

COVID-19 and the Recreation Sector



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COVID-19 and the Recreation Sector Survey

Background

Recreation Connections Manitoba (RCM) sent out a survey to over 400 RCM members in April on how COVID-19 was affecting the recreation sector. Our members include municipal recreation departments, commissions, recreation directors/programmers/facility managers, and non-profit organizations. We received 44 responses within the specified response time frame.

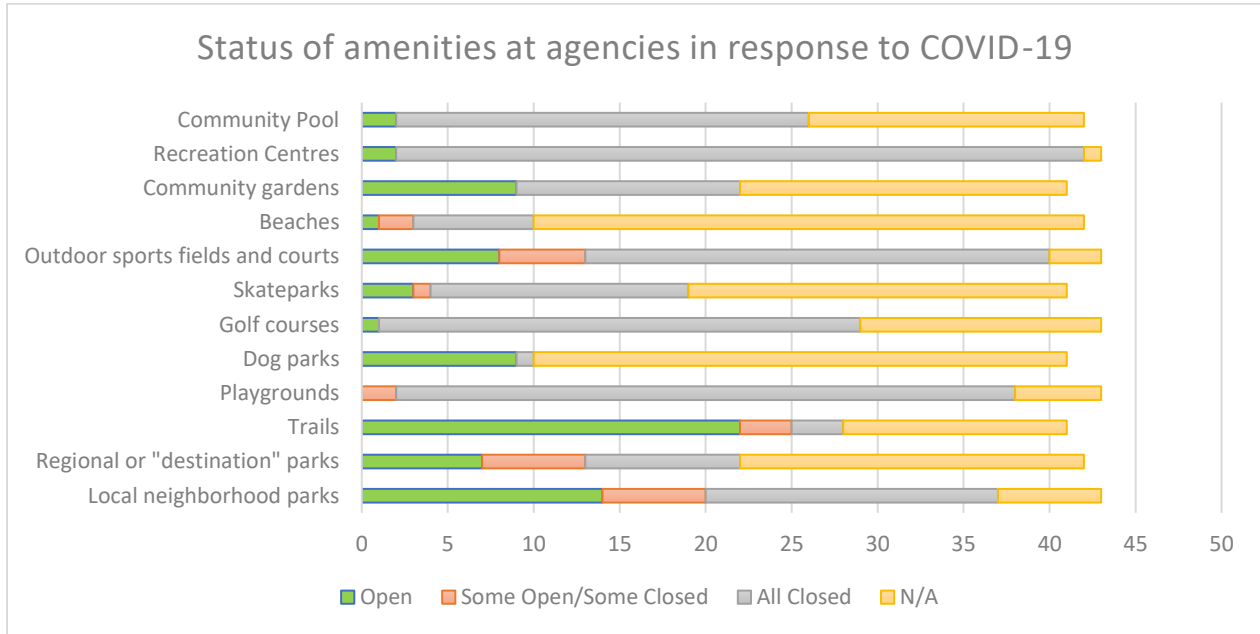
List of Participants

Members that participated in the survey:

