportunity

High quality, accessible recreation opportunities are essential to the healthy well-being of individuals and the vibrancy of a dynamic society. All people and communities deserve equitable access to recreational experiences and yet the physical deterioration of the country's sport and recreation infrastructure is dramatically inhibiting many Canadians from achieving the health and social benefits derived from recreational pursuits.

#### Linked Themes

- Ensuring prosperous and secure communities, including through support for infrastructure.
- Supporting families and helping vulnerable Canadians by focusing on health, education and training

#### Recommendation

***The CPRA recommends that the 2015 Federal budget include an annual commitment of \$ 925M for 3 years by the Federal government to partner with provinces/territories and municipalities to invest in an infrastructure program that is dedicated specifically for recreation and sport projects.***

## Full Submission

### CPRA

The Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (CPRA) is the national voice on the social, health, economic and environmental benefits of parks and recreation.

CPRA's work fosters:

- individuals with optimal mental and physical well-being who are engaged and contributing members of their communities;
- communities that are healthy, inclusive, welcoming, resilient and sustainable; and
- facilities and outdoor spaces that are appreciated, nurtured and sustained.

CPRA achieves its objectives by partnering on common mandates with the physical activity, sport, environment, facilities, public health, education, justice, community development and social service sectors.

### The Opportunity

CPRA enthusiastically supports and promotes the goal of improving the physical and mental health of Canadians by increasing levels of recreational activity. High quality, accessible recreation opportunities are essential to the healthy well-being of individuals and the vibrancy of a dynamic society. All people and communities deserve equitable access to recreational experiences and yet the physical deterioration of the country's sport and recreation infrastructure is dramatically inhibiting many Canadians from achieving the health and social benefits derived from recreational pursuits.

Throughout the first half of the last decade, provincial/territorial (P/T) governments and affiliated not-for-profit recreation and parks associations undertook studies that inventoried and assessed the physical condition of sport and recreation infrastructure throughout Canada. The results of these studies were used to estimate that over \$15 billion in deferred capital investment was required to repair or replace existing sport and recreation facilities. This estimate did not take into account funding needed for new facility developments to meet growth related requirements or to accommodate the needs of the country's changing demographics or cultural profile.

In 2006, P/T Ministers responsible for Sport, Physical Activity, and Recreation used this information as the basis for calling for a designated national infrastructure program that would help to increase opportunities for Canadians to participate in sport, recreation and physical activity within their communities. Recognizing that the recreation, parks and sports sectors represent the single largest citizen participation sector in the country, P/T Ministers urged all levels of government to work collectively within a shared mandate to successfully address the sport and recreation infrastructure funding requirement in time for the celebration of Canada's 150th anniversary in 2017.

A number of programs have provided funding for sport and recreation infrastructure since the 2006 Ministers Conference. In 2009, the Government of Canada launched its Economic Action Plan, which included a \$4 billion Infrastructure Stimulus Fund, which over two years funded provincial, territorial and municipal construction-ready infrastructure projects. Additionally, as part of the Economic Action Plan, the Government of Canada established the two-year \$500

million Recreation Infrastructure Canada Program (RInC) with the objective of providing temporary economic stimulus while renewing, upgrading and expanding recreational infrastructure across Canada. While these programs helped certain communities deal with pressing recreation imperatives, the funded projects represent a very small proportion of the national infrastructure challenge.

In April 2014, the \$14B New Building Canada Fund (NBCF) was announced, which focuses on economic growth, job creation and prosperity and yet sport and recreation capital projects do not comply with the NBCF funding categories. The Federal budget also included adjustments to the Federal Gas Tax Fund by increasing the annual contribution to \$2B which is allocated to provinces and territories to support municipal projects. While sports and recreation projects can apply for support from the Gas Tax Fund, these projects will compete against 16 other categories of potential applicant projects including public transit, wastewater management, drinking water, energy systems, bridges, roads and highways, airports, culture and tourism. Evidence suggests that many municipalities will allocate funds to transit or sewer projects rather than pools, arenas or trails.

The capital funding requirements of the parks and recreation sector across Canada is in desperate need of additional investments.

Consider these important facts:

- more than 50% of municipally owned sport and recreation facilities across the country are at the end of their useful lives and need to be replaced;
- all community sport and recreation facilities that are in mid-life cycle require renovation or upgrades consistent with their age;
- most sport and recreation facilities are carrying significant amounts of unfunded capital maintenance;
- community facilities built before 1990 require retrofit investments to protect customer safety or renovations to resolve building standard issues including enhanced accessibility and improved energy efficiency; and
- new facilities are required to meet future needs linked to population growth.

It is now undeniable that active people with healthy lifestyles place less of a financial burden on the healthcare system. It is also true that access to quality recreation and leisure activities leads to cohesive, healthy and dynamic communities in both urban and rural settings. The Federal government has the opportunity to contribute to the health and vitality of Canadians by investing in infrastructure that is critically important to recreation and parks systems. Indeed, investments in both built and natural environments that support recreation and sport activities are important elements in a complex mix of interventions and strategies to improve the quality of life in communities that will improve the health status of Canadians.

