

**City of Dawson Creek**

**2006  
Parks and Recreation  
Master Plan**

**Professional  
Environmental  
Recreation  
Consultants Ltd.  
(PERC)**

2728 Bayview St  
Surrey, BC  
V4A 2Z4

Tel: 604.531.2883  
Fax: 604.531.4486

**PERC**

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## Executive Summary

Professional Environmental Recreation Consultants Ltd. (PERC) was retained by the City of Dawson Creek to prepare a long range plan for the delivery of all parks and recreation services in the City. This document represents the culmination of that effort. It is anchored by and consistent with previous work within the City including a Recreation Needs Assessment, a City Visioning process and a Downtown Beautification Plan.

The Master Plan provides direction in two ways. Firstly, it provides a Decision Making Framework for dealing with all public parks and recreation issues that arise over the foreseeable future, including issues which are not anticipated within this plan. That framework is summarized beginning on page eleven in the body of this document and consists of a foundation statement, a mission statement, two high level goals, twenty-one service objectives, and six guidelines. The framework goes on to incorporate all that into a mandate for the City in terms of the delivery of parks and recreation services and a process for using the decision making framework for strategic and tactical decisions.

The Master Plan also provides specific recommendations for dealing with eleven issues that are currently evident or can be foreseen. These recommendations are summarized and put into context in Figures A and B beginning on the next page.

There are several codes which are important in understanding Figure A. They are described as follows:

Timeline for Implementation	<p><b>Immediate</b> means as soon as possible, certainly within the next year or so</p> <p><b>Short Term</b> means in the next two to four years</p> <p><b>Long Term</b> means in the next five to ten years</p> <p><b>Ongoing</b> means starting soon and continuing for the foreseeable future</p>
Capital Cost Implications	<p><b>Minor</b> means little or no capital requirements for this recommendation in and of itself and can be implemented within existing resources</p> <p><b>Moderate</b> means that some capital will be required, but not so much that it would likely have to go to referendum for taxpayer approval. These sums would be budgeted for annually in the capital budget.</p> <p><b>Major</b> means that the capital required would be so substantial that it would likely require a referendum to obtain taxpayer approval.</p>
Operating Implications	<p><b>Minor</b> means that there would be little or no increase in tax support required to implement this recommendation.</p> <p><b>Moderate</b> means that some significant increase in operating tax support would be required and would be budgeted annually</p> <p><b>Major</b> means that there would be more significant operating tax support required and would be budgeted for annually and/or approved within a referendum associated with the capital aspects of the project.</p>

**Figure A**  
**Summary of Recommendations**

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Timeline for Implementation</b>	<b>Capital Cost Implications</b>	<b>Operating Cost Implications</b>
1. Focus on operation of new Multiplex	Immediate	Minor	Minor
2. Redesign old pool site and demolish it	Short Term	Minor	Moderate
3. Redevelop old pool site over time	Long Term	Major	Major
4. Optimize existing skatepark	Short Term	Minor	Minor
5. Redevelop Rotary Campground Pool Site	Long Term	Major	Minor
6. Foster partnerships with other agencies	Ongoing	Minor	Minor
7. Activate children and teens	Short Term	Minor	Minor
8. Enhance family leisure opportunities	Short Term	Minor	Minor
9. Expand trails within City and around it	Ongoing	Major	Moderate
10. Embrace pre-school recreation services	Short Term	Minor	Moderate
11. Implement City Beautification Plan	Long Term	Moderate	Moderate
12. Reduce barriers for marginalized citizens	Ongoing	Minor	Moderate
13. Name parks more consistently	Short Term	Minor	Minor
14. Improve interdepartmental liaison	Ongoing	Minor	Minor
15. Fewer, higher quality outdoor rinks	Immediate	Minor	Moderate

The fifteen recommendations represent the fine tuning of an already well developed parks and recreation system.

**Figure B  
Summary of Recommendations in Terms of How They  
Contribute to Service Objectives**

Service Objectives	Summary of Recommendations														
	Focus on operation of new Multiplex	Redesign old pool site and demolish it	Redevelop old pool site over time	Optimize existing skatepark	Re develop Rotary Campground Pool Site	Foster partnerships with other agencies	Activate children and teens	Enhance family leisure opportunities	Expand trails within City and around it	Embrace pre-school recreation services	Implement City Beautification Plan	Reduce barriers for marginalized citizens	Name parks more consistently	Improve interdepartmental liaison	Fewer, higher quality outdoor rinks
1. Special Events and celebrations	X	X	X			X	X	X				X		X	X
2. Support of Local Groups	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X
3. Exposure to Sporting Events	X					X		X				X		X	
4. Exposure to and Appreciation of the Arts	X					X		X				X		X	
5. Social Functions	X	X	X		X	X		X				X		X	X
6. Protect Community Natural Resources						X						X		X	
7. Beautify the Community					X	X					X	X		X	X
8. Family Oriented Leisure Services	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X
9. Integrate Generations and Sub-Groups	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X
10. Fitness and Overall Well Being	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X
11. Pre-School Leisure Opportunities	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X
12. Basic Skill Development for School Ages Children	X	X	X			X	X					X		X	X
13. Advanced Skill development for School Aged Children	X	X	X			X						X		X	
14. Social Opportunities for Teens	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X		X	X
15. Basic Skill Development for Adults	X	X	X			X	X					X		X	X
16. Advanced Skill development for Adults		X	X			X						X		X	
17. Opportunities for Seniors	X				X	X		X	X			X		X	X
18. Interpret the Environment					X	X			X			X		X	
19. Reflection Escape					X	X			X			X		X	X
20. Leisure Education						X	X	X				X		X	
21. Communicate Opportunities						X		X				X	X	X	

# Introduction

## **Background**

In May 2005 the City of Dawson Creek retained the services of Professional Environmental Recreation Consultants Ltd. (PERC) to complete the preparation of a long range plan to guide decisions about public leisure services in the City for the next ten years.

The Master Plan has been prepared under a series of separate contracts over three years. In 2003 the City embarked on a visioning project which laid the groundwork for all other planning efforts in the City. This was followed by a Recreation and Parks Needs Analysis completed by Urban Systems in 2004. After the City reviewed the results of the Needs Assessment, it commissioned a series of workshops in November 2004 where PERC assisted the City in creating a decision making framework for the delivery of public leisure services. Finally, in the spring of 2005, the City asked PERC to synthesize the previous three efforts and finalize a Master Plan.

This final report is the culmination of that effort. It attempts to pull together all the previous work and create a series of recommendations which coherently address all needs which have been identified and prioritize various initiatives in a way which best reflects community values and requirements.

## **Methodology**

Data for the study came from a variety of sources; some collected in previous work and some collected by PERC in this final project. The main sources of data included:

- The November 2003 City of Dawson Creek Visioning Process
- The February 2004 Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Report
- The City's 2003 Downtown Beautification Plan
- Budget and Facility Usage Reports 2001 to 2005
- Results of a series of Workshops in November 2004 with local agencies and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee
- Results of Workshop with the Recreation Advisory Committee November 2005
- Results of Workshop with Recreation Parks and Recreation Staff November 2005
- Results of a Workshop with senior City staff from all departments in November 2005
- Input from Sport and Recreation Interest Groups and the general public in a workshop November 2005
- Various other maps, background reports and information supplied by the City staff.

The data was assessed and used to identify issues arising from the data. The consultants then prepared a draft report which attempted to address each of the issues and put them into the context of a decision making framework which had been discussed at length in workshops in November 2004 and in November 2005 as outlined above. The draft was then discussed with City Council and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee in May of 2006 and that input used to finalize this report for submission to and consideration by Council.

## Context for Planning

### ***Recent City Parks and Recreation Initiatives***

In the past five years the City of Dawson Creek has embarked on a number of initiatives which have positively impacted its parks and recreation services. They form a basis for moving forward, and, therefore, are summarized as follows:

- Set aside an area which is now known as the Chamberlain Community Forest in order to protect this area for future generations,
- Commissioned a downtown beautification study which recommended a number of ways the city's commercial centre can be improved,
- Formed the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee which is mandated to provide advice to the Department and to Council on important policies and priorities,
- Created a new position of Gardiner in the parks system to improve the skills related to maintenance and development of parks areas,
- Passed a major referendum and proceeded to construction of a large new Multiplex which will provide significant new opportunities for residents of the city and the region (more detail below),
- Developed a skateboard park between the City's main arena and a local school,
- Redeveloped most of the sportsfields in the City.

The new Multiplex will have an enormous impact on local leisure opportunities. In its first phase, due to be completed in 2007, it will include:

- An agri-centre with an indoor riding arena and stalls for stabling 100 animals,
- A new indoor pool which will consist of a 25 meter eight lane tank and a separate leisure tank with a wide array of supporting amenities and spaces,
- A 4500 seat event centre which can accommodate ice based events (e.g. Junior A Hockey) as well as dry floor events (trade shows, concerts) with a walking/jogging track around the outside,
- Fitness centre with aerobic and strength training areas,
- Banquet and convention spaces.

In future phases, there is accommodation to add several other amenities including:

- Squash/racquetball courts,
- Climbing wall,
- Indoor children's playground,
- Additional 100 animal stalls,
- Multipurpose spaces.

### ***Demographics of the City***

This section has been taken entirely from the 2004 Needs Assessment prepared by Urban Systems and edited only to fit with this report.

For 2001, the last census year, Census Canada estimated the population of Dawson Creek to be 10,754. In contrast, BC Stats estimated Dawson Creek's population to be 11,305 in 2001 and 11,409 in 2002. The difference in the two estimates stems from what BC Stats considers to be an "undercount" in the methodology of the Census Canada method. The population of the City is currently estimated to be just under 12,000.

The population within the City has been quite cyclical since 1976. The City's population increased rapidly in 1980, and peaked at 11,739 in 1982. This was followed by a decline shortly thereafter. Since the late 1980's, however, the City's population has increased modestly, recently exceeding population levels experienced in the early 1980's. The City experienced a negligible decline in population from 1996 to 2000, before recovering in over the past five years.

Population growth rates have been, on average, 0.4% per year within Dawson Creek since 1976. This growth is an average of growth over two business cycles. By contrast, the average annual growth rate for the same period in Fort St. John was 1.5%. If the population expands at the historical rate of growth, this would be 0.4% per year. If the population were to experience significant growth, albeit less than what the North Peace has experienced, the growth rate could be 1%. If there is substantial growth, even exceeding the growth of the North Peace, the growth rate could be 2%. Taken together, the three scenarios of 0.4, 1 and 2 % annual growth could be considered 'status quo', 'possible' and 'maximum' scenarios. *Figure One* illustrates population projections using these three scenarios.

**Figure One**  
**Dawson Creek Population Projections (2003-2021)**

Year	.4% Growth (Status quo)	1% Growth (Possible)	2% Growth (Maximum)
2003	11,455	11,523	11,637
2004	11,500	11,638	11,870
2005	11,546	11,755	12,107
2006	11,593	11,872	12,349
2007	11,639	11,991	12,596
2008	11,686	12,111	12,848
2009	11,732	12,232	13,105
2010	11,779	12,354	13,367
2011	11,826	12,478	13,635
2012	11,874	12,603	13,908
2013	11,921	12,729	14,186
2014	11,969	12,856	14,469
2015	12,017	12,985	14,759
2016	12,065	13,114	15,054
2017	12,113	13,245	15,355
2018	12,161	13,378	15,662
2019	12,210	13,512	15,975
2020	12,259	13,647	16,295
2021	12,308	13,783	16,621

In the status quo 0.4% annual growth scenario, the City of Dawson Creek's population will grow by 280 people by 2008 and by 900 people by 2021. In the possible 1.0% scenario, the City's population will grow by 700 people by 2008 and by 2,400 people by 2021. In the maximum 2.0% scenario, the City's population will grow by 1,400 people by 2008 and by 5,200 by 2021. These population projections can help in considering the demand for parks and recreation facilities and services.

In considering what demands an increased population will bring, one should also consider what ages this population will be. There are variations in activities among different age groups. For example, we know there is more youth participation in gymnastics than genealogy, and we know there is more adult participation in genealogy than in gymnastics. Parks and recreation planning can anticipate the age range of future populations. It can also anticipate the magnitude of potential increase or decrease in participation and the demand for future parks and recreation facilities.

In assessing the age of future populations in Dawson Creek, some forecasting has been completed by BC Stats for the South Peace Local Health Area using their 'People' model. The model takes into account birth, death and fertility rates, in-migration and economic factors. While the South Peace Local Health Area includes smaller communities such as Chetwynd and Tumbler Ridge, it provides a reasonably good indication of future age cohorts in Dawson Creek.

Several observations can be made from these projections. First, the population of youth and young adults (to 24 years) is not expected to change much by 2011 and but could be substantially lower. For the 25-44 age cohort, a modest decline in population is expected by 2011 with some recovery expected by 2021. The greatest population increase for 2011 is expected in the 45-64 age cohort while the greatest population increase for 2021 is expected in the 65+ age cohort. The greatest single factor influencing these projections is the baby boom: those people who were born between 1945 and 1965. Many of these people will be between 45 and 64 in 2011 and many of these people will be over 65 in 2021.

Although Dawson Creek is currently enjoying a high level of economic activity and some population growth, one cannot escape the fact that the City will increasingly become an 'older' community. In what leisure pursuits will aging baby-boomers participate? A review of associated literature suggests an increase in the following activities:

- walking
- passive outdoor recreation (e.g. nature observation, bird watching)
- gardening
- culture (theatre, museums, galleries)
- golf
- curling
- swimming

Correspondingly, along with a decline in the proportion of school aged population, there may well be a decrease in the following activities:

- Swim lessons,
- Minor team sports,
- Use of playgrounds.

Walking is consistently referenced as the most popular activity. Indeed, Dawson Creek is fortunate to have such a good system of walking paths already. This may be one priority area for additional investment.

**Emerging Issues:** Some of the potential issues and opportunities emerging from the review of demographics are:

1. A decline in the proportion of school aged residents may cause declines in such activities as minor sports, swim lessons and use of outdoor playgrounds.
2. An aging adult population will likely cause increases in such activities as walking, performing and visual arts, golf and volunteering.

## User Levels and Budget Trends

### *User Levels and Trends*

#### *Indoor Swimming*

Analysis of pool user data in the City suggests that total indoor swimming is at the low end of the expected range at present and that the aging existing indoor pool has served the community well. With 60,000 swims in 2004, total swims represent about four swims per capita within the pool's primary catchment area (which is the City and immediately surrounding area with population of about 15,000). In working in literally hundreds of communities in Western Canada over the past thirty years, the consultants have always found that communities with an indoor pool have total swims in the range of four to ten times the population of the primary catchment area. Where a community is located within that range almost always relates directly to the quality and breadth of indoor aquatic opportunities available within the pool. That means that the Dawson Creek indoor pool is at the bottom end of that range and has a great deal of potential to increase the number of swims in this market by as much as 100 to 150%. A reasonable estimate of the total swims likely with a new high quality multi-tank pool is about 8 swims per capita which represents an increase of about 100% in the number of swims.

Trends in indoor swimming are quite consistent across Canada. Each generation is slightly more likely to swim than the last one, and indoor swimming has the longest, most consistent, modest growth curve of any recreational activity. With consistent growth likely, and a new high quality pool opening in the community, the future of indoor swimming in Dawson Creek is quite bright.

#### *Indoor Skating*

Analysis of the two indoor arenas in Dawson Creek suggests that use is consistent with what might be expected. Total number of skates in the two facilities is likely about 50,000 per year. This would be in the top half of the range of similar communities in BC. However, use of arenas is on a slight decline across Canada with a smaller proportion of Canadians using indoor ice each year. This long term downward trend is likely to continue. With a new indoor ice surface for a junior hockey team opening as part of the new Multiplex, and its potential to take some of the special events that used to be held in the Memorial Arena, the long term prospects for the two established arenas is not bright. Strategies will need to be pursued to find alternate uses for the two existing arenas if, as expected, use declines.

#### *Team Sports Outdoors*

Total registrations in outdoor sports are at levels which one would expect for a community of 12,000 residents. Usage levels have been constant overall (with some increases in some sports and some decreases in others). The community has a good number of high quality sports fields, diamonds, courts and pitches. Over time, as the school aged population declines and the adult population ages, the total registration in outdoor sports is more likely to decline than to increase. There will be little need for additional fields, diamonds, courts and pitches.