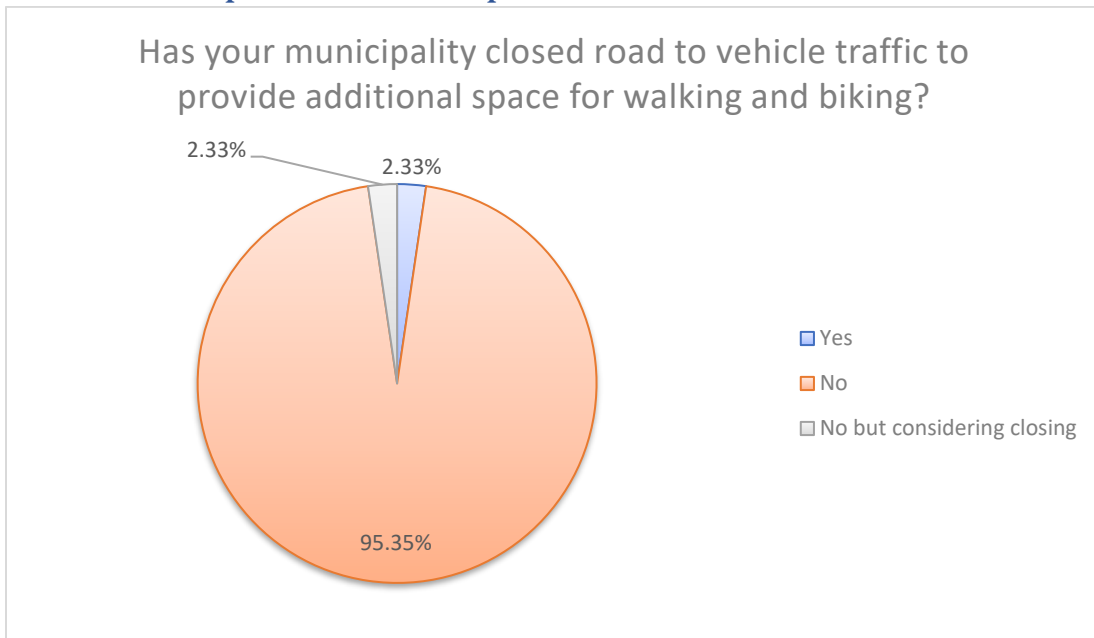
- Active Living Centre UofM
- Carberry community center
- City of Thompson Department
- City of Winkler
- City of Winnipeg
- Dakota Community Centre
- Dakota Community Centre/ Jonathan Toews Sportsplex
- Fern Valley Recreation
- Gateway Recreation Centre
- Gilbert Plains Recreation
- Gimli Recreation Centre
- Grandview recreation commission
- Heartland Recreation Commission
- Holiday Inn Airport West
- ICE Marketing
- Macdonald-Headingley Recreation District
- Manitoba Fitness Council
- McCreary Recreation Commission
- Midwest Recreation District
- Municipality of Emerson-Franklin
- Municipality of Killarney-Turtle Mountain
- Municipality of Pembina
- Municipality of Roblin - Recreation Department
- Niverville Recreation Centre
- Prairie West Recreation
- RM of Argyle
- RM of La Broquerie
- RM of Springfield
- RM of St. Andrews
- RM of West St. Paul
- Rossburn Recreation
- Sncc
- Souris Glenwood Parks and Recreation
- Ste Rose Recreation & RM of Lakeshore
- Teulon Rockwood Recreation Commission INC.
- Town of Altona - Recreation Dept.
- Town of Beausejour/Community Services Department
- Town of Carberry
- Town of Neepawa
- Town of Niverville
- Town of Virden
- Walter Badger

Survey Responses

Status of amenities in your agency in response to COVID-19



Status of municipal road in response to COVID-19



Estimated re-opening date for facilities closed due to COVID-19

All agencies continue to evaluate programming and facilities closure at least biweekly. 84% (36) of respondents do not have an estimated re-opening date for their facilities. This can be attributed to the agency taking direction from the Public Health or the Government of Manitoba. These agencies are making plans in line with Federal and Provincial guidelines.

Of the agencies that have an estimated re-opening date, the dates range from May 15th to August 31st, 2020. These agencies are planning to resume summer programming provided government guidelines permit these activities.

Do you have a re-opening strategy?

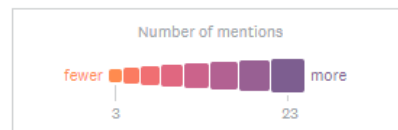
When asked what factors agencies are considering when planning for a return to normal operations, the following factors are said to be considered in addition to recommendations of Provincial Government, Manitoba Health Authority and Provincial Sport Organizations.

