



**Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (CPRA)**

**Canadian Recreation Facilities Council (CRFC)**

**Finance Pre-Budget Consultations - 2016**

**February 2016**

## Executive Summary

### CPRA

The Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (CPRA) is the national voice on the social, health, economic, community and environmental benefits of parks and recreation.

### CRFC

The Canadian Recreation Facilities Council (CRFC) is a national advocate for strong and sustainable recreation infrastructure in communities across Canada.

### Opportunity

High quality, accessible recreation and sport opportunities are essential to healthy individuals and communities. All Canadians deserve equitable access to these experiences and yet many citizens are inhibited from achieving the health and social benefits derived from recreation pursuits due to:

1. the physical deterioration of existing sport and recreation infrastructure in communities across Canada, and
2. the increased but unfulfilled need for new sport and recreation infrastructure to meet a growing, aging and diversifying population.

The recently released *Canadian Infrastructure Report Card (CIRC)* reinforces the acute need for infrastructure investments into sport and recreation facilities across Canadian communities.

### Linked Minister of Finance's Question:

What infrastructure needs can best help grow the economy, protect our environment, and meet your priorities locally?

### Recommendation

***The CPRA and CRFC recommend that the 2016/17 federal budget includes a commitment of \$3 billion over the next 2 years to partner with provinces/territories and municipalities to invest in an infrastructure program that is dedicated specifically for recreation and sport projects.***

## Full Submission

### The Opportunity

CPRA and CFRC enthusiastically support and promote the goal of improving the physical and mental health of Canadians by increasing levels of sport and recreational activity.

High quality, accessible recreation opportunities are essential to healthy individuals and communities. All Canadians deserve equitable access to leisure experiences and yet many citizens are inhibited from achieving the health and social benefits derived from recreation pursuits due to:

- the physical deterioration of existing sport and recreation infrastructure in communicates across Canada, and
- the increased but unfulfilled need for new sport and recreation infrastructure to meet a growing, aging and diversifying population.

If we are going to provide opportunities for Canadians to participate in sport, physical activity and recreation, we also need to ensure the necessary infrastructure is in place in order to allow them to do so. Currently, the existing infrastructure has deteriorated to the point where it is a barrier to many Canadians being able to take part in activities that will provide a recreation opportunity and the corresponding health and social benefits.

### Past Programming

In April 2014, the \$14B New Building Canada Fund (NBCF) was announced, which focuses on economic growth, job creation and prosperity and yet **sport and recreation capital projects do not fall within the NBCF funding categories**. The Federal budget also included adjustments to the Federal Gas Tax Fund by increasing the annual contribution to \$2B, which is allocated to provinces and territories to support municipal projects. While sport and recreation projects can apply for support from the Gas Tax Fund, these projects will compete against 16 other categories of potential applicant projects including public transit, waste water management, drinking water, energy systems, bridges, roads and highways, airports, culture and tourism. Evidence suggests that many municipalities will allocate funds to transit or sewer projects rather than pools, arenas or trails.

In the 2015 Federal Budget, a Canadian 150 Community Infrastructure Program was announced and although recreation facilities were included as eligible projects, the overall funding that is available is no more than a token when compared to the realities of the sport and recreation infrastructure funding needs for communities.

### The Need

The capital funding requirements of the parks and recreation sector across Canada is in desperate need of additional investments. This was re-confirmed in the recent *Canadian Infrastructure Report Card (CIRC)* which demonstrated that the need to address parks and recreation infrastructure is acute. The *CIRC* estimated replacement costs for sport and recreation facilities in Canada that are in 'very poor' or 'poor' condition to be \$9 billion. The *CIRC* also noted that the replacement costs for sport and recreation facilities in Canada that are in 'fair' condition are \$14 billion. However, if we act now to repair the facilities in 'fair' condition, the estimated cost will be only \$7 billion as opposed to replacement costs which are estimated at \$14 billion. To summarize, the estimated costs to repair

existing sport and recreation facilities at this time are \$16 billion (\$9 billion –‘very poor’ or ‘poor’ and \$7 billion – ‘fair’). Note that this figure does not include required funding for new sport and recreation infrastructure for the growing, aging and diversifying population.

As a result, CPRA and CRFC call upon the federal government to make a significant investment in an initial infrastructure fund that would be dedicated specifically to sports and recreation facilities. A dedicated fund (within the social infrastructure fund allotment) is critical, as history has shown that without a dedicated fund, sport and recreation infrastructure needs are ignored at the expense of other infrastructure requirements. This point was demonstrated again in the *CIRC* where the greatest infrastructure deficit was identified as sport and recreation facilities.

Like all infrastructure investments, the economic benefits are significant in regard to the design and construction elements. But recreation and sport facilities create important long-term employment opportunities in all rural and urban communities -especially important entry level positions for youth.

In addition, it is now undeniable that active people with healthy lifestyles place less of a financial burden on the healthcare system and are more productive citizens.

CPRA and CRFC are fully committed to working with government to create an equitable, effective and responsive infrastructure program that will contribute to the combined objectives of the Framework for Recreation in Canada (2015), Connecting Canadians with Nature (2014), Canadian Sport Policy (2012), Curbing Childhood Obesity Framework (2012), Declaration on Prevention and Promotion (2010), Healthy Aging in Canada (2006) and the Pan-Canadian Healthy Living Strategy (2005).

### **The Recommendation**

CPRA and CRFC call upon the Federal government to work collaboratively within a shared mandate (with provinces/territories and municipalities) to immediately develop a dedicated national recreation and sport infrastructure program to address the facility repair, replacement or rehabilitation needs of communities across Canada.

***The CPRA and CRFC recommend that the 2016/17 federal budget includes a commitment of \$3 billion over the next 2 years to partner with provinces/territories and municipalities to invest in an infrastructure program that is dedicated specifically for recreation and sport projects.***

As noted earlier in this brief, the repair/replacement costs for existing sport and recreation facilities are estimated to be \$16 billion. However, CPRA and CRFC understand that there are multiple infrastructure demands on the government. As such, for the first 2 years, we recommend that the focus be replacing/repairing the facilities in “very poor’ or ‘poor’ condition which according to the *Canadian Infrastructure Report Card* would be an estimated of cost of \$9 billion - \$3 billion for each level of government.

## Conclusion

The recommendation put forward by CPRA and CRFC strongly aligns with the Liberal government's commitment to investing in social infrastructure. The inclusion of a dedicated recreation and sport infrastructure program will deliver a meaningful and tangible impact on the lives of families in rural and urban communities across Canada.

The CPRA and CRFC respectfully request the opportunity to appear before the Finance Committee or to meet with the Minister to present further details on this opportunity for the federal government to invest in the health and productivity of citizens and communities across Canada.