**Emerging Issues:** Some of the issues and opportunities emerging from the review of user patterns and trends are:

1. The city will be challenged to increase swimming substantially when the new pool opens. There will be lots of demand for more aquatics within the higher quality pool.
2. Over time, the total number of swims in the drop-in and rental categories may increase and the number of swims in the swim lesson category may decline. Managing that change will be important.
3. Another challenge will be to maintain the usage levels of the existing two arenas when the new Multiplex opens. It has the potential to cannibalize some of the uses and events currently accommodated in the existing two facilities.
4. As the adult population ages and the proportion of school aged children declines, organized outdoor team sports will be challenged to maintain the current levels of registered members.

### **Budget Analysis**

The City of Dawson Creek has been investing about \$3.8 million annually in parks and recreation services in recent years. The figure has remained quite constant over the past five years, increasing by less than the rate of inflation.

The 2005 budget is broken down roughly as follows:

- Parks, playground and sportsfield operations (including related services like cemeteries, grass cutting in ditches and road verges, Christmas lighting, tree pruning, city beautification, maintenance of Exhibition Grounds etc.) \$1,569,748,
- Grants to groups of \$328,000 so that other providers of services can provide parks and recreation services within the City and in immediately surrounding areas,
- A transfer of \$320,000 to the Capital Pool Reserve,
- Curling rink maintenance of \$13,900,
- Aid to Community Projects of \$31,500,
- Swim pool operations of \$699,100 of which \$210,000 is recovered from users leaving a net investment of \$489,100 (recovery rate of 30%),
- Programs, special events and programming services of \$283,100,
- The Youth Care Centre of \$42,500,
- Out of School Care of \$113,000 of which all but \$1000 is recovered from parents and other means,
- City kids of \$104,000 of which all but \$2900 is recovered from parents and other means,
- Arena operations of \$1,007,600 of which \$310,000 is recovered from users for a net subsidy of \$697,000 (recovery rate of 31%).

Analysis of the above total investment and its various cost centres would suggest that:

- The overall investment of \$3.8 million divided by the population of about 12,000 represents a public investment of about \$317 per capita. This is above the average for B.C. municipalities (last measured in 2003 but likely under \$200 for 2005). However, it is consistent with smaller, northern resource communities which tend to have higher public investments per capita.

- The parks department is larger than typical communities of the same size with a higher net public investment per capita. However, it is mandated to do a number of things that are not always included in the parks departments in other similar centres (e.g. cemetery operations, Christmas lighting, grass cutting along roads).
- The pool recovery rate is lower than typical public pools in BC with a corresponding higher net public subsidy per swim (about \$8.15 for each of the 60,000 swims in 2005) than average. However, many smaller markets, especially in northern climates, have similar subsidy and recovery rates. The challenge in the new pool in the Multiplex will be to increase the total number of swims in the more attractive pool and realize the economies of scale, thereby reducing the net subsidy per swim.
- The arena recovery rate is also below the average for BC public arenas. Here again, arenas in smaller centres have lower recovery rates, so the two in Dawson Creek are not out of line in this narrower, more appropriate comparison.

***Emerging Issues:*** Some of the issues emerging from the analysis of budgets over the last five years are:

1. Although the City currently spends a great deal on parks maintenance and operations, there will be upward pressure on parks maintenance budgets as the city grows and established parks start to show their age.
2. One of the most important challenges the City will face over the next two years will be managing the financial impacts of the operation of the new Multiplex, and its potential negative impacts on existing facilities.
3. Grants made to local non profit leisure service providing groups represents quite a significant amount each year. Managing this large sum in the future will be important to ensure the City receives a high return on this investment. The framework for decision making outlined in a subsequent section of this report titled “A Rationale for the Delivery of Public Leisure Services,” should drive all direct City investment in public leisure services, and should also be used as a basis for future grants to groups which deliver leisure services on behalf of the City.

# Synthesis of Public Input

## Summary of Visioning Process Report

The visioning process resulted in a report to City Council in November of 2003. It is available separately. However, as the mandate for this Master Plan was to be consistent with that result, the essence of the vision is synthesized herein. The vision was created through a series of surveys, workshops and focus groups. It is summarized in **Figure Two** which comes from the Visioning Report.

**Figure Two  
Areas the Community Feels are Important to its Future**

DAWSON CREEK VISION					
Dawson Creek – A Great Place to Be		Strong Foundations		Active Regional Centre	
Informed Engaged Community	Beautiful, Safe, Proud Community	Diverse Sustainable Economic Base	Healthy Progressive Infrastructures	Active Sports and Cultural Community	Strong Regional Centre
Leadership that Risks & that Engages the Community 13	City We are proud to Live In 18	Fiscally Sound Growth Oriented City 27	Maintained Improved Infrastructure that Enhances the City 75	Well Maintained up-to-date Sports & Recreation Facilities 63	Strong Proactive Regional Teamwork 6
		Regional Hub for Tourism 52			
Well-Informed Involved Citizenry 14	Beautiful Clean Safe Magnet Community 141	Customer Focused Diverse, Quality Retail 75	Creative Transportation Systems focused on Community Needs 14	Accessible Youth Gathering Place 35	Multi-Purpose Sports Centre 28
		Attractive, Livable Heritage Downtown 20	Safe Diverse Housing 13		

The top priorities in the visioning exercise in terms of parks and recreation services were

- A new Agriplex – Multiplex sporting centre,
- Aesthetic improvements to the community with special emphasis on the downtown core,
- Better services for teens and young adults,
- Expanded sports and recreation facilities.

## Summary of Needs Assessment Report

The mandate for this Master Plan also included building on the results of the Needs Assessment which was completed in February 2004 and are available as a separate document. The Needs Assessment process included surveys, interviews and workshops. A synthesis of that report is provided below. The most important needs as expressed by local citizens were:

- Upgrading existing parks and recreation facilities before building new ones,

- New facilities should start with a new Multiplex and include new walking trails, sports fields and sport courts that could become ice rinks in the winter,
- More coordination of communication efforts to ensure that all residents are aware of all leisure opportunities that are available to them and how to get access to them,
- More walking trails, sports fields and more outdoor ice rinks that could be used in the summer for such things as basketball,
- Forming a Sports Council.

***Emerging Issues:*** Some of the issues emerging from the Visioning process and the Needs Assessment are:

- A need for a new Multiplex (under construction in 2005)
- A need for a new skatepark (already developed in 2005)
- A need for upgrading existing facilities
- A need for additional walking trails (trail extension budgeted for in 2006)
- Great interest in beautification of the downtown area

In addition to the three bracketed references above, it should be noted that the City has made real progress on other issues as well. One issue warrants further comment and that is the issue of the need for more sportsfields. The issue was raised in a number of forums over the past several years including in a public forum held in November 2005 held by PERC. However, the consultants believe that this is no longer an issue. The City has rebuilt excellent facilities at Harry Morrow Park and has upgraded many fields, diamonds and pitches on other sites around the community. The current quality and quantity of sports fields, diamonds, courts and pitches are quite sufficient to meet the needs for the foreseeable future. In the consultants' opinion, this is no longer an issue.

## Rationale for the Delivery of Public Leisure Services

In a fall of 2004 and then again in the fall of 2005 in two workshops with Council, senior staff, and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee, a framework was established and confirmed for decision-making. It consists of a Foundation Statement, a Mission statement, a commitment to a benefits based approach and a series of benefits that would act as goals and objectives. More detail on this chapter is included in Appendix A.

### **Foundation Statement**

All our decisions about leisure services are anchored in the following underlying premise.

*The City will direct its efforts toward achieving the greatest “public good” possible in return for the investment of limited available public resources designated by council each year.*

### **Mission Statement**

The following mission statement is based on and consistent with the foundation statement above.

*The City will use public parks and recreation services as vehicle in achieving socially worthwhile goals and objectives in our City, where the achievement of such goals and objectives clearly results in some form of indirect (i.e. public good) to all citizens.*

### **Goals**

The following two goals add direction to and are consistent with the mission statement above.

*To use leisure services to foster a sense of community identity, spirit, pride and culture.* Parks and recreation services in Dawson Creek can be used as a vehicle to connect local citizens more positively to their City and enhance their sense of comfort with it. Where such initiatives require City support, it will be considered in terms of the amount of public good created in relation to the cost to the taxpayers. The success of such initiatives will clearly benefit all citizens.

*To use leisure services to foster growth of individuals to become the best that they can be.* Parks and recreation services in Dawson Creek can and do help individuals to grow physically, emotionally, morally and creatively and help them to be as good as they can be. Where City support is needed to ensure such success, it will be considered within the cost/benefit framework referred to above. Healthier, more responsible citizens will clearly benefit the entire community.

## ***Service objectives***

The following twenty-one service objectives are consistent with the two goals described in the previous section. (They may be considered as specific public goods under which the goals can be measured.) All City parks and recreational initiatives directed toward achieving the two goals could be categorized under one or more of these twenty-one objectives.

### ***Sense of Community***

#### **1. To Encourage Special Events and Celebrations**

Special events (e.g. carnivals, fairs, and the likes) can be contributed to a feeling of community identity and spirit. Therefore, the municipality should be involved in supporting special events to the extent necessary to ensure promotion of this objective.

#### **2. To Support Local Groups**

Local clubs, groups and agencies are and will be organizing and sponsoring leisure opportunities. The “people doing things for themselves” aspect of such groups is socially worthwhile and desirable. The City should support such groups in their efforts. Support may occur in a number of ways, including subsidized access to facilities, provision of public land, assistance in problem solving or help with promotion.

#### **3. To Facilitate Spectator Exposure To Sporting Events**

Community identity, spirit and culture can be fostered through the environment generated by spectators at athletic events. In such events, sport can be closely linked with community identity and pride. Because of this, opportunities should be provided for spectator experiences at athletic events. The City may have a role to play in ensuring such opportunities exist.

#### **4. To Facilitate Spectator Exposure To And Appreciation Of The Arts**

Artistic endeavours (both performing and visual) represent one of the most significant aspects of developing a culture in any community. Through exposure to the arts, local residents should develop a better understanding and appreciation of the cultural aspects of a community.

#### **5. To Facilitate Opportunities for Social Functions**

Because social functions are a valuable vehicle to use in developing community cohesion and identity, the City should strive to ensure that such opportunities exist.

#### **6. To Protect Community Natural Resources**

The protection of natural aesthetic features, vistas and natural phenomenon and the provision of public access to such features will contribute to a greater understanding of and pride in the community and, therefore, contribute to an enhanced sense of community.

**7. To Beautify The Community**

The extent to which a community is seen by its residents as being visually pleasing is directly related to the potential for creating community identity, spirit and culture. Therefore, to make a community more beautiful is a worthwhile social objective worthy of City support if necessary.

**8. To Support Family Oriented Leisure Opportunities**

The family unit is an integral building block of community growth. Opportunities should be provided for families to pursue leisure as a family unit.

**9. To Integrate Generations and Sub Groups Within Our Community**

Community growth can be fostered through increased contact between people of varying age groups within the community. The more contact and interchange between seniors and younger adults and children, the greater the potential for community growth. Therefore, in the provision of leisure services, attempts should be made to provide such contact and interchange between seniors and younger residents with a view toward transmitting cultural heritage across the generations.

Community growth can further be fostered through an integrative mixing of various ethnic groups so that each better understands and appreciates the difference and strengths of the other. Multicultural recreation and cultural services can be used as a vehicle in making the community more cohesive.

Community growth can also be fostered by integrating various groups of people with special needs into mainstream programming. Whether individuals have physical, emotional or mental special needs, recreation can be used as a levelling and integrative force.

***Individual Growth*****10. To Foster and Promote Fitness and Overall Well Being**

Fitness, in this context, is used broadly as a synonym for wellness, and refers to mental and emotional, as well as physical fitness. The fitness level of every resident of the community should be increased at least to a pre-determined minimum level with opportunities available for progress beyond this point.

**11. To Foster and Promote Pre-School Leisure Opportunities**

An opportunity should exist for every pre-school aged child to participate with other children in a variety of leisure experiences, in order to:

- Expose the child to social settings
- Foster gross motor development
- Provide a generally happy and satisfying atmosphere where growth can occur
- Teach basic safety skills and attitudes
- Celebrate their natural creative tendencies

**12. To Foster and Promote Basic Leisure Skill Development in Leisure Pursuits For School Aged Children**

A wide variety of leisure pursuits in such areas as sport, performing arts, visual arts, outdoor nature oriented skills, and hobbies, should be identified, and basic skill level instruction in each should be provided for school aged children in order to:

- Provide exposure to skills which may form the basis for enjoying lifetime leisure activities
- Contribute to gross motor and fine motor physical development
- Provide social settings in which social, moral and emotional growth can be fostered
- Provide the basis for leisure education (i.e. the teachings of the benefits of and wise use of leisure time).

Other agencies (e.g. the school system) may provide skill instruction in some areas, with the City filling the gaps.

**13. To Foster and Promote Advanced Leisure Skill Development in Leisure Pursuits for School Aged Children**

Opportunities should be provided for those children who wish to further develop their interest and skills in a wide variety of leisure pursuits beyond the basic level.

**14. To Foster and Promote Social and Leadership Opportunities For Teens**

The maturing from youth to adult which occurs during teenage years is often a critical time in the life of an individual. It is also a time which individual difficulties may result in severe social problems. Hence, opportunities should be provided for teens to:

- Learn about themselves and how they will react to various social settings and pressures
- Develop positive social/emotional/moral skills, principles and convictions
- Develop positive leisure lifestyle patterns which will remain with them through adulthood.

**15. To Foster and Promote Basic Leisure Skills in Leisure Pursuits for Adults**

Opportunities should be provided in a wide range of leisure endeavours and hobbies for adults who wish to be exposed to such endeavours and learn some basic skills in each.

**16. To Foster and Promote Advanced Leisure Skills in Leisure Pursuits for Adults**

Opportunities should be provided for those adults who wish to further develop their interests or abilities in a wide variety of leisure pursuits.

**17. To Foster and Promote Leisure Opportunities For Seniors**

Opportunities should be provided for senior citizens to participate in the leisure activities of their choice in order to:

- Maintain overall fitness levels
- Maintain social contacts and continue to be involved in social environments
- Provide a continuing sense of worth and meaning of life through continuing personal growth

**18. To Interpret The Environment**

Opportunities should be provided for every local resident to learn about, understand, relate to and experience all aspects of his/her environment.

**19. To Create Opportunities for Reflection and Escape from Daily Pressures**

Often growth can occur through escape, reflection, contact with nature and relaxation in a serene natural environment. Because of this, opportunities should be provided for residents to experience nature.

**20. To Educate Individuals About the Wise Use of Leisure Time**

All residents should be generally educated as to the best use of leisure time and the benefits (e.g. growth and fulfillment) that accrue therefrom.

**21. To Communicate about all Leisure Opportunities Available in the City**

The city should ensure that all local citizens are aware of all leisure opportunities that are available to them and how to gain access to each opportunity. Without this, the City could be good at everything above, and yet still fail due to lack of awareness.

In order to achieve the above, the City will provide leadership and coordination where necessary. It may also provide services directly where no other agency is able or willing to provide the service and the need is great. The City will also monitor the infrastructure necessary for success in achieving the above objectives. For example, an effective communication system is necessary so that all citizens are aware of the leisure opportunities that are available in Dawson Creek and how to get access to them. Therefore, the City might provide leadership and coordination in creating such a system.

**Guidelines**

The following six guidelines constitute overarching considerations that will influence how the decision-making framework will be implemented. They are detailed in Appendix A.

1. The City should become involved in the delivery of leisure services only if and to the extent that a “public good” (i.e. as measured by the twenty-one Service Objectives and the two Goals above) can be demonstrated. In the process of becoming involved, the City should work with and through community groups and the private sector wherever possible.
2. Services should be provided to people at all levels of ability from the most talented participants to people with special needs. However, cost benefit considerations may dictate providing more assistance to the large numbers of people at basic skill levels and below.
3. All other things being equal, the City should put more emphasis on the variety of leisure services rather than the quantity of leisure services when increasing or reducing service levels.
4. All other things being equal, the City should put more emphasis on quality of service than on quantity of service when increasing or reducing service levels.

5. All other things being equal, the City should facilitate and support others to provide the services rather than providing the services directly.
6. The City should attempt to reduce or remove any barriers to public participation in leisure services including financial barriers.

