

Shared Strategy for Advancing Recreation in Nova Scotia



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Section 1

Introduction

The recreation sector in this province has a rich and successful history of engaging Nova Scotians in high quality and innovative recreational experiences. These experiences, be they physical, social, intellectual, creative or spiritual, contribute to individual wellbeing, vibrant, prosperous and healthy communities, and a closer relationship with the natural world. Individuals and organizations that make up the recreation sector have worked collaboratively across sectors establishing deep roots in communities, establishing a unique set of competencies and developing considerable physical infrastructure.

We are facing significant social and environmental challenges and recreation has proven to play an important role in addressing them. For example, engagement in recreation is helping to reduce obesity, diabetes, anti-social behaviour, social isolation and negative impacts on the environment. As the consequences and costs associated with these challenges increase, so does the value of recreation as a way of mitigating them.

There is also evidence that recreation positively impacts tourism, helps to attract business, enriches neighbourhoods, and encourages environmental protection.

The field has reached a critical point in its evolution. To continue to advance, recreation can and should make a more significant and far reaching contribution to the quality of life.

The dialogue about a progressive future for recreation began with the National Recreation Summit, held in Lake Louise in the fall of 2011. Arising from the Summit was a commitment to develop a national framework for recreation that would include a bolder vision for the sector. Significant efforts to consolidate research, consult with thought leaders and key stakeholders and build consensus resulted in the landmark document *A Framework for Recreation in Canada 2015 – Pathways to Wellbeing*. The framework was endorsed by Provincial and Territorial Ministers responsible for Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation and supported by the Government of Canada in February 2015.

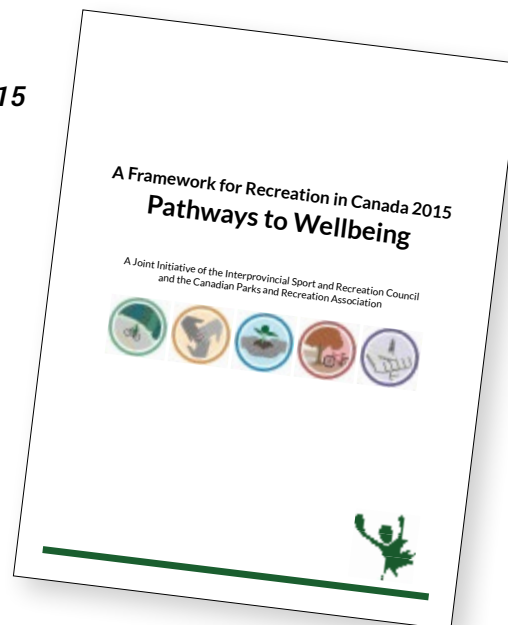
In keeping with this national movement, Recreation Nova Scotia and the Active Living Branch of the Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness partnered to develop a bold strategy for the advancement of recreation across Nova Scotia. Similar efforts are underway in other jurisdictions across the country.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the ideas being developed nationally and in Nova Scotia were very similar. Both were being informed by the same research, best practices and national discussions. The extent of the alignment became clear during a series of consultations with recreation professionals and volunteers held in May 2014 to discuss and provide comment on a draft of the national framework. The feedback on the national framework was overwhelmingly positive and consistent. The document was seen to be highly relevant for Nova Scotia. It effectively articulated the challenges and opportunities facing recreation. It also provided a bold and progressive vision for the future along with a compelling set of goals and priorities. Through the consultations it became clear that there would be many advantages for the recreation sector in Nova Scotia to embrace the core elements of the national framework (definitions, emerging challenges and opportunities for recreation, vision, values and the five strategic goals). It was also clear that it was necessary to develop a provincial strategy that defined how we could contribute meaningfully to the national agenda while pursuing the priorities and directions most relevant here.

Therefore, the recreation sector in Nova Scotia has adopted *A Framework for Recreation in Canada 2015 – Pathways to Wellbeing* as our guiding framework and will focus this strategy on the directions and priorities most relevant to our provincial context.

