Introduction

Ontario Support for the Framework for Recreation in Canada 2015

The Government of Ontario recognizes the importance of recreation, and is committed to supporting universal access to physical activity and recreation programming. In February 2015, the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport along with other Provincial and Territorial Ministers responsible for Sport, Physical Activity, and Recreation (SPAR), formally endorsed the Framework for Recreation in Canada 2015 (the Framework) as a guiding document for the recreation sector in Canada. The Framework, jointly developed by Provincial and Territorial Governments and key representatives from the Canadian recreation sector (led by the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association), intends to guide and stimulate coordinated practices in recreation that aim to improve the wellbeing of individuals, communities and the built and natural environment.

Within the Government of Ontario, recreation impacts a variety of initiatives taking place across many Ontario Ministries. Whether it’s planning related to health promotion, promoting active transportation as an alternative commuting option, introducing mandatory physical activity within our education system, or efforts to preserve parks and natural areas, recreation plays a key role in delivering on the governments’ mandate. The Framework will be a useful resource as Ministries continue to renew and develop policies, strategies and initiatives to reflect the current trends and issues affecting recreation in Ontario.

The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, as the lead Ministry responsible for recreation within the province of Ontario, undertook a process to identify government initiatives that support the Framework and promote the benefits of recreation. Within this report a select number that align with the goals and priorities outlined within the Framework have been highlighted.
GOAL 1

Active Living
Foster active living through physical recreation

“Participation in physical recreation is essential to building healthy, active individuals from infancy to older adulthood. The Framework outlines a solid evidence base to support the positive relationships between regular physical activity and healthy aging. Engaging in physical activity with others has been proven to help build social networks and promote overall health.”

Articulated below are Government of Ontario commitments that align with and support Goal 1: Active Living.

Ontario’s Healthy Kids Strategy

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has launched the Healthy Kids Strategy, which takes a whole-child approach to healthy child/youth growth and development. The Strategy is aimed at meeting the government’s objective to reduce childhood obesity. The Strategy supports the child’s right to play, and encourages full participation in age appropriate recreation experiences, cultural life and artistic and leisure activities.

The Healthy Kids Strategy focuses on:

- **PILLAR 1: HEALTHY START** | Helping parents learn what to do before pregnancy and during the early years for their children;

- **PILLAR 2: HEALTHY FOOD** | Helping parents and their children make healthy food choices; and,

- **PILLAR 3: HEALTHY ACTIVE COMMUNITIES** | Building healthy communities for kids to grow up in and get active.

Healthy Schools Strategy: Promoting Well-Being Through Physical Activity

Achieving Excellence, the government’s renewed vision for education, has elevated promoting well-being to one of four interconnected goals for the education system. This goal emphasizes a focus on the whole child – their cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development. Through our healthy schools strategy, the Ministry of Education has collaborated with partners across a variety of sectors to address multiple health-related topics, including physical activity.

To date, the Ministry of Education has:

• Updated the Foundations for a Healthy School resource that provides schools with sample strategies and activities that can be used at the school level, in the classroom, or with a group of students to address specific, curriculum-linked health-related topics, including physical activity.

• Implemented a Daily Physical Activity in Elementary Schools (P/PM 138) policy that requires all students in grades 1-8 to take part in 20 minutes of moderate to vigorous Daily Physical Activity during instructional time each day.

• Awarded 70 one-time Physical Activity in Secondary Schools Grants of up to $20,000 for innovative projects that are intended to change the physical activity culture in schools and increase physical activity.

• Supported the development of a Healthy Schools Certification Program (led by Ophea) aimed at supporting and increasing the capacity of schools to address health-related topics including physical activity; and, Supported the development of the “Heroes of Play” program to recognize teachers, principals, parents, and students who encourage physical activity at school.

The Ministry of Education also provides support for safe participation in physical activity, through:

• Free-of-charge and barrier-free online physical activity safety guidelines for all Ontarians (funded by Ministry of Education and administered by Ophea).

• School Board Policy on Concussion (P/PM158)– The policy outlines the ministry’s expectations for school boards to develop and maintain a policy on concussion awareness, prevention, identification, management and training, as well as, requiring school boards to develop a return to learn and return to physical activity plan for students with a diagnosed concussion.
Seniors Information and Active Living Fairs

The Ontario Seniors’ Secretariat provides funding to the Older Adult Centres’ Association of Ontario to coordinate the delivery of over 60 Seniors Information and Active Living Fairs across the province. The majority of these fairs are held in Elderly Persons Centres and help promote healthy aging and active living among seniors in Ontario. Annual attendance at these fairs has grown to approximately 15,000 seniors from across the province.

http://www.oacao.org/information_fairs.html
GOAL 2

Inclusion and Access

Increase Inclusion and Access to Recreation for Populations that Face Constraints to Participation

“Recreation has the ability to reach all citizens, and bring people together in a non-threatening, pleasurable atmosphere. Acknowledging and valuing cultural, ethnic and racial diversity is vital to the prevention of prejudice and discrimination. Recreation needs to take into account differences such as variations in sex and gender, age and ability, sexual orientation, education, persons with a disability, religious beliefs, socioeconomic status and mental health concerns that affect wellbeing.”

