

# ideas THAT MATTER™

Volume 2, Number 3

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## Action Speaks Louder! Making the Case for Youth Recreation

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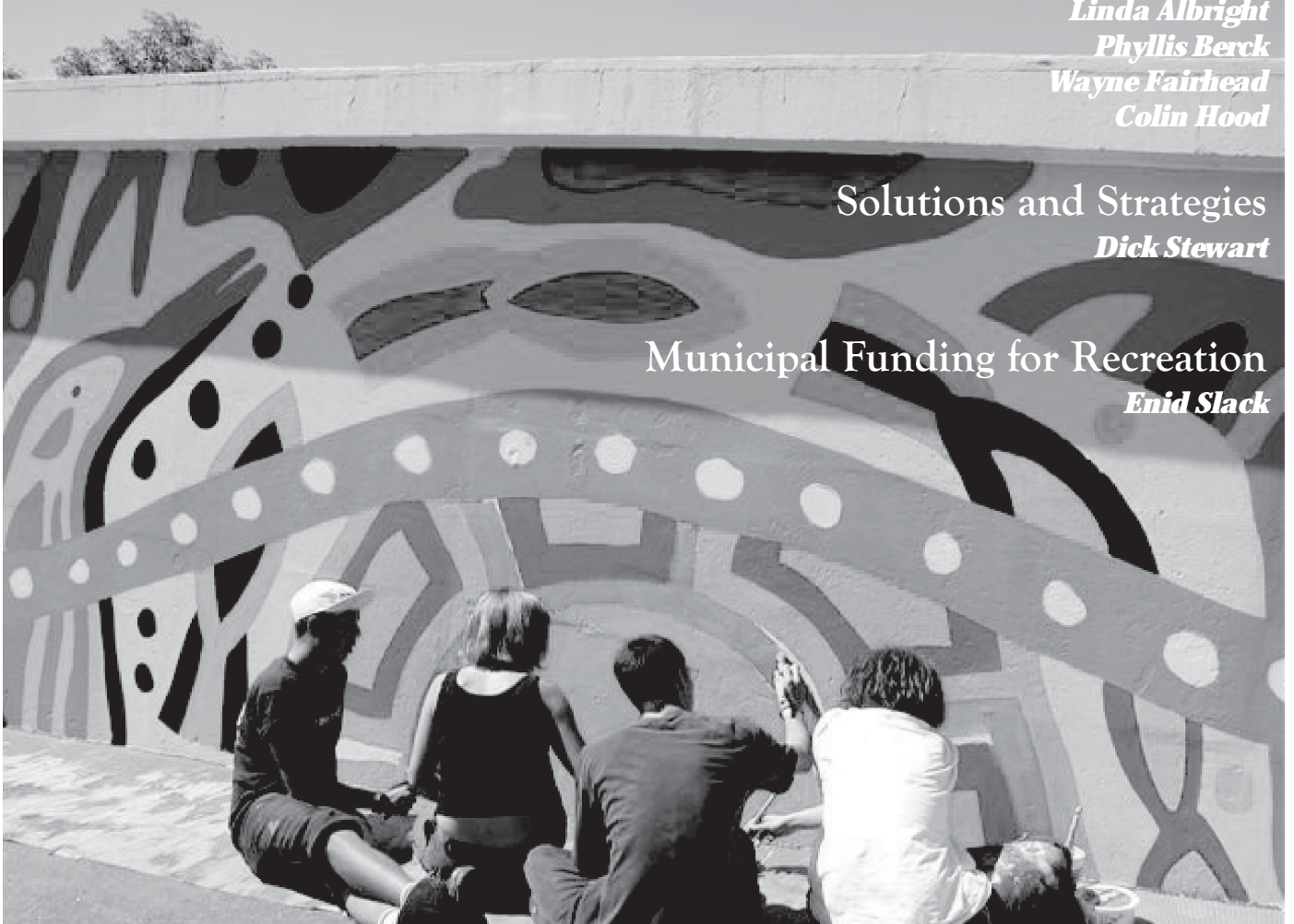
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*A quarterly to stimulate public discourse*

# ideas THAT MATTER™ .... Editor's Notes

An issue of Ideas That Matter that focuses on the social benefits of recreational activity is a welcome antidote to what has been a very long winter. This issue marks a new beginning of Ideas That Matter with the creation of Zephyr Press, a new publishing capacity within Avana Capital.

This issue is also unique in that it reports on a collaboration between Ideas That Matter and the Laidlaw Foundation, where together we convened an advocacy workshop addressing the societal benefit of recreation programming, especially for children and youth. Laidlaw has pursued a program focus in this area for several years (see Towards Universality in Youth Arts and Recreation Programs in Canada, page 25).

The forum, which was held in November 2002, brought together recreation practitioners, academics and community leaders to validate their experience of the broad benefits of recreation interventions for youth, particularly those at risk. The forum defined recreation very broadly to include both physical sports and the arts. From the research report of Dr. Gina Browne and the work of the System-Linked Research Unit at McMaster University, to the grassroots mobilization of Linda Albright's Arts Network for Children and Youth, the forum generated much enthusi-

asm for a variety of interventions and programming. Again and again, we heard that recreational programs are where young people develop their sense of identity and their ideas of citizenship and what's more, they often have a good time doing so. A large part of the power of recreation lies in the fact that these are usually chosen, which makes them very special in our world of societal demands for greater labour productivity.

This discussion also occurs in the context of severe budgetary limitations at the local municipal level to create and operate these programs. So this issue sets out a challenge to explore new financing models to provide infrastructure and programming and innovative community resources to take the next steps in mobilizing support for these initiatives.

Finally, a word of thanks and appreciation to Ginger Press ([www.gingerpress.com](http://www.gingerpress.com)), the wonderfully eclectic publishing firm, bookstore and café located on the main street of Owen Sound, Ontario, Canada. The Ginger Press and its owner, Maryann Thomas, helped give birth to Ideas That Matter, and we wish it continued success and express our appreciation for Maryann's many contributions to Ideas That Matter.

Mary W. Rowe  
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March 2003

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Ideas That Matter  
Volume 2 Number 3

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Ideas That Matter™ is a quarterly to stimulate public discourse published by:  
Zephyr Press  
170 Bloor Street West, Suite 804,  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5S 1T9  
P: (416) 944-1101  
F: (416) 944-8915  
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# Making the Case for Youth Recreation Integrated Service Delivery: More Effective and Less

Dr. Gina Browne

This article is based on the talk Gina Browne gave at "Action Speaks Louder", a forum on youth recreation convened by the Laidlaw Foundation and Ideas That Matter held in Toronto in November, 2002.

## Counting Up The Costs

I'm going to begin with an economic perspective. Health economists like to act like this is really hard to do but every person who shops for gro-

room care, laboratory services and social work services. In addition to the direct costs we also have out-of-pocket expenditures that people have to pay which sometimes accrue to government agencies, but most often accrue to the individual. Then we have also indirect costs such as time that children and youth lose from having received care plus hours off work by their parents. These are the direct and indirect costs. Now the health economists would say, "That's it." However there's an additional cost called the 'cash transfer cost' that hap-

each unit of service. We studied chronically ill people attending the medical outpatient clinics at Toronto General Hospital who were grouped by level of mental health – good, fair and poor. As mental health declined, patients used more of every kind of service - not only publicly funded health services but also out-of-pocket expenditures. There is a strong linear gradient where each type of cost is higher as a function of declining mental health (Table 1). The surprising thing is that this is not at all related to the severity or type of disease but to the level of mental health.

**Table 1 The Annual Per Patient Cost\* by Level of Adjustment to Mental Illness**

Adjustment	Good	Fair	Poor
<b>Direct Costs</b>			
Health Services	\$\$	\$\$	\$\$
TGH Primary Care Visits	349	699	1,266
TGH Specialists	1,511	1,846	2,348
Hospital Days	4,023	8,062	9,373
Other Emergency Room	14	24	35
Other Specialists	57	165	390
Health Professionals	113	758	1,143
Laboratory Services	1,548	2,121	3,219
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$7,615</b>	<b>\$13,675</b>	<b>\$17,774</b>
<b>Out-of-Pocket Expenditures</b>			
Medications	446	627	482
Medical Devices	12	36	699
Babysitting	179	341	294
Transportation	171	170	233
Parking	65	91	208
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$873</b>	<b>\$1,265</b>	<b>\$1,916</b>
<b>Total Direct Costs</b>	<b>\$8,488</b>	<b>\$14,940</b>	<b>\$19,690</b>
<b>Indirect Costs</b>			
Lost income by patient due to illness	301	3,589	3,900
Lost income by others due to patient's illness	904	57	293
Lost income due to receiving treatment	99	93	0
<b>Total Indirect Costs</b>	<b>\$1,304</b>	<b>\$3,739</b>	<b>\$4,193</b>
<b>Grand Total Direct/Indirect Costs</b>	<b>\$9,791</b>	<b>\$18,679</b>	<b>\$23,883</b>
<b>Cash-Transfer Effect of Illness</b>			
Unemployment Insurance	83	346	0
Worker's Compensation	0	0	0
Government Benefits	2,117	1,168	2,718
Private Insurance	780	942	4,690
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,980</b>	<b>\$2,456</b>	<b>\$7,408</b>

\*in 1987 Canadian Dollars

ceries knows that you can't add different kinds of resources together - a banana with an apple with a can of beans. You have to translate resources into a dollar value and then add up the cost of the groceries. Similarly in our work we count up the cost of people using different kinds of resources. There are direct costs such as hospital care, emergency

pens when people are poor and unemployed. It includes unemployment insurance, worker's compensation, social assistance and different kinds of cash transfers.

We take all these kinds of services – direct costs, out-of-pocket expenditures, indirect costs and the cash-transfer effects - and we multiply by the cost for

## A Picture of Youth at Risk

Let's now turn to a study we did to determine the prevalence and costs of youth psychiatric disorders in primary care. We randomly sampled 300 youth between the ages of ten and seventeen. As a family therapist, I know kids engage in a lot of risk behaviour and I was trying to find out what underlies their risk behaviour. We find out that it is highly related to the presence of behavioural or psychiatric disorders such as hyperactivity, emotional disorder, oppositional defiant disorder and conduct disorder. The more youth have these disorders, the higher the number and nature of risk behaviour events they engage in. You can see in the Venn diagram the tremendous overlap among these psychiatric disorders (Figure 1).

Of the total adolescents in the study, 48.67% had no disorder and the rest, 51%, had one or more psychiatric disorders. Any one of these disorders, such as anxiety disorder, only exists in its pure form in a small number of cases. I remember a physician saying to me, "Gina, I have to have the diagnosis" and I said, "Well, they qualify for three at the same time." "No, we have to have THE diagnosis", as if there is one. These

youth have many disorders at the same time.

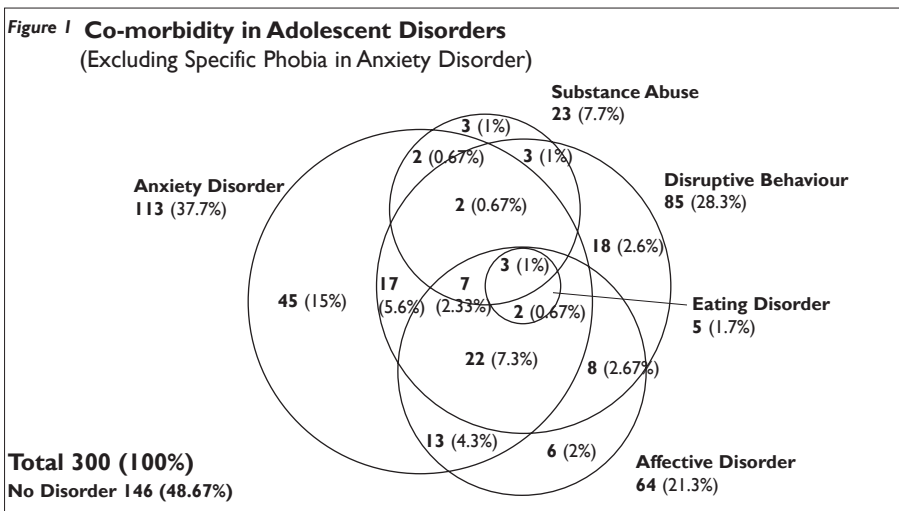
What's the cost of this to society? (Table 2) If there is no disorder, the costs are \$331 per child per annum. When there is one or two disorders, the costs are \$587 and in adolescents with 3 to 5 disorders the cost of treatment is almost \$1,500, a five-fold increase. With the increase in risk behaviour, the cost of every service increases: higher use of physician services, higher use of specialists, higher use of the emergency room, higher use of physiotherapy...So you can see every cost goes up as a function of the child's emotional-behavioural health problems.