### ***Service Delivery Process***

Although this document is meant to provide long term direction within which to provide public leisure services, each year it will be important to adjust and fine tune priorities and services. The following steps suggest how this short term planning should occur.

#### ***Evaluate Services***

The City should first inventory each of the services it now provides (e.g. sportsfields, arenas, grants to groups, indoor swimming pool, and the like), and catalogue them under the twenty-one service objectives each is responsible for achieving. ***Figure Three*** provides a basis for that assessment.

Before budget preparation each year, staff would use a chart such as that illustrated to document the extent to which each of its services actually contributes to the objectives. Instead of simply putting an “x” in the box to indicate whether or not a service meets an objective, a three point weighting scale could be used to show whether the service contributes in a “modest”, “moderate” or “major” way. Completion of this chart will show where the City’s resources are currently being allocated.

One point is particularly worthy of note. A service which contributes to only one objective is not automatically less important or effective than a service which contributes to many objectives. Consideration must also be given to the cost of the service, how many other services are directed at the same objective, the priority of the objective, and the extent to which the service meets the objective. If, for example, a play school program was considered a very high priority, the fact that this service met only one objective would not make it less important than other high cost services which contributed marginally to many objectives, most of which have low priority. Obviously, any service which does not contribute to the objectives, nor supports other city activities which do, would be a candidate for termination.

**Figure Three  
Department Activity/Service Objective Matrix**

<b>Goals/Service Objectives</b>	<b>Service Units</b>		
<p><b>Sense of Community</b></p> <p>22. Special Events and celebrations                  23. Support of Local Groups                  24. Exposure to Sporting Events                  25. Exposure to and Appreciation of the Arts                  26. Social Functions                  27. Protect Community Natural Resources                  28. Beautify the Community                  29. Family Oriented Leisure Services                  30. Integrate Generations and Sub-Groups</p> <p><b>Better Individuals</b></p> <p>31. Fitness and Overall Well Being                  32. Pre-School Leisure Opportunities                  33. Basic Skill Development for School Ages Children                  34. Advanced Skill Development for School Aged Children                  35. Social Opportunities for Teens                  36. Basic Skill Development for Adults                  37. Advanced Skill Development for Adults                  38. Opportunities for Seniors                  39. Interpret the Environment                  40. Reflection Escape                  41. Leisure Education                  21. Communicate Opportunities</p>			
<p><i>Service Contributes:</i>  <b>3 – in a major way</b>  <b>2 – in a moderate way</b>  <b>1 – in a modest way</b>  <b>0 – not at all</b></p>			

**Figure Four  
Service / Benefits Matrix**

	Arenas	Aquatics	Multiplex*	Childcare Services	Special Events	Programs and Services	Grants to Groups Parks and Playgrounds	Beautification	Sportsfields
<b>Service Objective</b>									

<b>Community Growth</b>									
1.	Special Events	3	2	3		3		3	3
2.	Support for Local Groups	3	2	3	1	3	2	3	2
3.	Spectator Sports	3	2	3		3	1		3
4.	Spectator Arts			1		3		3	1
5.	Social Interaction	1	2	1		3	1	3	2
6.	Protection of Natural Res.							3	2
7.	City Beautification					1		3	3
8.	Family Opportunities	1	2	2	1	3	1	3	3
9.	Integrate Sub-Groups	1	2	2	1	3	1	3	2
<b>Individual Growth</b>									
10.	Fitness and Well Being	2	3	3	1		2	2	2
11.	Pre-school Opportunities	2	3	2	3		3		3
12.	Basic Skills for Children	3	3	3			3	3	
13.	Advanced Skills for Children	3	3	3			3	3	
14.	Social Opportunities for Teens	2	2	2		3			3
15.	Basic Skills for Adults	2	2	2			3	3	
16.	Advanced Skills for Adults	1	1	1			3	3	
17.	Leisure for Seniors	1	3	2		3	3	2	3
18.	Interpret Environment						2	3	2
19.	Reflection/escape							3	3
20.	Educate About Leisure					2	2		
21.	Communicate Opportunities								

\*Anticipated when operational

The consultants have provided an initial assessment by inserting the numbers in **Figure Four** and also subjective assessment of the degree to which each of the twenty-one service objectives is being met in Dawson Creek on an overall basis as one of the requirements of the Master Plan. This analysis is included in **Figure Five**. The fact that not much is being done to achieve a specific objective is not important in itself. It depends on whether that objective is deemed by the City to be in need of more effort and resources. Perhaps not much is being done because the objective is very low priority or because other service providers in the City are achieving the objective on the City's behalf. That is determined in the next step.

**Figure Five  
Subjective Evaluation of Service Objectives**

	<i>Sufficient Services are Provided to Meet the Objectives (1)</i>	<i>More Could be Done to Meet the Objectives (2)</i>	<i>Very Little is Being Done to Meet the Objectives (3)</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Special Events	*			The number and quality of special events are both quite good in Dawson Creek and the Multiplex should offer even more opportunity to meet this objective.
Support to Local Groups		*		There is strong support to local sports and arts groups and to non-profit facility and service providers. However, a more consistent framework of support is required and more work to make these groups feel appreciated for the work they do. It is important to make local groups feel they are doing great work for their community, not for the City corporation.
Exposure to Sport	*			Some spectator sport opportunities are provided at Memorial Arena and sportsfields but there should be a great deal more opportunity to achieve this objective once the Multiplex is operational. Spectator opportunities should be incorporated into the new pool.
Exposure to the Arts	*			There is a great deal of high quality audience exposure to performing arts and to the visual arts
Social Functions		*		A wide variety of social events exist for most age groups and for all sizes of events. Some non-profit halls are in jeopardy of closing in the foreseeable future and some require some retrofits.
Protecting Natural Resources	*			With initiatives like the Community Forest, and a focus on protecting creek valleys, the city has begun to invest more in this area. There is relatively little natural resource to protect in the City. However, local environmental groups and the city have done much to protect what exists.
Beautify the Community		*		A significant emphasis has been placed on beautification in recent years, particularly in the downtown. A great plan is in place to guide future efforts, but more can be done to expedite those efforts.

	<b>Sufficient Services are Provided to Meet the Objectives (1)</b>	<b>More Could be Done to Meet the Objectives (2)</b>	<b>Very Little is Being Done to Meet the Objectives (3)</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Family-Oriented Opportunities		*		A wide variety of formal and informal opportunities exist, but little focus exists on this objective.
Integrate Generations and Sub-Groups			*	A variety of opportunities exist for mixing generations. However continued emphasis is required in this area and more programming/service ideas are required.
Fitness and well being	*			Private sector opportunities are available as well as non-profit sector (e.g. sports groups) and City sponsored opportunities.
Pre-School Leisure	*			Opportunities are provided by a number of agencies including the City.
Basic Leisure Skills for Children	*			Activities are provided within the school system and within the community for children to gain basic proficiency for a wide variety of sports and arts skills.
Advanced Leisure Skills for Children		*		Many opportunities for advanced skill development are available in the arts and in many sports. More could always be done to increase the breadth of these activities, but it may not be a priority.
Social Opportunities for Teens		*		Recent initiatives such as the skatepark have helped, but there is definitely more to do here.
Basic Leisure Skills for Adults	*			A variety of opportunities are available from a number of sources in sports, the arts and in City sponsored activities such as swimming.
Advanced Leisure Skills for Adults		*		Many opportunities for advanced skill development are available in the arts and sports. More could always be done but it may not be a priority for the community.

	<b>Sufficient Services are Provided to Meet the Objectives (1)</b>	<b>More Could be Done to Meet the Objectives (2)</b>	<b>Very Little is Being Done to Meet the Objectives (3)</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Opportunities for Seniors	*			There is a wide variety of opportunities available both within mainstream programs and within programs focused on seniors. However, as the population continues to age, more will be required.
Interpret the Environment		*		Some interpretive opportunities exist (e.g. the Community Forest) but more could be done here.
Reflection/ Escape	*			A variety of passive areas are accessible to the people of Dawson Creek especially along the creek valley trail system.
Leisure Education			*	Very little is being done by the City or anyone else. However, some leisure education is done through the public school system.
Communicate Opportunities		*		While the City puts out brochures and some maps, more coordinated effort is necessary to ensure that everyone understands all the opportunities available to them.

In interpreting **Figure Five**, it should be noted that in column 1, existing leisure programs and opportunities are being operated in a manner that is acceptable in meeting the specific objectives; column 2 suggests that some success is currently being realized in meeting these service objectives, but more could be done in these areas to fully meet the objective; and column 3 suggests that very little is being done to meet the objectives and much more could be done if the objective is to be realized.

In the consultants' opinion, ten of the twenty-one objectives are sufficiently addressed currently or when the new Multiplex opens and is operated to full potential. Another nine need some attention to move them left into column one. In only two cases is very little being done; integrating generations and subgroups and leisure education. It is important to note that just because an objective is assessed as being in column three, it does not necessarily mean that additional resources must be allocated in these areas. That decision would be delayed until priorities for improvement are determined. It may be that very little is being done to achieve a specific objective, but that the City determines that the objective is sufficiently low on the priority list that no more resources should be allocated to achieving it.

This assessment is meant to focus efforts in the future. It suggests that effective efforts are already being applied in most areas and that very few critical areas need urgent attention.

### ***Prioritize Service Objectives***

The second step in the annual priority setting exercise would be to prioritize the objectives. This should be a City responsibility as part of the budget and the Business Plan process because it deals with overall City priorities. After reviewing the completed inventory chart outlined in ***Figure Four***, City may decide that a few of these objectives are not as well served as others. It may set the attainment of these objectives as higher priorities for the coming year. This, of course, would have an impact on budget considerations and may require that new resources be added to meet new objectives, or that resources be shifted from those objectives which are already being met.

In subsequent years, the City may decide that earlier defined priorities are now relatively well served in relation to other objectives and that new priorities have emerged. The November 2005 workshop tested this prioritizing procedure, and determined that it could work. Although very preliminary in nature (participants had not been through the exercise before) the needs for improvement as perceived by participants are recorded in ***Figure Six***.

**Figure Six**  
**Areas Which Most Need to be Improved**

<b><i>Foster Sense Of Community</i></b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Special Events	0	
Support to Community Groups	1	
Spectator Sports	1	
Exposure to and appreciation of the Arts	4	6
Social Functions	3	9
Protecting Natural Resources	4	6
Beautify the Community	5	5
Opportunities for Family Units	8	1
Mixing Generations	4	6

<b><i>Foster Growth Of The Individual</i></b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Fitness/Well Being	6	3
Preschool Recreation Opportunities	2	
Basic Leisure Skills for School Aged Children	6	3
Advanced Leisure Skills for School Aged Children	1	
Social Opportunities for Teens	7	2
Basic Leisure Skills for Adults	2	
Advanced Leisure Skills for Adults	1	
Recreation Opportunities for Seniors	5	5
Interpreting the Environment	1	
Reflection/Escape	1	
Leisure Education	3	9
Communicating opportunities	3	9

### **Working Towards High Priority Objectives**

The above chart represents local decision-makers' prioritization of improvements required in achieving the twenty-one service objectives.

The final step would be to render the City's activities more effective as meeting the twenty-one objectives. To do this, the City would review the inventory chart (**Figure Three**) from each of the two axes independently.

To start, the separate rows of the chart, each representing a service objective, should be analyzed with a view toward more effective strategies for achieving each objective.

For example, the City might brainstorm new ideas for achieving a specific objective. Then it might estimate costs and benefits of each item on the list, prioritize them and implement only those that are the most cost effective. At the end of the year an evaluation process would reveal that success or lack thereof in achieving a specific objective. The costs of the strategies could then be weighted against the benefits, and adjusted during the following year to delete those that are least effective and where appropriate, initiate new strategies.

It would be necessary to analyze each of the existing services that are assigned columns on the chart. The City might, for example, "discover" through the inventory process that a particular program or service was involved in a major way in achieving two objectives, in a moderate way in achieving three others, and in a minor way in achieving two more. With some thought it would be possible to develop low or no cost strategies for:

- Moving some of the modest or moderate symbols up to the major category.
- Reducing costs of achieving the objectives.
- Achieving new objectives with the same program.

In the final step, all suggestions for developing or adjusting existing services would be developed into budget proposals showing their cost/benefit in terms of achieving objectives. The final budget review and approval process would also be based on this more structured cost/benefit approach.

### **Conclusion**

***The City Should:***

**Use the model described herein or a version of the corporate priorities setting model to set priorities and evaluate existing services on an annual basis.**

***Emerging Issues:*** Some of the issues emerging from the Rationale workshops are:

- A need for more leisure services in support of family units
- A need for more social recreation opportunities for youth
- A need for more fitness opportunities for all citizens
- A need for more basic skill development for school aged children

It should be noted that the new Multiplex will very likely provide sufficiently more fitness services and more basic skills for school aged children to meet the need. And, it might provide a major portion of the required increase in leisure services for family units.

## Strategic Issues and Directions

A number of strategic issues emerged from the data gathering and analysis as summarized at the end of each of the above sections. The consultants have reviewed them all and have crystallized ten strategic directions for the community to follow over the next ten years. Making progress on all ten is important to the community, but they are listed in priority order for a reason. Without significant success on the first one, it will be almost impossible to make much progress on any of the remaining nine. Each one describes the necessary previous success and the optimum timing of its implementation.

For some of the strategic directions, specific recommendations are made. In others, an outcome is provided and suggestions for achieving it are listed. However, there may also be other ways to make some progress on these over time.

The major strategic directions are:

1. Effective Operation of the new Multiplex
2. Reuse of the Existing Pool Site
3. Optimize Skatepark Site
4. Redevelopment of Rotary Campground Pool
5. Programming Partnerships with other agencies
6. Services to Activate Children, Youth and young adults
7. Family leisure opportunities
8. Trail system expansion
9. Positioning of the Child Care Centre
10. City beautification
11. Partnering with others to serve Marginalized Groups

Each of these ten strategic issues is reviewed in this section. Specific recommendations and the rationale for them are provided to the City for its consideration.

### **6.1 Effective Operation of the New Multiplex**

#### ***Background***

The City has invested massively in this facility both in terms of limited available capital dollars, and a correspondingly high percentage of its political capital. With such a large investment, getting the operation right is not an option. Getting the operation right is a two sided coin. On the one hand, the new Multiplex must meet already high expectations for more/better leisure services. People must be able to see the benefits of the new facilities. On the other hand the net operating deficit must be kept in line. Such a large facility has the potential to cost a great deal to operate. The more the facility costs local taxpayers, the less will be available for other service enhancements.

#### ***Options***

The current plan is for the City to operate the aquatic service portion of the complex. The new pool will be much larger and have the potential to offer much improved aquatic services than the existing indoor pool is able to provide. However, it will cost significantly more to operate. Economies of scale in indoor pools are such that a much larger operation, with much higher levels of swimming will not necessarily cost

proportionately more. The existing pool subsidizes each of the 60,000 swims by about \$8.15. The new facility should provide about twice the number of swims in initial years. However, that doesn't mean that the net subsidy will be twice as much. It should be possible to double the number of swims without doubling the total swimming. The new pool must work towards economies of scale which will reduce the subsidy per swim so that the operation of the new facility will not cost the taxpayers of Dawson Creek an additional half million dollars each year in operating support.

The current plan is for the agri-centre portion of the complex to be operated by an agency other than the city. Regardless of who operates it, the agri centre will provide a great deal of new and improved indoor service for animal and agricultural related uses. This significant improvement in service levels may come at a cost. Because such facilities have not been operated before in the local marketplace, there is some uncertainty about what the operating costs and revenues will be. Careful attention to these costs and revenues will be required to ensure the new services are offered as cost effectively as possible.

The new events centre is currently anticipated to be operated by a private company experienced in operating similar facilities in other centres. However, like the agri-centre, there is some uncertainty about how the new services and events will operate in the local/regional market. While some of this short term uncertainty can be assigned to a private operator through an operating contract, and the experience of the operator may reduce the uncertainty, there have been many communities throughout western Canada which have found that the operating deficits of major events centres have been much higher than was originally anticipated over the long term future. Monitoring and managing this risk is central to the success of the new Multiplex.