Articulated below are Government of Ontario commitments that align with and support Goal 2: Inclusion and Access.

The Special Needs Strategy

The Ministries of Children and Youth Services, Community and Social Services, Health and Long-Term Care and Education are collaborating on the implementation of the Special Needs Strategy, and are working towards a vision of an Ontario where children and youth with special needs get the timely and effective services they need to participate fully at home, at school and in the community. As a first step, Coordinated Service Planning implemented under the Special Needs Strategy is intended to help connect families of children and youth with multiple and/or complex special needs with a range of services that meet their needs. Service Planning Coordinators will work with families, educators and community service providers from multiple sectors to coordinate service planning and monitor progress. Where applicable, this may include service planning to enable participation in recreational activities and, as such facilitate the participation in recreation activities of children and youth with multiple and/or complex special needs.

http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/topics/specialneeds(strategy/index.aspx
The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005

The Ministry of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure is responsible for legislation called the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005. Under this act, mandatory accessibility standards, Ontario Regulation 191/11, have been developed to identify, remove and prevent barriers in key areas of daily living. The Integrated Accessibility Standards Part IV.1 Design of Public Spaces includes accessibility requirements for the design of new or redeveloped recreational elements such as trails, beach access routes, outdoor eating areas and play spaces so people of all abilities can participate and enjoy recreational activities in their communities.

https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessibility-laws

Community Aboriginal Recreation Activator Program

The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport has implemented the Community Aboriginal Recreation Activator (CARA) Program which is targeted to remote and isolated First Nation communities. The purpose is to enhance the capacity of First Nations to meet their sport and recreation needs, utilizing local resources and partnerships with other community-based organizations. Currently, CARA is running in 27 First Nation reserve communities. CARA recognizes and enables the experience of Aboriginal peoples in recreation with a holistic approach drawn from traditional values and culture.

Seniors Community Grant Program

The Ontario Seniors’ Secretariat’s Seniors Community Grant Program is helping more seniors have a better quality of life by providing opportunities to be more physically and socially active, volunteer, contribute to their communities and continue learning. This grant makes $2 million available annually for projects across Ontario that will help more seniors stay active, engaged, learning and contributing. Since 2014, when the program launched, almost $730,000 has been granted to benefit approximately 30,000 seniors across 123 programs and activities related to fitness/physical activity and recreation.

Lists of successful applicants for 2014 and 2015 are available at the following links:


Elderly Persons Centres (EPCs)

Through the Ontario Seniors’ Secretariat, the government provides $11.5 million to support 263 EPCs that offer seniors social, cultural and recreational programs and also provide some health education and support services. The Ontario Seniors’ Secretariat is currently undertaking a program review of EPCs to better understand these centres and to consider ways to optimize their roles, including their connection to other government and community programs.
The recreation field plays a vital role in connecting people with nature through parks, trails, open space, gardens, land/streetscapes and water based resources under its management or influence in community planning and design. By enabling public access to nature it helps to foster improved cognitive, mental and physical health, enhance creativity and positive social behaviour, and support healthy active living and biodiversity.”

Articulated below are Government of Ontario commitments that align with and support Goal 3: Connecting People and Nature.

Ontario Parks Learn to Camp Program

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry’s Learn to Camp Program at Ontario Parks was established in 2011 to help people discover the joy of camping in a safe and fun environment. Ontario Parks aims to help people acquire the skills and confidence they need to connect with Ontario’s beautiful natural environments. This program allows individuals to connect with nature and the outdoors, as well as develop public awareness and education initiatives to increase understanding of the importance of nature to one’s well-being.

http://www.ontarioparks.com/learntocamp
Grants in Support of Tourism Regions
The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport provides annual funding in support of Ontario’s Tourism Regions. In 2010, the Ministry supported the establishment of 13 Tourism Regions to further advance the competitiveness of Ontario’s tourism sector. Each region is led by a Regional Tourism Organization (RTO). Several RTOs are working with local partners on outdoor recreation related projects including undertaking research and planning, assisting in trail, waterway and cycling signage projects and developing and marketing outdoor recreation experiences, routes, itineraries and packages.