### A Framework for Evaluation

Now in a decision-making position you have to decide which recreation or arts programs you should provide. How much should you provide? At what stage in the developmental process should you provide services? Who should they be provided to? The hyperactive kid or the mother who's exhausted? Who are you taking care of? The answer to these questions is based on ideas of effective-

them worse. We can achieve these outcomes for more, the same or less expense. In the triangle you see the four types of efficiencies which improve

bucks go to health and social care aimed at deficiencies and diseases but recreation programming is based on resources and resilience. The medical



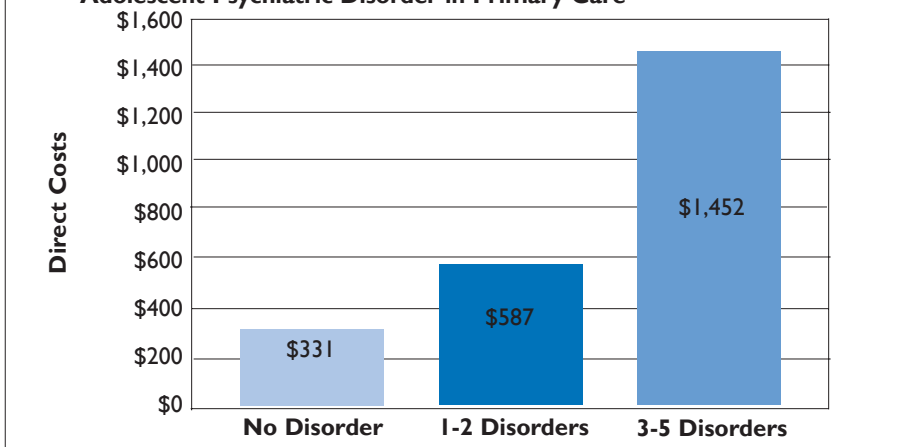
youth outcomes. In box 1, you improve youth outcomes but it costs more. You could improve youth outcomes and it costs no more (box 4). You can improve youth outcomes and in fact save the system money because you've reduced costs (box 7) or your recreation and other approaches can have the same out-

profession works on repair and replacement while recreational programmers work on restoring self-esteem and capacity. We supplement people's deficiencies, whereas you as recreational programmers empower them to have skills that they never believed they could develop. We offer specialized services and you offer a holistic kind of service where you have vulnerable kids hooked up with mainstream children. We offer services on demand, and you offer them on a proactive basis. We work on health care, but your services determine health. In fact, many of us in the health care system think any further investment in health care for children will be of limited help to children.

### Integrated and Proactive Services Versus Self-Directed Services

We now come to a study entitled, "When the Bough Breaks" funded by the Hamilton Community Foundation and the Children's Mental Health Division of Health Canada. This was a collaborative project between the university and the community in the Hamilton/Halton area. We worked with two Commissioners of Social Service and two heads of public health nursing.

**Table 2 The Per Person Annual Cost of Adolescent Psychiatric Disorder in Primary Care**



ness and efficiency. People think that's a simple notion with a simple answer - and they're wrong.

There are four types of efficiencies which can be achieved from service delivery (Figure 2) It is possible for recreation to improve children's outcomes, keep them the same, or to make

comes but the cost is less expensive (box 8).

Within community care and within health and social care, we operate from different assumptions. We keep adults and youth from progressing in their illness but we're not funded to promote healthy child development. All the big

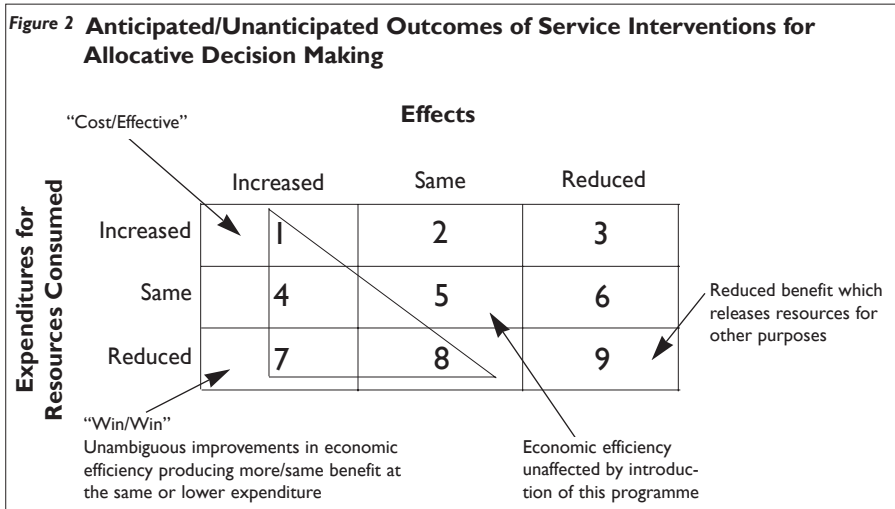
In addition the YMCA was a broker organization providing not only recreation to children and youth, but involving 29 other youth-serving organizations. The network of services in Hamilton that grew out of this study is

retraining and subsidized, quality child-care and recreation skills development. The public health nurse went in and helped mother proactively decide where her challenges were -housing, finances, childcare or her own health. They then

There are four terms a year of recreation programs - fall, winter, spring and summer. The recreation co-ordinator would go four times a year to the household and arrange programming for the children, everything from arts, ballet, and music lessons to sports programs.

If you give Mother and child these three services, is it effective compared to any one approach alone or compared to letting them just fend for themselves? This was the first randomized trial to compare this. There are seven randomized trials in the literature that look at the value of preschool programming, like the Perry Preschool Program, but this is the only one that has compared treatments against each other to see who, with what characteristics, might benefit from which approach.

We also wondered if we could help Mother's mood. 45% to 50% of the mothers suffered from major depressive disorders. If we could help Mother's mood, maybe we could help her capacity to parent, 'the parental adjustment scale'. If we could help her mood and her capacity to parent, maybe her children's behaviour would improve and maybe their use of all kinds of services

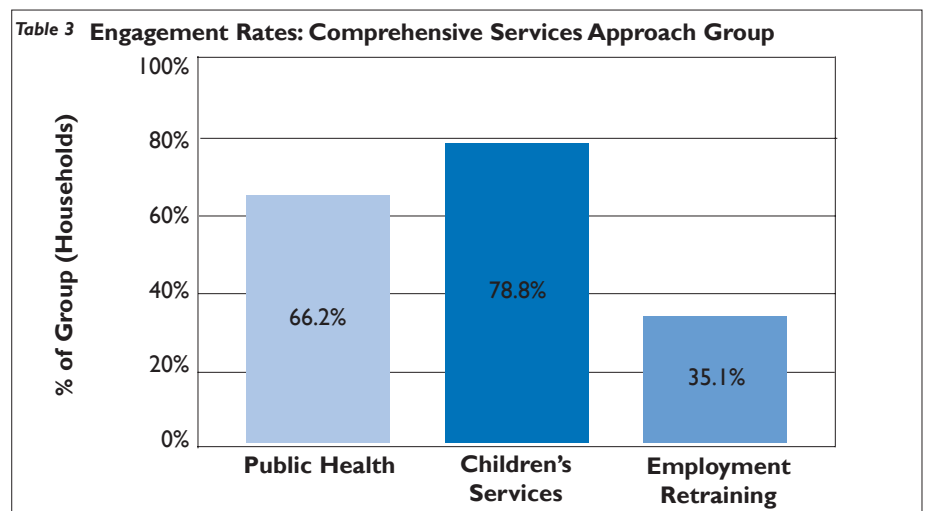


called YSN - Youth Serving Network. We looked at the question whether proactive, comprehensive and integrated care is better than self-directed care (i.e., letting people on social assistance just fend for themselves).

We approached seventeen hundred single-parent mothers on social assistance and asked them to participate in this study. A total of 765 mothers agreed to participate. We had each social case worker rate the mental health of mothers who refused and those who agreed to participate. We found that the mental health of mothers who did not participate is much worse than the mental health of those that did. So any conclusions about the mental health of these households is a serious underestimation of the magnitude of the problem. We allocated the 765 parents to a randomized trial of five social policies. There was no consent for parents to be allocated to a particular group. They only consented to fill out before and after questionnaires over time. The 1300 children in these households were between the ages of zero to twenty-four.

The parents who received comprehensive care had in-home visits by public health nurses, proactive employment

tried to figure out what to do about all that. The employment retraining people proactively called and offered job training. The third service was subsidized age-appropriate arts and recreation programs for children. Here the recreation



coordinator proactively visited Mother and worked to gain entrée to her home sometimes over a period of two years. She would then sit around and help Mother decide what kind of programming suited her children. Now, this is one thing that children get to choose.

would go down. At the time of this study, 1995 to 1999, 50% of welfare clients were single-parent mothers and 45% of these self-support parents had major depressive disorders. Not only were parents overwhelmed, 60.4% had two or more mental health conditions at

the same time. 30% of the women lived with pain that limited their activities and 38.8% had two or more health conditions. To complete the picture, 33% of their children had behaviour disorders

would take up recreation services if offered. In the self-directed group, the fifth group, of course, nothing was offered.

From a second angle, approximately

there is no significant difference between the four proactive approaches and the self-directed approach.

Using the methodology I have just described, if you leave families alone, then 10% would exit social assistance (this is before the introduction of the Ontario Works program). If you offered any one service, and I've already argued this is more acceptable, the exit from social assistance doubles to 20%. If you offered families full intervention then you can create a 25% exit from social assistance (Table 6). Now, that might not seem impressive but when you multiply these additional exits times the cost of benefits for a welfare family, you get \$300,000 saved for every one hundred mothers offered the program. The City of Toronto has 29,000 single-parent mothers on welfare so you have some idea of the amount of savings possible within one year. So, the real measure of effectiveness of a proactive approach is the exit from social assistance.

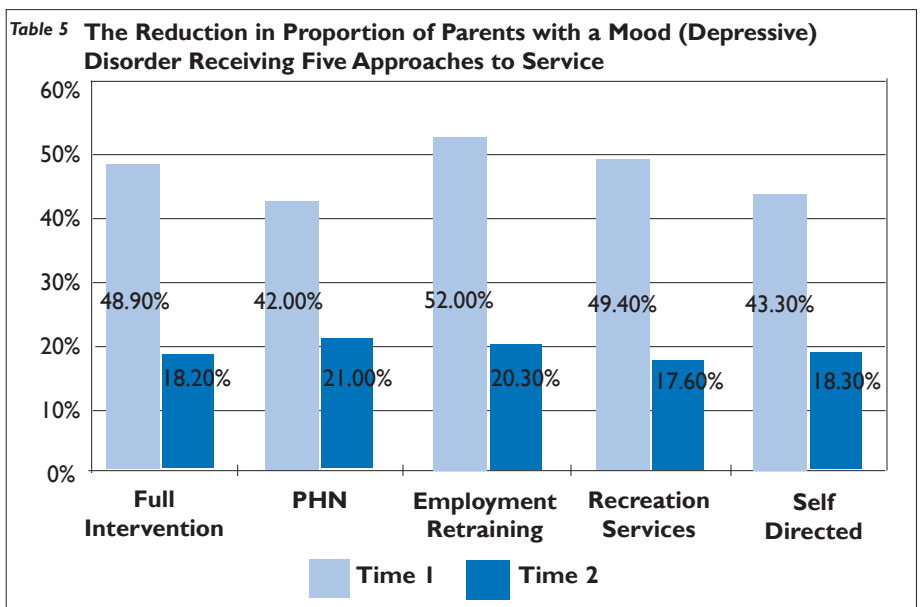
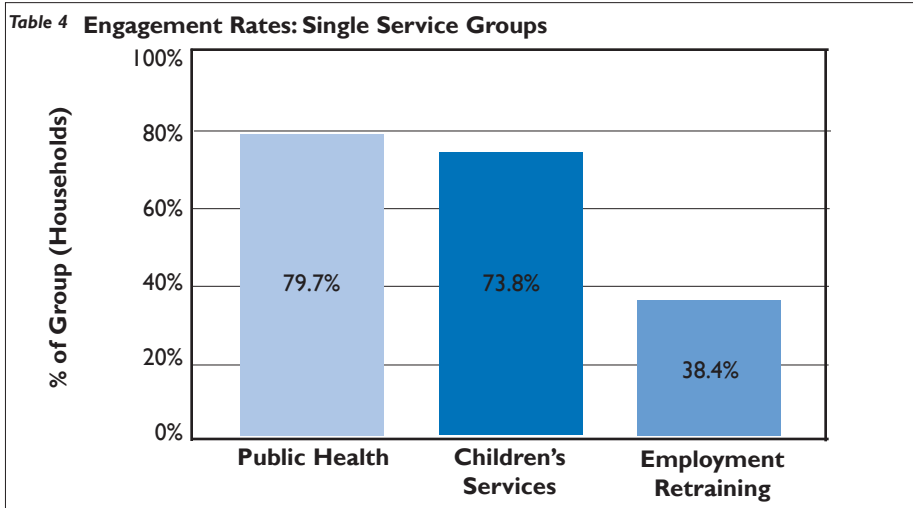
### Recreation Benefits Both

and 61% had children over seven.

The first measure of effectiveness in social policy is acceptability. In the first group, the comprehensive services approach group, we offered all three services (Table 3). Nearly 79% of parents who were offered children's services took it up. Public Health services were taken up 66.2% of the time and employment retraining was taken up 35% of the time. If we look at the definition of 'engaged', the measure of acceptability is reinforced. In public health, the public health nurse had one home or office visit either in person or over the phone for greater than ten minutes. In employment retraining, one home visit or telephone visit greater than ten minutes was considered engagement. In children's recreation programs, engagement meant at least one child in the family attended one program in that year and attended 80% of the sessions which were usually thirteen-weeks in length. So what you have to offer is very acceptable and timely for Mother.

