

# Promising Practices in Parks & Recreation

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## Final Report

A Project Sponsored  
by the  
**Ontario Municipal Knowledge Network**  
(formerly the Ontario Centre for Municipal Best Practices)

Facilitated by  
**Parks & Recreation Ontario** in association  
with the **Ontario Parks Association** and  
the **Ontario Recreation Facilities Association**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The objective of this project has been to identify best practices in municipal parks and recreation. The project has been sponsored by the Ontario Centre for Municipal Best Practice (now known as the Ontario Municipal Knowledge Network). The mandate of the Ontario Municipal Knowledge Network is to *“improve municipal service delivery by enabling municipal managers throughout Ontario to share information and learn from each other’s ideas and successes”*.

This project supports the Parks and Recreation Sector in enhancing its performance and accountability and contributes to a long-term strategy with the following objectives:

- Equipping the sector with the capacity to better assess its performance
- Building the capacity of the sector to improve its performance
- Building understanding of the current state of the parks and recreation sector today

## Importance & Benefits of Parks & Recreation

Recreation and parks services have a positive impact on health and wellness, quality of life, the environment, and the growth and development of children and youth. Recent research\* has confirmed that the vast majority of Ontarians believe that recreation and parks are essential services that benefit the entire community. Without parks and recreation services, respondents agreed that communities would be affected - by reduced quality of life, emotional well-being, community cohesiveness and reduced opportunities for physical activity, entertainment and fun - particularly for children. (\*Parks & Recreation Ontario, ***Use and Benefits of Local Government Recreation and Parks Services: An Ontario Perspective - Research Summary***, 2009) The ongoing capacity of the municipal sector to provide effective and efficient parks and recreation services is vital to Ontario communities and their futures.

## Challenges Facing Municipal Parks and Recreation

Municipalities across the Province are being challenged to meet community needs within fiscal constraints and to address a broad array of changes in their environment:

- **Meeting the needs of changing populations** (e.g. growth in some communities, depopulation or stagnation in other communities, aging populations, and growing multicultural diversity)
- **Coping with aging facilities and infrastructure** and dealing with the costs of maintaining facilities and delivering programs
- **Delivering effective programs and services to the public within an environment of fiscal constraints** - looking for creative ways to leverage investment
- **Demonstrating accountability** through effective planning, service delivery, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of outcomes
- **Developing staff, supervisory and management skills and capacity** to address changing needs, planning for potential retirements and building succession capability
- **Making effective use of technology and e-services** to support key service functions such as public information, program registration, and facility booking, as well as key management functions such as asset management, maintenance management, and staff deployment
- **Dealing with the uncertainty of Federal and Provincial policy, program and funding directions.**

### **Challenges of Pinpointing "Best Practices"**

Parks and recreation is one of the most locally-driven municipal service areas. Municipal parks and recreation providers face some significant challenges in the development and refinement of performance measures that can have province-wide applicability. Two key challenges include comparability and capacity:

- **Comparability: the “Apples and Oranges” problem:** There are large variations in the program delivery, support models and local policies across the Province. The current measures used under the Municipal Performance Measures Program can be influenced by a broad range of factors including: level of service provided; degree of urbanization; service delivery model used (direct delivery vs. community development model); labour force (unionized vs. non-union, vs. use of volunteers) and many other factors.
- **Capacity:** Parks and recreation providers often lack the capacity to do effective performance measurement. Until relatively recently many municipalities lacked accurate data on the full scope and nature of their parks and recreation services.

Given these and other factors, it is challenging to correlate results on the Municipal Performance Measures Program with "best practices". Put simply - many municipalities who were not identified as being in the "top performers" group using MPMP data may be implementing best practices; and some municipalities that were identified in the top performers group may be there for other reasons than efficient and effective practices.

For the purposes of this report we have chosen to use the term "promising practices" rather than "best practices" due to the challenges at this stage of verifying that the practices profiled are truly the "best".

### **Evidence of Promising Practices in Many Municipalities**

A broad array of promising practices was identified during this project. These have been identified in Section 3 of this report. A small group of practices was chosen for further investigation. The group of practices chosen had two general attributes: potential replicability across the Province; and a sufficient number of examples to enable further consultation and identification of promising practices. Three types of practices were investigated in further detail through consultation with municipalities and collection of further data and information:

- **Agreements with school boards:** includes various relationships developed between municipalities and school boards to maximize the benefits and use of public infrastructure for the community, and to minimize the operational costs of maintaining the public infrastructure.
- **Community engagement - leveraging volunteer time and resources:** includes various ways by which municipalities have supported and encouraged community volunteers and groups to develop and deliver community programs and enhance community quality of life
- **Community facility partnerships:** includes innovative formal relationships between a community organization and a municipality for the sponsorship, development and/or ongoing operations of specific facility infrastructure.

### **Need for Further Work**

The Expert Panels for Parks and for Recreation believe that further work is needed to support municipalities and their ability to provide efficient and effective service.

The current MPMP measures provide a broad set of metrics which individual municipalities can track over time. However there is a **need for further work on**

**performance measurement**, in a number of areas. This work should be done in cooperation with other organizations such as OMBI - the Ontario Municipal Benchmarking Initiative.

- **Need for More Refined Efficiency Measures in Selected Areas:** The development of more detailed performance measures that inform specific operations managers would be beneficial. For example it may be beneficial to develop a detailed measure such as Operating Cost/Hectare to maintain Class A Sports Fields.
- **Need for Consistent Approaches to Measuring Customer Satisfaction with Parks & Recreation Services:** The development of a common survey instrument that builds on other initiatives (e.g. Citizens First) would support continuous improvement and benchmarking among comparators.
- **Need for Long Term Research Which Assesses the Outcomes of Investment in Parks and Recreation:** There is growing interest in the development of methods for documenting outcomes, and in long term research which evaluates the impact of recreation and parks.

There is a growing interest within the municipal parks & recreation sector in **identifying and sharing promising practices** - to address fiscal constraints and maximize the benefits of municipal investment. The Expert Panels for this project have identified a number of specific areas for further investigation:

- **A Better Province-Wide Solution for School-Municipal Cooperation:** In spite of joint use and reciprocal agreements in many municipalities there are still many challenges in ensuring affordable, accessible community use of schools. There is a need to develop a province-wide approach which addresses recurrent concerns such as consistent after-school access, effective risk management, dealing with insurance concerns, custodial costs etc.
- **Dealing Effectively with Regulatory Change:** There is a need to document promising practices for compliance with the **Accessibility for Ontarians Disability Act (AODA)** and its regulations and to build awareness of partnerships and grant sources that have supported accessibility improvements. For parks operations the **implementation of the Cosmetic Pesticides Ban Act** is creating new challenges as parks managers look for new ways to maintain parks and open space to standards sufficient to meet community expectations, without the use of pesticides. This is a key priority because without innovative and effective methods municipalities are likely to face increased costs to maintain their parks and open space.

- **New Approaches to Master Planning & Lifecycle Planning to Support Effective Service and Facility Development & Renewal:** There is growing interest in implementing effective and efficient ways to develop long term plans that support wise renewal and replacement of facilities, and position municipalities for funding opportunities when they arise (e.g. having "shovel-ready" plans).
- **Ways Municipal Parks & Recreation Can Help Address Rising Health Costs & Health Concerns:** There is a need to document promising practices in terms of the growing role of some municipalities in health promotion and chronic illness management.
- **Ways Municipal Parks & Recreation Can Help Address Growing Environmental Concerns & Rising Energy Costs:** Areas of interest include: service delivery models which reduce reliance on cars and provide "Walk To" facilities; the impact of climate change on operations/maintenance practices and how municipalities are dealing with it; water conservation measures and practices; ensuring and building energy-efficient recreation facilities and parks (e.g. solar-powered splash pads; energy-efficient lighting for sports fields and pathways).
- **Effective Management Approaches to Enhance Service Responsiveness and Efficiencies:** Use of work order and asset tracking systems; use of specialized equipment; different staffing approaches; customer care (multi-service) centres in recreation facilities; inter-municipal partnerships.
- **Desire for Easy Access to Tools and Templates:** Like other municipal managers parks and recreation managers do not want to "reinvent the wheel". They are interested in being able to access tools and templates (e.g. policies, forms, sample agreements) developed by others that could be tailored to the unique needs of different municipalities.

This project represents an important step in supporting efficient and effective practices in parks and recreation. The parks and recreation sector looks forward to working with other municipal and provincial partners on initiatives to better assess and improve its performance.

# 1. PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

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## 1.1 Project Background and Objectives

The objective of this project has been to identify best practices in municipal parks and recreation. The project was sponsored by the Ontario Centre for Municipal Best Practice (now known as the Ontario Municipal Knowledge Network). The mandate of the Ontario Municipal Knowledge Network is to *“improve municipal service delivery by enabling municipal managers throughout Ontario to share information and learn from each other’s ideas and successes”*.

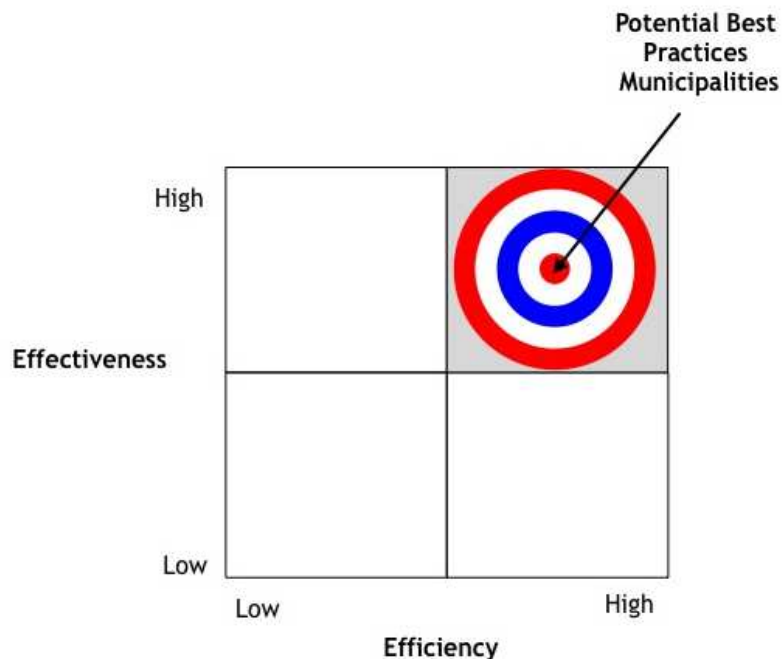
This project supports the Parks and Recreation Sector in enhancing its performance and accountability and contributes to a long-term strategy with the following objectives:

- **Equipping the sector with the capacity to assess its performance:**
  - To enable consistent performance evaluation and reporting - “How well are we performing?”
  - To support effective outcome evaluation reporting - “What difference are we making?”
  - To support effective assessment of customer satisfaction
- **Building the capacity of the sector to improve its performance:**
  - To develop tools that support effective and efficient measurement
  - To assist the sector in enhancing its performance by defining standards of high performance and supporting future certification and accreditation efforts
  - To identify and document best practices, provide continuous improvement tools
- **Building understanding of the current state of the parks and recreation sector today:**
  - To identify needs and provide an improved baseline understanding of the sector, including what is provided (providers, programming, current service levels, infrastructure) and how it is provided (delivery models, program organization and support models, policies)
  - To support comparative analysis and public reporting
  - To support future capacity building and sectoral strategy development



## 1.2 Municipal Performance Measure Program Data Analysis

The process involved correlating results on MPMP efficiency and effectiveness measures to identify potential best practice municipalities. Identified municipalities were then surveyed, interviewed where appropriate, and practices analyzed to identify promising practices which may assist other municipalities in enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of their operations. **It is important to note that many other municipalities may have developed best practices, but they were not surveyed unless their MPMP measures were in the top grouping.**



The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing's Intergovernmental Relationships and Partnerships Branch provided a run of the 2006 MPMP data for Parks and Recreation broken down by the following categories:

- Small: < 20,000 population
- Medium: 20,000 - 99,999 population
- Large: 100,000+ population

## Parks Analysis

The following measures were analyzed for each size category:

- **MPMP measure: Operating cost for parks per person (SLC 91710213)\***
- **MPMP measure: Hectares of open space per 1,000 persons (SLC 92715507)\***
- **Derived measure: Operating costs for parks per hectare of open space (municipally owned).** Further analysis was undertaken of the parks and open space data by combining two variables: operating costs for parks with total hectares of open space (municipally owned) to derive a proxy measure. While the two variables are not directly aligned due to the differences between parks and open space - they do provide a proxy measure of potential efficiency.

The numbers of municipalities reporting by measure and size category are shown in Table 1. Overall the aim was to identify approximately the top quartile of municipalities as the preliminary base. This relatively large base was designed to offset the anticipated challenges of erroneous data and/or low response rate. A survey was sent to the municipalities who ranked in the top grouping on 2 or 3 measures. While this was a somewhat arbitrary approach, it helped to identify those municipalities which theoretically have the most efficient operations (in some cases combined with high service levels).

**Table 1**  
**MPMP Parks Data - Measures Analyzed and Number Reporting by Size Category**

	Municipalities with Population < 20,000	Municipalities with Population 20,000 to 99,999	Municipalities with Population 100,000+	Total
Operating costs for parks per person	Total Reporting = 175	Total Reporting = 42	Total Reporting = 21	Total Reporting = 238
Hectares of open space (municipally owned)	Total Reporting = 163	Total Reporting = 42	Total Reporting = 21	Total Reporting = 226
Derived measure: Operating costs for parks per hectare of open space (municipally owned)	Total = 163	Total = 42	Total = 21	Total = 226

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\* MPMP/FIR Reference No.

## **Recreation Data Analysis**

The following measures were analyzed for each category within recreation:

- MPMP measure: Operating costs for recreation programs per person (SLC 91 7102 13)\*
- MPMP measure: Operating costs for recreation facilities per person (SLC 91 7303 13)
- MPMP measure: Square metres of indoor recreation facilities per 1,000 persons (municipally owned) (SLC 92 7356 07)
- MPMP measure: Total participant hours for recreation programs per 1,000 persons (SLC 92 7255 07)
- Derived Measure: Operating costs for recreation facilities per sq. metre of indoor space
- Derived Measure: Operating costs for recreation programs per participant hour
- Derived Measure: Total recreation program & facility operating costs per capita

The numbers of municipalities reporting by measure and size category are shown in Table 2.

The survey was sent to the municipalities identified who ranked in the top grouping on 2 or 3 measures (facilities, programs and total operating costs).

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\* MPMP/FIR Reference No.

**Table 2  
MPMP Recreation Data - Measures Analyzed and Number Reporting by Size Category**

	Municipalities with Population < 20,000	Municipalities with Population 20,000 to 99,999	Municipalities with Population 100,000+	Total
1. Operating costs for recreation facilities per person.	Total Reporting = 187	Total Reporting = 41	Total Reporting = 21	Total Reporting = 249
2. Square metres of indoor recreation facilities per 1,000 persons (municipally owned)**	Total Reporting = 187	Total Reporting = 41	Total Reporting = 21	Total Reporting = 249
3. Derived Measure - Operating Costs for Recreation Facilities per Sq. Metre of Indoor Space	Total = 187	Total = 41	Total = 21	Total = 249
4. Operating costs for recreation programs per person.	Total Reporting = 151	Total Reporting = 40	Total Reporting = 22	Total Reporting = 213
5. Total participant hours for recreation programs per 1,000 persons.	Total Reporting = 151	Total Reporting = 40	Total Reporting = 22	Total Reporting = 213
6. Derived Measure: Operating Costs for Recreation programs per Participant Hour	Total = 151	Total = 40	Total = 22	Total = 213
7. Derived Measure: Total Recreation Program & Facility Operating Costs per Capita	Total = 187	Total = 40	Total = 22	Total = 249

- **Quality of data and resulting measures was found to be problematic in some cases due to:**
  - Problems with separating Recreation costs from Parks costs - particularly in smaller municipalities where these functions are integrated
  - Problems with accuracy of cost allocation between Recreation Programs and Recreation Facilities
  - Problems with accuracy of program participant hours (many municipalities do not record this information)

- **There are a number of relatively unique drivers influencing results on MPMP measures:**
  - Nature of community and degree of urbanization is an influencing factor
    - Predominantly rural municipalities have little or no actively maintained parks, fields and trees
    - Highly urbanized municipalities may have a broad range of different types of lands and facilities to maintain
  - In some cases, results may suggest efficiency but some municipalities suggested that their results are attributable to low levels of service and investment
  - Types, sizes and ages of recreation facilities are highly variable
    - No consistent pattern in terms of facility mix
    - Many unusual facilities in the mix (e.g. Marina, Lock, Carousel)
  - Range of recreation programs offered directly and indirectly are also highly variable
    - Aquatics most common program provided directly
    - Other relatively common programs: children's school age programs, seniors, active living/fitness
    - Many unique programs: cultural, inter-generational, special youth programs
  - Use of non-union staff
- **Organizational flux is common in this sector and may also influence data**
  - Numerous municipalities have been changing their organizational model. For example:
    - Combining Recreation services with Parks
    - Separating Recreation and Parks - and putting Parks with Works

### **1.3 Best Practice Survey Methodology**

Surveys were designed with input from the Expert Panels and sent to potential best practice municipalities.

Reminders were sent to municipalities. The table below summarizes the number of responses received.

## Parks Survey Responses Received

	Sent	Received	%
< 20,000	26	6	23%
20,000 - 99,999	21	14	66%
100,000+	10	4	40%
	57	24	42%

## Recreation Survey Responses Received

	Sent	Received	%
< 20,000	12	1	8%
20,000 - 99,999	17	7	41%
100,000+	11	7	64%
	40	15	38%

### 1.4 Role of the Expert Panels

Expert panels for Parks and Recreation were selected to:

- Review the data for the short-listed municipalities
- Discuss underlying factors for results
- Review synopsis of potential best practices
- Agree on best practices that have the greatest potential to support sector improvement
- Review and comment on best practice summaries

The members of the panels are listed on the following page.

Parks Panel	Recreation Panel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bill Slute, Parks Manager, City of Oshawa; President, Ontario Parks Association</li><li>• Bill Galbraith, Parks Manager, Town of Whitby</li><li>• Jamie Houston, Director, Parks and Recreation, City of North Bay</li><li>• Ray Stukas, Parks Supervisor, City of Toronto</li><li>• Barry Braun, Commissioner, Recreation, Parks and Culture, Prince Edward County</li><li>• Larry Ketcheson, CEO, Parks &amp; Recreation Ontario</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Jan Wilson, Executive Director of Recreation, Windsor</li><li>• John Lohuis, Director, Parks &amp; Recreation, Mississauga</li><li>• Colleen Neil, Recreation Manager, Kenora</li><li>• Doug Sweet, Manager, Windsor Family Credit Union Centre (formerly Director, Parks and Recreation, Town of Essex)</li><li>• Mike Myatt, Director of Community Services, Town of Saugeen Shores</li><li>• Larry Ketcheson, CEO, Parks &amp; Recreation Ontario</li></ul>

## 2. THE CHANGING CONTEXT FOR MUNICIPAL PARKS & RECREATION

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### 2.1 Strategic Challenges Facing Municipal Parks & Recreation

Municipalities across the Province are being challenged to meet community needs within fiscal constraints, and to address a broad array of changes in their environment. Key issues facing many municipal parks and recreation providers include:

- **Meeting the needs of a changing population** (e.g. growth in some communities, depopulation or stagnation in other communities, aging populations, and growing multicultural diversity)
- Ensuring **affordable access** to recreation and parks programs and services
- Playing an appropriate role in health promotion and chronic illness management
- Coping with **aging facilities and infrastructure** and dealing with the costs of maintaining facilities and delivering programs
- Managing rising **energy costs** and a growing focus on **environmental sustainability**
- Delivering effective programs and services to the public within an environment of **fiscal constraints** - looking for creative ways to leverage investment
- **Demonstrating accountability** through effective planning, service delivery, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of outcomes
- **Developing staff, supervisory and management skills and capacity** to address changing needs, planning for potential retirements and building succession capability
- **Making effective use of technology and e-services** to support key service functions such as public information, program registration, and facility booking, as well as key management functions such as asset management, maintenance management, and staff deployment
- **Dealing with the uncertainty of Federal and Provincial policy, program and funding directions.**



## 2.2 Factors Influencing Municipal Parks and Recreation

Parks and recreation is one of the most locally-driven municipal service areas. Unlike many other municipal service areas there are relatively few regulations directly governing the range and level of service to be provided. Political priorities and community-based decision-making can exert a profound influence on the range and cost of facilities, programs and services provided. For example one municipality may wish to differentiate itself as a “beautiful” or “green” community and invest heavily in floral displays, streetscape plantings, parks or other greening initiatives. Other municipalities may choose to focus their energies on serving specific demographic groups by funding specialized centres and programs for groups such as youth or seniors. These local priorities will also influence performance on a variety of measures.