- Online or virtual programming
- Reduction in admissible numbers
- Social distancing measures to be put in place
- Daily sanitization of facilities spaces and equipment
- Installing temporary and permanent signage
- Increased hand sanitization stations
- Installing facilities equipment such as ice surface
- New policy and procedures
- Re-hiring staff (part-time and permanent)
- Re-casting the budget
- Updated safety equipment
- Staff training (enhanced first aid)
- Securing cancelled businesses/bookings
- Number of weeks left in the season for operation
- Cost analysis and financial viability of operations
- Completely clean facility prior to opening
- Program promotion and advertising facilities' availability for usage

For agencies that currently have no re-opening strategy, they stated they required many of the above stated resources/support to create one. It was also noted that many who do not have a plan in place yet is due to the uncertainty as to when facilities and the need for guidance in the form of templates or strategy guide documents.

Effect of the pandemic on the recreation and parks sector in the future

closed_{events} community_{hope} change_{take} facilities_{stay}
people_{keep} will_{way} programs_{know} think_{need} group
trails revenue long



It was agreed that fitness will be changed by the pandemic. On one hand, the current lack of social interaction has left people feeling disconnected, so there will be interested popularity of fitness and outdoor activities following the lifting of restrictions. On the other hand, there will be a heightened level of risk awareness and demand for non-contact or “safe” close to home activities which do not require much external interaction. People may be less inclined to partake in group and contact sports. Parks and Trails may become more popular as people seek out outdoor/open space for their activities. Government funding may also be focused on parks and public spaces in the immediate future.

There will be increased Public Health requirements from facilities which may delay capital and operational spending/funding, causing some facilities to fall behind in program delivery. The cost of putting new hygiene protocol and signage in place in addition to revenue lost from closures may put facilities in a difficult financial position causing extended closures beyond current lockdown mandates. The new requirements from Public Health may also call for policy creation or review as well as staff training. New policies would include new space capacity as well as sanitization protocols. Agencies may also be required to plan for future pandemics by creating business continuity planning which include internal/external communication strategies, financial stability plans, enhanced HR policies, facility maintenance plans and recovery planning.

There may also be a (permanent) shift to online or virtual programming for certain activities to assist facilities cope better with capacity restrictions and anxiety involved in running group activities. This shift in addition to closures and public sentiment would result in significant revenue loss for many facilities.