Looking at the other groups (Table 4), if you only offer one of these services by themselves, then nearly 80% of families would take up the public health services, whereas 38.4% would take up employment retraining. A resounding 73.8%

50% of the parents in each group suffered from major depressive disorders. After two years we looked at the reduction in the proportion of parents with a



depressive disorder receiving each of the five approaches to service. They all declined equally, from approximately 50% down to about 20% (Table 5). Had we only measured this as an outcome, we would have had to conclude that it is very expensive to offer these services if

### Child and Mother

What is the role of recreation in all this? We know from other studies that recreation increases the academic, social and interpersonal competence of all children with behaviour disorders (the

Offenbach Measure of Interpersonal Competence). Recreation skills development has an effect regardless of whether you are high or low risk. This is not the same thing as competence. One can be both highly risky and highly competent. What you want to focus on, of course, is competence and not pay so much attention to risk.

Public health services and employment training helped Mother out, however recreation was the only thing that helped the child (and of course by extension, helped the mother). We had one hyperactive child who was enrolled in nine programs at the same time! If you had that kind of a child, you'd enroll him for everything too! It's not rocket science. It's what recreational programmers all know but this is the first empirical evidence to document this.

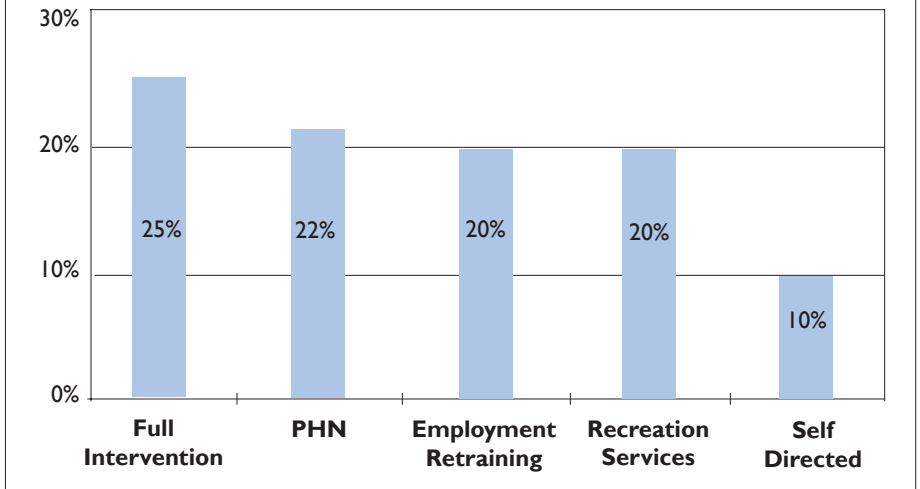
If you add up the total cost for the family's use of all health and social services including recreation, if they got recreation, the cost is \$3,389 per family per annum. (Table 7) Without recreation programs the cost of health and social services is \$3,809 per family per annum - a \$500 difference which would more than pay for a pass for the whole family

How did recreation pay for itself? Families receiving recreation used half the physician specialists. Give the kid a coach and he won't use the doctor. It paid for itself by half the use of the Children's Aid Society. You can see that overwhelmed mother with that pain and

the use of probationary officers. The use of chiropractors and the use of 911 services both went down by one-half.

### What are the Lessons?

Table 6 Percent of Single Parents Exit from Social Assistance Within One Year

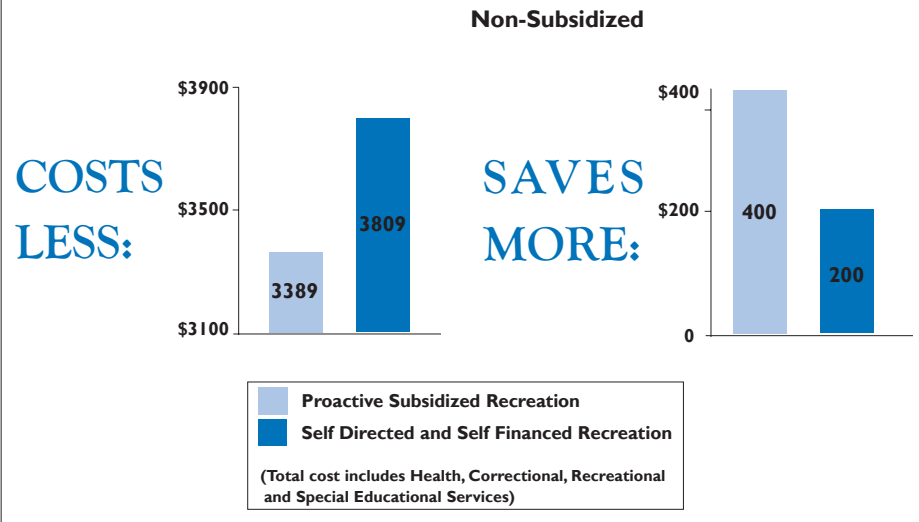


that kid, she's going to beat him up if you don't get him out of her hair. The use of occupational therapists was down by one-half and the use of physiothera-

What did we learn? Raising children is a community responsibility and reaching out is better than waiting to be asked. Our single-parent mothers didn't want to call Parks and Recreation in Hamilton because they said, "I'm already overwhelmed and I can't focus and problem-solve and when I call up I have to prove that I'm poor? This is hard." So it was really important to have this proactive recreation coordinator go out and set all this up for Mother. It probably was the single most important aspect of the intervention: The recreation coordinator said "We got him on the school team, but he has no shoes." "Get the shoes. Just buy them." And of course, we needed the money to be located in a non-bureaucracy because we didn't want the child to apply for aids and devices in social service just because he needed shoes. The recreation coordinator created a voucher system and gave Mother the money for the transportation. Mother gets the voucher, goes up to the mall, gets the shoes and they're all happy. What you offer is entitlement. When a public health nurse goes into the home, there's an insinuation that there's a prob-

table 7

Comparison of Total Cost Per Family on Social Services:



to the YMCA. There are also the additional savings which we looked at earlier through the doubling of the exits from social assistance

pists by one-third. Give the kid a coach and he won't need the psychologist. There is a 90% reduction in the use of social workers and a 90% reduction in

lem. Social support services work best when they are comprehensive, integrated and customized. If you can't do it all, just do the recreation piece because is so clean, so acceptable.

So, to conclude, one-third of social assistance parents were willing to engage in employment retraining compared to 80% who would engage in recreational services. With a comprehensive service approach, two years later parents' economic adjustment was improved by 13.6%. How did that happen? Well, you get this demanding kid out of mother's face and get him into a program where quality food, juice and cookies are offered, then he's not spending her discretionary income on candy bars.

It is no more expensive in total dollars to provide a comprehensive and integrated service approach. What we've shown is that outside investment in a voluntary sector such as recreation, ends up saving publicly-funded health, social

and correctional services. This money can then be reinvested from social services into programming at a local level.

Peel County has implemented this comprehensive approach with recreation, nursing services and employment retraining. They received \$1.3 million from council to implement this program and within one year they have a 33% exit from social assistance, which is better than our study showed. That's a higher exit rate with a more impaired population because it was after the Ontario Works program was implemented.

Eighteen randomized trials show the same thing - that proactive and comprehensive care for vulnerable populations pays for itself in the same year. A win/win situation from every point of view. We've had a lot of impact from our results. I understand that forty-one of forty-seven governments in Ontario are taking the National Child Benefit and putting the money into recreation. Hamilton started with \$500,000, then

\$750,000 and now they're up beyond a million dollars. That's a source of money for communities that can be implemented in a variety of ways.

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*Dr. Gina Browne is the founder and director of the System-Linked Research Unit at McMaster University, Hamilton. She is a professor of Nursing and Clinical Epidemiology and Biostatistics at McMaster University, Faculty of Health Sciences. Her study has been published in the Social Sciences and Medicine journal and has won the Award of Innovation and Excellence from the Canadian Institute of Children's Health. A full copy of this study as well as the study "When the Bough Breaks" can be obtained by contacting her at [browng@fhs.mcmaster.ca](mailto:browng@fhs.mcmaster.ca).*



## Recreation/Child Care Pays for Itself by Reductions:

**1/2 the use of Medical Specialists**

**1/2 the use of C.A.S. Services**

**1/4 the use of Occupational Therapists**

**1/3 the use of Physiotherapists**

**1/2 the use of 911 Services**

**1/2 the use of Psychologists**

**1/10 the use of Social Workers**

**1/10 the use of Probation Officers**

**1/2 the use of Chiropractors**

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# Challenges and Opportunities

## The View from the Municipality

Phyllis Berck, Parks and Recreation, City of Toronto

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The following four short articles entitled “Challenges and Opportunities” are based on presentations at *Action Speaks Louder!*, a forum on youth recreation sponsored by the Laidlaw Foundation and Ideas that Matter in November, 2002.

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Historically sport was used as an educational tool, primarily for boys, for turning them into men and preparing them for war. It then progressed to a more general notion of creating a healthy nation through the mixing of a healthy mind and a healthy body. The playground movement which is perhaps responsible for recreation began in Toronto in the post-war period when middle-class women thought that immigrant kids needed to get out of their poor housing conditions, be in the fresh air, and learn to be good Canadians by playing sports.

In the ‘60s and ‘70s, ‘play’ for kids was believed to be a good thing. Sports was a place where kids could learn discipline, good values, teamwork, leadership and so on. It was not necessarily seen as a way to make money. It was just a part of one’s life-long education.

In the ‘80s and ‘90s, with its emphasis on global economy and competition, physical activity became marginalized. Recreational sport no longer mattered. In both the professional and amateur areas, athletes were expected to be full-time professionals with agents and their own websites.

It seems that the idea of play has now been eliminated from our environment. This has contributed to a number of barriers that make the work in sport and recreation particularly difficult. Kids simply aren’t valued. There is no question that there has been a significant reduction in the range of opportunities available in physical activity. The role of schools in physical education has

declined. By increasing the cost of the use of school facilities, there are increasingly limited opportunities for co-curricular activities by community groups and Parks and Recreation. All of this has made a serious impact on the availability of recreation and I think that we will pay heavily if the Rozanski recommendations do not alter the current school funding formula.

Schools have now become places where you excel in math and reading and the notion that physical activity is fundamental to healthy learning has

hockey culture. When we talk about marketing to youth we have to remember that our community is enormously diverse.

There’s also an enormous amount of pressure for kids to specialize. The downside of specialization is that kids lose interest before their parents. That’s a huge loss because we know that kids who are involved at an early age stay involved for lifelong participation. The pressure for specialization is a profound disadvantage – it goes back to the notion that we live in a competitive age

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*There is no question that there has been a significant reduction in the range of opportunities available in physical activity*

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been lost. Kids now come to recreational programs without the kind of basic skill development that was traditionally learned in schools. While we are in partnership with schools, municipal recreation programs cannot duplicate or replicate what schools do.

The whole notion of play has changed considerably. We used to go to playgrounds and just play. We played on our front streets and in our neighbourhoods. Play is not valued today. Structured programs and supervised activities are valued however increasingly children are not allowed to play spontaneously. Promoting recreation just for the benefit of play becomes more difficult.

The youth target is a highly segmented one. Recently I was at a meeting at Downsview Park and realized that there’s this whole culture of skateboarding out there that I was completely unfamiliar with. This culture is very segmented and doesn’t relate, for example, to the highly organized and structured

where you have to excel early and again, the notion of play is lost.

What is the good news? One is that females are participating more in sport and physical activity. The sports that have become much more visible for females like ice hockey and soccer, have had a profound effect on what young women growing up think is available to them. Membership and participation in provincial sport organizations reflect this. It has become acceptable for young females growing up in this generation to be strong and athletic and to want to pursue this physicality.

At the national level we have a new national sport policy. It’s not quite enough to stop the presses but it is the first new national sport policy that we’ve had in over forty years. Remarkably, it has the support of all provinces and territories in Canada. In addition to this national sport policy, CAAWS, the organization I’m involved with ([www.caaws.ca](http://www.caaws.ca)), has developed a domestic strategy to maintain the

## Challenges and Opportunities

momentum for increasing opportunities for girls and women.

Diversity and immigration to this part of the world provides us with a huge opportunity. In the community meetings I've been a part of, I've been astonished to hear that recent immigrants want to be involved in sport and physical activity because they see this as one of the defining ways of being Canadian. For example, with the support of the Maple Leafs, one of our new programs is ball-hockey for Muslim women. Of course this has to be provided in a culturally appropriate context.

The link to disease prevention by public health gives the whole debate around the importance of sport and physical activity a higher place on the radar. However there is a danger that this could make physical inactivity a pathology or a body image and dieting issue. Like any good partnership, people in sport and physical activity need to develop an ongoing dialogue with public health.

There are interesting partners from the private sector who have come forward. I mentioned the Maple Leafs. Toronto Parks and Recreation also does things like eco-camps and gardening for youth with the support of Canada TD Trust. Members of the food industry have expressed interest in the whole issue of obesity and what role they can play. I don't think the idea of putting less sugar in their food has crossed their minds but they want to be seen as good corporate citizens. Nike Canada has been a tremendous supporter to girls' sports camps in the City of Toronto. Sears and Forzani's, a sports goods company, have identified children and youth as one of their funding priorities.

I just wanted to conclude by referencing Dr. Edward Hallowell, a psychiatrist and teacher at the Harvard Medical School, who recently wrote a book called, *The Childhood Roots of Adult Happiness*. He identifies five qualities of childhood that make kids able to create and sustain joy in their adult lives: connectedness, play, practice, mastery and recognition. All of these qualities can be found in sport and physical activity.