Municipal parks and recreation providers face some significant challenges in the development and refinement of performance measures that can have province-wide applicability. Two key challenges include **comparability** and **capacity**:

**Comparability: the “Apples and Oranges” problem:** Perhaps one of the greatest challenges facing the sector in terms of realizing the full benefits of the Municipal Performance Measurement Program is providing context information to support effective use of the measures and comparability. There are large variations in the program delivery, support models and local policies across the Province. The key variables influencing comparability may include:

- **Definition of recreation and the range of programming and infrastructure provided:** Some municipalities deliver or host a narrow range of programs such as the traditional hockey, soccer and swimming, while others are involved in a broad variety including for example cultural programs, camp programs, ski programs, golf programs, etc. Some municipalities own and operate a narrow range of facilities (e.g. community centres and arenas) while others may operate a broad range of other types of facilities (e.g. aquatics centres, stadiums, ski facilities, fitness centres, marinas). The range and complexity of programs and infrastructure provided may have an effect on certain types of measures.
- **Delivery model:** Some municipalities provide a large portion of the programs directly themselves - i.e. municipal permanent or seasonal staff deliver the programs. Other municipalities have chosen to pursue more of a “community development” model in which relatively little recreation programming may be

provided directly by the municipality - although the municipality encourages the development of community organizations and volunteers, and “hosts” community-provided programs in its facilities and parks. Other municipalities have chosen to pursue contracts or partnerships with other providers - including the private sector, the not-for-profit sector and in some parts of the province agreements with neighbouring municipalities.

- ***Program organization and support models:*** Municipal and organizational restructuring has led to an increasingly diverse set of approaches to the organization and support of municipal parks and recreation. For example, in some municipalities the parks function has been integrated with the public works outside operations functions. In some of the larger single tier municipalities (which are also Consolidated Municipal Service Managers) recreation has been integrated with other community and social services functions. It is not yet known which approaches may be more efficient or effective, but it will be important to be able to categorize and assess these differences in the future.
- ***Access and subsidy policies:*** Effectiveness and efficiency measures such as participation may be influenced by municipal access and subsidy policies. Hours of service and policies regarding community access to specific types of facilities may influence performance on such measures as participation. User fees represent a growing portion of the funding base for municipal recreation and culture (between 1990 and 1999 user fees increased from approximately 23% to 26% of revenues). The size of these fees and how they are applied can have an impact on effectiveness measures - e.g. on participation.

**Capacity:** Parks and recreation providers often lack the capacity to do effective performance measurement. Specific capacity issues in many municipalities include the following:

- ***Data collection:*** While some larger municipalities have instituted program financial management and registration systems in recent years for municipally-delivered recreation programs, there are many who lack such systems. The sector, unlike many other sectors, has not had a strong tradition of data collection related to participants, use and activity data. In addition, a large portion of parks and recreation activity which takes place in, or on, municipally-provided facilities and parks cannot be easily monitored - either because the provider is an arms-length community partner, or because the activity is by its nature drop-in or informal (e.g. drop-in basketball programs, walking/hiking in a trail or park). As a result, it is currently challenging for the sector to fully and accurately evaluate a variety of effectiveness measures - e.g. the collection of use, participation, retention and satisfaction data.

- ***Data analysis and evaluation:*** While the exact number is not known, it is clear that few municipal parks and recreation departments have dedicated in-house expertise in performance analysis and evaluation. Even the larger municipalities that use technology-based financial and management information systems have only begun to explore the management reporting and analysis capabilities of these systems. In addition, there is not currently a dedicated capacity at the provincial level (either in government or in provincial associations) to sustain ongoing province-wide data collection and analysis efforts.

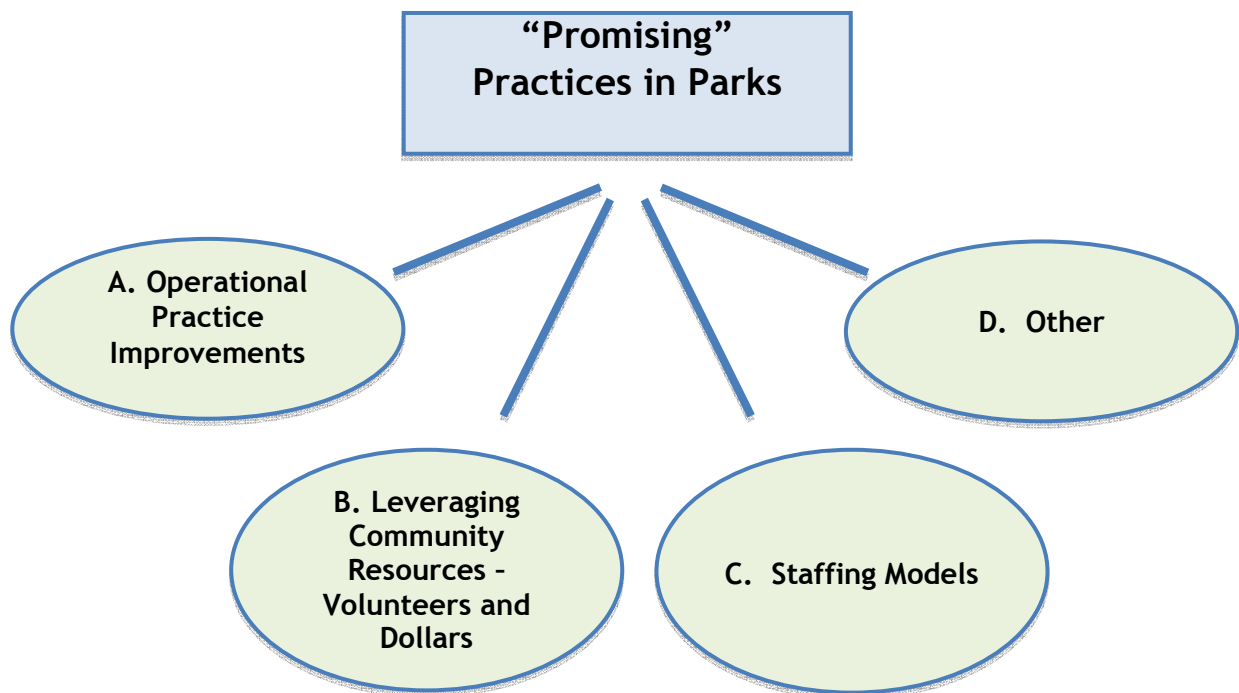
### 3. PROMISING PRACTICES IDENTIFIED

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A total of approximately 40 surveys were analyzed. Potential best practices were then categorized into large groupings. For the purposes of this report we have chosen to call these promising practices, due to the challenges associated with verifying that a practice is truly a best practice. This section of the report highlights the range of promising practices identified.

#### 3.1 Promising Practices Identified Through the Parks Survey

Practices supporting performance in parks were categorized into 4 categories:



#### A. Operational Practice Improvements

- Improved work order and tracking systems:
  - Implementing a new work order and asset tracking system (Township of Centre Wellington )

- Tracking of fuel consumption with fuel keys (City of Quinte West)
- Implementing work orders to track progress and make staff accountable for their work and support future budgeting (City of Quinte West)
- Metrics tracking of cutting heights, weed index and cutting times allows to adjust routes to meet expected outcomes (City of Kitchener)
- Maintain a Maintenance Management work activity process to establish budgets and monitor productivity (City of Oshawa)
- Monitor all maintenance activities and do cost/benefit comparisons to contracting the activity or service (City of Oshawa)
- **Improved equipment:**
  - Purchase of fuel efficient vehicles to better meet the needs of staff and environment (larger cutting surface and better fuel combine to less man hours and running time) (Town of Petawawa)
  - Purchased deep tine aerator and increased frequency of aeration to improve turf vigour (City of Belleville)
  - New equipment was purchased to increase efficiencies for each crew. For example: 2 enclosed equipment trailers were purchased for the turf and project crews so that all their required tools were handy to them on site and had permanent storage. Specialized equipment was purchased to meet the demand for turf maintenance including slit seeders, and hydraulically driven aerator (City of North Bay)
  - Switching some fleet vehicles over to smaller pick-up trucks and “Gator” type vehicles - more economical to operate than a full-size pick-up, “gators” do not require licensing or standard vehicle insurance. The “gators” are used on trails and around outdoor facilities (City of Woodstock)
  - Purchased a plastic welding unit, trained and certified staff to complete playground equipment repairs to reduce downtime for playground slide use and ensure CSA compliance (City of Oshawa)
- **Changes in service standards:**
  - Designated areas after holding Public Meetings to change practices in grass cutting reducing over 160,000 sq meters of grass cutting (Town of Newmarket)
- **Turf management/Pest management:**
  - Adjusting grass cutting heights from 3” to 4” in growth seasons. Cutting

- is quicker and leaves less clumps of cut grass. (City of Kitchener)
- Soccer Fields - use of turf covers to extend the growing season on newly seeded areas and eliminate required sod installation (City of Belleville)
- Sports field fertility program (Clarington)
- Do not use any pesticides or herbicides on public lands. Mow non sports parks once per week. Mow boulevards once every three weeks. (Town of Caledon)
- Developed the Pest Management Program in 2003 and implemented new maintenance standards with the elimination of pesticide use (City of Oshawa)
- Consolidated vegetation (Horticultural Vinegar) control for all City hard surface areas (City of Oshawa)
- Started a new turf maintenance program for parks - roll, aerate and over seed in the spring, and then aerate and over seed again in the fall (Town of Lakeshore)
- Employed an Integrated Plant Health Care Program for turf playing fields for over 10 years. Apply fertilizer, over-seeding and top-dressing along with regular core aeration. Have not sprayed a playing surface in more than a decade. (City of Woodstock)
- Trials of new products (top dressing) (City of Pickering)
- **Irrigation:**
  - West Riverside Soccer: Conversion of irrigation water supply from municipal water to Moira River water at an annual cost saving of \$6100, 3 year payback (City of Belleville)
  - Installed an intelligent centralized control for all field systems (except the St. Mary's Field system) that ensures that they are only watering the fields when they actually need it (City of Woodstock)
- **Communications/cooperation with user groups:**
  - Sports field are posted unplayable and not used during wet conditions to reduce damage and maintain turf quality and reduce required maintenance (City of Belleville)
- **Planting practices:**
  - Use of herbaceous perennials: Floral developments in new parks as a practice are perennial plantings to reduce cost (City of Belleville)

