



2018 Municipal Election Toolkit

Resources for Elected Officials

Prepared by Parks and Recreation Ontario

Healthy People | Vibrant Communities | Sustainable Environments



Introduction

Recreation and parks are at the heart of every community in Ontario. It has the power to improve the health and well-being of citizens, promote community engagement, and stimulate local economies. In short, parks and recreation offers a cost-effective way to enhance the quality of life for all citizens and strengthen communities. Canadians know this. 98% of Canadians believe that recreation and parks are essential services. Ontarians alone spend \$4 billion every year on recreation, sport, and fitness. An investment in parks and recreation is an investment in your community's economic, social, and personal well-being.

As providers, facilitators, and promoters of parks and recreation, municipal governments can embrace initiatives that support healthy communities. This guide provides you with information on the benefits of investing in recreation and parks, and tools to help you improve service and community outcomes based on the five goals identified in the Framework for Recreation in Canada.

About Parks and Recreation in 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.

PRO was formed in 1995 out of a shared belief in the power of parks and recreation to affect social change. Equitable access to parks and recreational programs promotes health, strengthens communities, and supports environmental sustainability.

With this in mind, we work with our 6,500 members to build capacity for the delivery of quality programs and advocate for the parks and recreation sector. PRO members provide services to more than 85% of Ontarians in municipalities across the province. Since our formation, we have successfully advocated for over 1 billion dollars in parks and recreation infrastructure spending, hosted Canada's largest annual national forum for recreation and leisure professionals, and have ensured that over one million children are having quality experiences in programs using HIGH FIVE, our quality standards program. A PRO membership comes with exclusive access to education and networking opportunities, research, and advocacy.

How to Use this Guide

Welcome to PRO's 2018 toolkit for municipal elections. Elections provide a meaningful opportunity to re-engage with the public about the issues that matter most to them: the economy, their quality life, and their overall personal health. Use this guide to strengthen the case for parks and recreation, align your community with the Framework for Recreation in Canada, and find out more about PRO's unique set of tools that help decision-makers make parks and recreation a priority. Most importantly, learn how small investments in parks and recreation can mean big changes for your community.

Recreation is the experience that results from freely chosen participation in physical, social, intellectual, creative and spiritual pursuits that enhance individual and community wellbeing.

Framework for Recreation in Canada 2016



Benefits of Parks and Recreation

Strong Local Economy



Parks, recreation programs, facilities, and community sporting and cultural events attract and retain businesses and families, drive tourism, and increase property values.

The parks and recreation industry employs close to 60% of those in the arts, entertainment, and recreation sector in Ontario and this number is projected to grow in the next two years.

Vibrant Community



Recreation and parks help build strong and vibrant communities through social interaction, volunteerism, and civic pride.

Recreation has a positive impact on the behaviour of young people with regard to the prevention or reduction of negative behaviour, stress, petty crime, alcohol and drug consumption, and eating disorders. It can create safer communities and can improve academic performance.

Personal Health and Wellness



Recreation and parks keep people healthy for life, improving overall physical and mental wellbeing. This has a positive impact on productivity and academic performance.

Quality recreation programming for older adults can help improve physical and cognitive health, reduce the risk of falls, and frailty. For children, it ensures positive experiences, which in turn increases the likelihood of engaging in an active lifestyle.



What Can Local Governments Do?

Municipalities own the majority of recreation facilities and parks in Ontario and manage the recreation programs that help keep everyone active. They do this with the help of a road map that supports their work in creating and sustaining healthy, vibrant communities.

In 2015, the *Framework for Recreation in Canada* was endorsed by provinces, territories, and supported by the federal government. It provides a unifying vision for parks and recreation in the country, along with goals, and evidence-based strategies that local government can use to plan and set priorities, build community engagement, and enhance programs. Here are some suggested actions that your municipality can undertake that align with the five goals of the Framework.



Goal 1: Active Living

Support local initiatives that encourage physical activity through low-or no- cost programs and services, and invest in high quality parks, trails, and open spaces.



Goal 2: Inclusion and Access

Establish affordable access policies, create community partnerships to maximize investments in facilities and establish agreements with facility owners to increase community access.



Goal 3: Connecting People and Nature

Work collaboratively at all orders and levels of government to create and maintain a system of parks and protected areas across Canada that allows year-round access to nature.



Goal 4: Supportive Environments

Work with community partners to increase the use of existing infrastructure for multiple purposes, and create and implement a facilities master plan to meet the needs of your community including active transportation.



Goal 5: Recreation Capacity

Engage in high-quality training and competency-based capacity development programs for organizations, professionals, and volunteers working in recreation, particularly in under-resourced rural and remote areas.



PRO Knowledge Base: Resources to help inform decision makers

PRO has created tools to help educate decision makers about the importance of parks and recreation and provide clear research on their benefits for communities. You can download some these resources from the PRO website as part of orientation for new council members.

[*Affordable Access to Recreation Policy Framework*](#)

Equitable access to recreation for all citizens actually benefits the whole community through greater social inclusion and civic engagement. PRO developed *The Affordable Access to Recreation Policy Framework* to help municipalities navigate the policy development process and engage stakeholders. This Framework was also endorsed by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario Board of Directors.

[*Guidebook on Ontario's Accessibility Standard for the Design of Public Spaces*](#)

Municipalities must now comply with Ontario's Accessibility for the Design of Public Spaces Standard. PRO, with support from the Government of Ontario's EnAbling Change Partnership Program, has created a Guidebook on Ontario's Accessibility Standard for the Design of Public Spaces.