# Challenges and Opportunities

## Visual Arts and Youth

Linda Albright, Arts Network  
for Children and Youth

I come from a rural community in south-western Ontario, and about twenty years ago became very active in developing a visual arts centre. Although we offered children's classes it was predominantly an adult centre. At the same time, I was also co-ordinating some of the special events in our community: Canada Day and a music festival. Most participants were not youth who would be involved in student council or in sports activities. Some were rock music kids and theatre kids and they were all excited to be involved in a cultural event.

At this time, though, I began to ask how this type of community involvement with kids could be sustained and facilitated. I left the Arts Centre and began to work on program development for what has become the Participate Community Arts Program. There were some key components: an emphasis on the creative process; a feeling of belonging and family; an holistic approach; and fitting the programs to youth rather than designing the programs and then making the youth fit.

There were also four key requirements. The program had to be housed in a facility designed for the purpose with access to arts equipment and studios outside of the school but working closely with all the schools. Not all kids really bond to school and there's different entry points where they have a comfort level. There needed to be a staff of creatively trained individuals and artists. It would be multidisciplinary and include environment and culinary arts. We would work with community partners to ensure that all youth in the

community had access with an emphasis on marginalized youth.

A pilot program began in Tillsonburg and was picked up in Ottawa by the Youth Initiative Department of Human Resources Development Canada. They asked that I talk to other communities across the province both about the program and about expanding arts activities for children and youth. What began in a risk-taking, impulsive and naive moment has taken me on a very long journey with a long way to go.

In Tillsonburg we set up our temporary home in an old armouries community centre which had been under-utilised for ten years and was structurally unsound. We hired a supervisor and twelve young people under a Youth Canada grant to develop the program. The twelve young people ranged from those with a BA in the arts to drop-outs from high school. Immediately the schools began calling asking if the staff who were trained in the arts could come and help them deliver their arts curriculum, assist with field trips and help with theatre productions. Staff went into the schools and began meeting all the kids.

One of the first groups was seven kids in an anger management class in Grade 7 when the staff arrived with a paper-mache project. These kids all followed the staff back to the community centre to begin what became the first of after-school drop-in programs. Through doing arts activities and engaging with staff, the kids' anger began to drop. As one father said, about 75% of his child's depression and anger just disappeared because he

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Linda Albright

was involved in a non-labelled program. Another youth who seldom stayed in class for a whole period and had a support worker for about 25% of school time, walked half-way across town every day and began by cutting up carrots for the after-school snack and remained connected to the

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*As one father said, about 75% of his child's depression and anger just disappeared because he was involved in a non-labelled program.*

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program for two years. Four years later he worked very hard over the summer and found money to fly to Japan to sing at the wedding of one of our past staff members. So he'd come a long way. Schools came to the building and asked if we would set up programs around themes such as Earth Day in our outdoor summer garden.

Our board is made up of community members, principals from the elementary, middle, secondary and Catholic schools, community living, community policing, recreation and social services. Over that first eight months, we reached about 5000 different children. Funding came from diverse areas such as YSC grants, county social services, National Crime Prevention, service clubs and the United Way.

Here's where the challenges came. We began drawings to rebuild part of the unsafe facility with a great timber-frame structure. This became an amazing building project with interest from the timber-framers guild, CMHC and the Ministry of Natural Resources. It had the potential to become a true community arts project but the day the roof came down, up came a small public community outcry to stop the project. Some said it should be in the industrial subdivision and why would we put real money into a facility for bad kids to do art? Seniors thought that their tax dollars might be used and other arts organizations were afraid it would

compete with their programming although we'd already been running the program for two years. And of course, close neighbours did not want it in their back yard. (This came at the same time that the town was building a single-facility, one-million-dollar soccer complex without a single out-

cry). Taxpayers were also asking council to guarantee that the town would never spend one cent on either the construction or the operation of the facility.

It became apparent that we needed systemic change for the expansion and creation of arts activities. We lacked infrastructure, trained staff, and of course sustainable funding to maintain programming. As I travelled across the province I was also meeting other incredibly dedicated people delivering a very diverse range of creative programs but they were improvising in facilities and always looking for sustainable funding. This is a very fragile sector. At a closer look it became apparent to us that only in isolated cases do governments strongly support sustaining youth organizations. The federal and provincial governments have special projects funding but not specific to the arts and most of the arts and cultural programming within ministries fund professional artists and infrastructure for the large, national facilities.

In 2000 a group came together to form the Arts Network for Children and Youth which hopes to promote

## Challenges and Opportunities


the benefits of the arts to youth and create change. In the U.S. the Search Institute recommends that youth in a healthy community should have access to about three hours of cultural activity a week, but only 19% do that. On top of that, only 25% of families whose yearly income is under \$30,000 per year put their children into programming. You realize that we're only reaching a very small percentage of youth, and even fewer marginalized youth.

The diversity of arts programs across Ontario and Canada is really remarkable. The vision for the Arts Network for Children and Youth is for multiple programs in a community in a variety of locations where children have choices to participate in programs that they're interested in. The first one that people see is that very traditional art class but there's many more. Sketch in Toronto uses the arts as a vehicle to reach street youth and

works with over 300 street youth per year. Programs blending creativity and play and the environment, such as the Spiral Garden, reach children with special needs. Cultural outreach programs in rural and remote communities, such as De-Bah-Jeh-Mu-



Jig Theatre on Manitoulin Island ([www.manitoulin-island.com/wik-wemikong](http://www.manitoulin-island.com/wik-wemikong)) use theatre improvisation and mask-making to reach children and youth in First Nations communities. They have internship programs which train young people who can go back into their own community and deliver programming.

Arts leadership and mentorship programs give youth skills in communication, team-building, risk-taking, problem-solving and all of the skills needed in the present-day workplace. 

# Challenges and Opportunities

## School Sports and Youth

Colin Hood, Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations

**H**igh school sports are a small part of the overall sport delivery system in this province.

The Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations, OFSAA, has 250,000 kids playing 40 different high school sports in the province.

The National Federation of State High School Associations has studied why school sport is important to kids. It shows that students do better in school when they participate in co-curricular programs and they stay longer in school if they participate in these programs (see [www.nfhs.org/case](http://www.nfhs.org/case)). There's some wonderful, well-documented research that shows that schools that have strong activity programs, whether it's music, art, drama or sport, really make a difference in kids' lives.

We also have a federal sports policy that promotes enhanced participation, enhanced excellence, enhanced capacity and enhanced interaction. One of the interesting aspects of this policy is a directive that says there should be more physical activity in sport programs in schools. One of the key issues is the accessibility and use of school sport facilities as schools are one of the few places where adolescents have broad, barrier-free access to sport. Although I speak from a narrow segment of the sports spectrum, I do believe that school sport is a very important part of a student's education.


Ontario is the only province in Canada that says school boards must provide co-instructional activities and that each school must provide a plan of

how that happens. Further, those plans must be developed in conjunction with the school community so they are not being made in isolation. At the high school level we're currently seeing a large increase in our numbers in high school sports. Whenever there's been labour disruption such as work-to-rule it takes three years for sports programs to get back to their

program which teaches our students, community coaches and teachers about the values and ethics of coaching in our schools. There's also a wonderful coaching program called The National Certification Program. We're currently running courses around the province to encourage qualified, competent people to work with our kids.

The funding formula is part of the chronic under-funding of public education in this province. Many of our schools can't use their facilities after the school day ends any more because there's a fee set for the school as well as the community. School sport fees present a major problem in terms of the provision of equity of opportunity. We've also attempted to receive a separate allocation within the funding formula so that school sports is not competing for funds with music, art, drama, or building maintenance.

There are challenges around program values – to what extent do we duplicate programs which are readily available in the community? What can we do best? Is it our role to develop programs at different levels of competition or is there a different model to deliver specialized, elite competition?

There are also tremendous opportunities to develop communication and advocacy partnerships. One of our initiatives is to provide each kid on every team who comes to OFSAA championships a postcard addressed to the Minister of Education to state what was special about the experience in high school sports programs. School parent councils also have a huge role to play here. On the downside there are jurisdictional problems that we've been talking about for twenty-five years which still exist. The links between schools, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, municipal sports and recreation programs and community organizations all need to be strengthened. 

### National Federation of State High School Associations "The Case for High School Activities"

- **Activities Support the Academic Mission of Schools.** They are not a diversion but rather an extension of a good educational program. Students who participate in activity programs tend to have higher grade-point averages, better attendance records, lower dropout rates and fewer discipline problems than students generally.
- **Activities are Inherently Educational.** Activity programs provide lessons for practical situations – teamwork, sportsmanship, winning/losing, and hard work. Through participation in activity programs, students learn self-discipline, build self-confidence and develop skills to handle competitive situations. These are qualities the public expects schools to produce in students so that they become responsible adults and productive citizens.
- **Activities Foster Success in Later Life.** Participation in high school activities is often a predictor of later success – in college, a career and in becoming a contributing member of society.

Source: [www.nfhs.org/case](http://www.nfhs.org/case)

At a provincial level, the Sport Alliance ([www.sportalliance.com](http://www.sportalliance.com)), brings together Ontario's provincial sport organizations, parks and recreation agencies, scholastic sport groups, and sports and recreation administrators to share, promote, coordinate and deliver more effective programs.

previous participatory levels.

Is everything rosy? Of course not. The system is extremely fragile and we have many challenges. Ten years ago we began to see the impact of the withdrawal of resources. Four years ago the Sport Alliance and Trillium Foundation recognized this and established a sports

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# Challenges and Opportunities

## Drama and Youth

### Wayne Fairhead, Sears Ontario Drama Festival

**T**he Sears Ontario Drama Festival operates on three levels. The district level involves students from individual schools across the province. There are five regional showcases where kids have the opportunity to work creatively in teams and also compete in a healthy environment. The Ontario provincial showcase represents fifteen of the outstanding productions from across the province. In the GTA area, there are 129 productions from participating schools and across the province I'm estimating there will be 400 productions by high school kids in 2002.

Sears has a \$3 million budget for children and youth related support programs of which \$120,000 goes towards the drama festival. We're able to operate on such a modest budget because of a volunteer district committee who meet twice a year to change rules and regulations, direction and policy. It's a very democratic process, and these volunteers are all teachers.

Kids who get involved in the festival production tend to stay in school and in many cases tend to do so much more effectively than they would have done otherwise. Drama has a unique place in the arts. Over the past twenty-five years

kids to work through these ideas, to talk about them and to put them on stage so that there's a public forum for what they're thinking. At the same time

who doesn't quite fit in. A drama production can be very intense working environment. Provided kids have an effective teacher; then it's going to be a

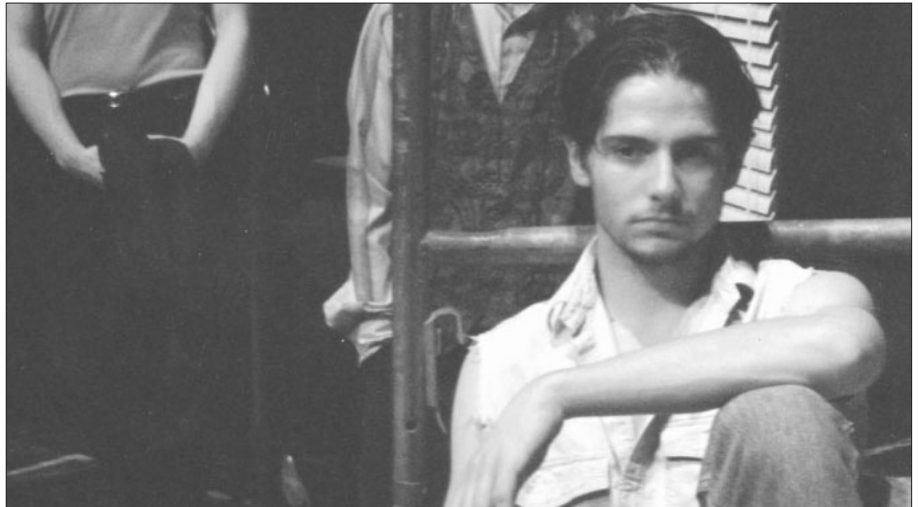


photo courtesy of Sears Drama Festival

they're developing their language abilities and we all know that the ability to speak appropriately and to write empowers a kid. The ones who are more likely to get into trouble are those who have difficulty expressing themselves. If kids can express themselves they can stand up for themselves and give a sense of direction of where they want to go.

I think the opportunity to be part of

very valuable experience. I've seen this so often with kids who were close to going off the edge and who managed to find a sense of direction through drama. It's also important to remember that not all kids who get involved in school productions go on to have a career in the theatre. As you know, the skills that you learn and the relationships that you form take you forward into the real world and into your chosen career.

Lastly, I want to comment on the lack of support by the media for the arts in education. When was the last time you read in a Toronto paper anything about an arts event in a high school with kids doing amazing things? The only time you'll get coverage is when there's an fiftieth anniversary and there's a nice photo in the paper. Outside of Toronto it's a very different matter: it's often big news in small community newspapers. How do we get represented in the media so that drama and arts become a natural part of a social structure that recognises what is happening in schools?

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*Drama provides a place for the kid who doesn't quite fit in. It empowers kids and gives them the language to take a little bit of control over their lives.*

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I have seen a great involvement of kids in the writing process. It empowers kids and gives them the language to take a little bit of control over their lives. They write about very personal experiences and global concerns. We will get a lot of plays written by kids that deal with prejudice and abuse and war and poverty. This provides a great opportunity for

a creative team and to explore leadership is important. A lot of kids become leaders through their experiences in putting on a play because it is really like running a company. You need the producer, the artistic director, the stage manager and all of the associated areas including promotion.

