

# Community recreation & sport facilities are one of the *most cost-effective prescriptions for our good health.*



Inactivity and its related health and socioeconomic consequences are costing BC money and quality of life. It is a leading contributor to obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, certain types of cancers, and fall-related injuries and chronic conditions in older adults. Recreation is a key factor in combating this trend, supporting physical activity at the community level and leading to healthier lifestyles, stronger community connections, increased productivity and economic growth. Investment in recreation infrastructure is a preventative approach for individual and community health that offsets spending on reactive investments in health care and social justice infrastructure.

## What's at stake?

Physical inactivity costs BC as much as \$573million/year. \$211 million/year is attributable to direct costs such as hospitals, physicians, drugs, and institutions, and \$362 million/year to the real indirect costs of lost productivity due to premature death and disability<sup>1</sup>. We are putting the communities and population of BC at risk. The cost of inactivity impacts us all:

- **Youth: Obesity and Juvenile Diabetes on the rise in BC.** Child and youth participation in physical activity improves health and reduces risk of: obesity, diabetes, heart disease, stroke and some forms of cancer, osteoporosis, and hypertension.
- **The Costs of Aging Population: BC's Population is aging,** increasing the burden on health care. Senior activity reduces health risks/costs and the incidence of fall related injuries and chronic health conditions.
- **The Cost to Communities: Inequity, Barriers, Access & Discrimination:** First nations and immigrant populations are at risk due to gaps in accessibility and culturally appropriate programs.

## The Problem: BC's aging recreation facilities are putting healthy communities at risk

According to the BC Recreation and Parks Association's (BCRPA) report "A Time for Renewal", upwards of 50% of BC's recreation, parks and sports facilities are 35 years of age and older\* and in urgent need of renewal or replacement. This abundance of aging infrastructure is undermining the ability of communities to attract, accommodate and sustain the range of healthy activities that are being trumpeted as integral to the fulfilment of BC's fitness and health goals.

*With sustainable maintenance & funding for renewal, recreation facilities will continue to be one of the most cost-effective prescriptions for our good health.*

More than replacement, it is imperative that we ensure a sufficient and appropriate stock of recreation facilities exist to support healthy living, adapting our facilities so that the demographic, cultural, heritage and health needs of the population are met.

## The Issues

- BC's recreation infrastructure is aging. A large number of recreational facilities are nearing end of useful life.
  - 42% of BC indoor recreation facilities are 35 years or older.
  - 68% of BC's indoor recreation facilities are 25 years or older.
- Our older buildings are becoming obsolete - not matching the changing demands of our growing population and being environmentally wasteful and polluting. Their functionality fails to reflect the changing needs of the population and the strong environmental leadership shown by British Columbia.
- In recent years less funding has been available for recreation infrastructure and today we are experiencing a rapidly accumulating backlog deficit.

*Maintaining the status quo is not an option.*

## What to do

The BCRPA has laid out the ground work for a new partnership program for recreation infrastructure funding – one that supports life-cycle management – and developed a set of funding principles to ensure investments are strategic and based on priorities. Funding and support for the development and implementation of this program will provide a framework from which recreation infrastructure investments can be allocated to reduce the recreation deficit and ensure ongoing life cycle renewal and increased capacity in step with population change.



\*The average functional life of a building is 50 years<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.hls.gov.bc.ca/prevention/activitycost.html>

<sup>2</sup> Vander Ploeg, Casey. (2006) "New Tools for New Times: A Sourcebook for the Financing, Funding and Delivery of Urban Infrastructure." Prepared for CanadaWest Foundation. Retrieved from: [www.cwf.ca/V2/files/NewTools.pdf](http://www.cwf.ca/V2/files/NewTools.pdf)

# Community recreation & sport facilities are one of the *most cost-effective prescriptions* for our good health.



**Benefits to Government** Recreation Infrastructure Renewal provides a proactive approach to:

- **Preventive Health Care.** A change in behaviour occurs when recreation, physical activity and healthy living are promoted and supported at the community level. In addition to reducing health risks and costs, it creates an immediate and positive healthy lifestyle change.
- **Health Care Cost Reduction.** Recreation infrastructure supports and fosters a physically active population, reducing demands on BC's health care system from the costs of inactivity: obesity, chronic illness, diabetes, cancer, and frailty.
- **Improved Access and Participation.** The delivery of culturally appropriate health services provides an opportunity to address inequity of access in aboriginal health, to increase activity of the aging population, and to facilitate the development of a multi-year sustainable plan to address the needs of BC's growing and changing population.
- **Partnerships.** The proposed life-cycle management program provides an opportunity to develop an integrated "whole of government" approach to healthy living in BC. The program can create partnerships with other government agencies, Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), Provincial Sport Organizations (PSOs) and the corporate sector to support funding.

**The Details** The BCRPA is suggesting a new approach to partnership programs for recreation infrastructure funding – one that supports life-cycle management. Three components are envisioned and may include funding from local, provincial and federal government:

- **Recreation Renewal Program** – an on-going capital fund for indoor and outdoor recreation projects
- **Recreation Partnership Planning Program** – a component to encourage co-operative and efficient program delivery
- **Recreation Life-cycle Program** – a new program to promote life-cycle information sharing and preventative action

With sustainable maintenance and funding for renewal, recreation facilities will continue be one of the most cost-effective prescriptions for our good health.

**Who We Are** For over 50 years the BCRPA has been a central resource for its 5,400 plus members, providing leadership, training and support within BC's parks, recreation, fitness and culture sector. These members manage more than \$11 billion worth of recreation infrastructure assets across the province that attract more than 50 million visits by adults and children annually.

Cultivating partnerships and collaboration with community groups and government is a vital part of BCRPA's mandate.

Partners include:

- **BC Healthy Living Alliance**
- **ActNow BC**
- **Heart and Stroke Foundation of BC and Yukon**
- **Ministry of Education**
- **Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport**
- **Provincial Health Services Authority**
- **Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC)**
- **Provincial Sport Organizations**

*With sustainable maintenance & funding for renewal, recreation facilities will continue be one of the most cost-effective prescriptions for our good health.*