***Recommendation:***

City Council and staff must focus on the operation of the Multiplex at the exclusion of all other priorities for the first few years of operation until all the risks and benefits become clear and the net cost of operation of the facility stabilize at an acceptable level. If these costs are not monitored and managed, there will be little or support for investment in other types of leisure services outside the new Multiplex. While no detailed recommendations are offered for doing this, the importance of this focus cannot be underestimated. Experience in other centres is as often negative as it has been positive. And the potential for significant additional unanticipated operating costs or renovation investments is high. This has to be the community's top priority for parks and recreation services, if not the City's top priority overall.

***Rationale***

This recommendation is supportable for the following reasons:

- The new pool will offer significantly higher service levels that will have the potential for significantly increased operating costs. If economies of scale cannot be realized, the potential for very significant increases in the operating deficit are very real and may not be anticipated.
- When increased operating deficits are not anticipated, support for a new facility, even if it provides excellent levels of new service, can wane dramatically and reduce support for other leisure service projects.

- The Multiplex is the single greatest capital investment the community has made in a long time. Expectations are high. The potential for vastly increased leisure service is also high. However, such increased service can come at increased costs. Some of these may be unanticipated.
- Many of the service level improvements in the agri-centre and the events centre are new services to the area. Therefore there is increased risk associated with such new services. Although there has been lots of thought put into the estimates of the size of the markets and the operating costs and revenues, with the experience of similar services and events within the community to guide the estimates, there is room for estimate error. With a project of this magnitude, even small percentages of estimate error can translate into significant sums of money.
- This project has so much positive potential, no efforts can be spared to ensure potential is realized.

### ***Service Objectives***

The Multiplex operation will enhance 14 of the Twenty-one Service Objectives to some degree. The following Services Objectives will be enhanced more significantly:

1. Special Events: The new facility should excel at achieving this objective.
2. Support to Community Groups: The new facility will host many activities and events sponsored by local community groups. All animal/agricultural groups in the region should feel supported in it, as well as the local swim club and all community groups that rent space to hold a special event or a recreation activity.
3. Spectator Sports: As with item one above, spectators will have additional opportunities to view sporting events as hosting capacity is expanded. The new Multiplex will excel at meeting this objective.
4. Spectator Arts: There will be some concerts and other artistic events hosted within the Multiplex. There is also some potential to exhibit visual arts and crafts.
5. Social Interaction: The food and beverage area, the aquatic centre and the agri-centre will likely become places where people congregate and socialize.
6. Family Leisure Services: The leisure pool will bring more families together than ever before, and families will be drawn to many special events and sporting competitions.
7. Mixing Generations and Subgroups: The new Multiplex can be a place where different generations mix and mingle and where people with different backgrounds come together. Ensuring that this happens should be a focus that the operators maintain.
8. Fitness and Well Being: The dry floor fitness spaces, the walking/jogging track, the riding ring and the aquatic centre all offer increases in fitness opportunities.
9. Pre-school Opportunities: The warm shallow areas of the leisure pool will encourage use by parents and pre-school children. Events with animals on display often draw significant numbers of pre-schoolers.
10. Basic Skills for School aged children: The new aquatic centre and the agri-centre will have lots of potential to teach children some basic skills in recreation and lifestyle skills (e.g. swimming and riding)
11. Advanced skills for school aged children: There will also be more advanced skills
12. Social Opportunities for Teens: The leisure pool and other elements will bring more teens into the pool than the existing pool has enjoyed.

13. Basic skills for adults: The new aquatic centre, like the one it replaces, has the potential to teach adults some basic swimming skills. Also, the agri-centre has the potential to teach some adults some basic skills like riding.
14. Recreation for Seniors: The warm water, zero-beach entry, conversation areas and rehabilitation elements will increase pool use by older adults.

## **6.2 Redevelopment of Existing Pool Site**

### ***Background***

The existing Centennial Indoor Pool is approaching the end of its functional lifespan. Even the building enclosure is on its last legs and can't easily be reused for another purpose. Technical evaluations of the structure conducted in recent years agree on these points.

The facility is part of a large site with several public leisure facilities on it. The campus of recreation facilities includes the Youth Care Centre, the Kin Arena with a large meeting room, Memorial Arena and the Dawson Creek Curling Rink. Centennial Pool has served the community well for almost forty years. But it is time to demolish and reallocate the site to another recreational use. Demolition could happen as soon as the new Multiplex is operational. That facility will more than meet the needs for indoor swimming for the foreseeable future and should be operational by the end of 2006. The site can be redeveloped any time after that. However, capital financing and careful planning will be required and will likely slow the progress of any new venue on that site.

### ***Options, Costs and Funding Scenarios***

There are several possible uses for the site. It is an ideal site for public amenities, well situated and easily accessible within the core of the community. Therefore, the consultants believe it would be very appropriate to continue to locate recreation spaces on the site. Whereas more regionally scaled facilities, and facilities accessed by private vehicle are being located at the new Multiplex, facilities that are typically used by local residents, especially those that are not coming by car, should be considered should be considered on this site. Some options are suggested below:

- A new Child Development Centre for Out of School Care and Day Care as well as pre-school programming and children's programs. Such centres in other communities have indoor playgrounds, edutainment centres, child sized climbing walls and multipurpose areas,,
- A new Youth Centre for pre-teen activities and teen drop in activities.
- An outdoor water park for toddlers and young people,
- A large indoor gymnasium for drop in activities, sports programming and sports group rentals,

There is room on the site for more than one of the above facilities and there is some potential to link some of the new spaces with some of the existing facilities. To explore such possibilities, as soon as a decision is made about what should or should not be located on this campus of facilities, a site Master Plan process should be initiated as a first step. It will reaffirm site capacity and possibilities for facilities and will show how best to locate and tie facilities together.

The types of spaces listed above are not particularly capital or operating intensive. While all will cost significant sums to construct and operate, none will require the magnitude of capital or operating funding that facilities like arenas or pools require. The spray park could be scaled to a size that would cost anywhere from \$200,000 to \$800,000 to develop in current dollars. Similarly, the other facilities have a range of possible sizes and corresponding capital costs. A Youth Centre, a Child Development Centre and a Gymnasium could each be scaled from as little as 500 square meters (which would cost about \$1.5 million to construct) up to three times that much. So, if all four elements could fit on the site, they would cost as little as four million dollars and as much as three times that much.

Operating costs for all four spaces are reasonable. The existing Youth Care Centre costs the City very little in net operating support. A new one would not cost a great deal more, even if it were to offer a much wider range of programs and opportunities. Spray parks don't always need to be staffed. They are typically operated quite reasonably. A Youth Centre would likely require some staffing and that would have an impact on operating budgets. But a Gymnasium would typically recover much of its operating costs from users. None of these spaces are the kinds of facilities that would impose unreasonable requirements for increased operating support, although the Youth Centre would likely have the largest operating deficit of the four.

### ***Recommendation***

The consultants believe that the redevelopment of the site should be viewed as a long term initiative. While all four possible elements suggested for the site offer significant improvements to leisure services and contribute significantly to the Service Objectives, they are not essential in the short term and can wait while capital funding is assembled. However, there is no reason to leave the old pool standing. It should be demolished in the two years after the Multiplex opens. The consultants also recommend that a Site Master Planning process be commissioned in the next three years to sort out priorities and confirm options. The consultants believe that the four spaces bulleted above are listed in priority order, with the gymnasium the lowest priority of the four.

### ***Rationale***

The rationale for proceeding with this project includes:

- The site on which the Centennial Indoor Pool stands is prime public recreation property. It is centrally located, easily accessible from most parts of the City and already has a critical mass of recreation facilities that have some life remaining in them.
- The site should be retained and used for long term development of local recreation facilities which need to be centrally located and easily accessed, even without a vehicle. Teens, young families, parents with pre-schoolers are more likely to want to use a facility without travelling to the edge of the community to a site which is positioned to serve the region.
- The Youth Care Centre is also approaching the end of its functional lifespan and will need to be either retrofitted or replaced. The City needs to review its role in delivering such services first and this may take some time. So, it supports a long term view of the development of spaces on this site; possibly even in phases as resources permit.

- While development of the site may be a long term initiative, decisions made about what will eventually go on the site will help to guide other decisions about leisure services. Therefore, such decisions should be made early to ensure that they do provide such guidance.

### ***Service Objectives***

The development and operation of the four elements of space will enhance 14 of the Twenty-one Service Objectives to some degree. The following Services Objectives will be enhanced more significantly:

1. **Special Events:** The new Gymnasium could be used at times for tournaments and therefore might help to achieve this objective.
2. **Support to Community Groups:** The new facility will host many activities and events sponsored by local community groups. Sports groups will use the Gymnasium and youth groups will use the Youth Centre.
3. **Social Interaction:** The drop in uses of the Gymnasium and most uses of the Youth Centre will likely feature people congregating and socializing. Also, the Child Development Centre and the spray park will facilitate social interaction for younger children with their parents.
4. **Family Leisure Services:** The spray park specifically, and the combination of the other spaces generally, will facilitate families to come to the site and participate together or separately.
5. **Mixing Generations and Subgroups:** The combination of spaces, depending on how they are positioned and connected can create a site where different generations mix and mingle and where people with different backgrounds come together.
6. **Fitness and Well Being:** The Gymnasium will foster activity that supports fitness. Preschool play within the Child Care Centre and the spray park will also foster fitness for that age group.
7. **Pre-school Opportunities:** The Child Care Centre and the spray park will excel at achieving this objective.
8. **Basic Skills for School aged children:** The Child Development Centre and the Gymnasium will be used for teaching basic skills in a variety of sports and arts to school aged children.
9. **Advanced skills for school aged children:** There will also be some opportunity for more advanced skill development as children practice skills and participate in sports and arts activities.
10. **Social Opportunities for Teens:** The Youth Centre will excel at achieving this objective.
11. **Basic and advanced skills for adults and services for seniors who wish to continue to be active and involved.**

## **6.3 Optimize Skatepark Site**

### ***Background***

The Skatepark was developed by the city in 2004 on land between the Curling Rink and the local high school in downtown Dawson Creek. It was meant to serve as a significant enhancement to services to youth in the area. While it has enjoyed some success, there have also been some problems. Problems have included anti social behaviour of some users. The response to date has been to tighten security. One example of the responses has been to install video surveillance cameras to monitor and control activities.

### *Options*

There are two fundamentally different approaches to ensure that the skatepark will be optimized as an attraction and socially worthwhile amenity for youth in the community. One is to focus on security measures to prevent antisocial behaviour. This has been tried recently and has met with some initial success. However, its long term success is questionable as youth rise to the challenge of the game of defeating whatever security measures are put in place by adults.

The other approach is to use a positive reinforcement teaching model whereby youth learn to be part of the solution instead of having the solution imposed on them by adults. There is no one right way to implement the latter approach. It is characterized by a series of trials and errors, all involving youth encouraged and supported by some sensitive adult leadership. It would likely involve some combination of paid leadership. Such leadership could be sponsored, at least in part, by the Parks and Recreation Department (e.g. a Youth Worker on a part time or full time basis), by the school system (a youth counsellor) or by the City's Police Department (a youth liaison officer). Such options could be attempted separately or in combination. The goal would be to have youth involved in identifying the problems at the skatepark, and how to resolve them.

This latter approach will undoubtedly involve more cost as it requires paid staffing to develop a more enduring resolution to antisocial behaviour throughout Dawson Creek, not just in the skatepark. The level of staffing can vary and is a local decision. However, the type of staffing (i.e. the qualifications of the staff person/people) is extremely important to success. It is important to understand that the staff required to fill this role could be the same staff that is used for other roles in the city (e.g. staff at the Youth Centre referred to above in 6.2 under the development of a Youth Centre).

### *Recommendation*

**The City should embrace a youth involved learning model for optimizing the value of the Skatepark in Dawson Creek.**

This approach would not guarantee success in the short term, but may well have more success in realizing the goal of "fostering better citizens" in the long term.

### *Rationale*

An approach based on helping youth to grow and become more responsible citizens will have much more positive results in the long term than a punitive approach based on higher levels of regulation and enforcement.

### *Service Objectives*

Hiring staff to work with youth to identify and deal with problems and educate them about the implications of their antisocial behaviour will help to achieve only one of the service objectives that being social recreation for teens. However, it is a critical objective that requires more resources and effort.

## **6.4 Redevelopment of Rotary Campground Pool**

### ***Background***

The man made “lake” at Rotary Campground has served the community well for many years as the main outdoor swimming facility within the City. It has been operated by the non profit group that operates the entire campground and park with financial support from the City in the form of a grant. However, the pool is approaching the end of its functional life. The water quality systems are no longer adequate to ensure public health on a sustainable basis. Also, the surfaces are substandard. Therefore the entire facility needs to be redeveloped.

### ***Options***

There are three fundamentally different options. One is to rebuild a substantial outdoor pool to recreate the experience of the pool that has been there for decades. Another is to build a spray park which would be a much different aquatic amenity than what has been there in the past. A third is to replace the pool with some other dry land play structure if the outdoor aquatic feature were developed elsewhere in the City (e.g. on the site of the existing indoor pool).

The first option would involve development of a substantial new outdoor swimming pool. It would be unreasonable to rebuild a new outdoor with as much capacity as the existing pool. The City’s new indoor leisure pool will be so attractive that it will meet a great deal of the need for summer swimming. However, a new outdoor pool would still have a significant capacity and cost a great deal to develop. A six lane 25 meter outdoor pool with a modern change facility would cost at least \$2 million in current dollars. The operating deficit would be at least \$50,000 per year and could be as much as \$100,000 per year if the new indoor pool does indeed cannibalize the existing facility. It would be open for about 100 days per year and would accommodate about 20,000 to 30,000 swims per year.

The second option would be to develop a new spray park. This is a concrete or asphalt undulating surface with a number of spray water features designed to optimize fun and adventure for children of all ages. It could be scaled to be large or small and should be planned in conjunction with a spray park at the downtown site of the existing indoor pool (see 6.2 above). The downtown amenity could be small and this one could be large, or vice versa. And, it would be possible to get away with only one of the two amenities, at least for the next ten years. Depending on scale, it could be as little as \$200,000 or as much as \$800,000 to construct. The operating deficit would be less. Although typically, operating revenues are minimal for such facilities, operating costs are also quite low. Staffing is not legally required, although some operators have a “play facilitator” to manage any conflicts that arise and to supervise and maximize the fun that occurs. Annual operating support would be in the order of \$25,000 or less.

A third option would be to terminate outdoor aquatics on this site completely and replace the feature with some form of dry land recreation amenity or some amenity that would better serve the demographics of the campers and museum visitors that come to this site. This would only be workable if a very high quality outdoor aquatics feature were developed at another site in the City. One such site would be the campus of facilities that would be redeveloped at the old pool site and arena site downtown. In fact, developing an excellent spray park on the downtown site makes more sense in terms of mobility and

access by users. But that means the Rotary Campground pool would have to be kept open until the spray park were developed on the old pool site.

### ***Recommendation***

**The City should work with the operator of the Rotary Park Campground to keep the existing outdoor pool operational until a spray park is developed downtown. Then the site should be redeveloped with a dry surfaced leisure amenity.**

The club may be able to obtain grants and raise other funds to augment any contributions the City is willing to provide for this project. The project should be considered only after the replacement outdoor aquatic amenity is provided on the downtown site. Also, every year that the current facility can be made operational is a bonus at this point.

### ***Rationale***

- The existing facility is at the end of its functional lifespan. Doing nothing is not an option.
- A replacement of the same size will not likely be required, as the indoor leisure pool will satisfy a great deal of demand for summer swimming that was being served at the Rotary Campground and a new spray park downtown will more than compensate for the loss of an aquatic feature on this site.
- Replacing the existing outdoor with a dry surfaced amenity is very efficient from an operational point of view.
- The City doesn't need two Spray Parks. The downtown spray park will suffice. The downtown one may be more accessible by local residents.

### ***Service Objectives***

The project would excel at providing family recreation opportunities and recreation for tourists and visitors to the heritage site next door. It would also contribute to several other service objectives including some mixing of generations, some fitness and well being for younger children, and some socialization for teens.