It is helpful to review the full national framework document. If it is not attached to this document, it can be found on the Leisure Information Network website.

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The purpose of the *Shared Strategy for Advancing Recreation in Nova Scotia* is to clarify a shared vision and set of priorities that reflects the aspirations and the broader potential of the recreation sector in the province. It is also intended to strengthen alignment of plans and policies and facilitate even richer opportunities for collaboration and resource sharing. It is meant to foster innovation, and the development of complementary initiatives. It is also intended to provide a blueprint for how governments, NGO's, community organizations and others might contribute to the recreation system. At the core of this strategy is a way to advance the impacts of recreation in Nova Scotia.

Over the course of a year and through a series of consultations and meetings, the recreation sector in Nova Scotia has reached consensus on the way forward. This document is the result of a truly collaborative process, extensive engagement, thoughtful and strategic discussions, and a commitment to focus on a narrow set of priorities where the greatest impact can be achieved.

Section 2

Key Elements of the Framework for Recreation in Canada

A New Definition of Recreation

In 1974, delegates at the First National Conference of Provincial Recreation Ministers endorsed the following statement: “Recreation is a fundamental human need for citizens of all ages and interests and for both sexes and is essential to the psychological, social and physical wellbeing of man.” Since then recreation’s role in fostering wellbeing has grown to become even more important.

Recreation has previously been defined and measured on the basis of providing quality opportunities. But providing opportunities is, to borrow the economists’ phrase, necessary but no longer sufficient. We must set our sights higher and assess recreation’s contribution on the basis of outcomes.

As a result of this shift to a greater emphasis on outcomes, the national framework has defined recreation as:

The experience that results from freely-chosen participation in physical, social, intellectual, creative and spiritual pursuits that enhance individual and community wellbeing.

While the national framework and this shared strategy have fully embraced this broad definition of recreation, they have also adopted a strong, but not exclusive, focus on physical dimension of recreation because of the important health benefits associated with physical activity.

The Emerging Agenda for Recreation in Canada

A Framework for Recreation in Canada 2015 – Pathways to Wellbeing is the result of a collaborative effort of the provincial and territorial governments (except Quebec), the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association and the Provincial/Territorial Parks and Recreation Associations.

This important framework was developed through a series of national summits and consultations with thought leaders and practitioners from across the sector.

A bold vision for recreation is outlined in the national framework:

A Canada in which everyone is engaged in meaningful, accessible recreation experiences that foster:

Individual wellbeing: Individuals with optimal mental and physical wellbeing, who are engaged and contributing members of their families and communities

Community wellbeing: Communities that are healthy, inclusive, welcoming, resilient and sustainable

The wellbeing of places and spaces: Natural and built environments that are appreciated, nurtured and sustained.

These aspects are very much inter-related as expressed in the following diagram.



Five goals that will help achieve the vision are included in the framework:



Goal 1: Active Living

To foster active, healthy living through recreation.



Goal 2: Inclusion and Access

To increase inclusion and access to recreation for populations that face constraints to participation.



Goal 3: Connecting People and Nature

To help people connect to nature through recreation.



Goal 4: Supportive Environments

To ensure the provision of supportive physical and social environments that encourage participation in recreation and build strong, caring communities.



Goal 5: Recreation Capacity

To ensure the continued growth and sustainability of the recreation field.

The recreation sector in Nova Scotia fully embraces the national framework as our guiding framework. We believe it effectively articulates the challenges and opportunities facing recreation, provides a bold and progressive vision for the future, expresses the values and operating principles we're committed to and outlines a compelling set of goals.

Needless to say, the recreation sector in Nova Scotia requires a set of priorities for action that are specific to this province. The following section details the provincial priorities associated with each of the goals.

Section 3

Nova Scotia Priorities



National Framework Goal 1: Active living Foster active living through physical recreation.

Nova Scotia Priority 1.1

Nova Scotians have the recreation competencies and physical literacy to be active for life.

Active living through recreation is essential to healthy human development and vibrant communities. Developing recreation competencies and physical literacy provide the foundation for participation and play in a wide variety of recreational pursuits during all the stages of a rich and fulfilling life.

