

Development, Lifestyle, and Aging

Le développement, le mode de vie, et la vieillesse

Priority Eclecticism Regarding Older Adults Among Ontario Recreation and Leisure Services Delivery Components

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INTRODUCTION

Building on a 10-year history of involvement with recreation and older adults, the Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Recreation established the Creative Initiatives for Older Adults Portfolio as one component of its efforts. The first major undertaking in its programme to support improvements in recreation to older adults was to host the Initiatives Symposium, held in March, 1988, in Ottawa (Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Recreation, 1988, p.1).

As a follow-up to the symposium, delegates and selected others were polled regarding their opinions and priorities relative to the recommendations from the conference as published in the conference report. Once established, the priorities were to be utilized by service delivery agencies and community action groups throughout Ontario to provide the basis for establishing action plans relative to recreation programmes and services and the older adult. This report documents those priorities.

METHODS

Potential respondents (n=444) were asked via mailed questionnaire to assign priority rankings using a Likert-type scale rating process for each of the statements proposed by Symposium delegates regarding the following issues:

- a. image
- b. involvement
- c. delivery
- d. advocacy
- e. education
- f. accessibility

In assigning priorities, respondents were asked to address the roles of seven distinct recreation and leisure service delivery sectors identified by conference delegates as being the primary delivery agents associated with recreation and leisure services and the older adult (Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Recreation, 1988, pp. 21-22). These sectors included:

1. provincial government ministries
2. municipal government agencies
3. other local agencies such as homes for the aged, YMCAs,

- seniors' residences
4. provincial voluntary organization professional associations such as The Ontario Recreation Society and the Older Adult Centre Association of Ontario
5. local voluntary organizations such as regional groups, advisory councils, and so on
6. private commercial recreation and leisure service agencies such as clubs, businesses and so on
7. individuals as concerned professionals

Data analysis was provided in two categories. The first was a macro-analysis relating to the data being reported on a province-wide basis. The second was a micro-analysis wherein the data were reported according to response from within the seven regions designated for this study.

The analyzed data were organized in the following manner and reported accordingly. Initially, the top priorities from the 160 statements on the questionnaire were identified provincially (macro-analysis) and for each of the seven regions (micro-analysis). Next, the top priorities were identified for each of the six issues emanating from the Initiatives Symposium provincially and for each of the regions. Third, the top priorities were identified from the 160 statements for each of the service delivery sector components investigated in this study. Fourth, and last, the top priorities for each issue for each sector were identified. Mean scores were used to determine the rankings for all of the statements in each of the categories reported in the study.

RESULTS

One hundred and forty-seven questionnaires were received from the study respondents with 133 of them being usable for analysis. In view of the length of the questionnaire and the extent of time that it took to complete it, the response rate of 33%, though low, was viewed very positively.

Initial data analysis revealed substantial response from all regions except the Northeast and the East Central. Province-wide overall priorities were distributed throughout the six issues with no one issue receiving particularly greater attention than any other. However, the top Provincial priorities were overwhelmingly associated with two service delivery sectors — Provincial government ministries and municipal government agencies.

Differences among priorities from region to region appeared to exist in the study giving credence to the notion that a Province-wide (macro) overall response would not be truly representative of the individual regions. Whereas some similar statements appeared throughout most of the regions in the top priorities, most priority profiles differed from region to region.

Service delivery sector components also showed some minor similarity in top priority response for the Province, but again, for the most part differed substantially from one sector to another. Two sectors were considerably under-represented here (and throughout the study) in the priority rankings — the private commercial recreation agencies sector and the individual professionals sector. Private commercial recreation agencies was the only sector acknowledged as having little or no major responsibility for any of the priorities through both the macro-analysis and the micro-analysis. Regional sector priorities, like the issues priorities for the regions, showed considerable difference in their rankings. However, as was the case for the overall Province-wide priority rankings, they were drawn primarily from the two service delivery sectors of Provincial government ministries and municipal government agencies.

Also reported were the top 20 priorities for each of six older adult recreation and leisure service delivery groups in the Province, the focal groups as identified by their affiliates through the

survey. These focal groups were: (1) Ontario Ministry of Tourism staff; (2) Homes and Institutional Personnel; (3) Older Adult Centres representatives; (4) College and University Professors and Instructors; (5) Municipal Parks and Recreation People; and (6) other city officials.

Results showed considerable discrepancy among each of the components regarding perceived priorities regarding service delivery responsibility. Comparisons revealed a general eclecticism in the direction of energies on behalf of the six components in their attempt to address the overall problem of meeting recreation and leisure needs of Ontario's older adults. The necessary united front essential to overcoming this problem is in apparent need of some restructuring and rethinking if concentrated, focused efforts are going to exist in Ontario.

DISCUSSION

Based on the results, it would appear that serious attention should be given to the fact that differences exist within each of the regions when compared to the overall Province-wide response. This gives credence to the notion that regional workshops should be conducted to establish more localized action plans. The priorities, as identified herein, could provide bases for discussions of action plans for all groups or agencies concerned with recreation and leisure services and the older adult. The data could serve as a starting point in deliberations for either localized or province-wide undertakings.

In addition, the data presented in this report could be used by various professional bodies associated with recreation and leisure and the older adult in Ontario in the determination of action plans of their own in this regard. Such organizations should be made aware of the existence of this report and the information included in it should be made available to them on request.

Last, it should be kept in mind that this report exists not as a directive regarding what various aspects of the service delivery sector should be doing, but rather, it is a compilation of the opinions of a group of concerned practitioners as to what they individually feel should be done. The data presented herein describe what the respondents are thinking about and what they are concerned about in this area. It is presented essentially as a data set of opinion for various professional, para-professional, and other groups to consider in their discussions of the future and recreation and leisure services and the older adult in Ontario, as well as elsewhere.

REFERENCES

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PROCEEDINGS
Sixth Canadian Congress on Leisure Research
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