## **6.5 Programming Partnerships with Other Agencies**

### ***Background***

The City provides funding for several local agencies that provide leisure services for City and area residents. These include:

- A grant to the local non-profit society that operates the golf course
- A grant to the local non-profit agency that operates the ski facility south of the City
- Subsidized access to a city facility by the local curling club
- A grant to the local Exhibition Association that operates the Fair Grounds
- A grant to the South Peace Arts Council
- A grant to the local art gallery to support its operation
- A grant to the operator of Rotary Park Campground to support the operation of the outdoor pool in that location
- A grant to the operators of Harry Morrow Park
- A grants to the Kiwanis Performing Arts facility
- A grant associated with the Communities in Bloom program and another for the beautification for the downtown area

The total of all grants in 2005 was \$328,000. They were given independently without a clear and consistent framework. In the future, such a clear and consistent framework is required. The basis for that framework is the same as that which is described in the earlier section titled “A Rationale for the Delivery of Public Leisure Services.

### ***Recommendation***

**The City must use its Rationale for the Delivery of Public Leisure Services as a basis for more consistent and defensible decisions about granting funds to its service delivery partners.**

What is required is a process whereby each agency that wants a grant from the City applies for it showing how it can meet as much of the public good as is outlined in the list of 21 Service Objectives as possible per dollar of grant requested. In other words, the cost/benefit analysis that council must go through to grant funds to a service delivery partner is the same one it must go through to justify its own internal investments in leisure services. An agency which wants funds from the City must show that it is delivering public goods and be held accountable for such delivery by reporting back on how it has measured that public good under some of the 21 Service Objective headings.

### ***Rationale***

- The rationale for public involvement in the delivery of leisure services applies to grants in the same way it applies to internally budgeted funds.
- Agencies funding by the City to provide leisure services are, in essence, acting as agents of the City in delivering public services. In other words, the City justifies providing grants to non-profit agencies as an appropriate way to provide services that have public goods attached to them.
- The significant levels of funding that the City provides must be allocated more consistently than simply on a case by case basis.

### ***Service Objectives***

In fact, the City will attempt to deliver on any and all of the 21 Service Objectives in the most cost effective manner possible. When it is more cost effective to provide a grant to another agency to deliver the services than to attempt to provide the services itself, the City will do so. The existing grants assist in the delivery of about 11 of the 21 Service Objectives including special events, support to community groups, spectator sports, exposure to the arts, beautifying the community, opportunities for family units, mixing the generations and sub groups, and basic and advanced skills for both school aged children and for adults.

## **6.6 Services to Activate Children, Youth and Young Adults**

### ***Background***

The evidence from the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute (CFLRI) clearly identifies that children and youth are less active than previous generations, and are twice as likely to be overweight and three times as obese as 20 years ago. This “physical inactivity epidemic” has raised concerns with medical and other authorities for the future health of this generation. It was raised and referenced in a number of Dawson Creek processes in recent years including the Needs Assessment which was the basis for this Master Plan.

Providing services to activate children and youth is one of the most important roles of the City's Parks and Recreation Department. That department currently does a great deal to deliver on this role. There are a many young people involved in sports and recreation activities in Dawson Creek. However, there are still many children and youth that are not involved or who are involved and drop out during their teen years. The Department needs to focus on those that are not involved at present and find ways to activate as many of them as possible.

### ***Recommendation***

**The City should expand the services for children and youth in Dawson Creek. In particular, it should:**

- **Work with School District # 59 to increase the physical activity programs in schools and community settings through an Active Schools, Healthy Schools Initiative**
- **Work with local sports organizations to determine the barriers to involvement by some that aren't taking up sports and reduce those barriers and find the reasons for participants dropping out and deal with those factors,**
- **Work with local private and non-profit agencies that serve youth to more proactively market active services to them,**
- **In all of its programs and services find more ways to serve more inactive youth.**

### ***Rationale***

- Children and youth are less physically active and have far higher levels of being overweight and obese than 15 years ago.
- This has become a significant issue to health and medical officials, parks and recreation departments, parents and school districts.
- The Needs Assessment concluded that this is significant community priority.
- Additional youth and pre-teen programs should be offered at City facilities through alternative uses of spaces at specific times, at schools in evening, weekend and after-school slots, and in other community facilities in the City.

### ***Service Objectives***

The following Service Objectives will be significantly enhanced:

1. Support to Community Groups: The partnership with School District #59 is expanded and strengthened.
2. Fitness and Well Being: This addresses the child and youth inactivity epidemic.
3. Basic Skills for Children: Young people are exposed to a wider variety of activities which can become lifelong pursuits.
4. Social Opportunities for Teens: There are increased opportunities for youth programs at Panorama and other locations.

## **6.7 Family Leisure Opportunities**

### ***Background***

Opportunities for families to recreate as a unit is one of the highest priority needs for improvement (see previous section titled “A Rationale for the Delivery of Public Leisure Services”).

There are currently many such opportunities. They include public swims and skates, uses of the trails and passive areas in parks, use of the Rotary Campground, all the city’s arts and cultural facilities, many aspects of the use of minor and adult sport leagues and many of the community’s special events. However, more is required.

### ***Recommendation***

**The Parks and Recreation Department should focus more efforts on serving family units.**

The potential to better serve family units should be one of the foundations at the new Multiplex. Everything from the planning for events in that facility, to the inter-relationship of scheduling spaces, to the price incentives for families to use the facility should be incorporated into all operational plans.

Also, the redevelopment of the Centennial Pool site is a prime opportunity to better serve family units.

The City’s programming efforts and special events initiatives should prioritize opportunities for families to be served as a unit. Annual reports in the next few years should crystallize the numbers and types of additional family recreation activities that have been facilitated by the Department.

### ***Rationale***

- The Family Recreation service objective is the single highest priority area in need of improvement according to Figure Six which reflects the values of the community through the Recreation Advisory Committee.
- Serving family units is generally cost effective. Economies of scale apply when families use arenas, pools, art galleries, the Exhibition Grounds, or attend special events. They will also apply in the new Multiplex and could apply with the redevelopment of the Centennial Pool site.

### ***Service Objectives***

While meeting this one service objective has some spin-off benefits to other service objectives, focussing on this one has value on its own.

## **6.8 Trail System Expansion**

### ***Background***

The City has gradually developed the central spine of a linear trail system that runs from the Rotary Campground in the northwest corner of the city, through the Dawson Creek valley, to the new Multiplex at the south east corner of the City. This evolving main trail corridor is an exceptional asset to the City and one that is extremely well used, especially

during summer months. However, there is potential to extend the system over time and every effort to do so will add many benefits to the City.

### ***Recommendation***

**The City should continue to expand the main trail system over time by adding links to it from residential subdivisions the north and south, and by connecting it at the City limits to other corridors outside the City.**

While the existing system has become one of the City's most important recreational assets, it has potential to be much more. As opportunities arise to create new linear connections from residential areas to the north and south of the trail, they should be pursued. Also, opportunities to ease pedestrian and bicycle access from the main trail into the downtown core will enhance utilitarian use of the system and allow greater mobility within the City. Finally, opportunities to use the trails to connect more regionally for hikers, cyclists and snow shoers will add a whole new dimension to the system. For example an off road connection to the ski area to the south of the City would enhance winter use of the trail system.

Most of the easy trail connections have already been assembled. Adding to it from its current point will become more difficult as easements and redevelop may be required to create more trails. However, the greater effort is still justified over time as opportunities arise.

### ***Rationale***

- The trails in Dawson Creek are one of the most broad based leisure services the City provides because they are so accessible.
- The trails serve two functions. They can be used for both recreational uses and utilitarian uses.
- Trails have a low capital cost and low operating cost in relation to their capacity for use.
- Even though the existing trails are well used, they have some excess capacity that is there to be used at no extra cost. The more trails you add to the system, the more use there will be of the trails that already exist.
- Need for more trails and their use for healthy living scored highest in the survey done as part of the Needs Assessment.

### ***Service Objectives***

The trails serve a number of the Service Objectives including:

1. Opportunities for family units: The trails are well suited for use by multiple members of the family or the entire family at one time.
2. Mixing Generations and Sub Groups: Trails are so accessible that they can be used by members of various generations at one time.
3. Fitness/Well Being: Trails are one of the most cost effective ways to contributing to overall fitness and well being in the City.
4. Interpreting the Environment: Trails can be a good base to use in interpreting a variety of natural flora and fauna.
5. Reflection/escape: Trails offer a great way of getting away from urban form right in the middle of the City.

One could also argue that trails can be used, at least to a small degree, as a vehicle for fostering pre-school recreation opportunities and social recreation for teens.

## **6.9 Positioning the Child Care Centre and Service**

### ***Background***

The City has operated a Child Care Centre for many years in a building on the same downtown campus as its arenas, indoor pool and curling rink. The building was not originally designed as a Child Care Centre, but has been converted and upgraded over time to fulfil this role. In this building, the City operates a pre-school program service, a day care operation for 4 and 5 year olds and an out of school service for younger school aged children. The services are offered in partnership with parent and community groups that help to fund the services. However, the facility is approaching the end of its functional lifespan and the City needs to refocus its efforts on child care services before the need for a new facility becomes imminent. Other private and not for profit groups in the City provide child care services in some of the same market niches in which the City operates. A more complete review of this one area of service is required.

### ***Recommendation***

**The City should sponsor a forum of child care service providers to clarify current needs and future trends in child care, and which agencies are best positioned to provide services in various market niches. The City should then provide leadership in partnering with other agencies to support where necessary, compete where appropriate and get out of areas where it does not need to be.**

It is assumed that the outcome of this step will be a role for the City which is at least as large as it is now, and likely larger, as many community groups articulated unmet needs in the Needs Assessment. This clarity and focus of the City's role in the delivery of services to pre-school and younger school aged children will then drive subsequent decisions about redevelopment of the downtown recreation facilities campus of facilities.

### ***Rationale***

- Existing services for young children need to be strengthened as articulated in the Needs Assessment.
- The City is well positioned to be a significant player in the child service delivery system and this is an important part of the City's mandate to deliver recreation services in a way that clearly results in public good within the community.
- The City's efforts currently are quite cost effective and cost the taxpayers very little due to the excellent financing partnerships with parent and community groups.
- The bigger picture of who is providing services, who should be providing services and what assurance that there are no gaps or overlaps is required to ensure best use of limited available resources for such services.

### ***Service Objectives***

There may well be spin-off benefits in a number of areas, but the greatest impact will be on the following Service Objectives:

1. Support to Community Groups: In this case mutual support would occur if and where joint marketing and communication would be helpful.

2. Opportunities for family units: With the City's involvement in pre-school services and services to early school aged children, it is ideally positioned to link such services to family based services provided on one integrated service site.
3. Pre-school program services: A Child Care Centre is an ideal base within which to provide services for pre-schoolers to ensure they get a good start towards becoming responsible citizens.

## **6.10 City Beautification**

### ***Background***

The City's Visioning Process spoke to the high priority of City beautification. The City has a Beautification Committee and has commissioned a Downtown Beautification Plan for improving streetscapes and public spaces within the commercial centre of the City. It has taken some initial steps toward implementing the Plan.

The consultants have reviewed the Plan. It appears to be an excellent way of adding value to the public spaces within the City and would contribute greatly the Service Objective of the same name. The consultants are supportive of continued focussed efforts to implement the Beautification Plan.

### ***Recommendation***

**The City should continue to focus on efforts on implementing its Downtown Beautification Plan**

### ***Rationale***

- The Committee has made some progress in its efforts to beautify the City. More progress is required. Implementing the Beautification Plan is the best approach to continued success.

### ***Service Objectives***

The single objective most served by this initiative will be City Beautification. While only one service objective is achieved through this Plan, it will be achieved in a major way.

## **6.11 Strengthening Partnerships to Serve Marginalized Citizens**

### ***Background***

The City works with local non-profit groups successfully in many ways. It provides subsidized access to public facilities to sports, arts and recreation groups. It provides grants to other operators of leisure services (see 6.5 above). It works on joint special events and programs with many service clubs and other organizations. Many of these services are quite generalized and serve the mainstream population. However, there are many citizens of Dawson Creek that are marginalized because of economic circumstances, low self esteem, disability, few contacts in the community or simply not feeling comfortable about their skills or abilities. There are several local organizations that are set up to serve and support such citizens generally. Many of these organizations have some interest and activity in recreation services for their constituents. However, the

City has never made service to marginalized citizens a priority in a way that justifies focussed joint efforts to identify and serve such citizens within the public recreation delivery system.

### ***Recommendation***

**The City should make serving marginalized citizens an ongoing priority and focus its efforts on working with other organizations with shared mandates in this effort.**

The greatest barriers to participation at present are economic and cultural. Therefore, the City should identify and prioritize working with such groups. Examples include the Indian Métis Friendship Centre, the Child Development Centre, Special Olympics and Community Living. City efforts and strategies might be focussed around such things as:

- A strengthened Financial Access Policy that ensures everyone can use public leisure facilities regardless of ability to play,
- Proactive measures to support marginalized citizens in their use of public recreation programs and facilities,
- Helping local sports and recreation non-profit user groups to create their own policies for inclusion of those that can't afford registration fees or equipment,
- Concerted use of the provincial Kidsport Fund.

### ***Rationale***

- The local Indian and Métis Friendship Association is doing a good job, but there are many possible joint initiatives to ensure more First Nations youth and adults are involved in mainstream recreation leagues, programs and facilities. The City just needs to find the time to work with the Association to capitalize on this potential.
- First Nations people are more likely to be at high risk for diabetes and can benefit greatly from more active lifestyles.
- Opportunities for First Nations teens in particular are lacking.
- The Aboriginal Sport and Recreation Association, while a provincial organization, can be a strong partner and conduit for local partnerships.
- The Child Development Centre works with many families at risk who would most benefit from positive lifestyle choices and activities. They have expressed an interest in partnering with the City to ensure their clients are more fully involved in public leisure services and facilities.

### ***Service Objectives***

Depending on the scope of the partnership, most of the Service Objectives would be enhanced for marginalized citizens. However, the primary Objectives served would be:

1. Support to Community Groups: By working with those already well positioned to deal with marginalized citizens, the City will support them and their constituencies.
2. Fitness and Well Being: One of the most important outcomes of involving marginalized citizens will be their improved fitness and sense of well being which will translate into better overall health.

## **6.12 Other Issues**

Other issues came up during the process that are less strategic in nature and more tactical. However, they are referred to herein to ensure they don't get lost. They can be considered and implemented as and when the City sees fit.

### ***Consistent Parks Naming***

Over time, the City's parks and public open spaces have been named and renamed. Long standing residents know some sites by one name, while other residents know the same site by a different name. Still others don't know the name of the site. This confusion causes problems for users, the general public and emergency services crews when residents call in problems using names for a site that responding crews don't recognize. The names for each parcel of public open space should be reviewed and one fixed name set so that it can be consistently used in signage, mapping and communications with the public.

### ***Interdepartmental Liaison***

At one point in the Master Planning process staff representatives from various met to identify issues that resolution and community needs that should be met. The participants commented that the meeting was quite valuable but that such meetings rarely occurred. They expressed an interest in making such meetings a part of the city's corporate culture to reduce departmental silos and provide more integrated thinking on issues.

### ***Focus on Quality for Outdoor Ice Experiences***

The City has a long history of working with local volunteers to provide outdoor skating rinks. However, experience has shown that quality of rinks is more important than quantity of rinks. Therefore, the City should focus on quality and experiment with options. Its current plan to provide a frozen trail in one park in the winter of 2007 deserves support; as does efforts to reduce the number of rinks that it provides in favour of high experiences at fewer locations.

# Appendices

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**Appendix A  
A Rationale for the Delivery of  
Public Leisure Services**

**PERC**

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# Introduction

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Municipally sponsored leisure services have become a legitimate public sector responsibility only in the last two decades. During that time the scale of these services has grown dramatically to the point where typical urban municipalities now allocate in excess of 20% of every tax dollar collected to the provision of Parks and Recreation.

Because of the relative infancy and significant growth of these services, much debate has occurred on the fundamental questions of which leisure services are worthy of tax support and to what degree they should be supported. The debate has not resulted in any clear consensus, and in the absence thereof communities continue to go their separate ways. Some communities subsidize public golf courses and curling rinks. Others do not. Some offer recreation programs. Others provide support to non-government organizations to operate the programs. Some engage in leadership training; others leave it to the respective leisure organization. No clear universal definition exists of municipal responsibility in the delivery of leisure services.