Recreation competencies refer to the knowledge, understanding, skills, confidence and motivation to value and engage in recreation throughout the life span.

Areas of Focus

- build common understanding of the role of recreation in promoting the physical literacy needed to be active for life
- promote the education and development of professionals and volunteers within the recreation and other sectors to increase recreation competency and physical literacy with an emphasis on
 - pre-schoolers,
 - children in elementary school, and
 - older adults
- educate and collaborate with our colleagues in other sectors, including public health and social services to promote active living as a key component of individual and community wellbeing
- work with communities and partners to advance recreation competencies and physical literacy

Nova Scotia Priority 1.2

Children and their families are physically active every day, playing in a variety of settings with an emphasis on engaging in the outdoors.

Shifts in the way children are spending their time have been shown to have negative impacts on their health and wellbeing. Children's lives are more planned, media-focused and sedentary. They are less engaged in unstructured play—particularly to play outdoors. The value that families place on recreation and their engagement in it has significant influence on the incorporation of recreation—and its benefits—in children's lives.

Areas of Focus

- support the interest and capabilities of early childhood education professionals and teachers to promote and lead quality physical activities and outdoor play
- provide easily accessible and navigable resources that
 - promote the value/benefits of family recreation,
 - outline safety considerations and management strategies
 - help families engage in physical activity and play
- support the provision of experiences for families that introduce them to recreation
- promote the availability of a variety of outdoor play options in neighbourhoods
- support recreation leaders to reduce sedentary behaviours through increased awareness and proven approaches

Nova Scotia Priority 1.3

Older adults are regularly engaged in recreation.

The average age of the population is increasing. Participation in physically active recreation during the “pre” and “early” senior years (age 45–65) increases the likelihood this population group will continue being physically active as they age. Engaging older adults in active and passive forms of recreation can also promote mental health and address issues such as social isolation.

Areas of Focus

- promote and facilitate the participation of adults 45–65 years of age and older in any form of recreation that may prepare them to be more physically active as they age
- support those involved in the provision of services to older adults to promote, provide and lead active and passive forms of recreation
- provide easily-accessible, user-friendly resources that enable individuals to connect with others who share their recreation interests, find appropriate programs or plan self-directed activities



National Framework Goal 2: Inclusion and access

Increase inclusion and access to recreation for populations that face constraints to participation.

Nova Scotia Priority 2.1

Constraints to participation in recreation experiences for all children and youth are eliminated.

Access to public education and health care are considered basic rights of all children. Recreation supports these rights as an essential element of the healthy development of children. Therefore, constraint-free access to recreational activities should be considered. Financial, transportation, cultural, physical, and psychological are some, but not all of the constraints and barriers that need to be addressed.

Areas of Focus

- collaborate with colleagues in other sectors to develop and implement strategies and policies, which ensure that all children fully participate in recreation opportunities without financial, geographic or cultural barriers
- prepare and support recreation practitioners to engage marginalized children and youth
- support the provision of sustainable and quality recreation infrastructure and opportunities in communities
- facilitate access to recreation equipment

Nova Scotia Priority 2.2:

Participation in recreation by Nova Scotians facing disparities is significantly expanded.

Diverse populations include individuals with visible differences such as sex, gender, age, and some abilities. Other differences may be invisible, such as sexual orientation, education, religious beliefs, socioeconomic status and mental health concerns that affect wellbeing.

For recreation to play a meaningful role in community wellbeing, the sector must become more focused on serving those segments of the population that are most in need, strengthening inclusion, celebrating diversity, and striving to incorporate the needs and viewpoints of diverse communities into all aspects of recreation services and programs.

Areas of Focus

- collaboratively develop and implement recreation policies and opportunities which are explicitly inclusive, respectful and relevant for diverse population groups
- strengthen inclusion competencies and practices within the recreation sector, including increasing the diversity of recreation professionals and volunteers
- develop and implement strategies and policies that support full participation of persons with disabilities in recreation experiences

Nova Scotia Priority 2.3

Equitable participation by all women and girls.

