



Local governments
lead the way



Physical Activity Strategy

Everybody Active



An active
community is a
healthy community

Everybody active

Everyone deserves access to parks and recreation opportunities

Across British Columbia, many citizens are left out of municipal parks and recreation planning because they have limited financial and social resources.

Regular physical activity protects against chronic disease, stress, anxiety and depression. It reduces loneliness, isolation and alienation. Parks and recreation connect people to neighbours and community resources building a stronger, more positive community.

Public pools, arenas, fitness centres, parks and trails, and recreation programs are key to building health through physical activity. But for people affected by poverty, seemingly small barriers can create significant obstacles to healthy living.

Many BC communities are taking action to make sure everybody has access to parks and recreation opportunities.

Are you one of them?

Poverty is...having a free swim pass but no money for the bus, babysitting or a bathing suit...knowing I should be more active but fearing I won't be accepted by others...not being able to afford proper shoes to walk 30 minutes a day...not having the time or energy for exercise after working two jobs...



Parks and
recreation connect
communities

Everybody matters

Currently, parks and recreation opportunities are out of reach for many people

Physical activity and recreation opportunities don't reach many families because of limited economic and social resources.

Poverty affects health in several ways:

- 1) Poverty often means that people can't afford to participate in activities that promote health
- 2) Chronic stress and limited social support can limit the ability to cope and engage in health building practices
- 3) Local government policies and practices can reinforce rather than remove barriers for people affected by poverty

While easier access to recreation and physical activity opportunities may not change their economic circumstances, it will help improve health and reduce stress, anxiety and loneliness. It can connect people to the broader community – and improve physical health and social well-being.

“Health inequities occur when some people – because they have more money, higher status, more education, etc. – have a better chance of being healthy.”

– Public Health Agency of Canada



Increasing physical
activity can
save millions

Improve health, save money

An inactive population financially impacts all levels of government

Municipalities are affected through increased costs for mental health, policing and social support services.

Creating an inclusive community, where everybody has access to parks and recreation services, helps reduce chronic disease and mental health issues and saves health and social services dollars.

The Bottom Line¹

- Inactivity costs BC an estimated \$211 million annual in direct health care costs.
- A 10% increase in physical activity could save the province \$18.13 million in direct health care costs.
- Studies show sedentary Canadians are more likely to suffer from depression than physically active Canadians. Reducing mental illness cases by just 5% through regular exercise can save \$81.2 million in direct and indirect costs.



Strong leaders build strong communities

Local governments lead the way

Leadership from local government is key to ensuring everybody can be active

Local governments, through their parks and recreation departments, play a vital role in building healthier, more active, communities.

Parks and recreation services are often the main providers of active living opportunities.

With connections and influence in many areas of the community, local governments are well-positioned to coordinate community-wide strategies that impact the health and well-being of people living in poverty.

By ensuring opportunities for disadvantaged community members to build health through physical activity, local governments can minimize the health inequities that often affect people living in poverty.

Local governments across British Columbia are adopting policies that promote inclusion and access through their parks and recreation strategic plans including:

- City of Chilliwack
- City of Dawson Creek
- City of New Westminster
- City of Richmond
- City of Surrey



Inclusive
communities
thrive

Take Action

Include everyone in parks and recreation planning to create a community free of barriers to recreation and physical activity



LEARN about the issues affecting community members affected by poverty. Raise awareness, your own and others.

ENGAGE community members affected by poverty and the organizations that support them. Ensure people have a voice in the decisions that affect their lives.

PLAN strategies that address the many layers of barriers. Work together across departments, including parks and recreation, community services and social planning, and engineering and development services.

ACT upon recommendations developed with community input. Who would know better how to address barriers than the people who face them?

REFLECT on policies and practices to ensure they remove rather than create barriers.

The first step: **Adopt a resolution that commits to improving access for everybody**

Sample Resolution:

[MUNICIPALITY] believes that recreation and physical activity are important for the health and well-being of all community members. Therefore, [MUNICIPALITY] supports in principal initiatives aimed at removing barriers to participation and increasing access to physical activity opportunities for community members affected by poverty.



Start talking

Begin the Conversation

Open dialogue builds understanding and awareness

Changing community health status can seem overwhelming. Many arguments can be made to maintain the status quo:

“People living in poverty don’t seem interested in physical activity programs.”

“Poverty isn’t really a municipal mandate. Aren’t there social service agencies in the community that deal with this issue?”

“We are concerned that designing programs or policies specifically for those with low incomes may be seen as segregation or as unfair. It’s reverse discrimination.”

In fact, we all have a role to play. To ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to build health through physical activity, it is important to discover what barriers exist and then develop strategies that address the needs that affect participation.

Local governments can have a great impact on the health of community members through the policies they endorse.

Committing to initiatives that remove barriers to physical activity levels the playing field and improves physical health and social well-being.

“It isn’t just about free programs and services. It’s all about the sense of community, that we are important, and that somebody is listening. We don’t get listened to very often.” — *Woman on low income*²





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Everybody Active

Everybody Active is a joint initiative of BC Recreation and Parks Association and the Heart and Stroke Foundation of BC & Yukon.

BCRPA is committed to leading the parks, recreation and culture sector in building and sustaining healthy active communities, including fostering economic and environmental sustainability. We inspire and support community leaders and practitioners through advocacy, communication, education, resources and other services.

For more information, contact Donna Lee, Everybody Active coordinator, at dlee@bcrrpa.bc.ca or phone 604.629.0965, extension 257.

1 Colman R. & Walker S. The Cost of Physical Inactivity in British Columbia. GPI Atlantic for BC Ministry of Health Planning, November 2004.

2 Frisby, W. & Millar, S. (2002). The actualities of doing community development to promote the inclusion of low-income populations in local sport and recreation. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, (3), 209-233.



HEART & STROKE FOUNDATION OF BC & YUKON

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A joint initiative of BC Recreation and Parks Association and the Heart and Stroke Foundation of BC & Yukon.

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