

## Canada's Recovery from the impact of COVID-19 Role of Parks and Recreation Sector

### Parks

Given the imposed self-isolation currently stemming from the public health response to COVID-19 crisis, it will be essential that government recovery programs for citizens incorporate the social, mental and physical health benefits of spending time outdoors. Municipal parks are by far the most accessible platform for forging a connection with the outdoors and will play a key role in rebuilding the social and economic health of Canadian communities.

#### *Proposed Recovery Mechanism: Green Jobs Initiative*

The Green Jobs Initiative is a highly successful Government of Canada program which is scheduled to sunset on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020. With the necessary administration already in place, a renewal of this program would be a 'turn-key' endeavor that would seamlessly provide financial support (via wage subsidies) to municipalities and community organizations to offer summer job positions that focus on green/parks activities. The renewal of the program would:

- Provide jobs to youth experiencing a slow 'up-take'; on employment due to COVID-19;

- Support municipalities who will have endured tremendous revenue loss due to the closure of recreation facilities and programs due to COVID-19;

- Connect youth and the communities to nature as part of a key component of societal recovery from COVID-19.

### Recreation

Past crises have proven that recreation is one of the first and most crucial services to return to communities. They play a critical role in the mental and physical health recovery of citizens. Recreation also plays an equally important role in community social and economic revival. Access to recreation facilities (arenas, pools, gyms) and programs (hockey, summer camps, exercise programs) is an essential service for Canadians that will usher in a return of normalcy -- especially for children and seniors.



However, the municipal recreation system is experiencing a severing of revenues due to the required closure of recreation facilities and the suspension of programs/classes. Federal government support will be absolutely necessary to ensure a return accessible community recreation.

***Proposed Recovery Mechanism: Community Recreation Fund***

Timely federal government funding to municipalities (earmarked for recreation and parks) via a *Community Recreation Fund* is recommended to ensure that recreation facilities and programs can be up and running again as quickly as possible to provide much needed social, mental and physical benefits to Canadians. This also protects important recreation sector jobs in all communities across Canada.

**Not-for-Profit Recovery**

To date, the federal government focus has been on support to businesses affected by COVID-19 but the economic impact on not-for-profit organizations is equally monumental. The cancelling of conferences, events and programs have significant impacts on the capacity of not-for-profit as these are often their main or only generators of income. Without government support, there will be many not-for-profits (including in the parks and recreation sector) that will not have the financial capacity to keep their doors open after the COVID-19 crisis.

***Proposed Recovery Mechanism: Funding Support for Not for Profits***

The government must provide an equally significant recovery fund for not-for-profit organizations so they may continue to play an important role in society during the recovery both during and after this crisis.