



PARKS AND RECREATION ONTARIO

2022 Municipal Council Orientation Toolkit: A Resource for Elected Officials



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How to use this toolkit

Elections provide a meaningful opportunity to re-engage with the public about the issues that matter most to them: quality of life and overall personal well-being.

This toolkit is designed to provide elected officials with a high level overview of parks and recreation, its benefits, and how best to support departments that provide vital programming and spaces for your community.

Parks and recreation departments create opportunities for active living, social inclusion, and connection with nature. These objectives are reflected in the Framework for Recreation in Canada, a guiding document for service providers and local governments that helps ensure meaningful, accessible recreation experiences that foster the well-being of individuals and communities. In this toolkit, you will learn what you can do to align your work with the Framework to ensure that every resident of your community can connect with high-quality programs and spaces.

About Parks and Recreation Ontario

This toolkit was developed by Parks and Recreation Ontario (PRO), a non-profit association that advocates for investments in the sector, provides training and professional development programs, and connects the sector.

We believe that parks and recreation programs are more than just a fringe benefit. They are essential to the social, economic, and physical health of Ontario. PRO members provide services to more than 85% of Ontarians in municipalities across the province. For more information about our work please visit our website.

What is parks and recreation?

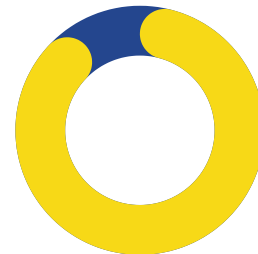
Parks and recreation is a municipal jurisdiction. However, it is supported by all three levels of government. It is represented at the provincial level by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Sport. At the local level, parks and recreation varies between community but can be broadly categorized into three areas: facilities and open spaces, programs and services, and special events.

Parks and recreation is at the heart of every community in Ontario. It isn't just skating classes and playgrounds. It is life-saving swim lessons, community-building programs for older adults that fight isolation, and skill-building classes that contribute to physical, mental, and cognitive health. It fosters social inclusion, well-being, and most importantly, makes your community a great place to live.

Ontarians know this. According to a 2021 value survey conducted by PRO:



97% of Ontarians believe parks, green spaces, and community recreation are important to quality of life.



91% believe municipal investment in parks and green space make their communities a desirable place to live.

Quick facts

1

Parks and recreation contribute to a 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. **Ontarians spend \$4 billion every year on recreation, sport, and fitness and the economic benefits of recreation are estimated to be \$38.3 billion.**

2

Parks and recreation help create vibrant, engaged communities.

Parks and recreation has a positive impact on people at all stages of life. For young people, recreation can prevent stress, petty crime, alcohol and drug consumption. For older adults, it provides opportunities for socialization and community building. **87% of Ontarians believe recreation programs, parks and community facilities make it easier for people to socialize and feel included.**

3

Parks and recreation keeps communities healthy.

Only 28% of children and youth and 51% of adults in Canada meet national physical activity guidelines. Participation in recreation at an early age builds healthy lifestyle skills that last a lifetime. For older adults, recreation provides opportunities for socializing, learning new skills, and can contribute to improved physical and mental well-being, allowing them to age in place and stay in their communities for longer.

What can local governments do?

The Framework for Recreation in Canada is the guiding document for public recreation and park providers in Canada. It outlines five objectives for recreation providers: active living, inclusion and access, connecting people and nature, supportive environments, and recreation capacity. Municipal governments can align their work with the Framework by:

- embracing initiatives that support healthy communities,
- funding the delivery of quality parks and programs, and
- working closely with your community's parks and recreation or community services department.

Below are some actions that your municipality can take to 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 & 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 & Nature



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 implement a facilities master plan to meet the needs of your community.

Goal 5: Recreation Capacity



Engage in high-quality training and competency-based capacity development programs for organizations, professionals, and volunteers working in recreation.

Resources

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.

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.

Customer Service Survey Tool

This Customer Service Survey Tool helps municipalities measure key indicators of success in recreation and parks. It helps organizations quickly and easily understand what the public perceives as important and valuable.

Affordable Access to Recreation Policy Framework

This framework can help municipalities navigate the policy development process and engage stakeholders. It was endorsed by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario Board of Directors.

Guidebook on Ontario's Accessibility Standard for the Design of Public Spaces

This guide provides information on how municipalities can comply with Ontario's Accessibility for the Design of Public Spaces Standard.

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 Economic Benefits of Recreation in Canada

This peer-reviewed study from 2020 provides the first comprehensive report that quantifies the economic benefits of outdoor recreation in Canada.

Programs and training

HIGH FIVE®

HIGH FIVE® is Canada's quality standard for recreation and leisure programs. HIGH FIVE provides recreation professionals with training and gives organizations program assessment tools, policies and procedures, and resources to raise awareness about the component parts of operating successful programs. Since then, the standard has evolved to include training on several of other factors including mental health, competitive sport programs, and healthy aging.

Parks and Recreation Management Certificate (PRMC) 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

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 within the sector and will be further equipped with the knowledge and skills 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.

PRO Aquatics Conference 2023

PRO is excited to announce that the PRO Aquatics Conference will take place from March 30-31, 2023, in Hamilton, Ontario. As Canada's largest gathering of aquatic professionals, the event will provide a one-stop destination for networking, peer-to-peer support, knowledge sharing, and professional development opportunities. As we continue to rebuild from the disruptions of the last two years, it is time for our sector to look toward innovation, research, and best practice to meet the challenges that lie ahead. This year's sessions will focus on renewal, engagement, and growth as it relates to aquatics.

PRO Educational Forum 2023

PRO is pleased to announce that the 2023 PRO Educational Forum is set to take place from March 28-29, 2023, in Hamilton, Ontario. After three years of virtual events, we are thrilled to invite our members and stakeholders back to an in-person event to connect parks and recreation professionals from across the province, mobilize knowledge, and build capacity in the sector.

Member Webinars

Exclusive for PRO members, we offer high-level webinar series on topics relevant to parks and recreation in your community, with guest speakers, opportunities for networking, and collective problem solving. Learn more at www.prontario.org.

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