



Advancing Access to Affordable Recreation in Durham

December 2013

The Advancing Access to Affordable Recreation in Durham Committee wishes to extend its appreciation to the Trillium Foundation and the Region of Durham for providing funding and support in order to complete research and develop recommendations on this worthwhile initiative. Thanks are also extended to our local partners and stakeholders.

Our Partners

Abilities Centre
Boys and Girls Club of Durham
Brock Community Health Centre
Brock Physical Activity Network
Canadian Tire Jumpstart
City of Oshawa
City of Pickering
Municipality of Clarington
Community Development Council Durham
Durham District School Board
Girls Inc. Durham
Grandview Children's Centre
Region of Durham - Social Services
Region of Durham - Health Department
Their Opportunity
Town of Ajax
Town of Whitby
Township of Scugog
Township of Uxbridge
Tucker-Reid & Associates
YMCA - Oshawa

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Section One: What Exists - Current State Of Affordable Access To Recreation In Durham Region

1.0 Introduction

Recreation opportunities in Durham Region are provided by the municipalities, not for profit sector and the private sector. The Region of Durham does not have direct responsibility for the provision of recreation services but provides funding to assist with recreation and sport opportunities for persons from low income backgrounds. There is broad range of recreational and sport opportunities within Durham and great efforts are made to ensure that barriers are removed to achieve affordable access. Both levels of government as well as non-profit and private sectors support full access due to the benefits that participation in recreational pursuits brings to both the individual and communities alike.

The 2006 Canada Census data indicates that 27% or 146,000 residents in Durham live at or below the Low Income Measure. Reports from the local municipalities and not for profit agencies that provide recreational opportunities have shown that a small percentage of residents from low income backgrounds are actively engaged in recreational pursuits due to the barriers that they experience (knowledge of opportunities, costs, transportation, equipment etc.) A collective of these regional agencies and recreational departments have engaged in research and a planning exercise to determine how many low income residents are engaged in recreational pursuits, what barriers they are experiencing, what initiatives could reduce these barriers and strategies to increase participation by these residents.

1.1 Study Process

The process to date has included:

- A report was presented to the Region of Durham Council in November of 2011 on the status of access to affordable recreation by low income residents in the region. The Region of Durham directed regional staff to assist recreation agencies and departments to develop a workshop and a planning meeting to discuss the current state, issues involved with affordable access to recreation and a request to report back on the findings.
- Two surveys were sent to municipal recreation departments and agencies providing recreational opportunities to determine the number of residents that are participating, barriers that clients are experiencing, and any current policies that are in place to reduce barriers to participation.
- Focus groups were held with residents from low income backgrounds to determine what was helpful in getting them involved in recreational experiences and further the barriers that they were experiencing as well as any recommendations for greater access that they might suggest.

- A facilitated workshop was conducted in June of 2012, funded through a Trillium grant that included representatives from all related and allied agencies to lend their expertise to discussing the issue of affordable access to recreation. Representatives from the school board, public health, social services, recreation departments, the Y, non-profit agencies, municipal recreation practitioners and academics participated in this workshop. The workshop served to share recent research, best practises and discuss the strengths and challenges within the current delivery system in increasing affordable access.
- One of the positive results of the workshop on advancing affordable access to recreation was the formation of a region wide committee of recreation, health and social service practitioners to further the work of increasing the number of Durham residents who are able to access recreational pursuits. The Committee is called Advancing Access to Affordable to Recreation in Durham (AAARD).
- Surveys were conducted with low income residents to ensure that the objectives of the AAARD Committee were supported by low income residents.

1.2 Report Organization

The summary report on the status of access to affordable recreation for low income residents will set about to provide a summary of what exists currently to support access and what could exist in the future to strengthen access.

The first section will provide background information, define the issue and a look to what is provided in other jurisdictions.

- A description of the study to better understand the number of residents from low income backgrounds and the numbers that are participating in recreational programs in Durham
- A summary of relevant demographics and socio-economics in Durham Region
- A description of what municipal and non-profit providers of recreation have in place to decrease barriers to participation
- A description of the barriers that low income residents are facing
- An understanding of the policies that exist to remove barriers to participation
- A summary of the research that supports investing in recreation for residents from low income backgrounds
- A summary of best practices that are in place in other jurisdictions

The second section speaks to what can be done collectively to advance affordable access and concludes with some go forward recommendations.

- An analysis (strengths, challenges and opportunities) with respect to affordable access to recreation in Durham
- A vision for the future access and guiding principles

- Suggested standardized provision targets for access
- A charter to advance affordable access to recreation in Durham for all allied parties to sign
- A framework to advance affordable recreation
- A summary of recommendations and next steps

1.3 Critical Research – Making the Case for Affordable Access to Recreation

At the June 2012 workshop, Dr. Gina Browne, who is the Founder and Director of the Health and Social Services Utilization Research at McMaster University, gave an overview of her research with respect to interventions for persons and families receiving social assistance. Essentially Dr. Browne’s research included providing supports (counselling, medical interventions and recreational pursuits) to families. Her systems–linked research is captured in a document entitled “When the Bough Breaks” which concludes that there is a business case to be made for investing in recreation and other interventions (social, health and recreational supports) in order to reduce the number of clients receiving Ontario Works.