- Reduce use of annuals in planting beds (Town of Caledon)
- Established an extensive but diversified floral program including the downtown floral program, civic beautification gateway program and the traffic island program; and replacing annual floral displays with perennial plantings (City of Oshawa)
- Implemented a program of biological insect control in the greenhouse to ensure that a quality crop can be produced with environmentally sustainable methods (City of Oshawa)

## **B. Leveraging Community Resources - Volunteers and \$**

- **Partnerships in general:**
  - Partnerships for leash free zones, public gardens, ecology centre, litter clean ups (Town of Halton Hills)
  - Partnerships with several different organizations whose mandate include looking after leased buildings, grounds, and nature areas (City of Orillia)
  - Increase in community involvement through partnerships with school groups, church groups and community, spring and fall community planting programs, actively involved in winter carnival and summer festivals (Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville)
  - Partnering with York Region to provide 3 stream waste services on trail systems - diverting dog waste and other organics in a separate stream of waste (Town of Newmarket)
- **Relationships with School Boards:**
  - The City has a partnership agreement for use of the sports fields on school properties (City of Quinte West)
  - Use of School Board fields in exchange for services (City of Orillia)
  - Partnership with the Waterloo Region District School Board. Exchange parks and school property to match the efficiency of routes. (City of Kitchener)
- **Involvement of volunteers in plantings and maintenance, etc.:**
  - Partner with 8 local Horticultural or Beautification groups to assist with maintenance of municipal flower beds and hanging baskets in our urban communities. (City of Kawartha Lakes)
  - Use of schools with regards to litter collection (City of Kitchener)

- BIA maintains planting urns. Horticultural societies and volunteers help maintain community roadside planting beds (Town of Caledon)
- Unique city/volunteer agreement for the City's Waterfront Park - 400+ volunteers under umbrella of Heritage North Bay (4 groups) are helping City to develop abandoned rail yards adjacent to Waterfront Park
- **Community funding of playgrounds, floral displays, etc.:**
  - Developed relationships with specialist groups and volunteers to assist in the fundraising and development and awareness of the Oshawa Valley Botanical Gardens, including the development of the Peony Collection, Water Garden, Rotary Bridge and Hosta Collection (City of Oshawa)
  - Playgrounds: West Riverside Park-Lady Nicole Pirate Ship, held a Rick Meagher Celebrity Golf Tournament, \$250,000 contribution on this \$500,000 structure (City of Belleville)
  - Floral Displays: Partnership with Rotary Club (2005) 100th Anniversary, Floral Replication of Rotary Club Logo adjacent to Floral Canadian Flag, \$7,000 donation (City of Belleville)
  - Skateboard Parks: Skate Board Park Development, West Riverside Park, Community Groups raised \$300,000 of the \$600,000 cost of this project (City of Belleville)

## **C. Staffing Models**

- **Staff/crew organization:**
  - Introduced change in crew structure, crews were assigned specific responsibilities. Previously City was divided into 2 zones and crews were responsible for all seasonal maintenance within their zone. Now crews assigned specific tasks - turf, general maintenance services and capital projects crew. Having more detailed focus on specific tasks and pooling of equipment so each crew had enough resources to complete the task. ...One small garbage truck was purchased (\$90k) to do all garbage pick-up at all park locations as required 7 days / week with two staff. Previously this was done Mondays and Fridays by all crews. (City of North Bay)
  - Improved structuring of administration and operational staff, including scheduling - still implementing (Township of Centre Wellington)
  - Established parks technical staff to streamline the implementation and maintenance of parks standards, inventory, research, inspections,



- technical programs and contract administration (City of Oshawa)
- Established a student orientation and training programs and processes (City of Oshawa)
- Implemented the Ontario Parks Association Playground Practitioners Certification for the Parks Patrol Technicians (City of Oshawa)
- **Staff scheduling:**
  - Staff are scheduled seven days a week year round to provide direct customer service and reduce overtime costs. Staff are aware of the seasonal nature of parks work and willingly perform equipment operator and labour work in the off season. (City of Belleville)
  - Established full time (year round) parks operation with the addition of 4 full time staff, additional seasonal staff (4-9 month contract positions) and additional summer students. Increase in level of service includes increase in standards, addition of evening shift to service sports field users. (Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville)
  - Spare List for CUPE members. For weekend work, a spare list is used so that staff from other operations area can be utilized to cut grass. This way equipment is being use for longer durations. (City of Kitchener)
- **Supervision:**
  - A new position of Parks Superintendent has been added to assist in the coordination of daily work schedules and increase directions to staff for efficient use of resources (City of Quinte West)
- **Staff qualifications:**
  - Position titles have been modified to reflect trade positions of Turfperson, Arbourist, Gardener, Irrigation Person, in order to recruit and retain required skill sets and maintain commitment to parks work (City of Belleville)
- **Staff sharing:**
  - Sharing of staff with Public Works; retain trained staff by use in parks and winter control programs (Town of Halton Hills)
  - Sharing of staff with Roads and Arena staff (City of Pickering)

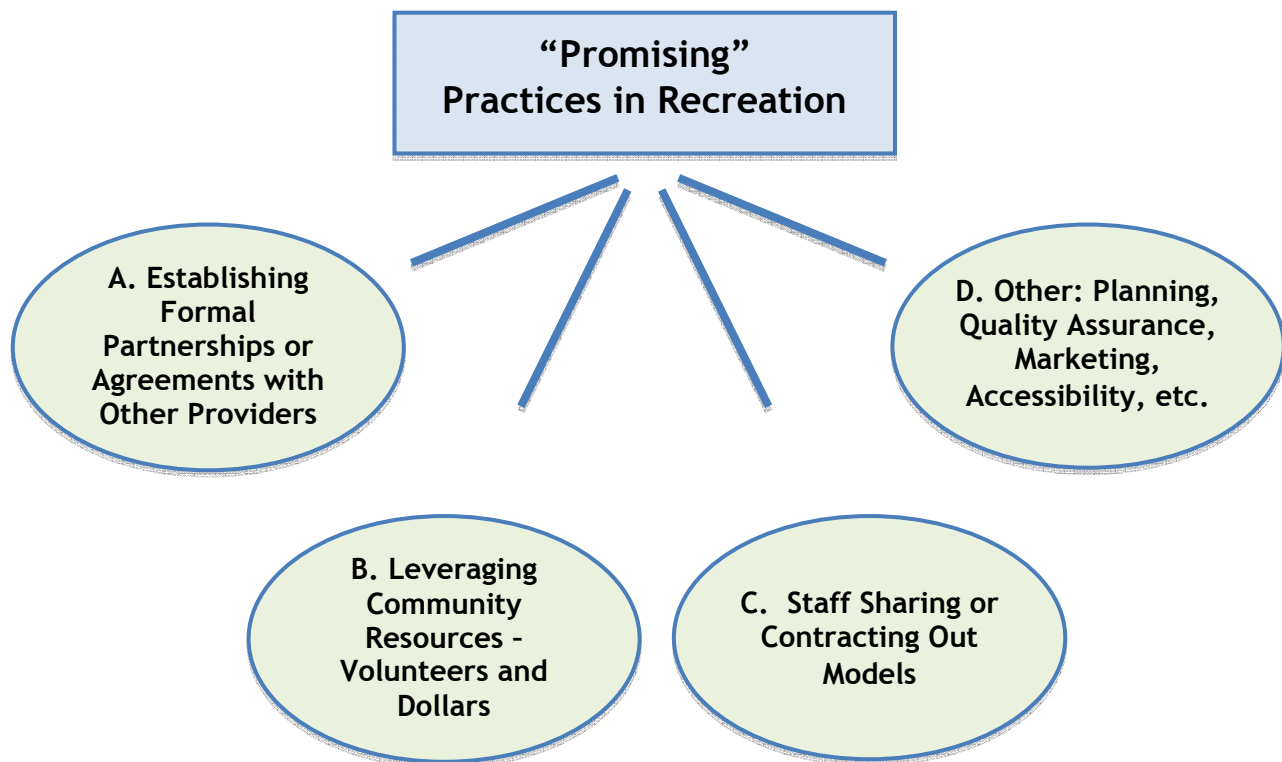
- **Contracting out:**
  - Contract out 65% of property maintenance. This is done in areas which are more rural and saves on staff travel time. (City of Kawartha Lakes)
  - Grass cutting contracted out (Clarington)
  - Some maintenance services (Town of Newmarket)

**D. Other**

- **Planning:**
  - Updating of Parks, Recreation & Culture Master plan helping to identify priorities and long term goals (Township of Centre Wellington)
  - Re-structuring and organization of Advisory Committees (Township of Centre Wellington)
  - Use of private property in exchange for services to allow public access (City of Orillia)
  - Use of private lands to accommodate sports groups (Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville)
  - Parks staff fabricate picnic tables in the winter months to provide sturdier tables at a lower costs (City of Quinte West)

### 3.2 Promising Practices Identified Through the Recreation Survey

Practices supporting performance in recreation fall into 4 categories:



#### A. Establishing Formal Partnerships or Agreements with Other Providers

- **Reciprocal or Joint Use Agreements of various types with School Boards:**
  - Township of Oro Medonte, City of Quinte West, Town of New Tecumseth, City of Sault Ste. Marie, Bradford West Gwillimbury, City of Peterborough, City of Oshawa
- **Facility partnerships with educational organizations:**
  - *"The City has a partnership with Fleming College regarding the Peterborough Sport and Wellness Centre. The centre is built on College property and is managed by the City. Memberships are sold to the general public and College students have use of the facility as part*

*of their enrolment fees.” (City of Peterborough)*

- *“We are partnering with Durham College/University of Ontario Institute of Technology in construction/programming of a new 2-pad arena” (City of Oshawa)*

- **Partnerships with YMCAs:**

- Many municipalities have developed or are developing partnerships with YMCAs: City of Quinte West, City of Clarence-Rockland, City of St. Catharines, City of Guelph
- Partnerships with YMCAs take various forms: facility development, operations and programming: For example:
  - *“The City has an operating agreement with the YMCA-YWCA to operate the recreation and cultural complex. The City will assume any deficit for the first five years of operation, the Y then has to be self-sufficient”. (City of Clarence-Rockland)*
  - *“Developed a partnership with the YMCA of Niagara with respect to the operations of day camp services. In the past the City of St. Catharines offered day camp programs at the same location as the YMCA of Niagara. These day camps are now being operated under the YMCA of Niagara.” (City of St. Catharines)*
  - *“We have committed to a goal that every child in Guelph will learn to swim. The YMCA/YWCA is a partner in that goal” (City of Guelph)*

