



## A special message from PRO Board Chair, Jan Wilson and PRO CEO Cathy Denyer

Dear PRO Members,

The COVID-19 pandemic has created immeasurable change in our daily lives, our communities, and our sector. Overnight, facilities and parks were closed, and programs were cancelled. Now, organizations face the daunting and lengthy process of reopening and reimagining every aspect of the business of parks and recreation with new budget constraints and great uncertainty. As our sector slowly begins to recover, we are keenly aware of the impact that the pandemic has had on our members – municipal, not-for-profit, commercial, and academic alike.

The pandemic has also had a significant impact on PRO, including its budget and operations that support the sector. Unlike some other non-profit organizations, PRO does not receive core government funding. PRO relies on earned revenue from training, conferences, event sponsorships, and membership dues. Because of restrictions, many of those revenue streams have either ceased or been drastically reduced. For the health and safety of everyone, PRO suspended its in-person training events for the remainder of 2020. Similarly, because of the continued emergency orders prohibiting gatherings, HIGH FIVE® training is not possible during this, our busiest season. Looking ahead, with tighter budgets everywhere, we know training dollars are at risk.

Recognizing the many challenges for our stakeholders and the fiscal realities for PRO, we have refocused our strategic priorities and developed a continuity plan through to the end of 2020. While it is never easy to shift course mid-stream, we have implemented operational cost-containment measures and new workplans. We have been able to access some temporary government relief available to non-profits, which has allowed us to maintain core member services while the funding is in place. However, given PRO's current fiscal projections, it became necessary to reduce staff working hours and close the office on Fridays. In addition, management staff have taken a voluntary reduction in pay.

PRO has suspended all non-essential business development to concentrate all its energies and resources on meeting the evolving needs of the sector. The stakes are too high for a fragmented approach, so PRO is playing an important role coordinating efforts. To accomplish this, we continue to advocate, collecting and analyzing data from the sector to be able to bring critical issues to government during weekly meetings. We are mobilizing knowledge and sharing recommendations to help communities develop consistent approaches to the new challenges of providing parks and recreation in the time of a pandemic. We are engaged at the national level monitoring activity through CPRA from other jurisdictions across Canada that can benefit Ontario's response. While the uncertainty is unnerving to all, PRO has continued to bring together senior leaders, allied organizations and other stakeholders to try to work through challenges and to share all available tools and resources.

This year we may not meet in person, so PRO is bringing more content online, through its first-ever [Virtual Forum](#) and our [COVID-19 resource page](#). In response to the need to rapidly train staff in a cost-effective way, we will also be releasing an online Principles of Healthy Child Development training (PHCD-C) to continue to help organizations enhance the quality of their children's programs.

We encourage you to stay active and engaged with PRO through its online events, the Member Knowledge Hub, the COVID-19 resource page and by joining our virtual [Annual General Meeting](#) on June 18 at 12 pm. This will be an opportunity for you to show support for PRO's work on behalf of the sector.

On behalf of your provincial association, we thank you, our dedicated members, for all that you are doing in your communities and for your continued support for PRO's work. We all agree on the importance of the parks and recreation sector in the continuing return to community life, economic recovery and quality of life across Ontario. While we don't know what the future will look like, one thing is sure: parks and recreation are essential for a healthy recovery. The more we act collectively and with a unified voice, the stronger we will be when we once again open our doors.

Stay safe and well,

Jan Wilson, Chair

Cathy Denyer, CEO

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