March 25, 2008
TO THE ATTENTION OF: Mayors and Municipal Councils

RE: A Call For Action - Recreation, Parks and Sport Infrastructure Funding

In response to our municipal members and stakeholders concerns around aging infrastructure, Parks and Recreation Ontario (PRO) is actively involved with the McGuinty Government to leverage additional funding to address the reported parks, recreation, and sport infrastructure gap that is creating significant financial pressures on municipalities across the province.

Parks and Recreation Ontario (PRO) has released a report entitled Investing in Healthy and Active Ontarians through Recreation and Parks Infrastructure (enclosed), which identifies that in 2006 Ontario municipalities reported a $5 Billion dollar infrastructure deficit in Arenas, Community Centres, and Swimming Pools alone. More importantly the report provides compelling data and recommendations that support an increased investment in parks, recreation, and sport infrastructure to address the growing problem of inactivity and obesity among Ontarians.

During the 2008 pre-budget consultations with the Honourable Dwight Duncan, Minister of Finance, PRO advocated for dedicated funding for recreation, parks and sport infrastructure, requesting $400 million per year for the next five years (attached). You should know that in response to PRO’s presentation, Minister Duncan stated that the government had not received a strong indication from local government that community sport, recreation and parks infrastructure funding is a priority. The attached report suggests otherwise.

Parks and Recreation Ontario understands' that municipalities face infrastructure challenges in all asset categories. It is not our intent to suggest that one particular asset is more important than another. Our request for action is for municipalities to send a clear message to the Province that sport and recreation infrastructure is indeed an important part of the overall infrastructure envelope.

In light of recent announcements from the McGuinty Government regarding infrastructure funding - including the MIII, and a proposed new Bill to direct future surpluses to Municipal Infrastructure, it is important that the Province understands the full scope of the municipal infrastructure challenge. As such, we invite you to join other municipalities across the province to send a message that ensures that your community’s sport and recreation infrastructure is effectively accounted for and eligible for future funding priorities.

We encourage you to read the report and consider how your community could benefit from improved recreation and parks infrastructure. Mayors and Council are the most influential leaders to send a clear message to the McGuinty Government and more specifically to the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Dwight Duncan, and Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, the Honourable David Caplan, that annual funding for recreation and parks infrastructure is a priority for citizens in your community.

To assist you in this regard, please find enclosed summary data, as well as a list of key officials that your Council resolutions could be distributed to. We thank you in advance for your efforts in building a more active and vibrant community.

Sincerely,

Frank Prospero,  
President, Parks and Recreation Ontario

Terry Alyman,  
Chair, Infrastructure Task Group
Additional Information on Sport, Recreation and Parks Infrastructure

- Ontarians need to become more physically active in order to counteract the “obesity epidemic.”

- Ontarians need access to quality recreation facilities in order to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

- Ontario’s sport, recreation and parks infrastructure is in a state of physical decline. The vast majority of publicly owned recreation facilities were built between 1956 and 1980, and are nearing the end of their useful life.

- A total of 424 major facilities in 255 different municipalities are at or beyond their useful life and likely candidates for imminent capital rehabilitation with an estimated price tag of $5 billion.

- PRO recognizes that municipalities are faced with many infrastructure challenges and difficult decisions must be made. We also recognize that programs such as the recent Municipal Infrastructure Investment Initiative (MI3) do not meet the needs of municipalities because the funding is not ongoing, the deadlines are very short, and the criteria for construction-ready projects can be problematic from an overall timing perspective.

- As a leader in your municipality, PRO knows that you share our concern over the current state of sport, recreation and parks infrastructure and understand the value that high quality assets bring to your community. We know this because 70% of municipalities, representing 90% of the population in the province, responded to our research.

- Given the addition of parks and recreation as a service area identified for measurement within the Provincial MPMP program, it is recognized that spending in this area within Ontario municipalities is one of the largest areas of spending within municipal budgets. This fact reinforces the need to ensure that sport, recreation and parks infrastructure are considered along with all other pressing municipal infrastructure needs such as roads, transit, schools and hospitals.
# Key Contact Information

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Provincial Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review

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