- **Partnerships with neighbouring municipalities:**

- Partnership between Quinte West and Belleville to provide lifeguard training

- **Facility development partnerships with sport organizations:**

- Partnership with Whitby Iroquois Soccer Club to build an indoor soccer facility (Town of Whitby)

- **Facility leasing to support program delivery:**

- Currently developing new partnerships with the Boys and Girls Club of Niagara to lease a city owned Community Centre to improve youth programming to the residents of St. Catharines

- **Formal partnerships with broad range of community service organizations for delivery of programs:**
  - Seniors Centres, Boys and Girls Clubs, Immigrant Services, Children's Aid Societies, Community Health Centres, Public Health, Heart & Stroke, Police Services
  - Family Respite - integration of children with autism in recreation program with shared staffing (City of Windsor)

**B. Leveraging Community Resources - Volunteers and \$**

- **A number of municipalities noted that they have some form of a community development model:**
  - Municipality offers direct programming only if community organizations are not able to offer
  - Municipality facilitates development of community capacity
  - Community organizations committing own resources - volunteers, donations and in-kind support (e.g. Town of Pelham, Township of Oro-Medonte)
- **Provision of support and/or grants to community organizations**
  - *"Strong relationship with user groups - particularly the "one point of contact". The Town provides a high level of support through no or minimal charge for services in kind."* (Township of New Tecumseth)
- **Partnerships with service clubs - including donations and provision of volunteers to offset costs of programs and event**
- **Operation of facilities by volunteer management boards or community organizations:**
  - Community halls or centres operated by volunteer boards or neighbourhood organizations (Township of Oro-Medonte, City of Kawartha Lakes, City of Oshawa)
- **Extensive use of volunteers in delivery of programs and special events:**
  - *"We have a volunteer group who is dedicated solely to the ongoing restoration of our historic carousel"* (City of St. Catharine's)
  - *"Being a large geographic municipality we depend heavily on volunteers to run programs and manage facilities"* (City of Kawartha Lakes)

- *“All of our special events are run by volunteers with the assistance of a city staff liaison”* (City of Quinte West)
- **Private sector partnerships and sponsorships:**
  - Sponsorship/advertising/naming rights (Town of Whitby)

## **C. Staff Sharing or Contracting Out Models**

- **Internal staff-sharing and cross-training:**
  - Maintenance staff are cross-trained in arena operations and pool operations (City of St. Catharine’s)
  - Arenas staff are shared with Parks - work in arena facilities September to March and in parks April to August (City of Windsor)
  - Community & Infrastructure Services Department is made up of public works, parks, facilities and community service staff. All staff is shared where necessary to accomplish tasks in the most efficient manner. (Town of Pelham)
  - Staffing for parks and facility maintenance is done by shared staff with Public Works (Township of Oro-Medonte)
  - Recreation manages the bookings of fields; Public Works looks after the maintenance (City of Peterborough)
- **Innovative staffing models with other departments:**
  - Customer Care Centres - city services available at 5 recreation centers (1 per ward) including payment of parking tickets, renewal of bus passes, purchase of dog licenses, receipt of taxes, receipt of job applications, etc. (City of Windsor)
  - Social Services Department - part of pay for service contract providing recreation services for child care clients in summer day camps (avoiding duplication of services) (City of Windsor)
- **Contracting out services or program delivery to private organizations:**
  - Contracting out cleaning services in 2 community centres (City of Oshawa)
  - Instructional sport programs are contracted out to private instructors (City of Peterborough)

**D. Other**

- **Planning:**
  - Developing Parks & Recreation Master Plans (Town of Tecumseh, City of Kawartha Lakes, Municipality of Chatham-Kent)
- **Quality Assurance:**
  - Implementation of HIGH FIVE Guidelines for Best Practices (City of Peterborough)
  - Developed program planning committees to coordinate/standardize delivery of instructional programs (City of Oshawa)
- **Marketing and Customer Service:**
  - Provide compensation when a problem/complaint has occurred that has not been dealt with in a timely, efficient or satisfactory manner (Town of New Tecumseth)
  - Improved Community Guides (City of Guelph)
  - Online registration (Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury)
  - New interactive website for parents and kids (City of Peterborough)
- **Enhancing accessibility (socio-economic, physical, special needs, etc.):**
  - Partnership with social housing provider to provide on site day camps for underprivileged children who are not able to attend regular day camp (City of Quinte West)
  - Accessible facility/transportation service put into effect in partnership with local retirement residence. (Town of Whitby)
  - Ronald McDonald House accessible playground sponsorship (Town of Whitby)
- **Encouraging health and physical activity:**
  - Partnership between Quinte West, Hastings and Prince Edward Counties and Ministry of Health Promotion to provide a Physical Activity Cruiser
  - “In motion” initiative to convince people to become more active (City of Guelph, Township of Centre Wellington)
  - Restructuring Senior Centres to ensure more active programming and targeting the new retiree and younger senior (City of St. Catharines)

## 4. SPOTLIGHT ON SPECIFIC PRACTICES

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There is growing interest at the municipal level in identifying ways to enhance the local quality of life and provision of parks and recreation through effective relationships with other community players including volunteers, not-for-profit organizations and school boards. These practices are being utilized in many municipalities to leverage the investment of community resources. Many of these practices are not new to municipalities, but there is growing understanding of how best to put these practices in place, and the pitfalls to avoid.

For the purposes of this document three types of practices are being highlighted. These practices were chosen due to their potential replicability, and because there was a critical mass of responses to enable more detailed exploration:

- **Agreements with school boards:** includes various relationships developed between municipalities and school boards to maximize the benefits and use of public infrastructure for the community, and to minimize the operational costs of maintaining the public infrastructure
- **Community engagement:** includes various ways by which the municipality has supported and encouraged community volunteers and groups to develop and deliver community programs and enhance community quality of life
- **Community facility partnerships:** includes innovative formal relationships between a community organization and a municipality for the sponsorship, development and/or ongoing operations of specific facility infrastructure.

### 4.1 Agreements with School Boards

There is growing interest in maximizing the value of public investment in community facilities including school facilities, recreation facilities and outdoor infrastructure including sports fields. Section 183 of the Education Act provides that District School Boards may enter into joint agreements with municipalities to provide for the maintenance and operation of facilities for cultural, recreational, athletic, educational, administrative and community purposes. Increasing access to schools for community activities and services is a current priority of the Government of Ontario and is part of a strategy to reduce child poverty. The Province recently announced a program in which 150 schools will be funded to give not-for-profit groups free access to schools after hours.



Gaining access to schools is vital to the delivery of recreation programs in municipalities. For many northern and rural municipalities the schools may be the only accessible facilities for many residents. Many municipalities have been frustrated by their inability to negotiate effective ongoing agreements with school boards. There is no consistent approach to gaining access to schools - municipal managers often find it challenging to deal with the full range of "players" including caretakers, principals, school board officials, and school board trustees. In addition, there are often challenges with respect to the use service level and maintenance standards for open space.

Different relationships between municipalities and school boards have been in place (in some cases for decades) to support the sharing and maintenance of public space. The approaches used and the roles and responsibilities of the partners vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.

In this section we profile three municipalities and the nature of their relationships and agreements with local school boards:

## **1. Township of Oro-Medonte**

The Township of Oro-Medonte, located near the City of Barrie, is a growing rural municipality with limited facilities, particularly in the north end of the Township. The Township negotiated an agreement with the Simcoe County District School Board to maximize the joint use of community infrastructure.

### *Municipal Information:*

Oro-Medonte Township, located in Simcoe County, has a population of 18,315 (Ontario Municipal Directory, 2009). The Township recently undertook a re-organization which combined Recreation Services with Parks to form the Recreation & Community Services Department.

### *School Board Information:*

The Simcoe County District School Board (SCDSB) serves diverse growing urban and rural communities in the Huronia and Georgian Bay region. The SCDSB has a policy of encouraging community use of its facilities during non-school hours.

### *What's Covered Under the Agreement:*

A joint use agreement between the SCDSB and the municipality identifies facilities which fall under the agreement:

Oro Medonte Schools	Oro-Medonte Municipal Facilities
Gyms Basketball Courts Ball Diamonds Soccer Pitches	Oro-Medonte Community Arena Ball Diamonds Soccer Pitches Pavillions Community Halls & Meeting Spaces

The agreement also specifies rental rates for municipal facilities. The Simcoe County District School Board has a district-wide policy and procedures regarding community use of facilities which specifies rental rates for different user groups. For further information, check the SCDSB website: [http://scdsb.on.ca/board-highlights/procedures: Community Use Of Facilities](http://scdsb.on.ca/board-highlights/procedures:CommunityUseOfFacilities).

### *What the Municipality Receives and Provides:*

The SCDSB makes available school facilities in after-school hours through the issuance of rental contracts. Fees for the use of school facilities are set by different user groups as shown below:

Definition of User Groups
<p><b>1.1 School/Board Associated Groups and Activities</b></p> <p><b>1.2 Group A</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community youth groups such as Scouts Canada and Girl Guides Canada</li> <li>Community house league youth groups such as “House league” soccer and baseball</li> <li>Representative youth athletic and sports groups ♦</li> <li>Youth programs/groups provided by community church and religious groups</li> <li>Municipal youth classes and youth recreation uses (where a joint use agreement with the SCDSB exists)*</li> </ul> <p>(*Where a joint use agreement does not exist the indoor facility usage rates are 25% of the Group C rates.) ♦ Classified under Group A due to the CUS Program September 1, 2008</p> <p><b>1.3 Group B</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adult recreational, athletic and pick up sports</li> <li>Municipal adult classes and recreation uses (where a joint use agreement with the SCDSB exists)*</li> <li>Ratepayer Associations</li> <li>Health Services such as St. John’s Ambulance/Canadian Blood Services</li> </ul>

Definition of User Groups	
(*Where a joint use agreement does not exist the indoor facility usage rates are 50% of the Group C rates.)	
<b>1.4 Group C</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Church and religious groups</li> <li>• Political parties</li> <li>• Federations and unions</li> <li>• Theatrical, entertainment, concert, performance groups*</li> <li>• Commercial groups</li> <li>• College and university groups</li> </ul> <p>* Indoor facilities charges permitted by registered not for profit charitable organizations conducting fundraising for charitable organizations are eliminated as part of the CUS Program September 1, 2008</p>

User Groups					
Category	Indoor Fee	Outdoor Fee	Admin Fee	Equipment Fee	Staff Assistance Charge
School/Board Associated Groups	No	No	No	No	**
A	No ♦	No ♦	Yes	♦	Overtime
B	No ♦	No ♦	Yes	♦	Overtime
C	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

♦ Gym equipment fee, volleyball nets and standards, table and chair fee waived for Group A and B. Other equipment fees as per schedule. CUS Program September 1, 2008

\*\* Overtime fees for staff assistance is applicable to school/board associated groups as required. Staff assistance charges, if any, for Trustee forums and meetings, will be charged to Board Administration.

