

Parks & Recreation

Building Complete
Communities

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PARKS AND RECREATION ONTARIO

About Parks & Recreation Ontario

Parks and Recreation Ontario (PRO) is a non-profit association that advances the health, social, and environmental benefits of quality recreation and parks through evidence-based practices, resources, and collaborative partnerships.



POLICY LEADERSHIP

PRO positively influences legislation and develops policy to enhance access to recreation and parks.



SUPPORTING WELLBEING

PRO supports the wellbeing of Ontarians by building capacity within the recreation sector.



QUALITY STANDARDS

PRO supports the delivery of quality recreation programs through quality standards and performance measurement.



The Value of Parks & Recreation

Mental & Physical Benefits

“For children, the presence of a playground within a nearby park is associated with enhanced levels of physical activity.”

“Participants in recreation report improvements in mental wellbeing, including increased self-esteem and life satisfaction.”

- CPRA Framework for Recreation in Canada, 2016





Social Wellbeing

Participation in recreation including sports, joining groups, and taking music, dance or art lessons is associated with lower rates of emotional and behavioral problems and school drop-out.

Young people involved in recreation are less likely to turn to smoking, drugs or alcohol abuse and crime.



Building Strong Families & Communities

“Participation in cultural and artistic programs has been shown to promote social connectedness and social cohesion, and positively influence civic behaviour, mutual caring and voluntarism.”

“Recreational activities help build welcoming communities for people and families from diverse cultures.”

- CPRA Framework for Recreation in Canada, 2016



Fighting Climate Change

“Green spaces have a number of environmental health benefits. They are associated with improved air quality, provide relief from extreme heat and lessen the urban heat island effect, which reduce the negative health impacts associated with a warmer climate. Green spaces also have important ecological functions, such as reducing the negative impacts of heavy rainfall events, which are expected to increase with climate change.”



ECONOMIC BENEFITS

“Spending on recreation creates jobs, fosters tourism, and makes communities more attractive places in which to live, learn, work, play and visit.”



“Upstream investments in recreation can lead to improvements in individual and community wellbeing, which helps to reduce costs in health care, social services and justice.”

- CPRA Framework for Recreation in Canada, 2016

**Parks and
Recreation are
not 'soft
services' – they
are critical
infrastructure!**



FUNDING

Cities face funding shortfalls for infrastructure renewal, development charge pressures/reductions (Bill 23), land and construction cost escalation.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Needs are changing: more shelter, flood protection/prevention, more year round use of parks, facilities needing energy efficient/green designs.

URBANIZATION

As cities are built out and shift to building up, less green space and land for recreation amenities. Push for POPS by developers. Caps on parkland dedication for medium and high density developments.

THE CHALLENGES

PRO • 2023



The problem with POPS

Encumbered parks and privately operated public spaces – challenging for long-term service delivery, maintenance. Less accessible, lower quality.



OPPORTUNITIES

- PARKS AS STORM INFRASTRUCTURE
- BETTER POPS
- HUBS
- PARTNERSHIPS

Parks as storm infrastructure

Engineer spaces to mimic or enhance nature's ability to slow down, soak up, and clean water where it falls, instead of whisking it away as fast as possible through drains to underground pipes—often called “grey” infrastructure. Green infrastructure in parks can include daylighted streams, rain gardens, and wetlands that filter pollutants and hold water or channel it to underground tanks. Stormwater charge funding.



When negotiating POPS – ensure connectivity, accessibility, ongoing placemaking work – and promote as City space



HUBS & PARTNERSHIPS



Get creative in
locating city
facilities



Bring services
together to
maximize funding

Leverage schools
from elementary
to higher
education

Cash in Lieu provides flexibility and the opportunity to build up reserves for larger projects – but land values have risen dramatically and at some point there is no parkland left to buy.

TAKE PARKLAND WHEN YOU CAN



THANK YOU

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