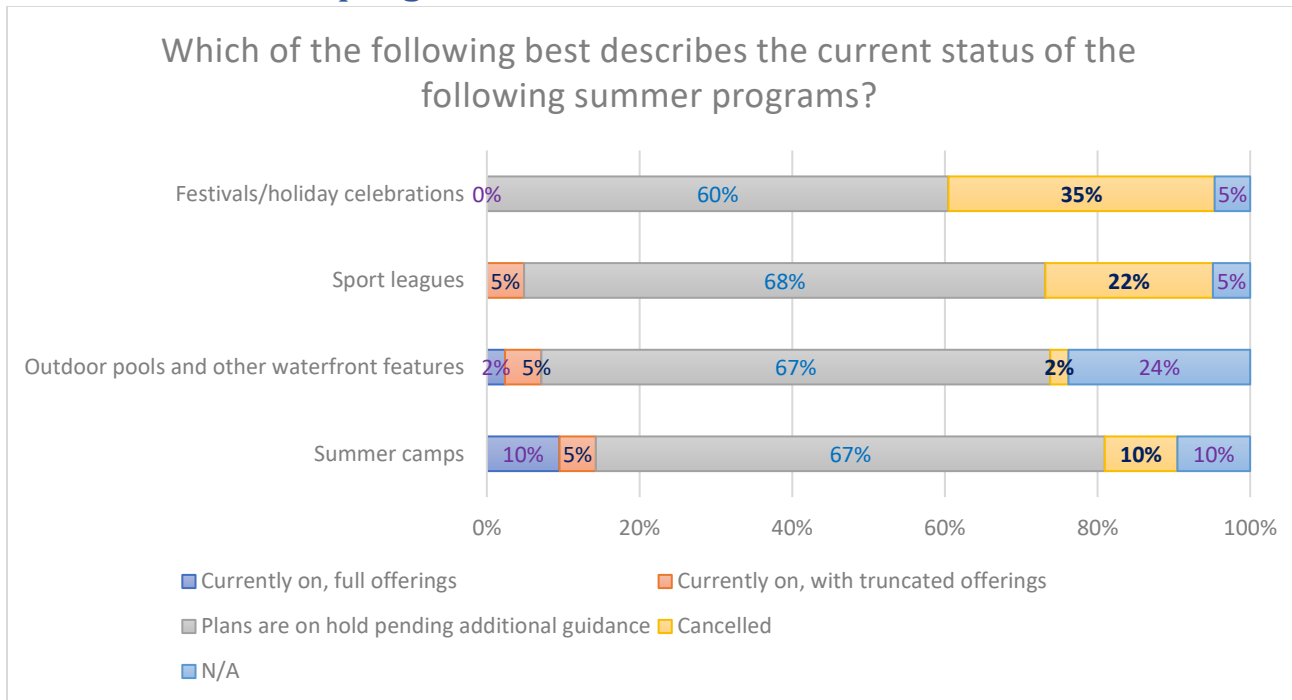
The loss in revenue coupled with funding cuts would mean agencies cannot sponsor events or offer reduced fee events to community members. Widespread job losses across the economy would mean families will actively seek out free activities in a bid to make their budget go further, however many free programs may not be available due to the financial burden being faced by facilities and agencies within the sector. Budgetary cuts have also affected online mental and physical wellbeing programming at some, the impact of this on Fall 2020 and Winter 2021 programming is unknown at present.

Comments on municipality's efforts and the role parks & recreation in communities

Agencies are taking a conservative, proactive approach, putting rigid measures and actions in place. Agencies are providing consistent timely communication to all stakeholders through online meetings as well as social media. A few agencies have provided their communities with stay-at-home programs and activities for residents including videos and printable activity sheets. Mental health programs have also been delivered virtually. Trails, some public restrooms and parks have been left open for limited use to allow residents remain active. Communities are being educated on recommended parks and playground safety rules. Some facility managers are also currently working with their Public Works Department to ensure public spaces and trails can be safely opened in their communities.

Some facilities are closed due to staff lay-off, so they are unable to provide adequate support to community members. 10 respondents indicated they are also unable to provide adequate support due to lack of resources (technology and human resources). There has also been inadequate communication from some municipalities to facilities which makes it hard to effectively plan for the next few months in the case of some of the respondents.

Status of Summer programs



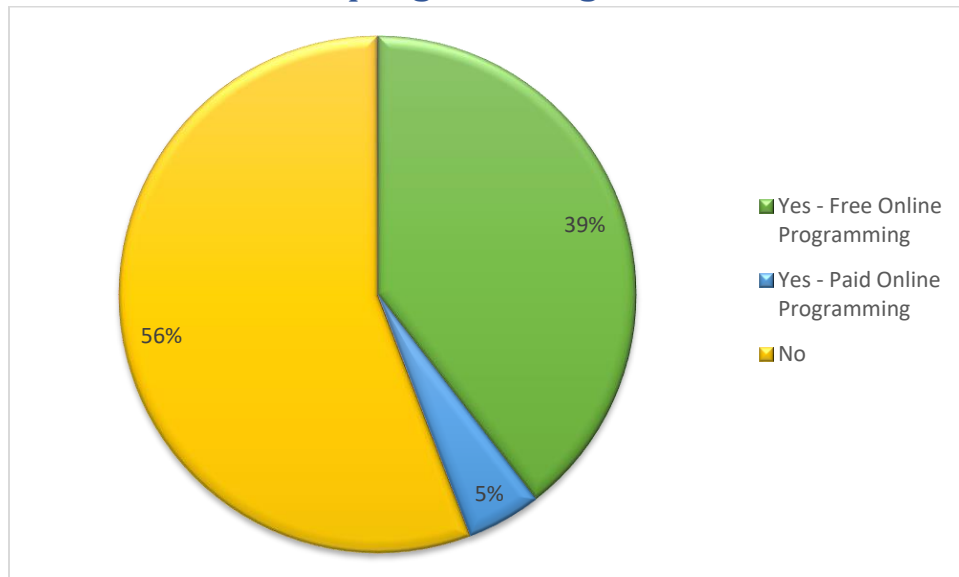
Hiring status of municipal summer seasonal employees