All schools facilities are “rented” through a centralized SCDSB Permit Office. The SCDSB will also consider applications from the Township requesting access to SCDSB facilities between the hours of 3:30 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. for after school programming (subject to approval of the School principal).

The Township provides the schools a total of 8 hours of non-prime ice time to each of the 6 local schools, at no charges, to use for skating. Other Township facilities area available for use of schools at specified rates.

*Comments:*

The Joint Use agreement has enabled Oro-Medonte to run programs in local communities where they lack facilities. While the Simcoe County District School Board has a clear set of overall policies and procedures, local relationships are still important. In particular, development of good relations with local school principals is critical. One of the current challenges with the joint use agreement is the cost of custodial overtime which may be prohibitive for many community programs. Ministry of Education funding is critical for the sustainability of these partnerships over the long term.

## **2. Town of Halton Hills**

The Town of Halton Hills is one of the four local municipalities in Halton Region that has taken part in a partnership with the Halton District School Board and the Halton Catholic District School Board (“the Boards”). The partnership is governed by a Reciprocal Agreement which was first established in 1974 and updated in 2001.

*Municipal Information:*

The Town of Halton Hills, located in Halton Region, serves as a growing population of 51,300. The Town’s Recreation and Parks Department is responsible for the development and support of community based programming.

*What’s Covered Under the Agreement:*

A useful description of the Reciprocal Agreement is provided in a document entitled “Official Playbook - A Guide to Understanding the Reciprocal Agreement”. The agreement itself covers the following aspects of the relationship:

- Facility inventory and availability
- Priority rating for use
- Notification timelines, booking procedures, rates and fees
- Maintenance standards for indoor facilities
- Outdoor facility maintenance standards
- Permit conditions and insurance requirements

*What the Municipality Receives and Provides:*

The Boards make available school-based facilities (particularly fields and gyms) during non-school hours (6:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m. during school days) based on availability. In addition, facilities are available for summer usage Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., based on availability. A detailed booking procedure exists for both block requests and single requests.

The municipalities and boards involved in the agreement have agreed to standards of care and cleanliness. Halton Hills provides the following level of grounds care for Halton District School Board:

- Grass cutting all areas, including trimming around trees, fence lines, etc.
- Aeration of sports turf
- Fertilization of sports turf
- Infield dragging
- Pruning of shrubs that interfere with cutting operations
- Running track grading and dragging
- Miscellaneous tasks individually arranged with schools (picnic tables, garbage cans, etc.)

A total of 59 hectares of school sites are maintained per the reciprocal agreement with the school boards.

There are agreed-upon standards of care for specific facility types. For example, the standards of care for specific baseball facilities (categorized into 3 levels) are as follows:

Category	Lights	Irrigation	Turf Infield	Infield Cuts/Week	Backstop Wings/Bench	Infield Compositio	Infield Groom/Week	Outfield Cuts/Week	Aeration/Yr	Infield Fertilizatio	Outfield Fertilizatio	Home Plate Installation
A	Yes	Yes	Yes	2	Yes			1	>2/Yr	>2/Yr	>2/Yr	2/Yr
B	No	Yes	No	2	Yes	Ball Mix	Per schedule	1	>2/Yr	>2/Yr	>2/Yr	2/Yr
C	No	No	No		Back-stop only	Ball Mix/Sand	1	17-22/Yr	1		1/Yr	As requested

**Results/Comments:**

The benefits for Halton Region collectively (i.e. all municipalities) have been summarized as follows:

Benefit Lineup
<p>For over 30 years, Halton residents have been able to receive better and more cost-effective services through the Agreement. The community has access to over 650 facilities including arenas, baseball diamonds, auditoriums, theatres, tracks, tennis courts, sports fields, gymnasiums and schools. Each year, over 300 community organizations use approximately 51,000 hours of facility time in Halton Region as part of the Agreement. In fact, the Halton Region has one of the highest usage rates in the province.</p> <p><i>Here are some of the Agreement's main benefits:</i></p> <p><i>Maximized Use of Recreation and School Facilities</i> Under the Agreement, all parties must track usage of their facilities. The results over the past several years have shown that daytime use of recreation facilities and evening use of schools has increased significantly. Open space in recreation facilities is made available to students and teachers during the day in order to enhance education and healthy physical development opportunities.</p> <p><i>Minimized Duplication of Capital Costs</i> Because the Municipalities and Boards share existing facilities and sports fields, the need for more indoor and outdoor recreation, sport and cultural facilities has been reduced, thereby reducing the financial burden on the taxpayer.</p> <p><i>Affordable Facilities for Community Groups</i> Through the Agreement, community organizations can use school facilities at more affordable rates than other facilities. This results in the ability to create more programs and opportunities for volunteers.</p> <p><i>Coordinated Program and Service Delivery</i> With the Municipalities and Boards working as a team, they can determine which agency can provide the best service desired by the community. This cooperative approach ensures that resources are being used to their maximum capacity and no duplication of effort occurs.</p> <p><i>Safe Environments and Pride in the Community</i> Through the Agreement, everyone shares responsibility for the facilities. This provides a greater sense of ownership, pride and commitment to ensure safe facilities and neighbourhoods for all residents.</p> <p><i>Opportunities for Learning, Growth and Development</i> Residents in Halton Region have the opportunity to participate in rewarding recreational activities, develop new skills, improve overall health and well-being and feel good about their involvement in the community. Communities also grow stronger as they can develop more volunteers and community leaders as a result of increased participation in activities.</p>

Benefit Lineup
<i>Maximized Opportunities for Children and Youth</i> Children and youth are able to learn new skills and participate in a variety of sports where they can develop valuable life skills, participate in meaningful activities that heighten their self-esteem and have access to on-going educational programs. They also gain a greater sense of ownership and respect for community facilities while parents and families know their children are in a safe, close-to-home environment.

Source: Official Playbook - A Guide to Understanding the Reciprocal Agreement

### 3. City of Kitchener

The City of Kitchener has entered into a variety of school board partnerships including one with the Waterloo Region District School Board to support efficient maintenance of parks and school property.

#### *Municipal Information:*

The City of Kitchener, located in Waterloo Region, has a population of over 205,000.

#### *What's Covered Under the "Agreement":*

The City of Kitchener and the Waterloo Region District School Board have developed an informal agreement to share responsibilities for turf maintenance. A growing trend towards school campuses surrounded by city parkland had resulted in turf cutting crews working "side by side". In some cases schools on these campuses had relatively little land to maintain as their green space was City land.

The City's Park, Planning, Development and Operations group sat down with the Board's Exterior Maintenance group and developed an informal agreement to essentially trade approximately 50 hectares of land to optimize efficiencies. In other words the City cuts approximately 50 hectares of school board land, while the School Board cuts approximately 50 hectares of City land.

This has resulted in route optimization for both parties - minimizing crew travel time and fuel consumption.

*Comments:*

This is an informal arrangement that is reviewed on an annual basis. Each year representatives of the City and the School Board sit down in November or December and review their holdings and the current arrangement. The arrangement works because of ongoing dialogue and communication with the school boards regarding cutting heights, standards etc.

**Overall Comments:**

Through consultation with municipalities and the Expert Panels, it is clear that there is a need for further work in this area. Many municipal parks and recreation providers find it challenging to deal with school boards, and are being confronted with numerous barriers to enable affordable access to schools: inconsistent policies and approaches; insurance and risk management concerns; custodial costs etc. Schools are precious community resources and there is a need for a consistent approach to support effective community access to schools.

<p><b>4.2 Community Engagement - Leveraging Volunteer Time &amp; Community Resources</b></p>
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For many years, municipal parks and recreation departments have (often by necessity) utilized creative methods of engaging community resources (both volunteer time and resources). Different models and approaches towards community engagement have evolved, many of them based on the distinct personalities and talents of those working in the parks and recreation department and community leaders.

In recent years some municipalities have recognized the need to formalize and strengthen approaches to community engagement. The need to strengthen community engagement approaches has been driven by a range of issues:

- Fiscal constraints and the need to leverage community resources
- A growing focus on risk management and the need to put in place appropriate policies and procedures



In this section we profile 3 municipalities and their approaches to community engagement in a variety of parks and recreation programs and activities:

## **1. Municipality of Chatham-Kent**

### *Municipal Information:*

The Municipality of Chatham Kent has a population of 108,177 (2009 Ontario Municipal Directory). Chatham Kent is a relatively large rural municipality.

### *History of Community Engagement*

Chatham-Kent has a long history of volunteer engagement. For many years community halls have been operated by volunteer boards and programs have been delivered by community groups. In recent years the Municipality recognized the need to further leverage community engagement by establishing a Community Partnership Fund.

### *Featured Approach: Community Partnership Fund and Find Funding Chatham-Kent*

Chatham-Kent has a community partnership fund which provides funding to support community-based initiatives of community groups. A corporate position entitled Community Partnership Development Coordinator coordinates the program. Facility supervisors in each district also work with local groups and encourage them to apply for the partnership fund.

Community groups can apply to receive a grant of up to 50% funding (to a maximum of \$10,000) to support community-based initiatives. In addition, Chatham-Kent supports community organizations in their efforts to access funding. For example, the municipality maintains a Find Funding section on its website which includes available alternative funding sources (searchable by type). See: [www.chatham-kent.ca/community+services/getting+involved/community+funding/Find+Funding+Chatham-Kent.htm](http://www.chatham-kent.ca/community+services/getting+involved/community+funding/Find+Funding+Chatham-Kent.htm)

### *Recent Results:*

Since its inception in 2000 the CPF has leveraged \$1,878,066.85 in municipal investment into \$7,299,040.40 worth of community development projects within the community, and has encouraged widespread civic engagement and community improvement. In 2009, thirty-five projects were approved for

funding out of sixty-two applications under the Mainstream component, with total funding of \$183,403.77 (including the National Child Benefit Supplement funding) leveraging approximately \$551,928.42 in gross project costs. Twenty-six projects were approved for funding out of thirty-three applications under the Festivals & Events component, with total funding of \$80,866.00 leveraging approximately \$405,970.02 in gross project costs.