The intent of this paper is to go back to first principles, to develop a philosophical foundation for the delivery of publicly sponsored leisure services and, using building blocks of logic, to construct a complete and consistent rationale which clearly outlines the bounds of municipal jurisdiction in this area. There are, of course, conflicting approaches on this issue. That is because, in the absence of consensus in the literature, most parks and recreation practitioners have spent many years developing their own personal beliefs and commitments. This paper presents one specific point of view. In the final analysis, the reader must consider all available points of view, combine them with practical experience and develop his or her own basis for decision making.

The first six sections of this paper develop the framework collectively referred to as the Rationale. The seventh section amplifies and applies the logic to suggest a number of priorities. The last section summarizes the rationale into an overall Mandate for a municipal parks and recreation authority. All in all, it is hoped that the Paper shows one way of defining the relationship between public and non-public sectors in the parks and recreation field.

# Definitions

Before proceeding, it is important to explicitly make some assumptions and define some terms.

## 1. Recreation

There are many definitions for the term RECREATION. Some are rather academic and philosophical:

*"Any non-debilitating consummatory experience."* (J. SHIVERS)

Others are more pragmatic,:

*"Any wholesome activity voluntarily engaged in during leisure time as an end in itself (as opposed to being a means to an end)."* (D. HUNTER)

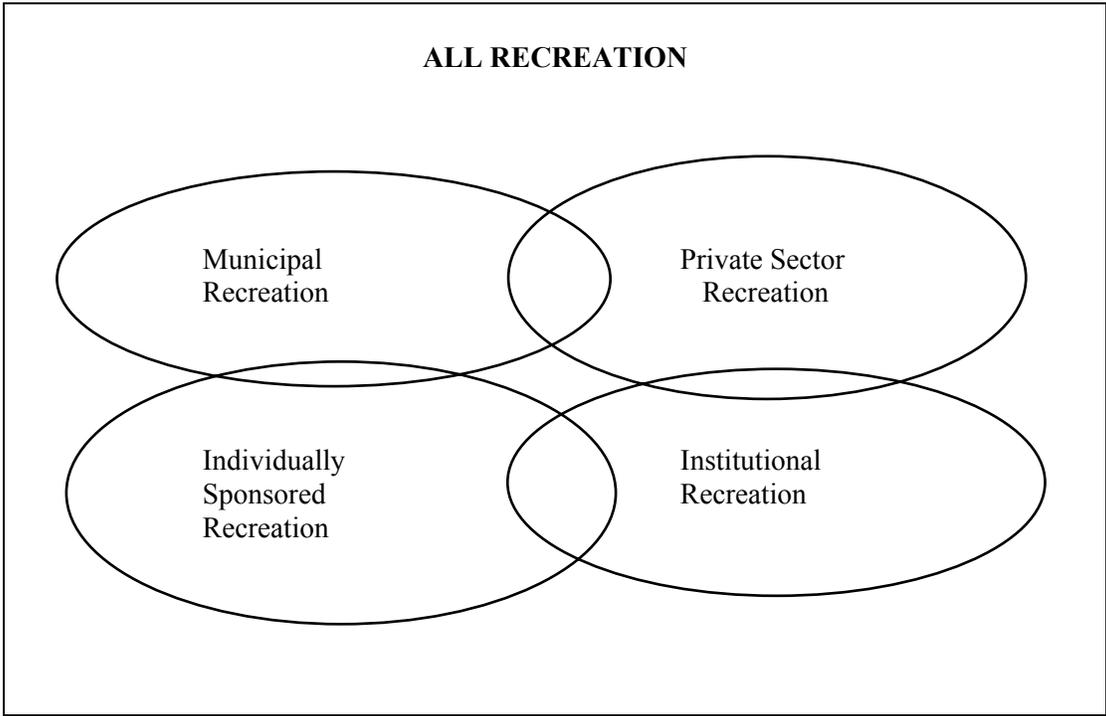
In fact, there are numerous textbooks devoted solely to the study of definitions for "recreation" and "leisure".

For the purposes of this paper it is less important to rigorously define RECREATION, and much more important to define that portion of recreation which is considered to be within public sector jurisdiction. It is defining the distinction between all RECREATION and a subset of recreation we shall call PUBLICLY SPONSORED RECREATION or PUBLICLY SPONSORED LEISURE SERVICES that is the objective herein. Therefore, the first premise is stated in point 2.

## 2. Publicly sponsored recreation is not synonymous with all recreation

Indeed, if a municipal government provides any public leisure services at all, it must be considered as only one of many providers of service. Publicly sponsored recreation is only a part of all recreation. The following figure illustrates this point.

**Figure 1.1**  
**Breakdown of all Recreation By Sponsorship**



In the figure, the boundary around municipally sponsored recreation is not coterminous with the boundary around all recreation. The private sector, which provides recreational opportunities within the scope of a profit motive, also exists, as do services sponsored by other non-municipal public institutions for their own purposes (e.g. hospitals, prisons) and recreational opportunities generated by individuals within their own private settings. There may also be other areas of service not illustrated in the figure, sponsored by other segments of society. The various areas of jurisdiction may not be mutually exclusive, but might, as the figure suggests, overlap to the extent that the objectives of the various providers of service overlap.

### **3. All recreation lies inherently outside of municipal jurisdiction except that which can be justified as being within the scope of municipal jurisdiction**

This premise goes back to first principles and asks if there should be anything within the ellipse titled MUNICIPAL RECREATION in Figure 1.1. In other words, it should not automatically be assumed that the municipality should be involved in delivering recreation services (and certainly not all recreation services); but the municipality must be able to justify why it is using public resources in the delivery of publicly sponsored recreation services. If it cannot justify any such involvement, the MUNICIPAL ellipse in Figure 1.1 shrinks to nothing.

### **4. Municipal government**

Before determining if there is a role for a municipality to play in delivering leisure services, it is important to first examine what a municipality is. All municipal governments are created to protect and serve the public interest. In doing so, the activities of a municipality, like all other levels of government, essentially fall into two categories:

- Legislating an appropriate framework within which to live;
- Collecting taxes from its residents on one basis and giving the tax revenues back to its residents, in the form of services, on a separate and different basis.

Virtually everything a Municipal Council does falls under one or both of those two main functions. The LEGISLATIVE function allows Councils to pass rules, regulations and by-laws to provide a harmonious environment in which to work and live. The lower the population density (i.e. in Rural Municipalities) the smaller the body of legislation that is required. The higher the population density (i.e. in big Cities) the more applicable this legislative function becomes.

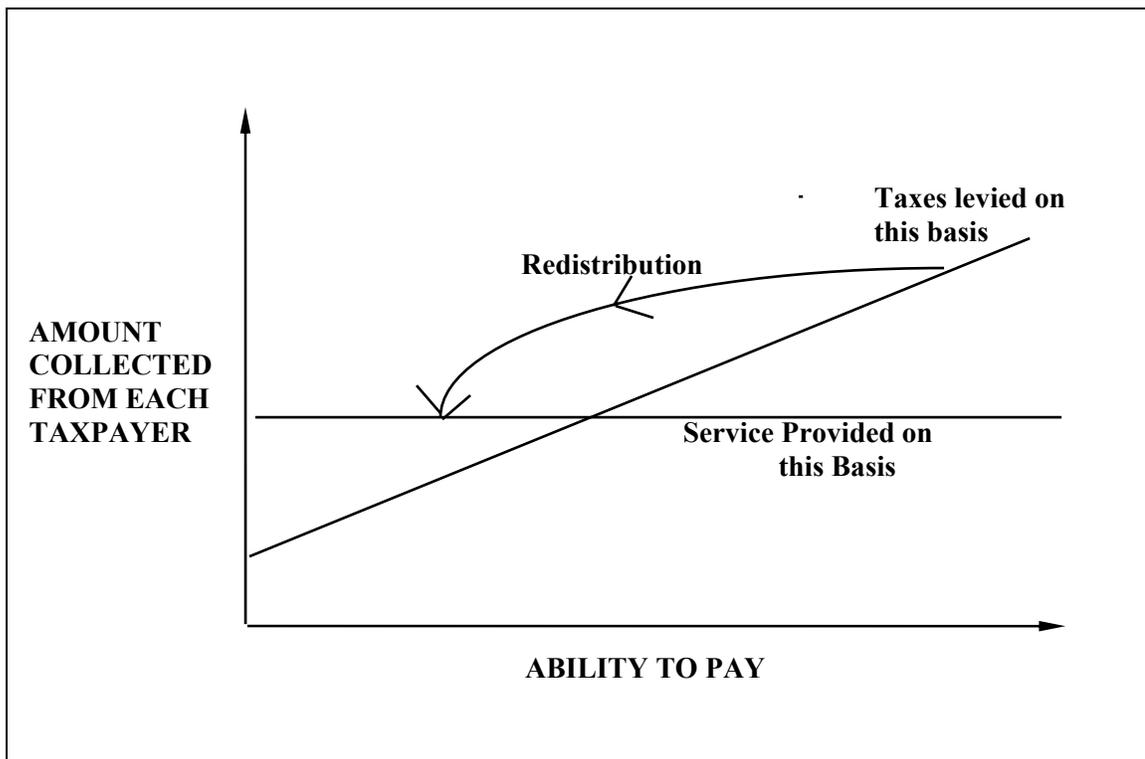
Councils also administer a tax system. The key to this system is that money is collected on one basis and distributed on another. That is the distinction between the public and private sectors. If the municipality carefully calculated the value of all its services and ensured that taxpayers directly received directly one dollar worth of service for each dollar they paid in taxes, there would be no need to collect taxes in the first place. The municipality might just as well leave that dollar in the hands of the taxpayer to purchase the service without the overhead of collecting it and giving it back again. The following distinction between private sector and public sector is important.

- In the private sector there is a direct link between the value of the goods and services provided and the amount paid for them. If one person wants a car worth twice as much as the next person, he/she must pay twice as much money for it.
- In the public sector there is not necessarily a relationship between the one who pays for goods or services and the one who consumes the goods or services. Public services are, in effect, a method of redistributing wealth. Figure 1.2 and the next section amplify this point.

## 5. The tax system

All tax systems are essentially intended to redistribute wealth. The extent to which this redistribution should occur is a political matter. Some people support a low level of taxation, and therefore, a small amount of redistribution. Others support higher levels of taxation with more redistribution. No matter what the political leaning, however, the intent of the tax system to redistribute wealth is an accepted fact (whether tax systems actually are effective in achieving that objective is another matter). All tax systems ostensibly levy taxes on the basis of ability to

**Figure 1.2**  
**Tax System**



pay. In the case of income tax, property tax and sales tax, the intent is to collect more from people who earn, own or spend more money than others. The funds are then redistributed on the basis of equity whereby all residents, regardless of ability to pay, have equal opportunity to subscribe to the service. This system is reflected in the following figure.

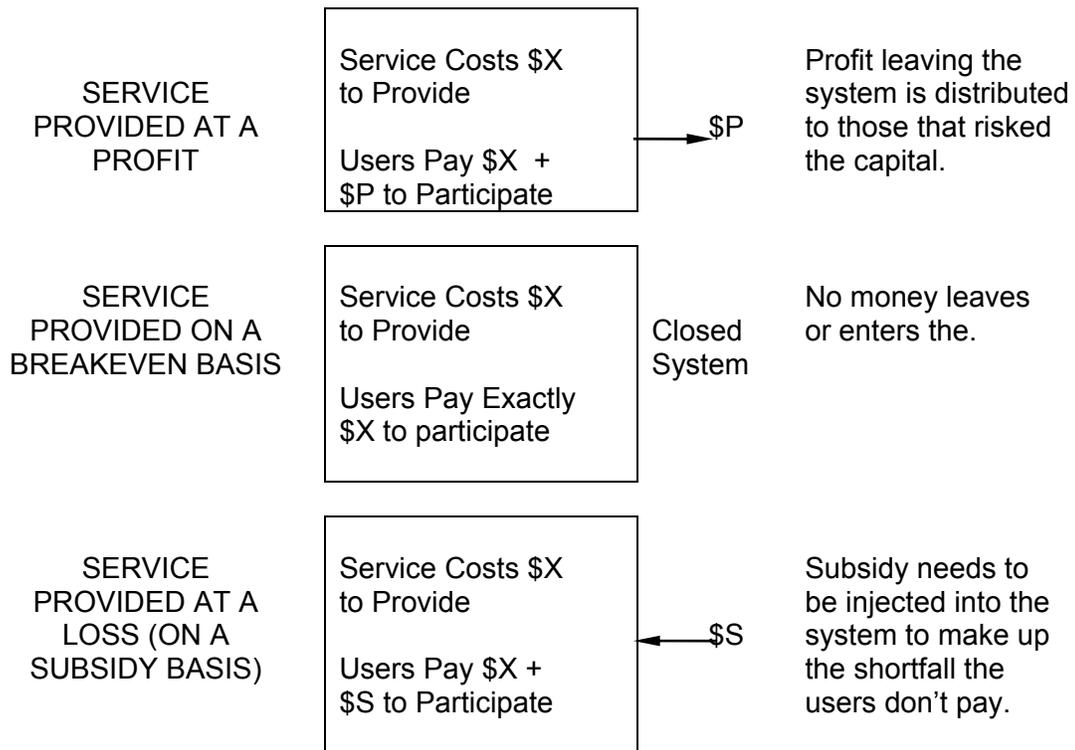
In the above figure, those that are supposed to be able to afford more, pay more, as illustrated by the solid line which may be straight as in the case of constant tax rates (e.g. sales tax), or curved as in the case of progressive tax rates (e.g. income tax). The service is then offered on a more or less equal basis to all residents as represented by the dotted line. The result is redistributing wealth from those at the higher end of the ability to pay scale down to those at the lower end of the ability to pay scale. If this were not the intent, services such as public education and police protection would not be financed out of property taxes because the number of school aged children per household and the high crime areas of a community bear no relationship to the assessed value of property on which taxes are levied.

**6. There are only three possible ways of sponsoring a leisure service: at a profit, on a breakeven basis, or at a loss.**

The following figure illustrates the differences among these delivery systems. (NOTE: the illustration assumes that TRUE costs of providing a service are determined in each case. The true costs would include capital cost, operating cost, cost of capital and amortization).

Although the definition of this concept is quite simple, it is often obscured by failing to calculate the total cost of providing the service at the outset, and therefore, it becomes more difficult to clearly determine in which of the three categories a service falls.

**Figure 1.3  
Mode of Sponsoring any Service**



**7. There are only three possible elements in society which can sponsor leisure services: the private sector, the quasi-public sector, and the public sector**

The private sector is characterized by entrepreneurs investing capital in order to provide a good or service and expecting a rate of return on that capital which is proportional to the risk. The first priority is to protect one's own interests. The quasi-public sector is defined as being a non-profit corporation. The Board of Directors of a non-profit corporation is obligated to serve and protect the interests of its membership. Examples of such entities include Golf and Curling Clubs,

YM/YWCA's, art groups, sport groups, ethnic groups, and the like. The public sector is composed of many types of entities, but for the purposes of this paper, can be narrowed to local government agencies and more specifically, a local Municipal Council; an entity which operates in democratic fashion, is involved in the two functions outlined on Page 4, and is primarily responsible for protecting the interests of all residents of the community.

8. **If there are only three possible ways of providing a leisure service (#6 above), and only three possible providers of a service (#7 above), then all leisure services can be classified according to the following matrix.**

**Figure 1.4  
Allocation of Service by Mode and by Sponsorship**

HOW PROVIDED \ PROVIDERS	PROFIT	BREAK EVEN	LOSS (SUBSIDY)
PRIVATE	X		
QUASI-PUBLIC		X	O
PUBLIC		O	X

X = Primary Area of activity  
O = Secondary/Occasional Area of Activity

It is clear that the private sector is confined to operating primarily in a profit mode. If a private sector company provides services on a breakeven or loss basis, it is obvious that it will not continue to operate for very long.

The quasi-public sector is prevented from operating at a profit as defined in #5 above, because operating surpluses cannot legally find their way into private hands. Operating surpluses are invested in subsequent years into membership services. The quasi-public sector usually tries to operate on a breakeven basis, but in recent years the trend in many cases is to request and receive subsidies from non-users either through fundraising (a volunteer/individual decision basis) or through some form of municipal subsidy (a mass participation/decision basis). In the case of the municipal subsidy, the non-profit entity, in effect, acts as an agent of the public sector in achieving public objectives. If the non-profit corporation wants to maintain its independence from the public sector (i.e. continue to protect only the interests of its members) then it will not accept public subsidies. If subsidies are accepted, the public sector has every right to put "strings" on the subsidy amounts of a nature that will protect the interests of the entire community. For example, in recent years many golf courses in Western Canada owned and operated by member owned non-profit societies, have requested municipal tax forgiveness from their respective Councils. In these cases, if a Council determines such an indirect subsidy is in the public interest (a point dealt with later), it has provided tax relief and in return has sometimes set such "strings" as public access to the golf course during the winter for cross country skiing.

