



Benefits of Sport & Recreation

This document was produced by:

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The following articles or organizations have attempted to defend the resources spent in the area of sport and recreation by gathering together evidence which articulates the value of such intangibles as helping children develop self-esteem, contributing to the quality of life, building leadership, or supporting families. The following is evidence to justify the investment of dollars in parks, recreation and sport services and facilities.

The Benefits Catalogue

A cooperative development produced by the Canadian Parks/Recreation Association (1997) which catalogues and summarizes the benefits of recreation and parks and provides an overview of research evidence backing up each of the benefits statements.

The research is packaged around 44 benefit statements and around eight key marketing messages. The following outlines these messages along with one of the many associated outcome statements that are backed by identified research.

Recreation and active living are essential to personal health - a key determinant of health status.

· Recreation and active living helps people live longer - adding up to two years to life expectancy.

Recreation is a key to balanced human development - helping Canadians reach for their potential.

· Recreation is essential to the development of our children and youth - motor skills, social skills, creativity, intellectual capacities and concepts.

Recreation and parks are essential to quality of life.

· Recreation, sports and arts/culture build self-esteem and positive self-image - foundations to personal quality of life.

Recreation reduces self-destructive and anti-social behavior.

· Recreation, sports and arts/culture reduce self-destructive behavior and negative social activity in youth - an antidote to smoking, substance abuse, suicide and depression.

Recreation and parks build strong families and healthy communities.

· Families that play together - stay together. Children and youth remain connected; couples that share leisure interests are more likely to stay together.

Pay now or pay later! Recreation reduces health care, social service and policy/justice costs.

· Fitness and well-being reduces both the incidence and severity of illness and disability - lowering health care costs.

Recreation and parks are significant economic generators in your community!

· Recreation, sports, and fitness improves work performance - increased productivity, decreased absenteeism; decreased staff turnover, reduced 'on the job' accidents.

Parks, open space and natural areas are essential to ecological survival.

· Green spaces protect habitat, biodiversity, and ecological integrity.

The Use & Benefits of Local Government Parks & Recreation Services: A Canadian Perspective

Is a report which attempts "... to provide hard evidence about Canadians' perceptions of benefits associated with public parks and recreation. It was undertaken in part because of a growing need to justify the allocation of public resources based on sound scientific evidence rather than popular opinion, intuition and assumption." It was understood that identifying and interpreting the benefits is critical to continued public understanding and support.

This study is the result of a national survey, developed to determine Canadians' perceptions of the many benefits associated with parks and recreation services provided either directly or indirectly by local government. The research was supported by the Interprovincial Sport and Recreation Council and participating Provincial and Territorial Governments. The following are the key highlights of the survey:

The major conclusions of this study are: The vast majority of Canadians use their local parks and recreation services. Use of such services continues across the life cycle. Perceived benefits attributed to such services cover a broad spectrum, but the majority relate to the individual and to society. Users and non-users alike perceived benefits from public parks and recreation services. The absence of local parks and recreation services is seen as having negative consequences for kids, impacting the fitness opportunities of individuals and a detriment to the quality of life in the community. Lastly, an overwhelming majority of Canadians (80%) believe that their public parks and recreation services are worth as much or more than the average they believe to be paying through taxes.

· Over three-quarters of all respondents reported they use their local parks.

· Respondents who had used local recreation services in the last 12 months reported the most important benefits attributed to individuals were personal and social

· If there were no public parks, recreation programs or facilities generally the absence was seen as

limiting the things kids could do, reducing the opportunities for individuals to improve their fitness/wellness, and making the community a more boring place to live.

· Four out of five respondents felt that their local parks and recreation services are worth \$75.00 (or more of this national average) per year per member of their household. About half said they were worth up to \$95.00 and slightly more than one in four said they were worth \$115.00 or more.

Benefits Facts: Recreation An Investment in Life

The following provides a summary of the personal, social, economic and environmental benefits of parks and recreation, as articulated by SPRA.

Personal Benefits:

"Active Living" is based on the premise that the benefits of physical activity go beyond the prevention of disease to include feeling better, having fun, socializing with others, increasing our abilities to function in daily life and gaining more control over our lives (Edwards, 1990).

Social Benefits:

People working in social and community services with a treatment focus see the provision of affordable and accessible recreation as a key to slowing the demand for more costly crisis intervention services. Providing adequate opportunities and supports is a long term investment in the healthiness of the community (Listening to London Task Force, 1991).

Economic Benefits:

A study of the economic significance of Saskatchewan parks illustrates that substantial returns are realized on taxpayers dollars spent in the development, operations and maintenance of parks (Goaltech Management Ltd. 1990).

Environmental Benefits:

Greenways which help conserve plants and trees provide a valuable contribution toward pollution control because they mitigate water, air, and noise pollution (National Park Service, 1990).

Get into the game: The Benefits of Sport

The following provides a summary of Sask Sport's FAQ sheet which outlines a few of the many benefits sport contributes to our daily lives.

- 14 to 17 million adult Canadians could prevent death if they did at least small amounts of physical activity every day (Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, 1995).
- Fitness Canada has conservatively estimated the direct and indirect health costs of disease associated with physical inactivity at \$2.5 billion annually (Canadian Sport Council General Assembly).
- Regular physical activity leads to higher levels of energy, improved stamina, weight loss, better eye-hand coordination, and improved muscle tone and flexibility. (The Social Impacts of Recreation, 1985).
- In Canada, annual medical costs arising simply from inactivity total almost \$1 billion. (Canada Fitness & Lifestyle Research Institute, 1994)

- For sport activities specifically, volunteers spend about 15.5 million hours annually - which is worth about \$155 million. These estimates do not include out of pocket expenditures by volunteers in the pursuit of their avocation. (Recreation: A Changing Society's Economic Giant, 1983)
- Children involved in culture, sport and recreation are much less likely to be seduced by the world of drugs, alcohol and vandalism. Positive activities teach youth essential life skills including responsibility, self-esteem, cooperation, discipline and patience. It costs much less to enroll young people in a recreation program than it does to incarcerate them. (Decima Research, 1992).



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