

## Talking Points for Dialogues with Community Decision Makers The Value of Parks and Recreation

- Recreation is integral to high quality of life by creating active, connected, vibrant individuals and communities. Recreation is a public good and has been proven to support individual and community resilience.

- Recreation significantly impacts local and regional economies by building strong communities and families, enhancing mental, physical and social wellbeing, connecting people to nature and contributing to job creation and tourism.

- Recreation plays a key role in cost avoidance. “Upstream” investments in recreation can lead to improvements in individual and community wellbeing, which helps to reduce costs in health care, social services and justice.

- Community parks in particular provide fundamental environmental, aesthetic, and recreation benefits to our community. They are also a source of positive economic benefits. They enhance property values, increase municipal revenue, bring in homebuyers and workers and attract retirees.

- Recreation provides the foundation of facilities, programming and human infrastructure upon which the industries of sport, culture and tourism rely to grow, thrive and contribute to the economy.

### Parks and Recreation and Recovery from COVID-19

- As (insert name of community) implements its re-open plan, it is essential to recognize the critical role that parks and recreation play in the economic recovery of communities, as well as in support of the mental and physical wellbeing of their community members.

- Community decision making in support of parks and recreation services must be clear, decisive and timely—the benefits for quality of life will be felt throughout the community for years to come.

- Returning parks and recreation services fully and safely in a post-pandemic context must be a priority for all levels of government.

- As both the current and past crises have shown, parks and recreation are one of the primarily sought and most crucial services requested by members of communities.



- Our community members now have an even greater appreciation for the benefits of community parks and recreation services and will support the decision to prioritize spending in this area.

### **The Importance of Inclusion & Access**

- Equitable access to recreation programs and facilities is fundamental to the wellbeing of our citizens, especially the most vulnerable in our community.
- Community parks and open spaces are welcoming and inclusive spaces and provide a place of refuge for community members. These spaces are needed now more than ever.
- Recreation provides critical opportunities for connection and social inclusion for people of all ages, abilities, identities and ethnicities. Without fully reopening recreation facilities and services, the social costs will be significant and felt throughout the short and long term by the entire community.

### **The Rationale for Financial Support**

- Prioritizing parks and recreation services within the community budget is critical to the recovery of our people and economy. It is not in the best interest of our community to target budget cuts in this area, as the ramifications will be felt in other budget areas such as health care and community policing.
- Many community services such as waste, water, roads and bridges did not suffer from the impacts of COVID-19. Thus, a targeted investment in community services like recreation that were heavily impacted by the pandemic is required for full community recovery.
- The significant economic contributions that community parks and recreation make to our local economy have been absent throughout the pandemic, from youth employment to sport and recreation tourism to facility/program user fees. Prioritizing funding for parks and recreation will have a significant economic return.
- Funding commitments to parks and recreation should be part of a broader community strategy involving schools, public health, active transportation, city planners/designers, small business owners and other community stakeholders.
- Community recreation departments require additional funds to prepare and adjust policies, practices and protocols to adapt to new and changing safety regulations and public expectations.
- Our community's economic recovery relies heavily on the productivity of caregivers who require safe and secure supports for dependents. Examples include childcare, camps and programs for their children and recreation programs and facilities for aging family members. Such supports also provide integration of various demographics to learn, practice, and demonstrate skill that can be beneficial to the community.
- Without funding for community parks and recreation, the impact will be a reduction in opportunities to create a sense of belonging and social connection for parents, children, elders and vulnerable populations, which will have catastrophic consequences across our community. All community members will directly feel investment in parks and recreation.