Research clearly shows that rates of participation of females in many aspects of recreation are lower than those of males. Opportunities that are tailored for women and girls are essential to improve the situation.

Areas of Focus

- develop and implement participation opportunities designed and led by women and girls
- increase the number of females in leadership roles
- build organizational capacity to increase opportunities for women and girls



National Framework Goal 3: Connecting people and nature

Help people connect to nature through recreation.

Nova Scotia Priority 3.1

The number of Nova Scotians enjoying recreation outdoors is significantly increased.

People have an inherent need to connect with the natural world. It is associated with improved mental, and physical health, as well as improved ability to think, learn and remember. It is also known to enhance creativity and positive social behaviours. As a result, community designs are increasingly incorporating opportunities for exposure to natural environments.

Areas of Focus

- create public awareness and education programs to increase awareness of nature's importance for healthy human development and families and vibrant communities
- promote and support a provincial information portal that provides guidance regarding where and how to pursue recreation outdoors.
- strengthen outdoor leadership to provide safe and appealing outdoor experiences
- provide a broad range of programs that develop skills and confidence to pursue recreation in natural settings
- improve access to our natural spaces through the acquisition of natural areas, policy development, and other means
- improve access to outdoor recreation equipment
- monitor and address liability/insurance constraints

Nova Scotia Priority 3.2

Recreation policies and practices minimize negative impacts on the natural environment.

Because nature-based recreation can have a negative impact on the natural environment, the recreation sector has a role to play in promoting and taking action to ensure stewardship of natural spaces.

Areas of Focus

- incorporate program elements that encourage responsible use and protection of natural settings
- ensure that recreation policies and practices leave as small an environmental footprint as possible



National Framework Goal 4: Supportive environments

Ensure the provision of supportive physical and social environments that encourage participation in recreation and help to build strong, caring communities.

Nova Scotia Priority 4.1

Built and natural environments inspire and support recreation in communities.

Supportive physical environments help people adopt healthy, active lifestyles by making “the healthy choices the easy choices.” Environments for recreation encompass many settings, including sports fields, recreational waters, trails, parks, and community centres.

Areas of Focus

- provide standardized assessment tools and indices that enable communities to assess the extent to which their public places and spaces support the contribution recreation makes to community wellbeing
- promote the incorporation and preservation of quality built environments, green space, natural settings, trails, recreational waters into community priorities, plans and policies
- encourage and support communities to plan, develop and maintain active transportation routes that safely and easily connect people to the places they want to go

Nova Scotia Priority 4.2

Social environments encourage participation in recreation and build strong, caring communities.

Supportive social environments, where we take care of each other, our communities and our natural environment, are at the core of what it means to be a healthy and vibrant community. For many people, social engagement is at the core of what makes recreation enjoyable.

Areas of Focus

- develop a shared understanding of community wellbeing and how recreation contributes to enjoyment, quality of life and the public good
- strengthen partnerships and collaborative processes with schools, distinct cultural communities, social service groups, the arts community, law enforcement, transportation and urban planners, community organizations and the private sector to create social environments that encourage participation in recreation



National Framework Goal 5: Recreation capacity

Ensure the continued growth and sustainability of the recreation field.

Nova Scotia Priority 5.1

Professionals and volunteers excel as leaders in the sector.

The recreation sector is constantly evolving. Ongoing development of new competencies and leadership capabilities is critical to the growth and sustainability of the field.

Areas of Focus

- define the core competencies and best practices associated with excellent recreation practitioners
- encourage and support post-secondary institutions to develop curricula that remain relevant to the evolving needs of the sector
- provide and promote high quality, relevant and accessible opportunities for all professionals and volunteers to acquire and continuously expand their competencies
- update and revitalize strategies to strengthen volunteer recruitment and development

Nova Scotia Priority 5.2

Recreation is contributing in substantive ways to the public good and is therefore recognized as essential for healthy, vibrant communities.