Answer Choices	Responses	
We have decided to not hire summer seasonal staff this year due to the COVID-19 crisis	5%	2
We have delayed hiring for summer seasonal staff because of uncertainty with summer offerings	63%	27
We are not currently recruiting for summer seasonal staff due to an municipal-wide hiring freeze	12%	5
We are not currently recruiting for summer seasonal staff due to an inability to meet candidates in-person, conduct reference checks, or other logistical challenge	2%	1
We are currently recruiting, interviewing and hiring summer seasonal staff	9%	4
We have completed hiring seasonal staff for this summer	9%	4
	Answered	43
	Skipped	1

How communities are engaged during the closures

- Online contests and competitions (photo contest, online scavenger hunt, window project)
- Online programming, workshops and webinars (using Zoom, Facebook Live and Instagram Live)
- Providing updates via website, email, social media and newsletter
- Video chats, texts, email and phone calls
- Daily Press release from Mayor
- Adverts in local newspapers
- Bulletin in water bills
- Publishing activity sheets and online video guides (activities range from exercise to baking, mental health programs to crafts)
- Using hashtag on all social media post to aggregate all communication.
- Making available avenues for recreation professionals to share ideas with each other and connect through calls and videoconferencing.

Have you moved to online programming?



Health and well-being opportunities provided to municipal staff

Answer Choices	Responses	% of total Responses
Well-being calls (check-in conversations from supervisor/management to discuss concerns, share ideas)	19	50%
PPEs and masks for employees in the field	13	34%
Employee Assistance Programs (EAP)	9	24%
Professional development	6	16%
None of these are offered to staff	6	16%
Mindfulness training	5	13%
Working from home	2	5%
Resources to support basic needs (e.g., food, medical supplies, shopping)	1	3%
Flexible /Spilt Shift	1	3%
On-staff doctors, nurses and/or physician assistant to answer COVID-19 related questions and concerns	0	0%
Childcare for employees in the field	0	0%
Answered		38
Skipped		6

Current service offering by municipalities

Answer Choices	Responses	% of total Responses
Serving or distributing food to older adults	4	15%
Opening municipal facilities to serve as emergency shelters	3	12%
Opening municipal facilities to serve as COVID-19 overflow testing and treatment sites	3	12%
Serving or distributing food to vulnerable families	1	4%
Serving or distributing food to vulnerable youth	1	4%
Food bank	1	4%
Childcare to the children of essential agency staff	0	0%

Childcare to the children of other government, medical and public safety staff	0	0%
Childcare to children of the general public	0	0%
None/Not Applicable	13	50%
Answered		26
Skipped		18

Estimated Revenue lost by facilities

Average weekly loss

- Min: \$300
- Max: \$100,000¹
- Average: \$14,845

Total Revenue loss

- Min: \$2,000
- Max: \$700,000
- Average: \$94,894²

Conclusion

We thank everyone who took part in this survey. RCM continues to monitor the situation and will update members as new information becomes available.

¹ One estimate of \$500,000 weekly loss removed to normalize result.

² Average total revenue loss would be \$119,486 if Pools and campgrounds do not open