



Parks and Recreation Are Essential to Community Resilience

The New Brunswick parks and recreation sector is dedicated to serving communities across our province. Our programs and services create strong and vibrant people and places while addressing many of our most pressing health, social and environmental issues. The vital role we play is even more evident during challenging times, including the global pandemic are now facing.

New Brunswick communities must band together during this time and continue to enforce the guidelines and follow the recommendations of our public health officials. It is also important that municipal parks and recreation agencies leverage our position in the community to provide resources and tools that help prevent all forms of disease and keep citizens safe and healthy. Quality parks and recreation services improve the mental and physical health of our communities in addition to significantly boosting our local economies.

Parks and recreation are essential to a community's ability to endure hardships and bounce back from crises. Our sector will be central to New Brunswick's recovery from this pandemic and crucial for the economic revival of our communities. However, municipal parks and recreation systems across the province are losing revenue every week due to the required closure of facilities and suspension of programming. Furthermore, New Brunswickers are developing new expectations and concerns related to public health and safety that will require our field to adapt and upgrade its facilities and programs moving forward. Following this pandemic, our parks and recreation systems will struggle to return to their previous service levels, and in small and rural communities, they may not be able to return at all.

To ensure that all New Brunswickers have equitable access to parks and recreation following this pandemic, government support for our sector is essential. Reopening and restoring parks, recreation programming and services in a timely and safe manner will be costly in the short-term, but will provide long-term social, health and economic benefits. Financial support should reflect the current situation and consider the unique challenges municipal parks and recreation agencies are facing:

- revenue loss due to facility closures and programming cancellations;
- the cost of hiring and (re)training student employees and staff;
- new and enhanced public health concerns regarding facilities and programming; and
- necessary upgrades to recreation infrastructure (e.g., handwashing stations).

With targeted government funding, parks and recreation agencies will be able to adapt and thrive in a post-pandemic environment and will help create employment opportunities across our province. Investments in municipal parks and recreation services and infrastructure will address multiple economic and social government priorities and help New Brunswickers rediscover recreation.