The public good refers to the benefit or well-being of Nova Scotians. While recreation has always contributed to the public good, programming and resources have been focused on, and therefore primarily benefit, the segment of the population that has chosen to participate. The power and potential of recreation must be extended for the benefit of all Nova Scotians.

Areas of Focus

- expand awareness of the contributions recreation is making to address pressing societal and environmental issues and promote the power and potential of recreation to play a lead role in the pursuit of the public good
- proactively position recreation as a recognizable element of all health, social, environmental and economic strategies and initiatives

Nova Scotia Priority 5.3

Strengthened alignment of priorities, collaborations and sharing of resources within recreation and across other public, not-for-profit and private sectors.

The recreation sector in Nova Scotia has always practiced and benefited from extensive collaboration and partnership. Taking recreation to the next level will require an even greater alignment of priorities, collective efforts, sharing of resources and deeper partnerships within the sector as well as with other sectors whose objectives intersect with our own.

Areas of Focus

- increase the alignment of priorities, sharing of resources and partnerships within the recreation sector and amongst other sectors
- strengthen alignment of recreation strategies, policies and practices with other public, not-for-profit and private sector organizations

Nova Scotia Priority 5.4

Improved access to quality information that supports evidence-based planning and decision making.

It is essential that recreation professionals have access to current, relevant data that informs their work but it is hard to sift through the volume of information available.

Areas of Focus

- promote and facilitate use of existing repositories of information and resources
- collect, interpret, and make locally-relevant information available to practitioners in an efficient and user-friendly way
- invest in strategic research that will inform strategic development of the field

Section 4

Summary of the Strategy for Advancing Recreation in Nova Scotia

Situation Analysis

Issues where recreation is able to make a unique and important contribution

- 1 demographic changes
- 2 urbanization and threats to the natural environment
- 3 challenges to health
- 4 increasing inequities
- 5 social challenges
- 6 infrastructure deficit

Vision

Everyone engaged in recreation experiences that foster:

- individual wellbeing
- community wellbeing
- the wellbeing of places and spaces in built and natural environments.

Values & Operating Principles

- 1 inclusion and equity
- 2 public good
- 3 sustainability
- 4 lifelong participation
- 5 outcome-driven
- 6 quality and relevance
- 7 evidence-based
- 8 partnership & collaboration

Goal 1: Active living

Foster active living through physical recreation.

Goal 2: Inclusion and access

Increase inclusion and access to recreation for populations that face constraints to participation.

Goal 3: Connecting people and nature

Help people connect to nature through recreation.

Goal 4: Supportive environments

Ensure the provision of supportive physical and social environments that encourage participation in recreation and help to build strong, caring communities.

Goal 5: Recreation capacity

Ensure the continued growth and sustainability of the recreation field.

Section 5

Moving Forward

Successful implementation of this strategy will depend on:

- the plans and activities of Nova Scotia's recreation organizations being strongly aligned with this strategy
- the development of tools and resources to achieve the strategy's goals
- other sectors adopting or aligning goals and objectives from this strategy
- Nova Scotia contributing to and benefitting from work being done to advance *A Framework for Recreation in Canada 2015 – Pathways to Wellbeing*.

Successful implementation of this strategy will be supported by:

- A Alignment of roles within Recreation Nova Scotia and the Active Living Branch of Health and Wellness.
- B Initiation of action to build momentum and demonstrate commitment:
 - organizations ready to align themselves with the strategy will be encouraged and supported to proceed and communicate results
 - the two lead partners, Recreation Nova Scotia and the Active Living Branch of Health and Wellness, will develop and communicate an implementation plan by spring of 2016.
- C Establishment of a team to provide leadership and coordination of support for the implementation of the strategy, including:
 - facilitating collaboration: help to share ideas, encourage and assist in joint/coordinated projects, share resources, increase capacity for thinking and working more strategically and collaboratively
 - developing resources: champions, information, profiles of success stories, materials to help with presentation/communication of the strategy and soliciting support of decision makers, tools to assist with incorporation of elements from the strategy into local recreation plans and activities

- convening a “summit” in conjunction with the RNS annual conference beginning in the Fall of 2016. The purpose is to profile progress, build capacity, work on specific topics and prepare next steps - other gatherings could be organized as required
- forming and supporting provincial working groups to advance specific elements of the strategy
- monitoring and communicating progress.