CPRA is fully committed to working with government to create an equitable, effective and responsive infrastructure program that will contribute to the combined objectives of the Canadian Sport Policy (2012), Pan-Canadian Healthy Living Strategy (2005), National Framework for Recreation (2014), Connecting Canadians with Nature (2014), Declaration on Prevention and

Promotion (2010), Curbing Childhood Obesity Framework (2012) and the Healthy Aging in Canada Vision (2006).

### **The Recommendation**

CPRA calls upon the Federal government to work collaboratively within a shared mandate to immediately develop a dedicated national recreation and sport infrastructure program to address the facility repair, replacement or rehabilitation needs of communities across Canada.

***The CPRA recommends that the 2015 Federal budget include an annual commitment of \$ 925M for 3 years by the Federal government to partner with provinces/territories and municipalities to invest in an infrastructure program that is dedicated specifically for recreation and sport projects.***

In 2005-06 the total estimated repair and replacement requirement for municipally owned sport and recreation infrastructure was \$15B - which is now valued at \$17B. Recognizing that there are multiple and important demands on tax supported funds, CPRA is seeking an investment that strictly focuses on addressing critical repairs, maintenance and adaptations necessary to ensure that the country's recreation and sports facilities are able to remain in service as safe and reliable public assets. It is estimated that the required funding envelope to deal with these critical items amounts to approximately \$8.5 B. Based on traditional tri-party funding arrangements involving federal, provincial and municipal governments, the total Federal contribution would therefore amount to \$2.8 B or approximately \$925 M per annum over the three year term of the program.

A dedicated sport and recreation infrastructure program would:

- enhance local leaders' abilities to make capital investment decisions to enhance and protect the health and vitality of communities without reducing Gas Tax funding to other investment priorities;
- allow strategic, long term facility rehabilitation and replacement planning based on funding certainty of a multi-year infrastructure program;
- allow municipalities to explore creative funding alternatives for new projects recognizing that their facility repair and replacement needs can be addressed through the program; and
- encourage municipal officials to develop physical assessment tools and to create capital reserve or re-investment strategies to take advantage of the Federal infrastructure program.

## Aligning with Finance Committee Themes

This recommendation links directly to two of the pre-budget consultative themes identified by the Finance Committee.

### ***Theme: Ensuring prosperous and secure communities, including through support for infrastructure.***

Recreation infrastructure is one of the most important core investments that can be made into the prosperity and security of urban and rural communities.

Strengthening recreation and sport infrastructure in turn strengthens the health, vitality and economy of local communities. The direct connection between access to recreation infrastructure and the health of communities has been internationally recognized.

In a number of Canadian public opinion surveys about recreation – respondents perceived that recreation services make a significant contribution improved health (93%), boost social cohesion (89%), ensure children and youth live healthy lifestyles (75%) and are a major factor in crime reduction (77%). Some 98 % believe that recreation and parks are essential services (like health and education) that benefit a community. (*Recreation Ontario Public Opinion Survey 2009 and Harper J. Public Perceptions of and Attitudes Towards Community Recreation and Parks Services in Canada, Recreation and Parks Matter, 2011*)

Although economic benefit is not the primary driver for social spending, an investment in recreation and sport infrastructure will create jobs, foster tourism and render communities more attractive places in which to live, learn, work and visit.

Recreation can also help build welcoming communities for diverse cultures and aboriginal people. Community events help keep neighbours in touch with each other and reinforce the relationships that make communities strong.

As we near Canada's sesquicentennial, a meaningful investment into the health of our citizens would result in the recapturing of a community spirit that is second to none.

### ***Theme: Supporting families and helping vulnerable Canadians by focusing on health, education and training.***

This recommendation will help reverse the dire effects and enormous costs to the sedentary lifestyle of many Canadians. We have the opportunity to improve the overall health of a vulnerable aging population by addressing common preventable risk factors including physical inactivity that are linked to cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes and respiratory disease.

The strain on the health care system across Canada is severe as we face an obesity epidemic and aging population. This situation will continue to worsen unless all levels of government work together to offer Canadians accessible physical activity and recreation opportunities.

Evidence concludes that public recreation and parks service are a critical factor in improved physical and mental health. Recreation experiences involving physical activity maintain healthy weights, reduce health care costs and have the potential to decrease anti-social behaviour. There is an identified direct connection between physical activity levels and the appropriate provisions of recreation and sport facilities, parks and active transportation corridors.

Research also shows that recreation can be an important vehicle for promoting family cohesion and adaptability.

### Conclusion

The recommendation put forward by CPRA strongly aligns with two of the themes identified by the Finance Committee. The inclusion of a dedicated community recreation and sport infrastructure program will deliver a meaningful and tangible impact on the lives of families in rural and urban communities across Canada.

This recommendation also directly builds upon the government's priorities identified in the Canadian Sport Policy (2012), Pan-Canadian Healthy Living Strategy (2005), National Framework for Recreation (2014), Connecting Canadians with Nature (2014), Declaration on Prevention and Promotion (2010), Curbing Childhood Obesity Framework (2012) and Healthy Aging in Canada Vision (2006).

The CPRA respectfully requests the opportunity to appear before the Finance Committee to present further details on this opportunity for the federal government to invest in the health of citizens and communities across Canada.