## **2. City of Oshawa**

### *Municipal Information:*

The City of Oshawa is a relatively large urban municipality located east of Toronto in Durham Region. The City's current population is 147,030 (2009 Ontario Municipal Directory).

### *History of Community Engagement:*

Oshawa has a long history of engaging community groups and volunteers in the delivery of services and in support of community events and programs.

### *Featured Approaches:*

**Partnerships with Oshawa Central Council of Neighbourhood Associations.** Since 1946, OCCNA has organized recreational sports for the children of Oshawa. The programs are operated by the Neighbourhood Association Sports Committee and include softball, soccer and hockey. The OCCNA operates from a number of community-based buildings "club houses" which are owned by the municipality (Oshawa pays heat, hydro, utilities and insurance). The neighbourhood groups operate the facilities and programs and receive a grant of \$16,000 to support their administrative activities. The success of the program depends very much on the local volunteer executive.

### **Parks Community Engagement**

In the Parks area, Oshawa has developed a broad range of community relationships and programs. The municipality has developed and/or participated in community programs such as Communities in Bloom, the CN Tower garden project, Festive Lighting, Scout Trees and Arbour Week and the Pitch-In-Program.

In 2002, Oshawa recognized the need to formalize and supports its approach to community engagement by creating a Parks Community Programs Coordinator

(see Job Description below). This position has enabled Oshawa to further leverage community engagement.

### **Parks Community Programs Co-ordinator**

#### **Summary:**

Responsible for co-ordinating and implementing various projects, grants, and special events related to beatification and environmental initiatives.

#### **Duties include:**

- Developing an annual plan by identifying needs, specifying objectives, and determining resources
- Designing promotional, marketing and advertising materials
- Soliciting volunteers to assist with Program mandates
- Providing orientation, training, coaching and guidance to assigned volunteers and partners
- Researching and developing community fundraising and sponsorship opportunities
- Completing statistics, budget submissions and preparing reports and correspondence
- Assessing and evaluating program effectiveness
- Performing other related duties as assigned

#### ***Partnership Grant Program:***

Oshawa is now launching a partnership grant program to assist Oshawa-based not-for-profit community groups and organizations (“organizations”) initiating or delivering programs and services to the citizens of Oshawa.

Partnerships Grants are available only when the organization can demonstrate that there is community support for the programs or services; that there is a need for financial assistance; and that adequate funding for the programs or services is not available from other sources. Grant recipients will be required to acknowledge the support of the City of Oshawa in all advertising, publicity, programs and signage for which funds are granted. The recipient may not represent the City as a partner, or hold the City responsible for any obligations relating to the project.

Funding is available to assist with the general operating and capital expense of the organization, including administrative costs and program-related expenses.

There will be one annual intake of applications for Partnership Grant requests. Each applicant will be required to provide:

- Evidence to establish the organization's eligibility in terms of the evaluation criteria outlined in this policy;
- A description of how the organization intends to measure the success of the program or service if the funding request is approved; and
- Specific financial information related to the organization's expenses, revenues and assets.

At a minimum, organizations will be required to submit with their applications:

- A statement of the organization's goals and objectives, constitution and by-laws or, if a new organization, operating guidelines;
- Minutes of the executive meeting at which the application was approved; and,
- Financial information as follows:
  - A budget for the upcoming year;
  - A financial statement for the previous year;
  - A year-to-date financial statement; and,
  - A statement disclosing all assets and reserve funds and any anticipated year-end surplus.

Completed applications will be submitted to Council with the annual budget for their consideration.

#### *Recent Results:*

Local community beautification programs have resulted in national recognition for Oshawa. The City has been recognized for its heritage management, environmental awareness and municipal beautification, none of which would have been made possible without community involvement. Community volunteer efforts, showcasing civic pride, have included clean-ups, public plantings, front garden and festive lighting competitions.

The City of Oshawa joined with Pitch-in Canada to promote the clean up of our community. In 2008, over 20,000 people helped to "pitch-in" by cleaning up

parks, trails, school yards and neighbourhoods in Oshawa. The City estimates that at least 35,000 volunteer hours have been involved in the delivery of parks programs and services.

### **3. Town of Halton Hills**

#### *Municipal Information:*

The Town of Halton Hills, located in Halton Region, serves a growing urban and rural population (51,300: 2009 Ontario Municipal Directory).

#### *History of Community Engagement:*

Halton Hills has worked with the community in the provision of recreation services for many years. The Town's 2007 Recreation & Parks Strategic Action Plan indicates that the Town's *"first priority is to assist and support community groups in the provision of recreation and cultural opportunities."* The Town is committed to a community development approach which "enables residents, groups and organizations to create partnerships, achieve self-sufficiency, and increase responsibility for implementing recreation ideas and solutions."

#### *Featured Approach:*

Halton Hills established a **Municipal Assistance Program** in 1998 to support initiatives, which promote and enhance a healthy, safe and active community. The Town of Halton Hills recognizes the importance of community organizations, volunteers and business who contribute and enhance the quality of life for our residents.

**The Halton Hills Municipal Assistance Program**  
consists of the following 7 programs:

- Waiver of Municipal Fees
- Marketing/Promotion
- Special Purposes, Projects or Start-up Costs
- Partnership Agreements
- Revitalization Fund - Tourism/Business District
- Volunteer Training
- Financial Assistance to Individuals/Families

The Town indicates that it shares with local organizers and individuals the responsibility to provide services in the development of healthy communities and neighbourhoods. The Town tries to sustain and improve the quality of life by providing programs, facilities and services and by supporting the needs of groups and individuals. The Town has a more formalized relationship with registered groups and organizations. For groups and organizations registered with the Town there are many benefits, such as:

- Reduced facility rates
- Organized development support
- Discounts on advertising in the Community Leisure Guide

The Recreation and Parks Department has developed an extensive range of community partnerships and works actively to support and develop community organizations.

**Halton Hills Management Agreements with Community Organizations**

Halton Hills has developed management agreements with a range of community organizations for the operations of programs and facilities including:

- Agreement with the Credit Valley Conservation Authority and the Limehouse Kiln Society for historic restoration project
- Agreement with the Halton Hills Dog Owners Group for the operation of a trial leash free zone
- Agreement with the Willow Park Ecology Stewardship Committee for the ongoing operation of Willow Park Ecology Centre
- Agreement with the Rotary Club of Acton regarding the construction of a bandshell in honour of the centennial year of Rotary International.

The Department's approach also includes the following elements:

- A Community Development Supervisor to coordinate and support community development initiatives
- Training for community volunteers in partnership with Community Development Halton and Volunteer Halton
- A monthly electronic publication entitled "Insider" which provides "inside information" for community groups who work with the Town. The Insider features information about grant opportunities, local organizations, and resource information.

### **4.3 Community Facility Partnerships**

Many municipalities face major challenges in developing and operating sufficient facility infrastructure to meet community needs. A growing number of municipalities have developed unique relationships with community organizations for the design, development and in some cases ongoing operations of community facilities.

#### **1. The Town of Whitby**

##### *Municipal Information:*

The Town of Whitby, located east of Toronto in Durham Region, serves a growing population (93,756: 2009 Ontario Municipal Directory).

##### *Partner Information:*

The Whitby Iroquois Soccer Club (WISC) has been serving the Whitby community for over 40 years. WISC has been consistently growing and its outdoor registration is approximately 6,000. The Club's indoor program had been constrained by the lack of availability of appropriate space (WISC was renting from a private facility and then subsequently within gym space offered by the Durham District School Board).

##### *Nature of Facility:*

The proposed indoor facility is an air supported structure (dome) large enough to accommodate two (2) indoor soccer fields of approximately 80-90 feet wide by approximately 200 feet long. A separate, conventional two storey masonry structure includes change facilities, circulation space, and storage and office areas for WISC personnel.

##### *How the Partnership Works:*

This agreement between the Town of Whitby and the Whitby Iroquois Soccer Club defines the responsibilities of each party as it applies to the development and ongoing operation and maintenance of the new indoor soccer facility.

Responsibilities of The Town of Whitby	Responsibilities of The Whitby Iroquois Soccer Club (WISC)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design and construct the facility at its expense</li> <li>• Own the land and the building</li> <li>• Annually review operating budgets prepared by the Whitby Iroquois Soccer Club</li> <li>• Annually receive audited financial statements</li> <li>• Have access of up to 10 hours per week of non-prime facility use at discount rates (specific rates to be determined)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate with the Town during the design and construction phases to ensure that the facility responds to the program needs of WISC</li> <li>• Be responsible for the procurement and costs of all additional furniture, fixtures and equipment needed to deliver its programs and services</li> <li>• Manage the use and operation of the facility</li> <li>• Rent the facility to third party users, provided such uses are consistent with the intended purpose of the facility</li> <li>• Be responsible for all staffing, operating, maintenance, utility and repair costs of the facility</li> <li>• Pay a monthly fee and contribute to a reserve fund as determined by the Treasurer for future capital repair and component replacement</li> <li>• Prepare an annual operating budget for review by the Town of Whitby</li> <li>• Provide quarterly reporting on the status of the Club's operations</li> <li>• Annually provide audited financial statements</li> <li>• Maintain liability insurance, naming the Town of Whitby additional insured to the satisfaction of the Town</li> <li>• Maintain contents insurance and business interruption insurance</li> <li>• Provide access to non-prime time hours for Town of Whitby activities at discount rates to be negotiated</li> </ul>

It is expected that the annual reserve fund contribution paid by WISC will be in the \$35,000 - \$40,000 range to ensure the future repair and replacement of major capital components of the facility.



## **2. City of Woodstock**

### *Municipal Information:*

The City of Woodstock, located in southwestern Ontario serves a population of 31,766 (2009 Ontario Municipal Directory). The City has undertaken a number of facility partnerships including The Terry Fox Memorial Track and the Cowan Park Project.

### *The Terry Fox Memorial Track*

#### *Partners:*

The collaborative consists of the Oxford Athletic Club (formerly Woodstock Legion Track Club), the City of Woodstock Community Services Department and the Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB). The collaborative's mandate is to ensure that a first class all-weather track is available for the competitive, training and recreational community use of the residents and students of Woodstock and district.

The Oxford Athletic Club exists to offer training and competitive opportunities to young track and field athletes from the beginner to the elite level. It provides the only local opportunity for elite athletes to train on a fast, safe all-weather track in the area.

The City of Woodstock Community Services Department's mandate is to provide recreational and leisure opportunities for people of all ages, abilities and interests. The City of Woodstock works closely with a number of youth organizations that use the track and/or field at Terry Fox Memorial Track for their practices and games. Both Woodstock Minor Soccer and Woodstock Tackle Football participate in programs at this venue.