Section 6

Appendices

Appendix I Summary of Steps Taken to Develop the Shared Strategy

- 1 Original commitment to develop a provincial recreation strategy made in June 2005 by then Minister Rodney MacDonald to Recreation Nova Scotia Board of Directors. After a series of delays successive governments have re-confirmed a commitment to the development of a provincial recreation policy
- 2 *First National Recreation Summit* (2011) – commitment to a national framework for recreation
- 3 Task Team formed to develop a provincial framework as a partnership between Recreation Nova Scotia and Active Living Branch Health and Wellness (2013)
- 4 Review of documents and consultation with “thought leaders” to gather relevant background and insights (fall 2013)
- 5 Consideration of a number of related policies and strategies
 - Thrive! (2011)
 - Active Canada 20/20 (2012)
 - Canadian Sport Policy (2012)
 - Connecting Canadians to Nature (2014)
- 6 Task Team develops first draft of shared strategy (winter 2014)
- 7 Consultations with professionals and volunteers across province to solicit feedback on the Framework for Recreation in Canada (spring 2014)
- 8 Held 10 regional consultations (142 attending sessions; 83 completing on-line survey; 70% represent municipal recreation staff, elected officials, community volunteers; range of sectors represented). Also consulted board of the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities. (spring 2014)
- 9 Decision to integrate the national and provincial frameworks into a single document for Nova Scotia (summer 2014)
- 10 Workshop with experts to further develop provincial priorities (Fall 2014)

- 11 Presentation of a completed draft shared strategy to recreation professionals and volunteers at the Recreation Nova Scotia Conference and board of the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities (Fall 2014)
- 12 Second National Recreation Summit (November 2014)
- 13 Finalize Shared Strategy for Advancing Recreation in Nova Scotia (Spring 2015)
- 14 Framework for Recreation in Canada endorsed by federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for sport, physical activity and in February 2015
- 15 Shared Strategy to Advance Recreation in Nova Scotia endorsed by Minister of Health and Wellness, board of Recreation Nova Scotia, and board of the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities

Appendix II

Documents Reviewed in the Development of the Strategy

- 1 A Framework for Recreation in Canada 2015 – Pathways to Wellbeing – Canadian Parks and Recreation Association, 2015
- 2 1987 National Recreation Statement
- 3 National Recreation Summit – Synopsis – December 2011
- 4 Towards a National Recreation Agenda – One Year Later– slide deck
- 5 Towards a National Recreation Agenda - Discussion document March 28, 2013
- 6 Towards a National Agenda for Recreation – The Nova Scotia Response – author Brenda Robertson – May 2013
- 7 National Recreation Agenda Provincial/Territorial consultations summary report – Canadian Parks and Recreation Association May 2013
- 8 Report on the National Recreation Roundtable in Fredericton, New Brunswick – prepared by Don Lenihan, June 2013
- 9 Canadian Sport Policy 2012
- 10 Stonehame Summit – Highland Region-notes and proceedings – February 2012
- 11 Key Questions that Rose from the Recreation Rising Summit – slide deck presentation by Brenda Robertson – January 31, 2013
- 12 Link to Recreation Rising notes and proceedings
- 13 Examining Municipal Recreation study - November 2012
- 14 The Core and The Edges of Recreation – A Call to Action – February 2011
- 15 The Power and the Potential – April 2008
- 16 Saskatchewan Recreation Sector Policy Final Report – November 2012
- 17 Provincial Recreation Policy – Overview Updated by M. Chauvin, H. Praught, R. Gilbert - September 18, 2013
- 18 Recreation Nova Scotia Strategic Framework
- 19 Active Living Branch of Department of Health and Wellness Strategic Plan
- 20 Active Canada 20/20 – May 2012
- 21 Connecting Canadians with Nature – 2014