



# THE BENEFITS OF PARKS AND RECREATION

Parks and recreation benefit all levels of society. These benefits help strengthen families, build healthy communities, improve quality of life and support the healthy development of children. Being that the benefits of parks and recreation are so comprehensive, it is important that parks and recreation are a top priority for the Province of Saskatchewan. Included below are the eight benefits statements for parks and recreation, with supporting evidence.

## Recreation and Active Living are essential to personal health

- Recreation and active living significantly reduces the risk of coronary heart disease and stroke, one of the leading causes of death in Canada, and helps combat osteoporosis, reduce diabetes and prevent site-specific cancers, particularly colon, breast and lung.
- Recreation improves longevity and prolongs independent living for older adults.
- Recreation can also contribute to improving mental health by reducing stress and depression and enhancing emotional and psychological well-being.

## Recreation is the key to balanced human development

- Participation in recreation promotes the acquisition of motor skills, social skills, creativity and the development of cognitive function, which are important to successful integration into society.
- Recreation provides the opportunity for adults to develop to their full and holistic potential.

## Recreation and Parks are essential to quality of life

- Recreation contributes to improving the conditions that support mental well-being by improving self-esteem and self-image, life satisfaction levels and enhancing perceived quality of life - for individuals, families and communities.
- Rest, relaxation and revitalization through recreation opportunities are essential to stress management. The catharsis achieved through recreation is an ideal antidote to the build up of otherwise negative tension, anger and adrenalin.
- Participation in recreational activities can be linked to lower levels of sedentary activity, more positive relationships with peers and friends, a greater likelihood of performing better in school, increased future educational expectations, better health and decreased participation in negative behaviours such as smoking and drinking.
- Parks offer safe, accessible and low/no cost opportunities for recreation and active living.



## Recreation reduces self-destructive and anti-social behaviour

- Involvement in recreational activities serves as an antidote for smoking, substance abuse, suicide and depression. Recreation also provides accessible role models and leads to the adoption of positive life choices.
- Recreation can reduce racism, as it builds understanding between diverse cultures.

## Recreation and Parks build strong families and healthy communities

- Recreation contributes to the development of future capacity. Childhood recreation activity is associated with adult volunteering and community work.
- Recreation programs promote leadership, character, health, and career development of youth while emphasizing social, cultural and educational growth.
- Recreation provides safe, developmental opportunities during the critical after-school hours.
- Parks and green space encourage socialization, thereby strengthening community relationships. The sense of belonging resulting from this interaction may help dissipate the feeling of isolation often experienced by marginalized groups and older adults.

## Recreation reduces health care, social service and police and justice costs

- Recreation, as part of a healthy, active lifestyle, can reduce the incidence and severity of illness and disease, resulting in lower healthcare costs.
- Opportunities for children to participate in recreation help ease the pressure on families, reducing the costs of social service intervention and foster care.
- Recreation programs serve as a crime prevention strategy, thereby reducing police, justice and incarceration costs.

## Recreation and Parks are economic generators in your community

- Recreation, sports and fitness improve work performance through increased productivity, decreased absenteeism, decreased staff turnover and reduced 'on the job' accidents.
- Recreation and parks attract tourism and business opportunities while creating employment opportunities for local residents.
- Parks and green spaces improve the value of property and at the same time, revenues in adjacent pieces of land.
- Quality recreation facilities and parks can attract events which can increase the economic vitality of a community.

## Parks and open spaces are essential to well being, and our environmental and ecological survival

- Green spaces protect habitat, bio-diversity and ecological balance. Together, these improve air quality by reducing carbon dioxide, sulphur dioxide and other air pollutants.
- Fresh air recreation offers an excellent approach to environmental education.
- Parks, trails and pathways save energy and protect air quality by encouraging active transportation.
- The protection of open spaces reduces the risk of erosion and flooding (environmental disasters).

## Sources

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