The Thames Valley District School Board's mandate is primarily focussed on educating and training the youth who are enroled in their schools. As educators, they recognize that a student who participates in a healthy active lifestyle both in school and as a leisure time activity, is a better student. Staff at College Avenue Secondary School and the TVDSB recognize that CASS is an integral part of the community. College Avenue Secondary School makes use of the track the field during their physical education classes. This is also the home field for their varsity soccer, football and 3 High School track teams.

#### *Nature of Facility & Project:*

The Terry Fox Memorial Track is the only all-weather track and athletics area in Woodstock and district. Woodstock wanted to host the Parasport Summer

Games on July 24 and 25, 2009 but the track surface which was a 27 year-old, lighted, all-weather surfacing was deteriorating. The partnership received a Trillium grant to support the repair of the track and athletic facilities by resurfacing the track, high jump area, long-jump runway, pole vault runway, and by constructing a javelin runway.

*How the Partnership Works:*

The City of Woodstock maintains the turf and the track at CASS as part of a shared use agreement that has been in place for many years.

The Oxford Athletic Club (formerly known as the Woodstock Legion Track and Field Club) operates the activities at the track, including events for TVDSB elementary and high schools. The Club also supplies the hurdles, jumps, and throwing equipment for all the users.

The TVDSB is the property owner and handles all bookings and processes any revenues and then applies the revenues against electricity costs, as well as any required lighting and track repairs.

*Results:*

The partners worked together to support a Trillium project application and were successful in receiving a grant of \$90,000 towards the total project cost of \$120,000.

***Cowan Park***

*Partners:*

The two primary partners are the City of Woodstock and the Woodstock Soccer Club. Woodstock Soccer Club started in 1976 with one team. In 1987, the club became an incorporated entity. In 2008, there were 2200 members playing on 140 youth recreational teams, 18 youth competitive teams, 10 adult recreational teams and 8 adult competitive teams. Membership has grown at a rate of 7% over each of the past 5 years. The Ontario Soccer Association has recognized Woodstock Soccer Club as their fastest growing member organization in Southwestern Ontario.

Since the mid-1990s, the Woodstock Soccer Club and the City of Woodstock have had an operating partnership that has resulted in the provision of soccer opportunities for the community. Even before the development of Cowan Park, Woodstock Soccer Club had provided all the goals and field marking at all the soccer pitches across city parks. Once the former Oxford Regional Centre site was purchased, the Club agreed to provide all maintenance services to the site

such as field lining, goals, nets, lawn cutting, fertilization, aeration, top-dressing and over-seeding. They purchased the large mowing equipment necessary for this work and also constructed a garage/storage building on site.

Once the Cowan Park building was completed, the City turned over the keys and all operations responsibilities to the Club under terms of a 20 year agreement. The City maintains responsibility for the roads, parking, boundary fencing, trees and parking lots on the site.

#### *Development To Date*

In 1998, the City of Woodstock commissioned a Sports Fields Needs Assessment Study. The results pointed to the need for a significant increase in the number of soccer fields to accommodate the growth in that sport. In 2000, with the agreement and financial support of the Woodstock Soccer Club, the City purchased the site of the former Oxford Regional Centre from the Ontario Realty Corporation for \$820,000. The Club agreed to pay a portion of those costs and had paid off their \$210,000 commitment by 2005.

Approximately 30 acres of this site had been kept as lawns by the hospital. This was immediately turned into 11 soccer fields of various sizes. The site had no services. The Club built a storage garage for the turf equipment and a small pavilion/shelter utilized for Tournament play and operated the site under those conditions until 2007 when a building was constructed.

The current building was constructed during 2006 - 2007 and contains the following elements:

- 4 athlete change rooms
- 2 referee change rooms
- 2 large public washrooms
- 2 private family/accessible washrooms
- 1 first aid room
- 1 meeting room
- 1 office for the Soccer Club
- 1 Concession/Kitchen

At the same time as the above construction, 5 new three-quarter size fields were constructed along with one full-size International premier competitive field. There were also approximately 400 new parking spaces created to complement approximately 100 existing spaces.

Once again the Woodstock Soccer Club agreed to make a financial commitment to the work and is paying off \$600,000 of the \$1.9 Million costs of the above-mentioned work. In addition, they successfully raised over \$300,000 in cash donations to the Cowan Park project to date.

### *The Current Project*

The project envisions two pre-engineered structures to complement the existing outdoor playing fields, public amenities such as change rooms, referee rooms, washrooms and concession stand. The first new structure will house an indoor fieldhouse to be used for soccer, tennis, lawn bowling, slo-pitch and baseball. The upper level of the structure will provide an indoor jogging/walking track around the perimeter. The second new structure will provide a space for basketball, volleyball and floor hockey. It will also be used as a community hall which may be used for banquets, receptions, and meetings.

### *Project Funding*

The partners applied for Building Canada funding and have received it. As per the guidelines of the Building Canada Fund, financing of the eligible costs of the project of \$5,100,000 will be split equally between the Municipality of the City of Woodstock, Government of Ontario and the federal government. Each share will be \$1,700,000.

The operator of the Cowan Park fieldhouse and multi-purpose hall as well as the remaining Cowan Park fields will be the Woodstock Soccer Club. It is intended that the City of Woodstock's share of the costs will be financed through the issuance of a long-term debenture of up to \$1.7 Million. The Woodstock Soccer Club has committed to assisting with payment of the city's share of the costs through a combination of fundraising and a long-term payment schedule. The Business Plan reflects a payment of \$15,000 per year commencing in the second year of operation of the proposed facility. It is anticipated that the repayments by the Soccer Club will carry on for as long as 20 years or a total of \$300,000.

## 5. SUGGESTED FUTURE DIRECTIONS

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The Expert Panels for Parks and for Recreation believe that further work is needed to support municipalities and their ability to measure performance, understand best practices and support the provision of efficient and effective service.

### 5.1 Need for Further Work on Performance Measurement

The current MPMP measures provide a broad set of metrics which individual municipalities can track over time. However there is a **need for further work on performance measurement**, in a number of areas. This work should be done in cooperation with other organizations such as OMBI - the Ontario Municipal Benchmarking Initiative.

- **Need for More Refined Efficiency Measures in Selected Areas:** The current MPMP measures do not support the ability of parks and recreation operations managers to pinpoint highly efficient operations. The development of more detailed performance measures that inform specific operations managers would be beneficial. For example it may be beneficial to develop a detailed measure such as Operating Cost/Hectare to maintain Class A Sports Fields.
- **Need for Consistent Approaches to Measuring Customer Satisfaction with Parks & Recreation Services:** While many municipalities are undertaking comprehensive customer satisfaction surveys, there is a need for consistent approaches which enable parks and recreation managers to seek customer input and evaluation of their services. The development of a common survey instrument that builds on other initiatives (e.g. Citizens First) would support continuous improvement and benchmarking among comparators.
- **Need for Long Term Research Which Assesses the Outcomes of Investment in Parks and Recreation:** As noted earlier, parks and recreation contributes to communities in multiple ways such as health and wellness, quality of life, environmental sustainability, and the growth and development of children and youth. There is growing interest in the development of methods for documenting outcomes and in long term research which evaluates the impact of recreation and parks.

## 5.2 Suggestions for Further Promising Practice Analysis

There is a growing interest within the municipal parks & recreation sector in identifying and sharing promising practices - to address fiscal constraints and maximize the benefits of municipal investment. The Expert Panels for this project have identified a number of specific areas for further investigation:

- **A Better Province-Wide Solution for School-Municipal Cooperation:** In spite of joint use and reciprocal agreements in many municipalities there are still many challenges in ensuring affordable, accessible community use of schools. There is a need to develop a province-wide approach which addresses recurrent concerns such as consistent after-school access, effective risk management, dealing with insurance concerns, custodial costs etc.
- **Dealing Effectively with Regulatory Change:** Like other municipal service providers, municipal parks and recreation are dealing with regulatory change. For recreation providers the **implementation of the Accessibility for Ontarians Disability Act (AODA)** is creating new challenges. There is a need to document promising practices for compliance with the new Act and its regulations and to build awareness of partnerships and grant sources that have supported accessibility improvements. For parks operations the **implementation of the Cosmetic Pesticides Ban Act** is creating new challenges as parks managers look for new ways to maintain parks and open space to standards sufficient to meet community expectations, without the use of pesticides. This is a key priority because without innovative and effective methods municipalities are likely to face increased costs to maintain their parks and open space.
- **New Approaches to Master Planning & Lifecycle Planning to Support Effective Service and Facility Development & Renewal:** Municipal parks and recreation are recognizing the benefits of long term planning to ensure efficient and effective services and infrastructure. There is growing interest in: implementing effective and efficient ways to develop long term plans that support wise renewal and replacement of facilities; approaches used to fund infrastructure (including capital reserves); and ways to position municipalities for funding opportunities when they arise (e.g. having "shovel-ready" plans).
- **Ways Municipal Parks & Recreation Can Help Address Rising Health Costs & Health Concerns:** Some municipalities are working with other local organizations (e.g. Public Health, Heart & Stroke, and Local Health Integration Networks) to help address chronic illness management and support health promotion. Recreation and parks facilities have the potential to become

community health hubs. There is a need to document promising practices in terms of the growing role of some municipalities in health promotion and chronic illness management.

- **Ways Municipal Parks & Recreation Can Help Address Growing Environmental Concerns & Rising Energy Costs:** Parks and recreation can play an important leadership role in addressing environmental and energy concerns. Areas of interest include: service delivery models which reduce reliance on cars and provide "Walk To" facilities; the impact of climate change on operations/maintenance practices and how municipalities are dealing with it; water conservation measures and practices; ensuring and building energy-efficient recreation facilities and parks (e.g. solar-powered splash pads; energy-efficient lighting for sports fields and pathways).
- **Effective Management Approaches to Enhance Service Responsiveness and Efficiencies:** Use of work order and asset tracking systems; use of specialized equipment; different staffing approaches; customer care (multi-service) centres in recreation facilities; inter-municipal partnerships.
- **Desire for Easy Access to Tools and Templates:** Like other municipal managers parks and recreation managers do not want to "reinvent the wheel". They are interested in being able to access tools and templates (e.g. policies, forms, sample agreements) developed by others that could be tailored to the unique needs of different municipalities.

This project represents an important step in supporting efficient and effective practices in parks and recreation. The parks and recreation sector looks forward to working with other municipal and provincial partners on initiatives to better assess and improve its performance.