



# **Big Steps Towards a Benefits - Driven Field**

*Parks and Recreation Ontario  
April 29, 1997*

THE ESSENTIAL  
BENEFITS OF  
RECREATION

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## Session Outcomes

- Provide an overview and update of provincial and national Benefits initiatives
- Introduce the new Catalogue of Benefits...its new outcome statements and marketing messages
- Share preliminary results of the Benefits Indicator Pilot Project
- Gather feedback from session participants as to what is needed to implement benefits-driven recreation in their communities

Vision is the ability to see beyond our present reality, to create, to invent what does not yet exist, to become what we not yet are. It gives us capacity to live out of our imagination instead of our memory.

Stephen Covey

## Vision for Parks and Recreation Ontario (1992)

Through provision of recreation and parks services, we enhance Ontario's quality of life and nurture the health and well-being of our people, our communities, our environments and our economy. We are community-driven. Together, and often in partnership with related fields and organizations, we:

- help individuals reach for their potential
- strengthen the social foundations of our society
- serve as "stewards of the environment"
- build and renew local economies

- bring “joie de vivre” to our communities

## **This Provincial Vision was the result of CHANGE**

- recreation was one of the first sectors to feel the impact of fiscal restraints
- resulted in the “Recreation: An Essential Service” Project (RES) of PRO in the late 80’s
- initial purpose of the project was to convince key stakeholders that recreation and parks services are important and that continued investment in these services made sense

## **Collected Research Demonstrated that Leisure Services Deliver:**

- PERSONAL BENEFITS to help individuals achieve their full potential
- SOCIAL BENEFITS to strengthen families, neighbourhoods, communities
- ECONOMIC BENEFITS critical to financial well-being
- ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS leading to the protection of the ecology

## **This resulted in:**

- “THE BENEFITS OF PARKS AND RECREATION: A CATALOGUE” published in 1992 by the Parks and Recreation Federation of Ontario ( now PRO)
- over 15,000 copies sold around the world
- a document that now serves as a “bible” for recreation practitioners

## **The Project Made Us Realize....**

- Too preoccupied with buildings
- Too closely associated with sports
- Lacked networks to other organizations
- Narrowed our focus

## **We also learned...**

- that while we had the potential to deliver benefits, we weren’t always doing it to our fullest potential
- much more could be done if we deliberately selected benefits and targeted them for delivery in our

communities (benefits-driven recreation!)

## **The project also reinforced our understanding that:**

- community development is a proven strategy for delivering the benefits
- recreation practitioners are well-positioned to act as catalysts for change in their communities
- recreation practitioners can play a leadership role in bringing together service providers from other sectors to respond to new community needs (youth at risk, escalating health care costs, unhealthy lifestyle choices, cultural diversity, dysfunctional families etc.)

This understanding is what led to the development of the new provincial VISION

**Despite this new vision and a growing appreciation of the benefits of parks and recreation, the majority of recreation practitioners continued to offer traditional programs and services while struggling with the impact of downloading, transforming, re-engineering, downsizing, restructuring, rightsizing....**

## **In the meantime...the Recreation: An Essential Service Committee (RES) of PRO**

- established a Speaker's Bureau
- conducted train-the-trainers sessions
- developed and piloted a "Building Strategic Alliance Workshop"
- developed promotional "benefits" materials (including a national newsletter)
- established a Benefits Listserve
- and worked at convincing the rest of the country that benefits-based recreation was essential if we were to survive as a profession
- served as a catalyst for other benefits-driven initiatives across Canada

However, it also became clear that we needed:

- to be more specific (e.g. write the benefits statements as "outcomes", include tangible examples and performance indicators or targets that could be used to measure progress and demonstrate success)
- to promote "change leadership", "transition management", and a cultural/behaviour change within our field

## **National Priorities for 1996-97**

### **Included:**

- Maintaining the Momentum in creating an awareness of benefits-driven delivery of recreation
- Updating and Expanding the Catalogue (Phase One)
- Developing and Testing Performance Indicators (Phase Two)
- Refining the Social Marketing Plan (Phase Three)

### **Phase One:**

#### **Catalogue Update**

- CP/RA agreed to spearhead the Catalogue update as a national initiative
- a \$21,000 grant was received from the federal Ministry of Health
- PRO contributed an additional \$10,000.00 (revenue generated by catalogue sales)
- New Brunswick contributed \$1500.00
- CP/RA gave the Ontario RES committee the lead role in updating the Catalogue
- RES hired Ken Balmer and Brenda Clarke of RETHINK Ltd. to update the Catalogue

### **The Benefit Statements included in the original Catalogue of Benefits have now been rewritten as 8 clearly focused marketing messages and 40+ outcome statements....**

- Recreation and Active Living are ESSENTIAL TO PERSONAL HEALTH - A key determinant of health status!
- Recreation is a key to balanced HUMAN DEVELOPMENT - helping Canadians reach for their potential
- Recreation and parks are essential to QUALITY OF LIFE
- Recreation reduces self-destructive and ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR
- Recreation and parks build STRONG FAMILIES and HEALTHY COMMUNITIES
- PAY NOW or PAY MORE LATER! Recreation reduces health care, social service, and police/justice costs!
- Recreation and parks are significant ECONOMIC GENERATORS in your community
- Parks, open spaces, and natural areas are ESSENTIAL TO ECOLOGICAL SURVIVAL

The Updated Catalogue:

- was presented at a National Benefits Partners Meeting this past weekend as well as here at the PRO conference
- will be fine-tuned and published by CP/RA in two versions (a hardcover and an electronic version on LIN)
- formally introduced at CP/RA's national conference in St. John's Newfoundland in August

## **Phase Two: Development of Performance Indicators**

- RETHINK is also spearheading a Pilot Project with five cities (North and West Vancouver, Dauphin, Markham, and Grande Prairie)
- Community Leaders are being surveyed to select the outcomes/benefits they deem most important in their communities and stakeholders are working together to develop performance indicators

## **Nationally....**

- representatives from across Canada met this past weekend to share resources and initiatives
- finalize issues around publishing of the Catalogue (particularly copyright)
- share Phase Two Update
- determine a future direction for what was the National Benefits Partners (a committee of CP/RA) but now to become "THE BENEFITS TRUST"

## **VISION of the BENEFITS TRUST**

a coalition of individuals and organizations who:

- are committed to "benefits -driven" recreation
- will promote an understanding of the benefits delivered by recreation, parks, sports, fitness, arts and culture
- will serve as a catalyst for making benefits-driven recreation a reality



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