

The Benefits of Parks and Recreation **FACT SHEET**



Benefits to Personal Health

- **Improving health** through sport and other forms of physical activity would significantly reduce healthcare costs. Recent estimates of health-care spending due to physical inactivity range from \$2.1 billion to \$5.3 billion annually, representing as much as 4.8 per cent of total health-care costs. (*Socio-economic Benefits of Sport Participation in Canada, Conference Board of Canada, 2005*)
- **A healthy individual** is less likely to be sick – saving frequent medical visits, additional costs and absenteeism from the workplace. (*Alberta Government website: Alberta Community Development*)
- **Recreation provides** an ideal opportunity to explore and develop a full range of abilities. We develop the majority of our physical, social, creative, intellectual and spiritual perspectives at an early age – carefully planned and balanced recreation for children delivers the potential of our citizens – through play, culture and the arts, leisure learning, sport and travel. (*Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association www.lin.ca/resource/html/youthb.htm*)
- **Sport participation** develops a wide range of skills and attitudes, including teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, decision-making, communications, personal management and administrative skills. Sport also builds character and personal qualities, such as courage and the capacity to commit to a goal or purpose, as well as values, such as respect for others, self-discipline, a sense of fair play and honesty. Sport is a valuable element in Canada’s learning culture that builds a wide set of transferable skills that are important in work and life. (*Socio-economic Benefits of Sport Participation in Canada, Conference Board of Canada, 2005*)
- **Research shows** that strategies involving physical activity and recreation appear particularly promising in minimizing or removing risk factors faced by many children and youth. Participation in recreation activities can provide positive benefits related to psychological health, physical health,

familial interaction, peer influence, academic performance, community development and other lifestyle behaviours. (*Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association www.lin.ca/resource/html/youthb.htm*)

- **Recreation activities** help... youth explore strategies for resolving conflicts while recreating and playing. They learn to act fairly, plan proactively, and develop a moral code of behavior. This play also helps enhance their cognitive and motor skills. Individuals with more highly developed motor skills tend to be more active, popular, calm, resourceful, attentive and cooperative. Recreation also provides children the chance to learn, consolidate, and practice the skills necessary for further growth and learning. (*Estes & Henderson, 2003*). (*The Health and Social Benefits of Recreation – An Element of the California Outdoor Recreation Planning Program www.parks.ca.gov/pages/795/files/benefits%20final%20online%20v6-1-05.pdf*)



Benefits to Communities

- **Parks and recreation opportunities** are essential for strengthening and maintaining a healthy community. Positive impacts are evident throughout the community. Recreation brings neighbors together, encourages safer, cleaner neighborhoods and creates a livelier community atmosphere. Parks and recreational facilities also help improve a community’s image, socioeconomic status and enhances the area’s desirability.
- **Sport improves** social cohesion. Sport participants experience a high degree of interaction with other individuals, which improves interpersonal relationships, establishes the basis for trust and builds teamwork skills that generate gains in social cohesion. It gives individuals of all ages good opportunities to be actively involved in their communities, which helps them learn positive lessons about responsibility and respect for others, and gives them the chance to give back to their communities. (*Socio-economic Benefits of Sport Participation in Canada, Conference Board of Canada, 2005*)

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Benefits to Communities (continued)

- **Recreation reduces** self-destructive behaviour and negative social activity in youth.
- **Recreation promotes** social bonds by uniting families, building cultural tolerance and supporting seniors and individuals with disabilities.
- **Recreation reduces** isolation, loneliness and alienation.



Benefits to the Economy

- **Household spending** on sport has a significant impact on the Canadian economy: sport spending totals almost \$16 billion per annum – about 2.2 percent of consumer spending and 1.2 percent of GDP in 2004, up from 1990 levels. Sport supports about 2 percent of the jobs in Canada. (*The Socio-economic Benefits of Sport Participation in Canada, Conference Board of Canada, 2005*)



Benefits to the Environment

- **Open space, park and recreation areas** are ideal mediums for encouraging and developing stronger stewardship of the land. People who enjoy outdoor recreation become more familiar with natural resources and the environment. This increased knowledge helps them understand how their personal actions can affect the environment.
- **Park lands and outdoor recreation facilities** in county, city, regional and state parks provide exceptional learning opportunities for students. Using recreation areas and park land as a medium for learning creates a fun and relaxed atmosphere where students want to participate. (*The Trust for Public Land, Land and People, Spring 2006 - U.S.*)

- **Six reasons** why parks, open space and land conservation makes good economic sense:
 - 1 – Increases the value of nearby properties.
 - 2 – Attracts businesses and employees in search of a high quality of life.
 - 3 – Attracts tourists and boosts recreational spending.
 - 4 – Reduces obesity and health care costs by supporting exercise and recreation.
 - 5 – Working lands, such as farms and forests, usually contribute more money to a community than the cost of the services they require.
 - 6 – Conserved open space helps safeguard drinking water, clean the air, and prevent flooding. (*The Trust for Public Land, Land and People, Spring 2006 - U.S.*)

Did You Know?

- A report released by the Ontario Ministry of Health Promotion in 2006 states that: “Obesity costs Ontario approximately \$1.6 billion annually, including \$647 million in direct costs and \$905 million in indirect costs.” *Ontario’s Plan for Healthy Eating and Active Living, Ministry of Health Promotion*
- Between 1981 and 1996, the number of obese children in Canada between the ages of 7 and 13 tripled. This is contributing to a dramatic rise in illness such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, hypertension and some cancers.” *Dr. Sheela Basrur, Ontario’s Chief Medical Officer of Health*
- In 2004, 28% of Ontario children and youth aged 2 to 17 were overweight or obese. In 2002, more than half of Canadian children and youth aged 15 to 19 were not active enough for optimal growth and development.” *Ontario’s Plan for Healthy Eating and Active Living, Ministry of Health Promotion*
- Estimates show that the number of Canadians in their 60s will increase by 50% over the next 10 years, while “a recent study indicates that 52% of Canadian baby boomers are inactive, with rates of obesity among this generation increasing by nearly 60% in the last decade.” *Dr. Sheela Basrur, Ontario’s Chief Medical Officer of Health*
- When asked about the number one thing they could do to improve their health, 80% of Canadians say they should be more physically active. *Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Physical Activity, Recreation, and Sport*