Lake Simcoe Protection Plan
The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change funds various projects that are involved in protecting the Lake Simcoe watershed. The Lake Simcoe Protection Plan recognizes that protecting and restoring the ecological health of the Lake Simcoe watershed is a shared responsibility and a long-term undertaking. A key objective of the Plan is to improve conditions for environmentally sustainable recreation activities and promote those activities. The Lake Simcoe Protection Plan supports local projects which promote environmentally sustainable recreation practices within the Lake Simcoe watershed. Owners and operators of recreation facilities are encouraged to develop and implement projects that promote best management practices to help recreationalists protect the ecology and cultural heritage of the watershed. In this way the Plan helps people connect to nature through recreation.


Ontario Trails Strategy
The Ontario Trails Strategy is a long-term plan to guide the development, management, promotion and use of trails in Ontario. The vision of the Ontario Trails Strategy is a world-class system of diversified trails, planned and used in an environmentally responsible manner that enhances the health and prosperity of all Ontarians. On June 1, 2016, the government passed the Supporting Ontario’s Trails Act, 2016 following with Royal Assent on June 9, 2016. Upon proclamation, the act will help the trails community more effectively develop, operate and promote trails by addressing longstanding land access, liability, trespassing and protection of property challenges.

Supportive physical and social environments help facilitate community and family connectedness, which involves taking care of each other, our communities and our natural environment. Creating supportive environments for recreation can ensure access to safe and effective spaces and places that are required to deliver a comprehensive mix of high quality recreational experiences. Creating supportive physical environments include the provision of essential facilities, the effective use of existing spaces and addressing the decline of Canada’s recreation and sport infrastructure.”

Articulated below are Government of Ontario commitments that align with and support Goal 4: Supportive Environments.

Promoting Life Skills in Aboriginal Youth Program

Since 2010, Ontario has partnered with the international not-for-profit organization, Right To Play in support of the Promoting Life Skills in Aboriginal Youth (PLAY) program. The PLAY program provides Indigenous children and youth with the opportunity to participate in consistent, weekly, year-round programming to improve their self-confidence and enhance their capacity for leadership. Through youth-led events, inter-generational tournaments and sport clinics, the PLAY program:
• Promotes the health of children and youth so they can learn how to be and stay healthy;
• Helps Indigenous children and youth explore their identity and culture;
• Builds children and youth’s leadership capacity so they can succeed as leaders within their communities; and
• Supports the reclamation of Indigenous culture by helping First Nations children and youth (re)connect with their culture and traditions.

http://www.ontario.ca/page/promoting-life-skills-aboriginal-youth-play

Provincial Policy Statement

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing is the ministry-lead for the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS, 2014). The PPS 2014 provides policy direction on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and development, including policies promoting supportive physical and social environments that encourage participation in recreation, community hub development, and active, healthy communities. The policies are founded on core principles supporting more sustainable patterns of development and resource use and apply to all communities in the province.

http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page215.aspx

The Greenbelt Plan and Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan

In addition, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing’s Greenbelt Plan and Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan provide policy direction on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning, that promote supportive physical and social environments including parkland, open space and trails in the Greenbelt. Throughout the Greenbelt and the Oak Ridges Moraine, there is existing public parkland and open space, as well as major trails such as the Bruce Trail, Trans Canada Trail, the Niagara Greenway and the Lake Ontario Waterfront Trail. This system of parks and trails provides significant economic benefits and opportunities to a multitude of uses and activities.

http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page189.aspx
http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page1707.aspx
Ontario Cycling Strategy

The Ministry of Transportation’s Ontario Cycling Strategy (#CycleON) enables participation in physically active recreational experiences throughout the life course by focusing specifically on active transportation. As part of #CycleON Action Plan 1.0, the Ministry of Transportation has established a $10 million Ontario Municipal Cycling Infrastructure Program, to help municipalities build new and improve existing cycling infrastructure and is also working toward identifying a province-wide network of cycling routes to promote recreational cycling and cycling tourism.

As well, the Cycling Strategy works towards the development and implementation of targeted education campaigns that increase knowledge about how active transportation contributes to enjoyment and quality of life and helps people acquire the skills and attitudes they need to plan for making recreation a part of their lives. Through the Cycling Training Fund, another initiative of the first #CycleON Action Plan, the ministry is allocating $380,000 in financial assistance in 2015 and 2016 to help partners develop, enhance and deliver cycling skills training programs. The programs funded are building skills to promote safe and enjoyable cycling and encouraging healthier, more physically active lifestyles through cycling.