Drama provides a place for the kid

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# Solutions and Strategies

## Mobilizing Support – The Ottawa Experience

Dick Stewart, Former Commissioner of People Services, City of Ottawa

The City of Ottawa was amalgamated in January 1, 2001 and on that day a new department was created, 'The People Services Department'. It is an amalgamation of many services under one administrative structure: libraries, social housing, social services, child care, recreation, culture programming, and community development - 3000 employees, a \$600 million dollar budget and 36% of the operating budget of the new City of Ottawa. The transition board for the new City of Ottawa decided that bigger was better and put everything under one roof. I'm here to tell you that it was the right decision. It has forced a large number of folks to work together and develop shared values and vision. You now have public library folks talking to people managing Ontario Works case loads and recreation and culture programmers

ment and towards dealing with issues like prevention.

At the same time the City of Ottawa embarked on a planning process as a new city and currently there are five plans in active stages of development. One of these is a new official plan, a land use plan. Another is called the

Ottawa has a target: at the end of five years, 70% of the city's population will have achieved and maintained a certain level of physical health. Health Canada is currently undertaking a study to determine what the base line of health should be. That's a bold strategy. It actually puts the staff and the city,


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*It's very important that the strategy is neighbourhood and community focused.*

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'Human Service Plan' – a plan for people and people services. Part of this plan involves a five-year strategic plan and a twenty-year vision for each neighbourhood or community. After the plan is approved, every area will have an audit done of both the physical facilities and

including the politicians, on the hook to deliver. Part of the plan's strategy is to build in political consequences for non-compliance and non-delivery. The 'Active Ottawa' plan will also build on the fact that there is an epidemic in this country of Type Two diabetes. The Medical Officer of Health will lead a campaign to reduce the incidence of Type Two diabetes per capita as part of the city plan. We're doing it because it's the right thing to do but just as importantly, because there will be federal money available.

It's very important that the strategy is neighbourhood and community focused. After all a city is nothing more than a collection of communities and neighbourhoods. We've done some of this by deliberately investing in services for marginalized youth in neighbourhoods where there has been an absence of service. For example, a contract was signed recently using funds from the National Child Benefit program with an organization called Christie Lake Kids to turn over partial use of a community center in a low-income community to provide services for marginalized kids for the next three years. Working at the neighbourhood level, a community development plan is important – one size will not fit all. 



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working with public health. Initially it was chaotic and people were upset but it's proving to be a very interesting and positive experience for the city. It has resulted in the reallocation of funds within a \$600 million dollar envelope to begin moving away from crisis manage-

the social capital that exists or needs to be developed. This includes, for example, school infrastructure which is critical to the health and social capital of communities.

The third strategy is to develop a plan called 'Active Ottawa'. Active

# Municipal Funding for Recreation

Enid Slack

At the forum, "Action Speaks Louder!", held in November, 2002 Enid Slack gave a preliminary overview of her research into the municipal funding of recreation. The study is now complete and excerpts are presented below. A full copy of the report in PDF format can be obtained from the Laidlaw Foundation at [www.laidlawfdn.org](http://www.laidlawfdn.org).

A growing body of literature in Canada and elsewhere points to the important role played by recreation and culture both in contributing to the quality of life of individuals and to the economic prosperity of the country. There are several studies, for example, that show that investment in recreation, particularly investment in youth recreation, increases self-esteem, improves academic performance, improves health, and lowers crime rates. Furthermore, there is evidence that recreation "pays for itself" by reducing the use of social and health services such as child psychiatrists, social workers, and probation officers.

In terms of the economy, studies have shown that cities need to attract businesses and skilled labour (the "knowledge workers") to be globally competitive. These studies also show that services that enhance the quality of life of individuals in the community (such as parks, recreation, and cultural activities) feature prominently among the characteristics that attract the knowledge workers to particular places. Notwithstanding the importance of recreation and cultural activities, both from a social and economic perspective, municipal per capita spending on recreation and culture in Ontario over the last decade has not kept pace with inflation.

## Municipal Finance in Ontario

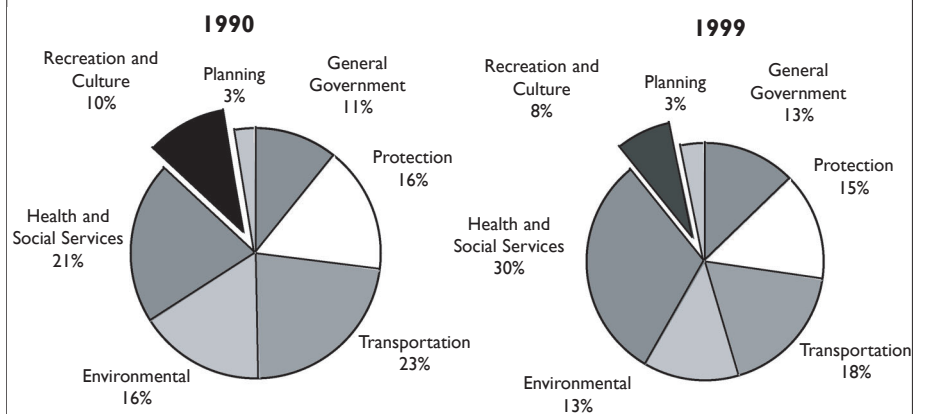
Municipalities in Canada have no original powers in the constitution; they are only mentioned in the constitution to the extent that they are creatures of the province. In terms of municipal finance in Ontario, this means that the provincial government establishes the very existence of local governments and their geographic boundaries, mandates the expenditure responsibilities of municipalities, sets standards for local service provision, determines the revenues they can raise, sets the rules around levying the property tax, influences municipal expenditures through its grant programs, and determines the extent to which municipalities can borrow to meet capital requirements. Furthermore, provin-

for them.

In 1999, municipal expenditures in Ontario totalled almost \$21 billion of which almost \$1.6 billion (about 7.6 percent) were spent on recreation and culture. Figure 1 compares the breakdown of municipal operating expenditures in Ontario in 1990 and 1999 and shows the relative importance of recreation and culture expenditures in the total municipal operating budget. A further breakdown, available from the FIR data, indicates that of the total expenditures on recreation and culture in 1999, 67.4 percent were for parks and recreation, 24.1 percent were for libraries, and 8.6 percent were for other cultural expenditures. This breakdown has remained roughly similar over the last decade.

The proportion of total expenditures spent on recreation and culture in 1999

Figure 1 Distribution of Municipal Operating Expenditures, Ontario, 1990 and 1999



Source: Appendix Table A1

cial legislation requires that municipalities not incur a deficit in their operating budget -- operating expenditures cannot exceed operating revenues. What this means is that municipalities have limited local flexibility with respect to the services they deliver and the way they pay

(at 7.6 percent of total operating expenditures) was down from 10 percent in 1990. The main reason for the decline in the proportion of expenditures on recreation and culture is the increase in municipal expenditures on social services that started in 1998 with the

offloading of social housing and an increased portion of social services by the provincial government. As shown in Figure 1, expenditures on health and social services increased from 21 percent of total expenditures in 1990 to 30 percent in 1999.

Municipalities use debt financing to pay for at least part of major public capital works. Repayment of borrowed funds comes from operating revenues such as property taxes and user fees. Municipalities are restricted by provin-

### Municipal Recreation Expenditures and Revenues in Ontario

Figures 4 and 5 show how municipal expenditures on recreation and culture have changed over the last nine years. The data in these Figures are shown in total current dollars, not adjusted for population growth or inflation (see Figures 6 and 7 below for changes in per capita expenditures in constant dollars). Figure 4 shows municipal operating expenditures and Figure 5 shows municipal capital expenditures. Municipal operating expenditures on recreation and culture increased from approximately \$1.4 billion in 1990 to almost \$1.6 billion in 1999 or by about 14 percent over the nine-year period. Although operating expenditures show a steady increase over time, capital expenditures tend to fluctuate more on a year-to-year basis. In other words, large expenditures in one or two years will likely mean lower expenditures in subsequent years. For this reason, there is generally no consistent trend in capital expenditures. Municipal capital spending ranged from

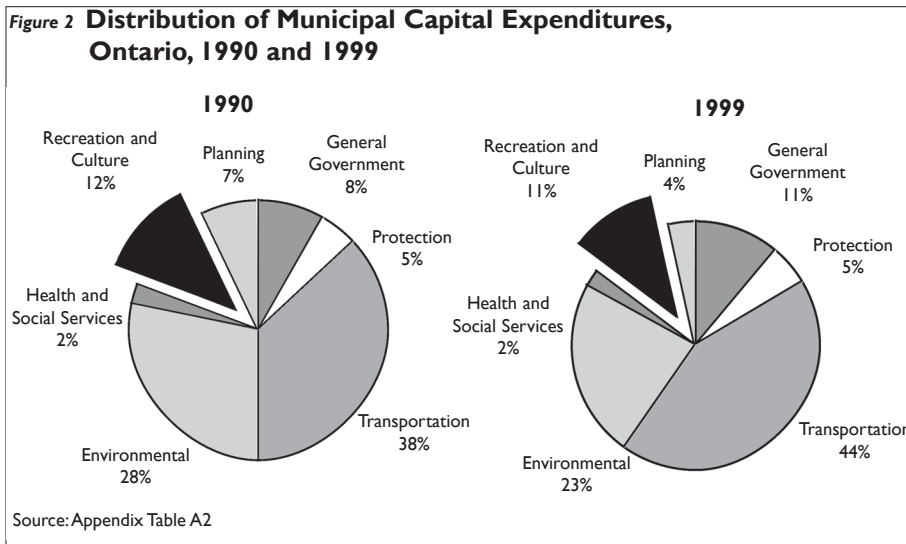
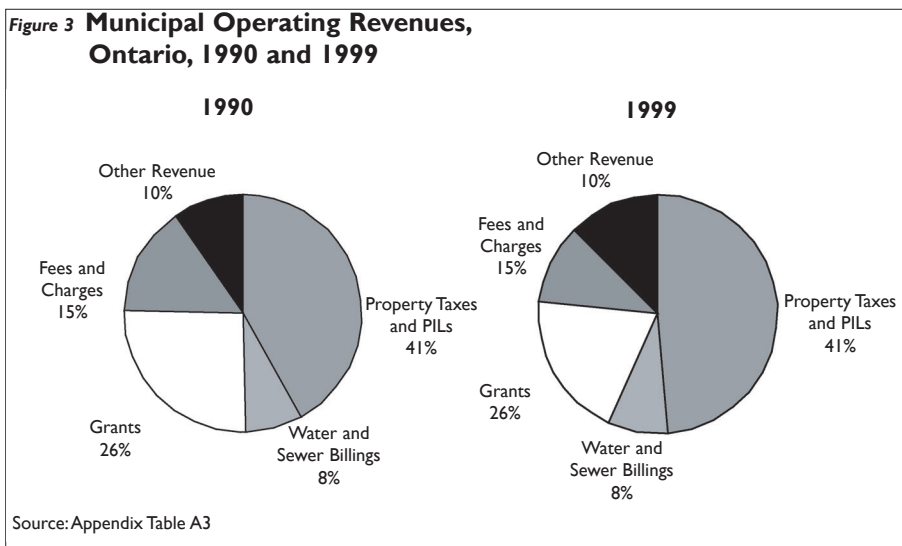


Figure 2 compares the breakdown of municipal capital expenditures in Ontario in 1990 and 1999. The largest proportion of capital expenditures in both years is for transportation (roads and transit) and environmental expenditures (water, sewer, and solid waste). Capital expenditures on recreation and culture were roughly the same in both years (around 11 or 12 percent of total municipal capital expenditures).

The main sources of revenue to fund operating expenditures include property taxes, user fees, provincial transfers, and other revenue sources. Figure 3 provides a breakdown of municipal operating revenues in Ontario in 1990 and 1999. The largest source of revenue is the property tax followed by provincial grants and user fees. The main change over the last decade results from the reduction of provincial grants and the resulting increased reliance on property taxes and user fees.

Capital expenditures are financed from current own-source revenues (such as property taxes and user fees), provincial grants, reserves and reserve funds, borrowing, and development charges.

cial governments in terms of the amount of debt they can incur, the types of debentures they can issue, the length of term and the use of borrowed funds.



Specifically, debt charges cannot exceed 25 percent of own-source revenues. In Ontario municipalities, debt charges relative to own-source revenues have declined steadily over the past decade.

\$315 million in 1994 to almost \$570 million in 1996.

Figures 6 and 7 show expenditures on recreation and culture adjusted both for inflation and the increase in population. Per capita operating expenditures

in constant dollars have declined steadily over the last decade from \$151 per capita in 1990 to \$133 per capita in 1999. This means that municipal operating expenditures on recreation and culture have not kept pace with population growth and inflation over the last nine years. Per capita capital expenditures in constant dollars have fluctuated over the period from \$30 per capita in 1994 to \$51 per capita in 1996.