[*Canadian Infrastructure Report Card*](#)

The Canadian Infrastructure Report Card (CIRC) provides an assessment of the health of municipal infrastructure as reported by cities and communities across Canada. The 2016 edition included valuable information on municipal recreation and parks.

[*Framework for Recreation in Canada*](#)

The *Framework for Recreation in Canada* was developed by the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (CPRA) and the Interprovincial Sport and Recreation Council in 2015. It acts as a guiding document for public recreation providers, outlining a unified vision for recreation in the country and establishing five goals for the sector. The framework can be used to guide programming decisions, support public investment, and educate future leaders. CPRA also hosts a [national portal](#) that includes resources and a free orientation webinar.

[*Municipal Audit Toolkit*](#)

The Municipal Audit Toolkit allows local governments and organizations to assess their current status with respect to implementing the goals and actions of the Framework for Recreation in Canada. It can be downloaded from the CPRA portal.

[*Customer Service Survey Tool*](#)

Parks and Recreation Ontario, in collaboration with the Ontario Municipal Knowledge Network, has created a Customer Service Survey Tool to help municipalities measure key indicators of success in recreation and parks. This tool can be customized for small, large, urban or rural municipalities. It helps organizations quickly and easily understand what the public perceives as important and valuable.



Programs and training to support strong communities

Research, training, and thought leadership are critical to growth and sustainability in the recreation sector. For this reason, PRO is committed to providing diverse training opportunities in communities across the province in order to build capacity in the industry. PRO hosts a wide range of educational and training events, workshops, and webinars that provide valuable insight on best practices, sector-specific challenges, and relevant management and policy issues. They provide innovative learning experiences that help improve the quality and delivery of recreation programs and services. Our conferences and educational events also offer unparalleled networking opportunities with recreation leaders and suppliers. They are the best way to stay on the cutting edge of the recreation and leisure sectors.

[Play Works Youth Friendly Recognition Program](#)

A community where youth are engaged tends to be one with less crime and more post-secondary graduates – and where people rely less on social services and use more recreation, arts and cultural services. The Play Works Youth Friendly Recognition Program can give communities the opportunity to benchmark youth engagement and improve services.

[HIGH FIVE®](#)

Created in 2001, HIGH FIVE® is Canada's only comprehensive quality standard for children's programs. HIGH FIVE's proprietary approach is built on a quality framework, consisting of program assessments, policies and procedures, training, and awareness. In 2018, Parks and Recreation Ontario launched HIGH FIVE® for Older Adults: Principles of Healthy Aging as a framework for older adult recreation based on the current HIGH FIVE national industry standard for children.

[Parks and Recreation Management Certificate Program](#)

Designed for municipal managers looking to enhance their skills, the PRMC program focuses on the 3 pillars for successful leadership in public sector administration: communication, strategic planning, and political acuity. It introduces participants to key concepts and theories in each of the core areas, supported by research and practical case studies. This program is presented in partnership with the Schulich Executive Education Centre at the School of Business at York University.

[CPRA Professional Development Certification](#)

Working in the recreation and parks sector requires a unique and diverse set of knowledge, skills and attitudes. The CPRA Professional Development Certification (CPRA PDC) fosters the continual growth of these competencies through accessible professional development, creating a national standard that will strengthen the credibility and quality of its practitioners. Through this certification, you will enhance your understanding of the issues facing the recreation and parks sector and will be further equipped with the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to design and implement innovative solutions. You will be part of a national network of professionals that will ensure the health of the sector and enhance the active members of a provincial or territorial recreation and parks association.



Why Join PRO?

From education to networking to advocacy, a membership with PRO provides you with the tools and resources you need to enhance the quality of life in your community. Join a network of over 6,500 professionals working collectively to advance the benefits of quality parks and recreation programs in Ontario. PRO members provide services to more than 85% of Ontarians in municipalities across the province and come from a wide range of backgrounds including recreation, parks, fitness, sport, facilities, the environmental sector, aquatics, therapeutic recreation, camping, and arts and culture.

A PRO membership gives your municipal staff and elected officials access to valuable training, resources and quality standards. PRO also develops policy to support municipal parks and recreation and advocates with government on important legislation and regulation.

The Benefits of Membership

Policy Solutions for Municipalities

- ✓ **Essential information on current provincial and federal legislation affecting recreation and parks**
- ✓ **Tools for policy and program development on:**
 - **Affordable Access to Recreation**
 - **Authorized recreation programs**
 - **Public Health regulations for pools and spas**
 - **Parkland dedication and land-use planning**

Professional Development and Resources

- ✓ **Professional development program that prepares municipal staff for today's challenges through:**
 - **Annual conferences**
 - **Management Training**
 - **Discounted and free web-based learning**
- ✓ **Access to valuable resources to improve efficiencies and services including:**
 - **Framework for Recreation in Canada Municipal Audit Tool**
 - **Municipal Recreation and Park Customer Service Survey Tool**
 - **Latest news on funding programs for municipalities**

Risk Management

- ✓ **Manage risk and increase participation and client retention with the HIGH FIVE® Quality Assurance Standard**
- ✓ **Keep youth engaged in our community with the Play Works Youth Friendly Community Recognition Program**

Competitive Edge

- ✓ **Job Mart, Ontario's only direct recreation and park job search service**
- ✓ **Access to member recognition and provincial awards**
- ✓ **Online and in-person networking**