Community Use of Schools Program

The Ministry of Education’s Community Use of Schools program provides funding to all school boards so they can make school space more affordable for use after school hours. Both indoor and outdoor school space is available to not-for-profit community groups at reduced rates, outside of regular school hours. It supports a positive climate, by supporting and promoting healthy, active lifestyles for community youth. In addition, through its Priority Schools Initiative, Community Use of Schools helps a set of schools provide not-for-profit groups free after-hours access to school space in communities that need it most. Community Use of Schools supports healthy, active lifestyles, and student achievement and well-being by enabling not-for-profit groups to offer affordable activities to their communities.

http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/community/
GOAL 5
Recreation Capacity
Ensure the Continued Growth and Sustainability of the Recreation Field

The recreation field needs to recruit and inspire new leaders who can address emerging trends and have knowledge in a variety of areas, such as cultural diversity, emerging technologies, urban planning, active transportation and nature conservation. Recreation provides many young people with opportunities for employment and for leadership and career development. To be relevant and outcome-driven, leaders in recreation need timely access to emerging technologies as well as current evidence and information.

Articulated below are Government of Ontario commitments that align with and support Goal 5: Recreation Capacity.

Joint Training Sessions
The Ministry of Children and Youth Services’ (MCYS) Youth Justice Services Division provides and supports recreational activities dedicated towards preventing youth from coming into conflict with the law. For example, in May 2015, Probation Officers from MCYS, Remote Community Intervention Workers, Community Mentors and staff from Right to Play took part in joint training sessions to build capacity for two streams of recreational activities. The first stream of training, provided in partnership with the Jay’s Care Foundation, taught staff how to organize and manage a baseball league for youth in 11 First Nation communities in Grand Council Treaty #3. The second stream of training, provided in partnership with Painted Turtle Arts Camp, focused on how to organize summer camp programs that include various sport activities and arts and crafts for youth. These training sessions facilitated the enhancement of community-based leadership in recreation.

http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/topics/youthandthelaw/index.aspx
Physical Activity Resource Centre

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care funds the Physical Activity Resource Centre (PARC) to provide training, resources and supports to community agencies and public health units to implement best practice programs and policies for physical activity. Some of the key deliverables include knowledge exchange and professional learning, consultation and referrals, networking and partnership development, planning, evaluation and project management. PARC works to develop and implement high-quality training and competency-based capacity development programs for organizations and individuals working in recreation, particularly in under-resourced rural and remote areas. They also contribute to creating supportive social environments in the settings where people live, learn, work and play. In addition, the Physical Activity Resource Centre is coordinating a group of health promotion resource centres to support the Healthy Kids Community Challenge.

http://parc.ophea.net/

Ontario Sport and Recreation Communities Fund

The Ontario Sport and Recreation Communities Fund (OSRCF) was established to achieve a vision of getting and keeping Ontarians active in community sport, recreation and physical activity through the support of short-term projects that deliver high-quality and meaningful experiences to individuals at every phase of life. The OSRCF is targeted at populations whom lack equitable access to participate and/or have been historically less physically active. The OSRCF program includes a focus on strengthening the sport and recreation sector by building capacity. The fund has provided support to organizations in areas such as coaching, youth development and volunteer development, in order to ensure enhanced service and quality programming is available throughout the province.


Game ON: The Ontario Government’s Sport Plan

Game ON: The Ontario Government’s Sport Plan was launched in November 2015 and is rooted in three priorities for amateur sport – participation, development and excellence. Under the development priority, the plan supports provincial sport organizations (PSOs) and multi-sport organizations (MSOs) in their efforts to recruit and train coaches and volunteers. These efforts will help inspire new leaders and will provide many young people with opportunities for employment and for leadership and career development.

Conclusion

Ontario Support for the Framework for Recreation in Canada 2015

The Government of Ontario is committed to providing valued recreational programs and services to all Ontarians. The ability of recreation to provide solutions to many modern day challenges has provided the evidence behind many government investments, many of which can be seen within this report. These challenges include the:

- rising rates of obesity and sedentary living;
- decreased opportunities to connect with nature;
- inequities within society that have limited access to recreational programming and opportunities.

Moving forward, the Government of Ontario will continue efforts to implement the Framework, utilizing the document as a resource to guide decision making and planning. Working collaboratively with recreation stakeholders is an important focus for the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, ensuring valued and relevant recreation opportunities that are accessible across the province. While this report provides a snapshot of current investments in recreation and alignment efforts with the newly endorsed Framework for Recreation in Canada 2015, the benefits of recreation will continue to inform and impact emerging initiatives across many areas of government in the future.

The finalized Framework for Recreation in Canada 2015 document can be found here:

http://lin.ca/national-recreation-framework