Municipal sources of funding for recreation and culture are shown in Figure 8. The main source is general revenue (comprised largely of property taxes but also other miscellaneous operating revenues). Property taxes and general revenues accounted for 70 percent of revenues for recreation in 1999 followed by user charges at almost 26 percent. Provincial grants are fairly minor. Over the nine-year period, grants have fallen from 3.6 percent of revenues to

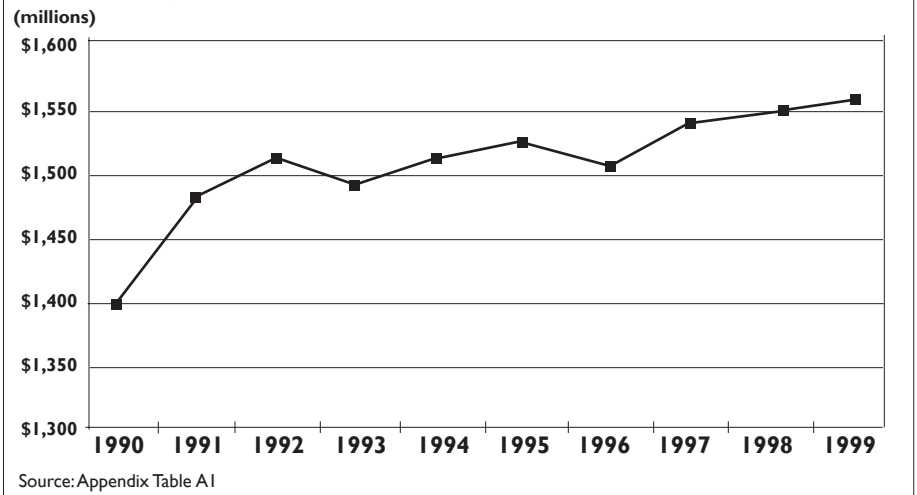
### Fiscal Pressures on Municipalities in Ontario

Municipalities are required to balance their operating budgets and they do. This

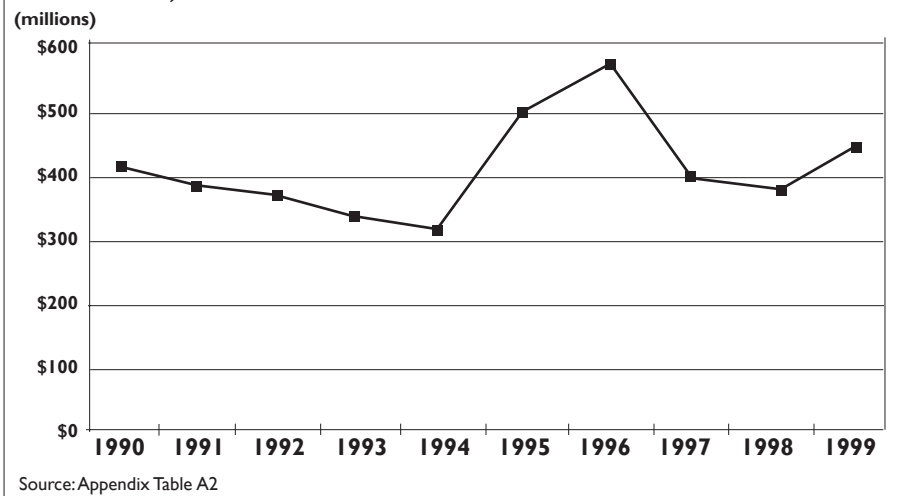
tures, such as recreation in culture, however, may reflect the financial stress that municipalities currently face.

Municipal financial data do not show the extent to which service delivery has

**figure 4 Municipal Operating Expenditures for Recreation and Culture, Ontario, 1990-1999**



**figure 5 Municipal Capital Expenditures for Recreation and Culture, Ontario, 1990-1999**



2.6 percent and user fees have increased from 23 percent to almost 26 percent of revenues.

Capital expenditures on recreation and culture, as for other capital expenditures, are financed from current own-source revenues (such as property taxes and user fees), provincial grants, reserves and reserve funds, borrowing, and development charges.

means that operating revenues generally equal operating expenditures. Municipalities are also mandated by the Province to make certain expenditures such as fire protection and general welfare assistance, among others. This means that, to the extent that municipalities face a financial crisis, it will not be clearly evident from an operating deficit or a reduction in mandated expenditures. The decline in discretionary expendi-

changed over the last decade nor do they give any indication of the extent of the backlog in expenditures. For example, a recent study in Toronto suggests that, over the past five years, the City of Toronto has “failed to pursue public investment strategies that enhance recreation facilities and program resources.” The authors estimate that \$41.3 million in annual operating expenditures and \$173.6 million in capital expenditures are needed to restore recreation programs and build the necessary recreation infrastructure in Toronto alone. Other studies highlight the backlog in transportation expenditures and water and sewer expenditures. These types of estimates give a much better indication of the financial crisis in recreation and in municipal finance more generally.

Furthermore, current and historical municipal financial data also do not give an indication of future financial pressures that are likely to arise as a result of a number of different factors:

- Large cities like Toronto (and city-regions like the GTA) are the major drivers of economic prosperity in Canada. To be competitive, these cities need to attract business and skilled labour. This

means that they not only need to provide transportation and communications infrastructure but also services that enhance quality of life. These services include, for example, parks, recreation-

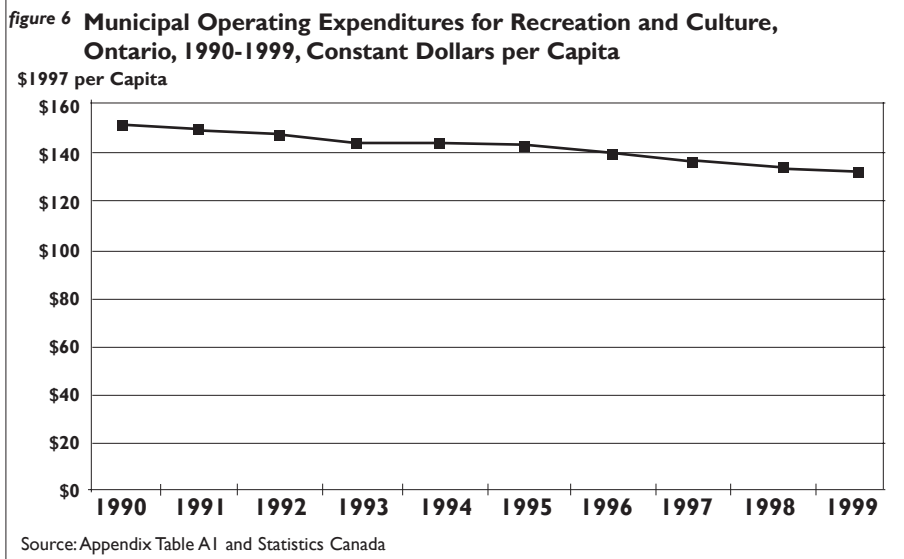
government, the evidence now shows that any cost savings have been elusive. Higher costs are expected to continue in the future.

increasing property taxes to finance growing service demands.

In light of the financial pressures on Ontario municipalities and the declining municipal expenditures on recreation and culture (in constant dollars per capita), the next section of this study looks at different options for funding recreation.

### Options for Municipal Financing of Recreation

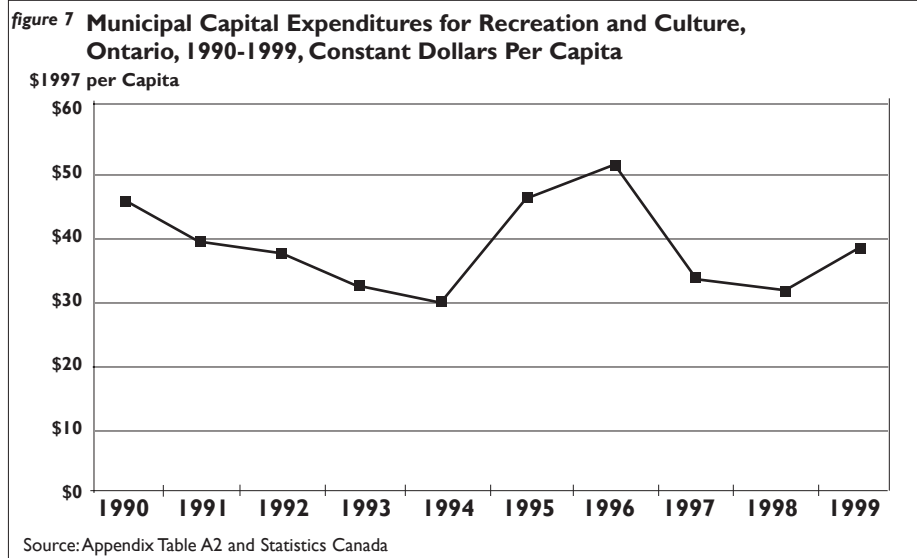
There are a number of options for financing municipal recreation operating and capital expenditures: property taxes, special assessments, tax increment financing districts, dedicated revenues, user fees, intergovernmental transfers, and private sector participation through development charges and other exactions and through partnerships. Each option is described and the advantages and disadvantages are outlined.



al, and cultural facilities, social services, a high quality school system, police protection, health care, air and water quality. These cities will face increasing expenditures demands in the future.

•Offloading of services by the federal and provincial governments (particularly the increased municipal funding responsibility for social services) will increase the financial pressure on municipalities. A downturn in the economy, for example, could dramatically increase social service expenditures in many municipalities in the future. Since municipalities are required to balance their budgets and they are required to fund mandated services, these increased expenditures will either mean a reduction in other services (for example, parks and recreation) or an increase in property taxes.

• Municipal restructuring in Ontario has had an impact on municipal finances. Perhaps the most notable example is the creation of the “megacity” in Toronto in 1998 through the amalgamation of six lower-tier municipalities and the metropolitan government. Although municipal amalgamation was intended to reduce the cost of municipal



• At the same time that municipalities are facing and will continue to face increased expenditure pressures, there has been no diversification of municipal revenue sources. Municipalities continue to rely mainly on property taxes and user fees to finance services, including recreation and culture. Furthermore, pressure to limit property tax increases has prevented many municipalities from

### Property Taxes

Property tax rates can be levied on the whole tax base of the municipality and the tax revenues collected used to fund the general expenditures of the municipality. They can also be levied on specific areas of a municipality to pay for services that are only received in that area. For example, special area rates are

sometimes used for water, sewers, transit, and garbage collection in specific areas of the municipality that receive the service. Special area rates have also been used for parks, recreational facilities, and libraries.

The property tax is considered to be appropriate for financing local services for at least two reasons: first, real property is immovable -- it is unable to shift location in response to the tax and this characteristic makes it easy to collect. Second, there is a connection between the types of services funded at the local level and the benefit to property values. The property tax is like a benefit tax because it approximates the benefits

makes it difficult to increase the tax. Furthermore, the property tax is inelastic in that it does not increase automatically over time as the economy grows. To increase tax revenues, it is necessary to increase the tax rate and, because of the visibility of the tax, this can be politically difficult.

The current situation in Toronto makes raising property taxes even more difficult. Because the tax rate is significantly higher on non-residential property than residential property (beyond provincial "threshold" levels) and because of provincial property tax rules, the city can only levy budgetary increases on the residential property tax base.

boundaries of the benefits and how the benefits decrease for properties that are located further away from the capital improvement, such as a park or recreation facility.

### Tax Increment Financing Districts

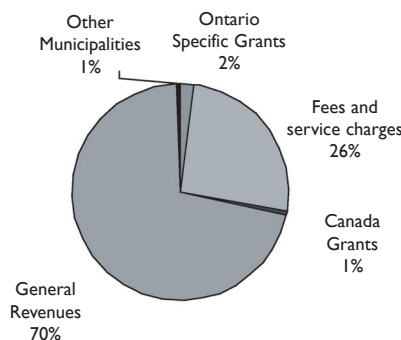
Tax Increment Financing Districts (TIFs) have been used to redevelop urban areas and to fund infrastructure improvements in many U.S. cities. More than 40 U.S. states have TIF enabling legislation. TIFs are a way to take the increment in property taxes that results from an increase in property values arising from infrastructure investments and use these funds to pay for the infrastructure. Although they are not set up to fund parks and recreational facilities alone, investment in these facilities could be part of an overall redevelopment plan for a particular neighbourhood.

The advantage of TIFs is that they provided the funds needed to invest in infrastructure. There are some potential disadvantages, however. TIF spending may receive less public scrutiny than other spending by local governments. TIFs may not be able to generate the predicted tax revenues. Other taxing authorities (such as school boards) resent that their property taxes are frozen at a time that they are experiencing growth in demand as a result of the redevelopment. TIFs have also been criticized for targeting funds to a designated area at the expense of areas on the periphery of the TIF district or at the expense of overall municipal growth.

### Dedicated Revenues

Dedicated revenues are revenues that are directed to specific purposes. These funds may be collected specifically for that purpose or they may be existing revenues that are directed to a particular use. Dedicated funds can be created through a number of different mechanisms: guaranteed expenditure minimums, special tax levies, and special tax districts.

Figure 8 Sources of Revenue for Recreation and Culture, Ontario, 1999



Source: Appendix Table A4

received from local services. Residential property taxes, in particular, are appropriate to fund local governments because they are borne by local residents. Those who enjoy the benefits from services are required to pay for them.

Other characteristics of the property tax make it difficult to increase the tax, however. First, the property tax is a visible tax because, unlike personal income taxes, it is not withheld at source. Taxpayers are required to pay property taxes directly to local governments. It is also visible because it finances services that are visible such as roads, garbage collection, parks, and recreational facilities. The visibility of the tax makes local governments accountable but it also

### Special Assessments

Special assessments (or local improvement charges) are levied on the property tax base to pay for capital expenditures in particular areas of a city. Taxes are levied on those properties that benefit from a particular capital improvement such as parks, sidewalks, watermains, and other services. The tax is generally apportioned according to a formula to reflect the proportion of the benefits that accrue to each property owner.