The public sector is also prevented from operating in a profit mode where surplus funds find their way into private pockets. Occasionally, certain municipally sponsored services result in an

operating surplus which is injected into other services for the general public. In these cases, however, the surplus is a by-product of the service, not the objective, and is justified as needed in order to protect the interests of the entire community. Indeed, if making a profit were a legitimate public sector objective there would be no distinction between the public and private sectors. The public sector would invest in all the most profitable enterprises. The following example illustrates this point:

"Some Cities have land banking programs in which they purchase and resell developable land on their periphery. A surplus often results. The surplus is not the objective; rather regulating the type and amount of growth and ensuring an appropriate supply of affordable developable land is the objective. This is justified because the public interest is served by such regulation and the private sector is not seen as able to fully protect the public interest in land development. If the operating surplus were the objective rather than the by-product, the Municipal Council would invest in a fast food franchise instead; some of which are more profitable than land development."

In fact, any surplus funds eventually find their way back to the community at large.

A municipality can legally provide service on a breakeven basis or a subsidy basis. However, it will not typically operate on a breakeven basis because there is no need for public sector involvement where the users are paying all true costs. Points 3 and 4 herein have already shown that:

- The municipality should not be involved unless there is a clear need; and
- Generally, a municipality only need be involved where legislation or redistribution of wealth are required in order to protect the interests of all citizens of the community. If the interests are protected without legislation or subsidy, the municipality has no justification for being involved.

The foregoing assumptions and definitions relate to fundamental aspects of the environment within which public leisure services are provided. Subsequent sections attempt to provide answers to at least the first of the two following basic questions:

## **SHOULD A MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT PROVIDE ANY PUBLIC LEISURE SERVICES?**

and, if so,

## **WHICH SERVICES SHOULD IT PROVIDE?**

In order to answer the first question, the municipal government must develop and adopt its own PHILOSOPHY, GOALS and OBJECTIVES concerning the delivery of public leisure services. These three terms, which are the subject of subsequent sections, are defined as follows:

**PHILOSOPHY - This is what we believe.**

**GOAL - This is what we want to achieve (long term).**

**OBJECTIVE - This is how we want to achieve the goal (short term).**

A municipality's philosophy about public leisure services, coupled with its long term goals for the provision of such services, and more specifically, its short term objectives, will define the rationale for providing municipally sponsored leisure services and thereby define the jurisdiction of municipal involvement in leisure services. The philosophy, goals and objectives will thereby form a consistent framework within which planning can occur and decisions can be made.

# Philosophy

Most Municipal Parks and Recreation Commission and Departments are becoming very good at answering the "HOW TO" questions of service provision, and are becoming effective technicians in operating leisure services. However, they are often less able to answer the more difficult question of "WHY" the service is provided in the public sector in the first place. In searching for such answers it is valuable to examine the most popular bases on which public leisure service systems are founded.

Probably the most common philosophical base for the provision of public leisure services is PUBLIC DEMAND. According to this line of thinking a Municipal Parks and Recreation operation would base all of its decisions on what it perceived the public wanted. It would ask the public what it wants, and then give the public what it wants because it wants it. Delving deeper into this approach, it really means that the municipal government should collect taxes from everyone (for every resident pays taxes either directly as a property owner or indirectly as rent) and use the tax pool to create a service which is offered on a subsidized basis (i.e. to a portion of the population or to everyone that paid for it but not necessarily in the same proportion as the taxes they paid).

The first problem with this approach is a philosophical one. It is simply difficult to justify. The following scenario represents a rough analogy to the PUBLIC DEMAND approach to providing service:

"Three neighbours and I want to water ski but cannot afford to buy a boat. We approach the ten other neighbours in our community who do not want to water ski and ask them to give us money so that we can buy our boat and ski (in effect, levy a tax to create a service that a few will use). Before we go out each weekend, we further approach the other ten neighbours for gas money to run the boat because we can't afford that either (in effect, levy taxes to subsidize the operation of the service). When the neighbours ask us why they should pay for our recreation activity, we tell them because we 'like' to do it and can't afford it."

The ten neighbours above will undoubtedly refuse such a request because it is based simply on the fact that a few would LIKE to ski. They see no direct or indirect benefit to them and hence, why should they pay to satisfy someone else's desires?

Other problems with the "demand" approach are a mixture of philosophical and practical considerations:

- Demand is reactive in nature instead of being proactive - as demands change so should the service, and therefore, it is impossible to plan.
- Demand is a tenuous thing which is often invalid - a person's perceived wants are based on what that person knows - if they don't know about something they can't want it.
- Stated demands often conflict with "hard data" - e.g. often a public survey results in people saying they want more multipurpose activity spaces, whereas inventory data shows clearly that this perception is invalid - that, in fact, the community has excess capacity in a wide variety of multipurpose activity spaces - then what is the Parks and Recreation Commission to do?

A second common foundation on which Parks and Recreation operations are based rests on the value of recreation. This philosophy suggests that RECREATION HAS INTRINSIC VALUE. Subscribers to this philosophy say that people who participate in recreation activities get lots of value from such

participation. As a consequence, they say, everyone should be taxed in order to create a fund from which services can be provided for those who want to participate because of the direct benefit they get from participating.

It is true that recreation has intrinsic value and that people who participate in high quality wholesome recreational activities do derive direct benefit from participating; but that alone does not necessarily constitute a reason for public sector involvement and subsidy. After all, food has intrinsic value. We all need it and it does us good. However, the municipality does not purchase tons of food every morning and deliver portions to every household.

The two traditional philosophical bases for providing public leisure services, namely DEMAND and INTRINSIC VALUE, are both based completely upon the direct benefit that accrues to those participating in the service. Proponents of those positions leave themselves open to the question of why non-participants should help finance the service if they get no direct benefit from it. In fact, public leisure services, like all public sector services, must be based not on direct benefits, but instead on the indirect benefits that accrue to all residents of the community. That is the only way of answering the question, "Why should I pay taxes to support a recreation facility or service if I won't be using it?"

Consider the water ski example again. If the four neighbours go back to all other residents in the community and say:

"We want to water ski but can't afford the cost of water skiing. We want the whole community to collectively pay taxes to buy a boat. However, we don't want the community to buy the boat simply because we 'like' water skiing. Rather, we suggest that there would be an indirect benefit to all residents of the community derived by having a publicly owned boat in our community (e.g. having a rescue boat available in case of emergencies, and having a boat available from which to teach water safety and prevent drownings). Based on the indirect benefit to all, will you help finance this project even if you may not benefit directly from it?"

To the extent the indirect benefit can be justified to all residents, perhaps they will support the project and finance a portion of it in relation to the amount of indirect benefit that is perceived to occur.

The obvious conclusion is that the use of taxpayers money to subsidize the delivery of public leisure services should not be justified solely on the intrinsic value of the service or on meeting stated demand, both of which relate solely to direct benefits to subscribers of the service. The use of the tax system to subsidize public leisure services can best be justified if the services are treated as a means to an end, rather than an end in themselves, and are used in a way which results in indirect benefit to all residents of the community.

The arguments made thus far point to a philosophical statement which can be used as the base for the development of the rationale. It is as follows:

***A municipality should use public leisure services as a vehicle in meeting socially worthwhile goals and objectives, the attainment of which clearly results in some form of benefit to all residents of the community.***

To the extent that benefits accrue directly to the subscriber to the service, no public subsidy can be justified and the user should pay the entire cost. If the user pays the entire cost for providing the service, there is likely no need for public sector intervention in the activity or service whether there is indirect benefit or not.

Before proceeding to the GOALS and OBJECTIVES sections, an attempt is made to show how this approach is consistent with the delivery of all other public sector services.

# Consistency

The principle of using indirect benefit as the "triggering mechanism" of public sector involvement is not reserved exclusively for RECREATION. In fact, all of the previous discussion of the PHILOSOPHY of public leisure services is entirely consistent with the rationale for the delivery of all other basic public sector services. The following examples of public services illustrate the use of the public tax system to redistribute income where indirect benefit to all citizens is apparent.

1. School teachers don't hand an invoice to each student at the school door each morning. Instead, families pay taxes to support the education system, independent of the number of children actually consuming the service. This break in the link between the subscribers to the service and the financiers of the service is inherent in all truly public sector activities. In the case of public education, a base level of service is set, and all residents in a certain age group have a right to that basic educational service no matter what the family's ability to pay. Society in general supports the notion that the entire community will benefit from having a better educated populace, which will be more productive and have fewer social problems. If certain families want a level of service which is higher (i.e. better) than that deemed to be financed by the public sector, they are at liberty, if financially able to support it, to send their children to private schools.
2. If a municipal bridge or road is built, the Municipal Council doesn't charge only those with cars for the project and certainly doesn't charge someone using it twice a day more than someone using it only once per day. Instead, everyone pays taxes according to their ability to pay in order to support such projects, because they are seen to be of benefit to everyone in the community. Locally produced goods travel out of the community over public bridges and roads, and outside goods come into the community in the same manner. Whether a certain individual ever uses a particular bridge or road, that person, like all other people, derives indirect benefit from a coherent and effective public transportation system.
3. Garbage collection also breaks the link between who uses the service and who pays for it. Garbage collectors do not charge each household by the kilo for garbage taken away. Instead, everyone pays for garbage collection on his/her tax bill. This is because it was recognized a long time ago that if garbage collection remained in the private sector only people that could afford it would remove their garbage. In this situation, the health of the entire community would be at risk. Even those at the upper end of the ability to pay scale (those that pay a disproportionately greater amount of the service than they use) realized that if some people did not remove their garbage, disease could spread and affect everyone no matter whether his/her garbage was removed or not.
4. When the police investigate a robbery, they don't start by calculating the cost of the investigation and presenting an invoice. The cost is financed on a basis completely separate from consumption. Everyone has the right to a level of protection that the democratically elected government (at any level) determines the society can afford. If one wants and can afford it, one can purchase additional protection over and above the level basically funded by the public sector.
5. Modern day public swimming pools can be traced back to the concept of "public baths" in Europe. These baths were originally a public sector way of providing a bath for people whether or not they could afford to pay the cost. In these cases even the richest residents realized that although they could afford their own bath they might still get a disease transmitted by others who could not. Therefore, because it indirectly benefited them, they supported funding public baths even though proportionately they would pay the greater share, and in this case would use the service proportionately less or not at all.

The above points illustrate how the rationale for publicly sponsored leisure services, as defined in the previous section, is consistent with the rationale for most other public services. In all cases there is a distinct difference between how services are provided in the public sector and how they are provided in the private sector. In all cases the use of the tax system to finance the delivery of the public service, as opposed to the user paying all costs, is justified on the basis of indirect benefit to all citizens, or what is sometimes called "the greater public good".

# Goals

The overall goals established for the delivery of municipal leisure services may differ from community to community and may alter through time. There is neither a right goal nor a wrong one. The point is that the overall goal(s) must be agreed to and supported by the Municipal Council and reflect the interests of the entire community. They must also be consistent with the accepted philosophical foundation. Council support must be clear and total, because in some cases (although hopefully only in isolated cases), achieving the social goals may not entirely parallel the meeting of short term public demand. If a Council bows to public demand by always giving vocal minority groups what they want, simply because they say they want it, then Council will not be protecting the overall public interest. It will, instead, be taxing all citizens to subsidize the interests of a few, simply because those few want help to finance their recreation pursuits.

Two goals considered appropriate for a typical municipality are as follows:

**USE THE DELIVERY OF PUBLIC LEISURE SERVICES  
TO FURTHER THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF  
THE COMMUNITY**

(i.e. through first establishing a broadly felt community identity and then developing a widely held community spirit and, finally, to the evolution of a community culture.)

**USE THE DELIVERY OF PUBLIC LEISURE SERVICES  
TO FURTHER THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF  
THE INDIVIDUAL**

(i.e. the social, emotional, moral, academic and physical growth of each member of the community.)

With regards to the first Goal, communities pass through several stages of evolution. Similarly, residents who move into a community which is new to them have a relationship with that community that evolves through several stages. The first phase has been termed herein as the development of a sense of **COMMUNITY IDENTITY**. In this stage people begin to feel a part of the community in which they reside. This occurs gradually over time. The second stage occurs when people not only feel a part of the community, but they feel good about it. It is the evolution of a sense of **COMMUNITY SPIRIT**. Eventually some communities develop to a sense of **COMMUNITY CULTURE**. Communities in this category are known for their unique characteristics or attributes (e.g. art galleries, hockey teams, theatre groups, friendliness, special events or historic sites).

Analysis of communities that have made good progress along the growth continuum, from community identity through community spirit to community culture, suggests that much of this growth can be directly linked to leisure time activities that draw local residents together and instill a sense of pride. In fact, how people feel about the community in which they live is influenced greatly by the experiences they have during leisure time.

Two points about community growth are significant. First, growth does not automatically progress positively along the continuum. If it did, Municipal Council would not need to become involved. In fact, growth along the continuum is not assured at all. Secondly, the existence of leisure experiences does not automatically foster such growth. In fact, certain forms of recreation activity can frustrate growth or contribute negatively to it. It is the quality, variety, balance and the way in which leisure services are administered that influence growth. That is why a Municipal Council can justify using public leisure services as a vehicle in achieving a sense of community identity, spirit and culture. Leisure services have the potential to, but do not automatically, contribute to growth. If they do contribute to the sense of community, there is indirect benefit to all.

With regards to the second Goal, recreation like other types of liberal education experiences, can contribute to the mental, physical, social, moral and emotional development or growth of each resident in the community. Recreation does not automatically contribute to growth (it could potentially stagnate rather than develop), but it can do so, and indeed, is a vehicle ideally suited to contribute to growth for the following reasons:

1. Municipal Leisure Services, by its very definition (i.e. contributing to growth) is educational. In fact, it is more broadly educational than current public education systems because:
  - It enjoys a wide range of media in which to educate (i.e. a wide range of physical and social settings)
  - It occurs while the participant is in a state of mind particularly susceptible to education (i.e. consumed, comfortable, voluntary, usually enjoyable)
  - It deals very generally with the total person (i.e. physical, mental, emotional).
2. People spend a great deal of their time in recreation. There is little doubt that the percentage of one's time spent in leisure will increase in the future and the potential for growth in leisure time is significant.
3. Psychologists agree that recreation is a very basic part of life (i.e. a natural human activity).
4. Although there is little evidence to support the concept, leisure services may be used as a vehicle to reduce many costly social problems and hence, represents a sound economic as well as social investment.

In effect then, the provision of publicly sponsored leisure services as a vehicle in maximizing growth of the individual can be justified in exactly the same way as public education.

If recreation can contribute to the growth of individuals and communities but does not automatically do so, it is in the community's best interests to at least monitor recreation delivery systems, preferably control those systems to the extent that potential for growth is maximized and possibly, directly sponsor certain recreation services which most effectively contribute to the two goals.

# Objectives

The following 21 Service Objectives are consistent with the two Growth Goals described in the previous section. (They may be considered as specific public leisure service categories for achieving the goals.) All Municipal Parks and Recreation Department activities directed toward achieving the two goals could be categorized under one or more of these objectives.

## **Community Growth**

### ***1. Special Events***

Special events (e.g. carnivals, fairs, and the likes) can contribute to a feeling of community identity and spirit. Therefore, the municipality should be involved in sponsoring special events to the extent necessary to ensure promotion of this objective.

### ***2. Support To Local Groups***

Local clubs, groups and agencies are and will be organizing and sponsoring leisure opportunities. The "people doing things for themselves" aspect of such groups is socially worthwhile and desirable. The municipality should support such groups in their efforts. Support may occur in a number of ways, including subsidized access to facilities, assistance in leadership training, provision of specialized equipment or the provision of operating grants.

### ***3. Exposure To Sporting Events***

Community identity, spirit and culture can be fostered through the environment generated by spectators at athletic events. In such events, sport can be closely linked with community identity and pride. Because of this, opportunities should be provided for spectator experiences at athletic events.

### ***4. Exposure To The Arts***

Artistic endeavours (both performing and visual) represent one of the most significant aspects of developing a culture in any community. Through exposure to the arts, local residents should develop a better understanding and appreciation of the cultural aspects of a community.

### ***5. Social Functions***

Because social functions are a valuable vehicle to use in developing community cohesion and identity, the public sector should ensure that such opportunities exist.

### ***6. Protecting Community Natural Resources***

The protection of natural aesthetic features, vistas, natural phenomenon and features of historic significance and the provision of public access to such features will contribute to a greater understanding of and pride in the community and, therefore, contribute to community growth.

### ***7. Beautify The Community***

The extent to which a community is seen by its residents as being visually pleasing is directly related to the potential for creating community identity, spirit and culture. Therefore, to make a community more beautiful is a worthwhile social objective worthy of tax support.

### **8. Family Oriented Leisure Services**

The family unit is an integral building block of community growth. Opportunities should be provided for families to pursue leisure as a family unit.

### **9. Integrating Generations And Sub Groups**

Community growth can be fostered through increased contact between people of varying age groups within the community. The more contact and interchange between seniors and younger adults and children, the greater the potential for community growth. Therefore, in the provision of leisure services, attempts should be made to provide such contact and interchange between seniors and younger residents with a view toward transmitting cultural heritage across the generations.

Community growth can further be fostered through an integrative mixing of various ethnic groups so that each better understands and appreciates the differences and strengths of the other. Multicultural recreation services can be used as a vehicle in making the community more cohesive.

Community growth can also be fostered by integrating various groups of people with special needs into mainstream programming. Whether individuals have physical, emotional or mental special needs, recreation can be used as a levelling and integrative force.

## **Individual Growth**

### **10. Fitness (Well Being)**

Fitness, in this context, is used broadly as a synonym for wellness, and refers to mental and emotional, as well as physical fitness. The fitness level of every resident of the community should be increased at least to a pre-determined minimum level with opportunities available for progress beyond this point.

### **11. Pre-School Leisure Opportunities**

An opportunity should exist for every pre-school aged child to participate with other children in a variety of leisure experiences, in order to:

- Expose the child to social settings
- Foster gross motor development
- Provide a generally happy and satisfying atmosphere where growth can occur
- Teach basic safety skills and attitudes.

### **12. Basic Leisure Skill Development For School Aged Children**

A wide variety of leisure pursuits in such areas as sport, performing arts, visual arts, outdoor nature oriented skills, and hobbies, should be identified, and basic skill level instruction in each should be provided for school aged children in order to:

- Provide exposure to skills which may form the basis for enjoying lifetime leisure activities
- Contribute to gross motor and fine motor physical development

- Provide social settings in which social, moral and emotional growth can be fostered
- Provide the basis for leisure education (i.e. the teachings of the benefits of and wise use of leisure time).

### ***13. Advanced Leisure Skill Development For School Aged Children***

Opportunities should be provided for those children who wish to further develop their interest and skills in a wide variety of leisure pursuits beyond the basic level.

### ***14. Social Opportunities For Teens***

The maturing from youth to adult which occurs during teenage years is often a critical time in the life of an individual. It is also a time when individual difficulties may result in severe social problems. Hence, opportunities should be provided for teens to:

- Learn about themselves and how they will react to various social settings and pressures
- Develop positive social/emotional/moral skills, principles and convictions
- Develop positive leisure lifestyle patterns which will remain with them through adulthood.

### ***15. Basic Leisure Skill Development For Adults***

Opportunities should be provided in a wide range of leisure endeavours and hobbies for adults who wish to be exposed to such endeavours and learn some basic skills in each.

### ***16. Advanced Leisure Skill Development For Adults***

Opportunities should be provided for those adults who wish to further develop their interests or abilities in a wide variety of leisure pursuits.

### ***17. Opportunities For Seniors***

Opportunities should be provided for senior citizens to participate in the leisure activities of their choice in order to:

- Maintain overall fitness levels
- Maintain social contacts and continue to be involved in social environments
- Provide a continuing sense of worth and meaning of life through continuing personal growth.

### ***18. Interpreting The Environment***

Opportunities should be provided for every local resident to learn about, understand, relate to and experience all aspects of his/her environment.

### ***19. Reflection/Escape***

Often growth can occur through escape, reflection, contact with nature and relaxation in a serene natural environment. Because of this, opportunities should be provided for residents to experience nature.

***20. Leisure Education***

All residents should be generally educated as to the best use of leisure time and the benefits (e.g. growth and fulfillment) that accrue there from.

***21. Communication System***

A communication/information system should be established and maintained whereby all residents are made aware of the availability of access to all leisure opportunities in the community.

# Parameters of Public Sector Leisure Services

Previous sections have defined the outer limits of municipal jurisdiction in the delivery of leisure services. However, within this limit other factors will govern exactly how far a municipality goes in the delivery of these services. The most important practical limitation will be money. Obviously, a community can only provide a level of service that is consistent with its financial limitations. Because funds are typically quite limited, certain priorities have to be established. Each of the following sub-sections addresses one area in which priority decisions will have to be made.

## ***1. Public Sector/Non-Public Sector Relationships***

Up to this point the emphasis has been on drawing the distinction between the public and private sectors and suggests that to the extent the private sector offers services which have no spin-off benefits to non-users of their services (i.e. no greater public good) they can be ignored by the public sector. However, the private sector and, to a greater extent, the quasi-public sector often provide services which contribute to the socially worthwhile goals and objectives defined as the domain of the public sector. In other words, although the underlying incentives of the three sectors may be different, their jurisdictions may overlap. This gives rise to the potential for co-operation and competition. The following policy is suggested.

- The municipality should define criteria for the provision of leisure services that maximize the potential of those services to meet socially worthwhile goals and objectives. Those criteria may include:

QUALITY            perhaps services of a certain quality are required in order for the service to be useful in achieving the goals.

QUANTITY        perhaps a certain quantity of service is required before it is useful in meeting the community's goals.

CONSISTENCY    normally a service, to be developmental, should be offered consistently rather than intermittently.

COST              perhaps a service should be offered at or below certain participant cost thresholds in order to be accessible to all or to specific identified target markets.

- If and to the extent that the private or quasi-public sector can offer the services within the criteria established by the municipality (i.e. in a manner most conducive to achieving its objectives), then the municipality should not compete with them, but should instead simply monitor the situation to ensure its objectives continue to be met without its intervention.

- If the private or quasi-public sector agencies are unable or unwilling to offer the services in a manner required to meet public objectives, the municipality should step in and consider becoming involved in sponsoring the service.
- Once the municipality has decided that public sector intervention is required to meet socially worthwhile goals and objectives it may:
  - Work with and help quasi-public sector and private sector agencies to provide services in a manner which will achieve its objectives where it is most cost effective to do so
  - Directly sponsor the service itself where it is more cost effective to do so.
- In cases where (b) above is necessary, the Municipality should not be concerned about competing with the private or quasi-public sector agencies because:
  - It is justified and, in fact, mandated to achieve its objectives in the most cost effective manner possible, and
  - It competes with those sectors in other cases where it provides a basic public service, and people wanting a higher level of service can seek other means of obtaining it (e.g. police protection, snow clearing, public education).

### ***2. Municipal/Individual Relationships***

Although the municipality shall assume responsibility for sponsoring whatever types of leisure services are required in order to meet its objectives, those leisure experiences engaged in by individuals on their own property or residence shall be considered to be outside of the jurisdiction of municipal leisure services.

This does not mean, however, that courses of instruction in leisure skills which later may be undertaken at home, or leisure resource packages available for home use, cannot be within the jurisdiction of the public sector.

### ***3. Municipal/Senior Government Relationships***

Generally speaking, senior governments offer various types of financial aid programs to municipal governments to assist them in providing publicly sponsored leisure services. Examples include facility grant programs, special project grants and administrative grants. These programs obviously support the objectives of those senior governments and are meant to encourage municipalities to do certain things that the senior governments want them to do. Therefore, there are certain incentives and conditions attached to the programs.

Notwithstanding provincial priorities, Municipal Councils should review each program available from a senior level of government in light of how the program can assist the municipality in achieving its own objectives, and use those programs only in cases where they are helpful in achieving the municipality's objectives (as opposed to automatically adjusting the municipal activities in order to be in line with grant requirements and, run the risk of the adjusted activities not meeting real local needs).

#### ***4. Developmental***

All leisure opportunities must first determine the level at which the individual functions (socially, physically, emotionally), deal with the individual on that level and attempt to develop the whole person to the next highest level. In order to be developmental, programs must:

- Be organized on a long term basis and, therefore, have continuity
- Be organized into levels or systems
- Deal with one or more aspects of growth.

All leisure opportunities under the control of or supported by the local Parks and Recreation Commission should be developmental in nature. As far as is reasonably possible, public leisure services should allow a person to "plug into" the service system at a level appropriate to his/her ability, whether that person is a beginner or an elite athlete or artist, able bodied or disabled. In cases where the cost of accommodating individuals at advanced levels of participation (i.e. elite athletes or artists) becomes onerous, the following policy guidelines are suggested:

- The municipality has a mandate to provide service to all citizens at all skill and ability levels in the system
- The municipality, however, must make decisions on a cost/benefit basis, and therefore, if the cost of serving one advanced participant is many times the cost of serving beginning participants, it will allocate relatively fewer resources to serving the advanced participant
- As an amateur athlete or artist develops skills which are provincial, national or international in calibre, the furtherance of that individual's skill level becomes progressively a provincial and national jurisdiction and as such, assistance from senior levels of government should be sought to offset the municipal cost of serving that individual
- The municipality should not directly subsidize professional athletes or artists simply to provide them with a livelihood, although it may indirectly subsidize them as a by-product of achieving other of its service objectives, such as objectives 1 and 2.

#### ***5. Variety Of Opportunity/Quantity Of Opportunity Relationships***

Residents of a community have a wide variety of leisure interests. If the Parks and Recreation Commission is to use public leisure services as a vehicle to meet its goals it must ensure that as wide a variety of leisure services as possible is available to local residents. In providing leisure services there is often a tradeoff between QUANTITY of service and VARIETY of services. As and when additional resources become available the difficult choice between providing more of what is already available (e.g. building another ice surface, offering another macramé class) and providing something new for those who have interests currently not being accommodated, must be made. Larger interest groups are typically served first. The groups not yet accommodated are, therefore, usually smaller and less vocal. Consequently, pressure often exists to sacrifice variety (i.e. the smaller interest groups not yet served) in favour of quantity (i.e. the large groups already served at least to a certain extent). It is suggested that such pressure be resisted.

Where a choice must be made between providing more service to those already receiving some service, and providing some service to those not yet receiving any, higher priority should be given to the latter.

## **6. *Quality/Quantity Relationships***

Quality is a value-laden term. It is often difficult to measure the quality of a leisure experience and equally difficult to determine how much quality is enough to meet the objectives. When resources are limited, a choice must often be made to either increase the quality of the existing leisure opportunities or generate additional opportunities. Another difficult choice, when resources are limited, sometimes involves offering new leisure experiences of a high quality or offering none at all. Because the two (i.e. quality and quantity) are often conflicting objectives, fostering one sometimes sacrifices the other.

This point is addressed herein because some communities fall into the "numbers game". They become concerned with quantity at any cost by using only numbers of participants in the service evaluation process. Therefore, the following policy guidelines are suggested.

- The municipality should carefully determine a pre-defined minimum quality level for all current and potential services it offers, at a level below which the service is ineffective in achieving municipal goals and objectives.
- The municipality should also carefully pre-define an optimum quality level above which little or no incremental gain in achieving its goals and objectives is realized.
- At all times services should be offered between the base and optimum quality levels according to cost-benefit considerations.
- If the base quality level cannot be financed, the service should not be supported by the public sector.

## **7. *Direct/Indirect Programming Relationships***

Although the municipality should assume responsibility for ensuring that leisure opportunities exist which meet stated objectives, this by no means requires that the Parks and Recreation Commission must organize and sponsor the delivery of all such services. It means instead that the Department should:

- Evaluate which leisure opportunities are available at all times
- Coordinate to the best of its ability the provision of leisure services by other providers of service
- Extend support to other providers of service according to established criteria
- Contribute to the quality of service provided by others groups or agencies where possible and feasible, and finally
- To deliver services itself to fill in the gaps left by other providers of service.

Where a choice is available, the Commission should support another group/organization to offer a service instead of offering the service itself. This indirect programming (i.e. supporting others who provide programs) assumes that **THERE IS SOCIAL VALUE IN PEOPLE DOING THINGS FOR THEMSELVES**. The social value referred to promotes community growth and development. There will, however, continue to be cases where, for reasons of participant cost, consistency, quality and geographic scope, the municipality will offer services directly.

Although the municipality is responsible for ensuring provision of all municipal leisure services, it will respond to this responsibility through a balance of INDIRECT PROGRAMMING (support to other groups to program) and DIRECT PROGRAMMING (authority sponsored programs).

#### ***8. The Total Leisure Experience***

In order to be effective, the local Parks and Recreation Commission must not simply deal with generating leisure opportunities, but for each opportunity must also deal with the entire leisure experience. This may include:

- How a person becomes aware an opportunity exists
- How a person becomes motivated (registers, joins, etc.) to subscribe to an opportunity
- How a person travels to the opportunity
- What limiting/inhibiting factors there are to participation
  - i.e. - transportation
    - cost
    - bad timing
    - child minding service
    - feelings of incompetence or not being welcome
- Why a person quits or continues in a leisure experience
- How a person travels home after a leisure experience
- What kinds of positive or negative results the experience has had on the person (immediately after, a significant time after).

# Mandate

The rationale as outlined does not determine how much money a Municipal Council allocates to the delivery of public leisure services. Instead, it provides a framework within which to make decisions no matter what level of service is supported by Council. The ultimate objective is to make the most effective use of limited available resources by providing services in a rational, consistent, equitable manner that can be clearly justified and defended to all local residents.

If the Municipal Council adopted the rationale as outlined in the previous four sections it would mandate its Parks and Recreation Commission to act on behalf of Council to:

- Operate within the philosophical foundation for the delivery of public leisure services which is outlined in the section titled Philosophy
- Set the two Goals and 21 Objectives which give meaning to and are consistent with the Philosophy and are outlined in the sections titled Goals and Objectives
- Generally shoulder responsibility for achieving the Goals and Objectives in the most cost effective manner possible and within the bounds of limited available resources allocated annually by Municipal Council for this purpose
- Monitor the provision of all leisure opportunities available to community residents and determine which of the 21 Objectives are being met without municipal intervention of any kind
- Where Objectives are not being met by other providers of leisure services in the community, work with and support those agencies where appropriate to ensure leisure services are provided in a manner which best meet the Council's Goals and Objectives
- Where certain leisure services cannot or will not be operated by any other providers of service in a manner which will meet the Council's Goals and Objectives, even with public sector support, then consider sponsoring such services directly, using public resources
- Be concerned at all times with obtaining the greatest amount of benefit (achieve the most objectives to the greatest possible extent) in relation to the cost, and constantly engage in such cost/benefit analysis. In other words, if the Municipality has only a certain amount of money to allocate to a new public leisure service but there are two optional services, A and B, in which to invest that money, both requiring the total amount, then the Municipality should attempt to determine which option, A or B, would result in the greatest achievement of the most Service Objectives and invest the money in that option.

Annually, the Municipal Council would prioritize the 21 Service Objectives and determine the extent to which each is being met. Specific targets would be assigned to each Objective. Resources would then be focused where most needed. At the end of each year an evaluation of resources allocated against the success in meeting the targets would be conducted.

In adopting the above described Mandate, the community realizes a number of advantages:

- The spending of public tax funds on leisure services can be easily justified to the public (on the basis not only of direct benefit to users but also indirect benefit to all)
- The rationale for activity is sufficiently clear that the effectiveness of the Parks and Recreation Commission's activity can be measured. The weakness of most evaluation models is in the setting of rather motherhood, immeasurable goals and objectives which can be inconsistent with each other

- The rationale for fees and charges policies (the degree and type of subsidization) becomes clearer
- Planning for the future allocation/protection of resources becomes possible because a proactive rather than reactive stance is assumed.