The advantage of special assessments is that only those who benefit from the improvement pay the cost. One of the problems with special assessments is determining the geographic

Examples of the use of dedicated funds include:

- Oakland (guaranteed expenditure minimum): Voters passed Measure K (the Kids First Initiative) in 1996. Measure K requires the city to set aside 2.5 percent of unrestricted general revenues in a children's fund for programs for children and youth. This measure generated \$5.2 million in 1998.

- Seattle (special tax levies): Voters passed the Families and Education Levy in 1990 and again in 1997 to support early child development, school-based student and family services, comprehensive student health services, and out-of-school time programs. Under this levy, a property tax rate was set at .23 per \$1,000 of assessment. The special tax levy is projected to generate \$70 million over seven years. Revenues fluctuate over time as property values change.

- Florida (special taxing districts): Six counties created special taxing districts that fund children's services. These districts are approved by voters. The district board can levy property taxes not to exceed 50 cents per \$1,000 of assess-

ment, especially if taxpayers want the service.

- Dedicated funds result in predictable and stable funding for recreation because they are difficult to reduce or eliminate.

- Dedicated funds are protected from budget debates and the tradeoffs that have to be made between recreation and other services.

- Dedicated funds can be used to match other public and private sector funding.

The disadvantages of using dedicated funds for recreation include:

- Dedicated funds may not generate sufficient revenue over time, especially where the demand for services increases. In many cases the linkage between particular revenues and expenditures has been established for political reasons and may not reflect service needs.

- Dedicated revenues may be difficult to put in place. There are costs associated with the control of dedicated funds, especially if there are many dedicated funds.

- The amount of money dedicated may become a ceiling for funding

by the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD), in collaboration with the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association. In 2000, CCSD conducted a survey of municipal recreation departments across Canada to examine children's access to recreation and cultural programs. The following are some of the findings from the 167 departments who responded to the survey:

- The vast majority of the municipal recreation departments charge a user fee for at least some of their programs. A majority of the departments surveyed charged user fees for all of their programs. Over 90 percent charged user fees for some of their aquatics, athletic, and arts programs; 87 percent charged for after-school programs, and 70 percent charged for youth drop-in programs. In most cases, user fees have risen over the last five years.

- Among recreation departments that charge user fees, the majority charged user fees to all participants of aquatic programs but fewer charged all children for after-school programs or drop-in youth programs.

- A greater proportion of departments in Alberta and Ontario charged user fees for their recreation programs. In almost all cases, Quebec had the lowest proportion of recreation departments charging user fees. In Ontario, 93 percent of recreation departments charged user fees for youth aquatic programs and 85 percent charged for aquatics programs for school-aged children. The pattern for arts and athletic programs was the same.

- 85 percent of respondents were trying to maintain or increase the financial accessibility of their programs. For example, some departments offered subsidies to low-income families using a special fund set aside for this purpose. Generally, the subsidy was capped and families were required to self-identify. In some cases, all children were subsidized either by subsidizing a percentage of all programs or offering families a fixed fee per child per year. Some departments offered families a specific time per year that they could attend; some offered specific programs free of

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*Taxpayers are generally more in favour of taxes when they know specifically where the revenues are going and, with dedicated taxes, they do know that the revenues collected will be used for a specific expenditure.*

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ment. The board allocates property tax revenues to particular purposes or programs. In general, 30 percent of the revenue is used for training community residents and service providers, community outreach programs, and council administration. The remaining 70 percent is spent on programs providing direct services for children, including childcare.

The advantages of dedicating revenue sources or "earmarking" revenues for specific purposes such as recreation include:

- Taxpayers are generally more in favour of taxes when they know specifically where the revenues are going and, with dedicated taxes, they do know that the revenues collected will be used for a specific expenditure. Dedicated taxes are often easier to levy for this reason,

instead of a floor. In other words, once funding is allocated by this mechanism to recreational programs, for example, it may be difficult to increase funds for recreation from other sources.

### User Fees

As noted in the revenue trends earlier in this report, municipalities in Ontario have increased their use of user fees for recreation and culture over the last decade. This increase is largely the result of budgetary pressures, in particular the decline in provincial transfers to municipalities and pressures on the property tax.

The extensive use of user fees by municipal recreation departments in Canada has been documented in a study

charge to all children, such as learn to swim.

Although the main reason for the increased reliance of municipalities on user fees has been budgetary pressures, economists argue that user fees can play an important role in municipal finance by ensuring that governments do what people want and are willing to pay for. The main economic rationale for user charges is “not to produce revenue but to promote economic efficiency.” Charges lead to efficiency in two ways: first, they provide information to the public sector about how much users are willing to pay for the particular service. Second, they ensure that citizens value what the public sector supplies at least at its marginal cost. Under-pricing a service (by not charging for it) can result in over-consumption. The resulting crowding may be taken as a signal that government should provide even more of the under-priced service.

A survey of municipal recreation directors in Ontario on the role of user fees found the following: 62 percent rated increasing revenue as an important price objective; 50 percent reported that price was an important means to assess which services should be given priority; 47 percent said that reducing congestion and overcrowding was an important price objective; and 63 percent reported that pricing was an important way to encourage more responsible use of services and facilities. The authors argue that the combination of limited resources and alternative uses requires a price system to allocate resources.

Although the efficient provision of goods and services requires local governments to charge directly for services wherever possible, there are cases where charging full user fees may not be appropriate. Where a good or service exhibits externalities, pricing at the marginal cost may not be appropriate. Externalities are benefits or costs of services that are not priced and may therefore not be taken into account by the user. Education is often used as an example of a positive externality where the benefits go beyond the individual to society at large. When society puts a high value on

these positive externalities, then below-cost provision or subsidies may be warranted.

Numerous studies provide evidence of the external benefits of youth recreation in terms of reducing health care and education costs, increasing social cohesion, and reducing crime (i.e., Gina Browne’s research on page 3 of this publication).

The most important general public concern with user fees is that they have adverse distributional effects: low-income families cannot afford to pay user fees for recreation services and will not use the services. There is some literature on the impact of user fees on participation rates in recreation programs but it is a mixture of empirical analysis, surveys, and anecdotal evidence. Other studies have indicated that price is only one barrier to participation in leisure activities. For example, Hanvey’s survey on access to recreation in 2000 showed that, among survey respondents, 88 percent identified other barriers that prevent school-aged children and youth from accessing programs. Highest among the barriers was transportation. Other barriers include family/parental support, social/cultural factors, equipment, lack of facilities, little awareness, and a lack of volunteers.

give everyone access to an initial basic quantity of the service at low prices or at no charge (often used for basic programs, such as swimming programs for children and youth) or some variant of a “smart card.” Under a “smart card” scheme, all users would obtain access to the service by a card but low-income users would be given an initial credit on their cards.

### Intergovernmental Transfers

Transfers from senior levels of government provide another source of revenue for local governments. There are obvious advantages to provincial transfers in general and for recreation and culture in particular in that they provide additional revenues to municipalities to fund these programs and services. There are some disadvantages to relying on provincial transfers, however:

- As noted in the expenditure and revenue trends above, grant funding is not always a stable or predictable revenue source for municipalities. When grants decline, municipalities have to make up the lost revenue by increasing property taxes, user fees, or other revenues or by reducing expenditures.

- Transfers can distort local deci-

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*The most important general public concern with user fees is that they have adverse distributional effects: low-income families cannot afford to pay user fees for recreation services and will not use the services.*

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Bird and Tsiopoulos conclude that, where a subsidy is appropriate, it should be given to the users and not to the suppliers of services. Where subsidies are provided to suppliers to induce them to lower the price charged to users, it may encourage inefficient over-expansion. Furthermore, the subsidy may go to the wrong people (that is, rich people instead of poor people). Demand subsidies (e.g. tax credit or transfer payment), on the other hand, relate to consumption of the user. Options that they propose include “lifeline” pricing schemes which

tion-making. Conditional transfers require municipalities to spend the transfers according to provincial (or federal) guidelines and often require matching funds on the part of the municipality. Witt and Crompton, for example, suggest that transfers for recreation are often confined to narrowly-defined programs. The transfer, by lowering the price of some services, encourages municipalities to spend more on those services. This often means that municipalities are making expenditures in areas that were not necessarily a priority for

them.

- Transfers can also result in accountability problems because two or more levels of government are funding the same service. When users or taxpayers want to complain about the service, they are not sure which level of government is responsible for the problem.

### Borrowing

Municipalities borrow (use debt financing) to pay for at least part of major public capital works. Repayment of borrowed funds comes from operating revenues such as property taxes and user fees. Debt at the municipal level is quite different from debt at higher levels of government. Unlike federal and provincial governments, who can and do borrow to meet operating requirements (such as wages and salaries), municipalities can borrow only to make capital expenditures. Borrowing for this purpose often makes sense. Borrowing permits municipalities to synchronize the costs and benefits of infrastructure over time. A project built today will result in benefits over the next, say 25 years. If funds are borrowed, the project is paid for over the next 25 years through repayment of the principal and interest. This means that those who benefit from the facility (the users and taxpayers over the next 25 years) also pay the costs. Borrowing is more equitable and efficient when those paying for services are enjoying the benefits.

The main disadvantage of borrowing is that future revenues are dedicated to debt repayment and are not available for other uses. While the costs are spread over time, a significant portion of local budgets becomes a fixed obligation and debt charges can constrain local fiscal flexibility.

As noted earlier, Ontario municipalities could borrow more than they do. Indeed, not only are they well below provincial borrowing guidelines, they have been reducing borrowing consistently over the last decade (see section I.2 above). As one author recently noted, “a city completely free of debt should not be the ultimate goal of fiscal

policy, regardless of how well it plays with the public. This is especially the case if the fiscal trade-off is an underfunded stock of capital assets and infrastructure.”

The costs of municipal borrowing may be reduced in the near future if the Province of Ontario goes ahead with its plan to introduce legislation to allow municipalities to issue tax-exempt bonds

ated with new development (or, in some cases, redevelopment). These funds collected have to be used to pay for the infrastructure made necessary by the development. Charges can be levied on residential or non-residential properties.

The main advantage of development charges is that growth pays for itself and does not create a burden on existing residents. As a result, development some-

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*As one author recently noted, “a city completely free of debt should not be the ultimate goal of fiscal policy, regardless of how well it plays with the public”*

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(“opportunity bonds”). These are bonds that offer the investor an income tax exemption on interest earned on the bonds. Tax-exempt bonds would allow municipalities to access financing at a lower interest rate and would reduce the cost of municipal borrowing. The Province of Ontario also announced the creation of an Ontario Municipal Economic Infrastructure Financing Authority (OMEIFA) for the 2003 budget year. This Authority will further assist municipalities (especially smaller and northern municipalities) to borrow funds at reduced rates.

### Private Sector Participation

Private sector participation includes charges on developers for park and recreation facilities (parkland dedications and development charges) and public-private partnerships.

The use of parkland dedication provisions differs across municipalities depending on their size, stage of growth, and need for parkland. For example, growing municipalities prefer land dedication; older municipalities accept cash-in-lieu payments to improve existing parks and recreation facilities or to acquire parkland elsewhere in the municipality.

One way that municipalities in Ontario finance recreation and other capital costs is through development charges. A development charge is defined as a levy on developers to finance the off-site capital costs associ-

times occurs more quickly because the municipality does not have to pay for the capital costs associated with the development. Development charges can only be used for capital expenditures and only for development or redevelopment, however. The use of development charges to pay the capital costs of recreational facilities and libraries has been restricted by new legislation: the municipality has to bear at least 10 percent of the cost.

The involvement of the private or community-based sector in the provision of infrastructure or services can take many forms:

- Operate: The private sector operates the facility for a fee. The public sector retains responsibility for capital costs.

- Lease/Purchase and Operate: The private firm leases/purchases the facility from the public sector, operates the facility, and charges user fees.

- Lease/Purchase, Build and Operate: This arrangement is similar to lease/purchase and operate except that the private sector firm would be required to build or develop a new facility, or enlarge or renovate an existing facility and then operate it for a number of years.

- Build: This is a turnkey partnership in which the private sector is paid a fixed fee to build a facility according to government specifications and turns the facility over to the public sector when it is completed.

- BOT (Build, Operate, Transfer): The private sector develops and builds

the required infrastructure, operates the facility for some specified period of time, and then transfers it back to the government.

- Build and Operate: The private sector builds and operates the facility and is responsible for capital financing. The operation is regulated and controlled by the public sector.

- Build and Transfer: The private sector builds the infrastructure and then transfers ownership to the public sector. Under the Municipal Capital Facilities provision in the Municipal Act in Ontario, municipalities can enter into agreements with the private sector to build capital facilities (including recreational, cultural, and tourist facilities). Municipalities can exempt private companies from municipal and school property taxes, provide assistance through grants and low-interest loans, provide lending guarantees, and provide the services of municipal employees. The private sector can lease the facility back to the city or operate the facility.

One of the main advantages of partnerships is that, by relieving municipalities of the financial responsibility for upfront capital costs, they enable infrastructure to be built at times when government funding is constrained. Since municipalities do not like to borrow, this

For the private sector, there are risks that the regulatory framework could change and cause delays in the project. For the public sector, there is the risk that the nature of the public services provided will not be what the public wants. The success of a partnership depends on how the contractual arrangements are structured and how the risks will be shared. Municipalities need to ensure that municipal objectives are being met. For example, in the case of a recreation facility, the municipality may want to ensure that some programs are provided for specific users at specific time periods.

Two Ontario examples of partnerships for recreation facilities can be found in the City of London, the Western Fair Sports Centre, and in the City of Vaughan, the Sports Village.

## Summary and Conclusions

The importance of recreation and culture to the quality of life of individuals and communities and to the economic competitiveness of cities is increasingly being emphasized in the literature. At the same time, however, the analysis in this report shows that municipal expenditures on recreation and culture in Ontario have not kept pace with infla-

additional sources of revenue (for example, access to income, sales, or fuel taxes) have been made available to Ontario municipalities. On the capital side, Ontario municipalities have reduced their use of borrowing for recreation and other infrastructure. The result of this overall financial situation is that operating expenditures on recreation and culture are declining (in constant dollars) and recreation infrastructure is deteriorating.

In this fiscal context, it is clear that municipalities need to set out a long-term strategic plan for recreation that includes ways to finance recreation infrastructure and programs. This means seeking partnerships with the private and community-based sectors and looking for new revenue sources to supplement the existing sources. This report has reviewed a number of different options for funding municipal recreation, some of which are currently being used in Ontario and some of which are used in other jurisdictions. The report also set out the advantages and disadvantages of each option. Probably the most that can be said from this review is that there is no single source of revenue that would be sufficient to meet the operating or capital needs for municipal recreation. Rather, municipalities need to use a combination of revenue sources to meet the long-term requirements for municipal recreation.

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### *A major contributing factor to the decline in municipal recreation expenditures relative to other expenditures by municipal governments is the fiscal situation in municipalities*

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is one way to get facilities built without the municipality incurring debt. The operation of facilities and programs by private or not-for-profit operators also reduces municipal operating expenditures and may enable additional sources of revenue to be collected. Ancillary uses such as retail can be accommodated within facilities to provide another source of revenue. Finally, the public sector can draw on private sector experience and skill.

There are also potential risks associated with public-private partnerships.

tion over the last decade.

A major contributing factor to the decline in municipal recreation expenditures relative to other expenditures by municipal governments is the fiscal situation in municipalities. Municipalities are being faced with an increasing number of responsibilities that have been offloaded from the federal and provincial governments. Provincial grants have declined significantly over the last ten years and municipalities are under pressure to keep property taxes down. No

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*She has co-authored three books on property taxes and urban public finance in Canada as well as numerous articles on local government finance.*

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# Towards Universality in Youth Arts and Recreation Programs in Canada

## A Statement on Youth Recreation



## Laidlaw Foundation

### *Purpose*

*The Laidlaw Foundation is a public interest foundation that uses its human and financial resources in innovation ways to strengthen civic engagement and social cohesion. The Foundation uses its capital to better the environments and fulfil the capacities of children and youth, to enhance the opportunities for human development and creativity and to sustain healthy communities and ecosystems.*

*The well-being of children and youth are central to the Foundation's mission. A life chances perspective frames much of the Foundation's work. This framework recognizes the multiple influences that shape the social prospects and life outcomes of children through predictable developmental transitions. The Foundation has adopted an interactive approach with organizations and agencies in the charitable, public and private sectors. It has selected activities in which it believes progress is possible and in which outcomes can be sustained.*

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**P**erhaps it was sharing experiences at summer camp. Or the camaraderie and competitiveness of team sports. For others, it might have been shaking the rafters in a neighborhood garage band, matching wits in the local chess club or fumbling through Shakespeare in a dimly lit auditorium.

Whatever the activity, almost any successful, well-rounded adult can recall the first time they fell into some-

thing they loved as a young person, and, in retrospect, how important it was in discerning and developing character, creativity and a sense of self in a larger world.

Most young people don't go on to become Olympic athletes, famous musicians or legends of the stage. But there's mounting evidence that their involvement in loosely structured arts and recreation programs – broadly defined – is an important factor in producing healthy, balanced, fully developed and engaged adults contributing to the civic life of their communities.

### **Our Vision – Young People Reaching Their Full Potential**

No one can deny that Canada is one of the best places on earth to grow up. We are a peaceful, prosperous nation with a first-rate education system. Many of our young people today are surrounded by a dizzying array of electronic, consumer and personal goods exceeding that of any previous generation. These are great natural advantages, but research is increasingly showing that youth involvement in arts and recreation programs is key to producing well-rounded, fully engaged citizens, and healthy and safe communities.

Family, schools, ethnicity, culture and religion will always exert a strong influence on the development of young people. But it is primarily in arts and recreation activities that youth can relate to their peers, experience increased self-esteem, connect with

positive role models and other like-minded youth, expand their imagination, acquire skills, and interact socially. Through arts and recreation, adolescents also give back to their own communities by using their time well, avoiding anti-social behaviour, learning teamwork and collaboration, and having the freedom to explore individual strengths, weaknesses and likes.

### **Our Goal - Universal Access to Quality Youth Arts and Recreation**

The Laidlaw Foundation has been supporting organizations that work with Canadian youth for more than 50 years. Our experience has taught us that engaged and involved young people produce strong and active future citizens.

We believe that every Canadian community should be a place where young people can find out more about themselves and their peers through competition, collaboration and personal development in the arts and recreation.

That's the dream. The reality is quite different. In most communities today, a waning public commitment to youth arts and recreation is reflected in aging and inadequate facilities, fraying or non-existent links between partners and providers and the rise of private sector alternatives, where socio-economic status determines who participates and who profits. Other barriers to participation, such as transportation costs, lack of family support, and poor outreach to disadvantaged communities, get in the way of full participation.

Canadians respond to issues and undertakings that reinforce their basic values. The Laidlaw Foundation firmly believes broad-based public resolve is needed to establish entrenched, universal access to youth arts and recreation in every community. This is not a job for

government alone. It never has been. This is about ensuring that families, neighbors and community groups are able to support the development of young people by providing them with ample opportunity to explore, to experience and to participate.

### **Our Values – Universality: Equality of Access, Participation and Outcome**

We believe that the economic, social and logistical barriers reduce access to arts and recreation for millions of Canadian youth. These barriers restrict participation, deny opportunity and work against the development of healthy communities.

A truly universal network of youth arts and recreation programs would encourage and emphasize equality of access, participation and outcome across different groups of young people, rich and poor, immigrants and non-immigrants and boys and girls.

The Laidlaw Foundation is a public interest foundation that uses its human and financial resources in innovation ways to strengthen civic engagement and social cohesion. The Foundation uses its capital to better the environments and fulfil the capacities of children and youth, to enhance the opportunities for human development and creativity and to sustain healthy communities and ecosystems.

The well-being of children and youth are central to the Foundation's mission. A life chances perspective frames much of the Foundation's work. This framework recognizes the multiple influences that shape the social prospects and life outcomes of children through predictable developmental transitions. The Foundation has adopted an interactive approach with organizations and agencies in the charitable, public and private sectors. It has selected activities in which it believes progress is possible and in which outcomes can be sustained.

### **Our Plan – Raising Awareness, Seeding Research and Supporting Model Programs**

The Laidlaw Foundation recognizes and supports the intricate network of government and community groups that currently provide the vast majority of current youth arts and recreation services. These groups and the partnerships they formed are a unique part of the history and development of each community. But too many today are under-financed, under-staffed and operating in isolation. Barriers are not coming down.

The time is right for a new approach. Transforming the patchwork quilt that is youth arts and recreation services in most communities into a program that works effectively for all young people is a huge challenge. But by keeping our eyes on the prize – universality in the sense of equitable access, participation and outcomes -- we will have a focus and a goal against which to measure progress.

As a first step, the Foundation plans to step up its efforts to raise public awareness of the connection between youth recreation, youth development and healthy and safe communities. A number of forums are scheduled to take place over the next several months-involving youth, the general public and workers in the field. Insights gained at these forums will be used to help decide next steps.

In tandem with these forums, the Foundation plans to support further research into the relationship between structured arts and recreation programs and adolescent development. The Foundation will be encouraging recreation providers to keep score of their impact, and supporting definitive research linking adolescent development and recreation in a positive way will be key to successfully raising public and political interest in our upcoming activities.

But the Foundations' resources and energies are limited. Funding for this movement will continue to be a blend of

public, individual, and private sector contributions. Communities, individuals, and governments, as well as private funders all must participate in this movement if real progress is to be made. Recreation and Arts organizations too must continue to deliver programs that demonstrate the power of arts and recreation and model effective solutions to the challenges of access, participation and outcomes. These programs will serve as beacons of the sweeping change the Foundation hopes to spark.

The very young men and women who will one day guide our nation are growing up, accumulating experiences, observing by example and forming fragile, first opinions of themselves and the world around them. All children and youth need artistic and recreational experiences, and the Foundation focuses on the critical years of ages 10 to 15. At this time, the process of personal, social and physical development is still incomplete, but it is underway in earnest.

It's no understatement to say that the options and choices available to young people will influence their development in these critical years, and perhaps lay the plotline for the life ahead. If we cannot offer accessible and stimulating arts and recreation opportunities to our young people during this critical phase of their development, we really cannot be surprised if and when they opt for less attractive alternatives.

### **Your Role - Moving Forward**

Get involved. Link up with those already working in the field. Initiate and contribute to the ongoing debate. Make the case for universality in your community. Contact your municipal, provincial, federal and school board elected representatives. Tap into other communities, imitating their strengths and learning from their experiences. Demonstrate and support engagement and commitment – which just happen to be the very qualities we wish for our young people.



# Action Speaks Louder: Summary

*The following is a summary of the major ideas suggested by forum participants as strategies for mobilizing support.*

- Investment in recreational opportunities for youth pays for itself. In the short term low-income families who have access to recreational services leave social assistance in greater numbers and reduce their need for a broad range of social and health services. In the longer term recreational opportunities for youth result in stronger school attendance and achievement records and higher academic, social and interpersonal competence, and is a strong predictor for success in higher education and subsequent careers.
- The youth market is very segmented. A broad range of services in culture, sports and physical activity is important to reach youth's diversity.
- Recreational facilities and programs are part of the social infrastructure of municipalities. Cities need to attract skilled workers to be globally competitive. The quality of recreational services is a key ingredient in what attracts skilled employment to particular communities. An audit of all of the human, social and physical resources of a neighbourhood or community can provide a broad picture of what is available, e.g. the human services approach in Ottawa.
- Investment in youth recreation has strong links to other public agendas. Two examples are public health (active youth equals active adults) and crime prevention (a reduction in the use of correctional services and the police).
- Schools are key providers of recreational facilities, programs and skill development. Schools can provide access to recreational programming, both in the sports and cultural

areas, which cannot be replicated, particularly in providing basic skills. Shrinking access to school facilities has a huge impact on a broad range of organizations including the schools themselves, municipal recreation programs and community organizations. Using existing school facilities is an efficient use of public resources.

- Access to existing public school facilities may be the easiest priority to argue for. There already exists a broad understanding of this issue at the neighbourhood and community level. There is currently a public debate on possible changes to the provincial school funding formula. Can parents be mobilized as strong advocates in this debate?
- There is a need for public education and advocacy. Appropriate communication tools and partnerships needs to be developed. Leadership needs to be diverse and representative (age, culture, public and private). It is important to create a common language among recreational, cultural and physical activity organizations.
- Champions for youth recreation need to be identified. There is a unique opportunity in 2003 with the possibility of elections at the municipal, provincial and federal government levels.
- Advocacy for youth recreation requires a collaborative, cross-sectoral approach. Who can seed these necessary partnerships and create a "safe table" for a coalition to form on this issue?

## Laidlaw Youth Recreation Forum: Action Speaks Louder!

### Forum Presentees

Listed below each presenter's name is a website link, where available, which provides additional information on the organizations or subjects covered at the forum.

**Linda Albright**,  
Arts Network for Children and Youth  
(<http://www.artsonline.ca/2ndPages/Conference/General.shtml#forum>)

**Phyllis Berck**, Manager,  
Physical Activity and Sport Development,  
Parks and Recreation Division, City of Toronto.  
She is also on the Board of Directors of the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity (CAAWS)  
(<http://www.city.toronto.on.ca/parks/index.htm>)  
(<http://www.caaws.ca/english/index.htm>)

**Dr. Gina Browne**, founder and director,  
System-Linked Research Unit, McMaster University.  
She is also a Professor of Nursing and Clinical Epidemiology & Biostatistics, Faculty of Health Sciences, McMaster University  
(<http://www-fhs.mcmaster.ca/ceb/who/faculty/browne.htm>)

**Wayne Fairhead**, Executive Director,  
Sears Drama Festival. He is also on the faculty of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.  
(<http://www.searsdramafestival.com>)

**Colin Hood**, Executive Director, Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations.  
(<http://www.ofsaa.on.ca>)

**Enid Slack**, Enid Slack Consulting Inc.  
([eslack@netcom.ca](mailto:eslack@netcom.ca))

**Dick Stewart**, former Commissioner,  
City of Ottawa  
([http://ottawa.ca/inside\\_govt/transition/committees/projects/humanservices.html](http://ottawa.ca/inside_govt/transition/committees/projects/humanservices.html))

*The following people acted as discussion moderators for the forum:*

**Barbara Hall**, former Chair, National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention

**Herb Pirk**, former Commissioner, City of Toronto. He is currently CEO at the York Downs Golf and Country Club.

**Walter Ross**, Past President, Laidlaw Foundation

**Mary W. Rowe**, Editor, Ideas That Matter

**Paul Zarnke**, President, Laidlaw Foundation

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