Dr. Gina Brown’s prominent research found the following statistics regarding social assistance clients across Ontario:

- 50% are sole support parents
- 45% of sole support parents are depressed
- 60.4% have 2 or more mental health problems
- 33.3% of children have behavior disorders
- 29.3% live with pain which limits activities
- 38.8% have 2 or 3 health problems
- 61.0% have children over 7 years



Dr. Browne’s research demonstrated that there a positive cost/benefit effect by subsidizing recreation services pays for itself from an overall social services perspective as the provision of recreational services results in a significant reduction of other services such as specialists, Children’s Aid Services, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, psychologists, social workers, probation officers, chiropractors and emergency services required by families on social assistance. Beyond the economic advantages, regular participation in recreation services benefits children by increasing their academic, social and interpersonal competence and benefits parents by decreasing their nervousness, anxiety, sleep problems and use of food banks.

1.4 Demographics and Socio-Economics in Durham

Recent data from the 2011 Census, released by Statistics Canada in early 2012, indicates that the population in the Region of Durham continues to grow at steady rate.

Between 2006 and 2011 the population of Durham increased by 8.4% to 608,124; since 2001 the population in Durham has increased by 101,223 or 20%; in the 20 year period between 1991 and 2011 the population in Durham has increased by nearly 50%.

Below is a breakdown of the 2011 demographics of Durham pertinent to the affordable access to recreation issue:

- In 2011, there were 113,030 children under 15 years in Durham, there were an additional 47,025 youth between the ages of 15 and 19 years in Durham in 2011; children and youth represent 26% of the population.
- In 2011, there were 87,810 couple families (married and common-law) with children in Durham; of these families 35.7% had one child, 45.4% had 2 children, and 18.9% had 3 or more children.
- In 2011, there were 30,830 lone-parent families in Durham, of which 79.5% were lone-female parent families. Of these lone female parents, 55.1% had 1 child, 32.2% had 2 children, and 12.6% had 3 or more children.

Based on the 2006 Census Data, in Durham, 149,315 individuals (26.6% of the population) reported income below the Low Income Measure. The Low Income Measure (LIM) was set as the official measure of poverty in Ontario in the 2009 Poverty Reduction Act. Of these individuals 63.4% (or 94,750 individuals) were women.

- 18.6% of lone female parent families in Durham live in poverty (LIM), compared to 5.7% of couple families
- 25% of recent immigrants in Durham live in poverty (LIM)
- 15% of children in Durham live in poverty (LIM)
- As of December 2012, there were total of 21,445 individuals in Durham receiving Ontario Works (OW) and 22,500 on the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). The Ontario Works Caseload has almost doubled in the past five years.
- The February 2013 unemployment rate for the Oshawa CMA is 9.6%.

The information on residents living on lower incomes in Durham Region serves to develop the case to increase the call to action to include these residents in gaining access to recreational pursuits.

1.5 How Service Providers are Reducing Barriers to Access to Affordable Recreation

The role of local non-profit organizations in the promotion and delivery of affordable recreation programming in Durham - Prepared by: B. Earle, CDCD

In assessing local infrastructure that supports access to affordable recreation, we need to consider the role of local not-for-profit organizations. These organizations provide a variety of programs and services that provide affordable sport and recreation options for all members of our community. This section provides a snapshot of these services in Durham, identifying local assets as well as the gaps that exist in local programming.

There are several local not-for-profit organizations (see Table 1 for examples) that provide sports and recreation programming to the community. Each of these organizations have various programs that promote affordable access to recreation for children, youth, adults and seniors. These organizations are generally taking a mixed approach, providing both free programming as well as subsidy or fee-reduction programs for members of the community who demonstrate financial need. They also work closely with existing programs, such as Canadian Tire Jumpstart, to promote affordable access to all those who wish to participate in their programs and services. Affordable recreation is also promoted by local sports clubs and leagues. Although a comprehensive survey of these organizations and their approach to affordable access is difficult, many do provide or support financial aid programs for their participants. Further, many local sports leagues promote and support equipment exchange programs, helping parents to access affordable options for their children's equipment.

Finally, the local faith community promotes multiple youth, adult and seniors recreation programs, ranging from sports leagues and tournaments, to camps, and other recreation programs. These programs are often organized within a single faith institution or between a few partnering institutions, and provide free or low-cost recreation options for members of the community.

In dialogue with local non-profit organizations, it was identified that a comprehensive and coordinated affordable access strategy should include programming offered by local community organizations. Often these organizations have developed detailed and goal oriented programming and have many years of experience in the delivery of accessible programming for local residents. However, they often struggle to resource these programs and therefore their ability to promote affordable access is reduced.

The following chart shows select local non-profit organizations that provide recreation programs and their subsidy programs.

Organization	Organization Description	Promoting Affordable Access
Abilities Centre	Abilities Centre is a charitable organization that delivers enriching sports, arts, music, and life skills opportunities for all ages and abilities within a 125,000 square foot, state-of-the-art facility.	The Abilities Centre has a Membership Assistance Program for those who demonstrate a financial need. The program assesses individuals on a per-case basis through an application process.
Boys and Girls Club of Durham	The Boys and Girls Club of Durham provides safe and accessible programming for children and youth in the community. In addition to providing recreation programming, the Boys and Girls Club offers various workshops, clinics and programs focusing on issues that are present concerns of children and youth in our community.	The Boys and Girls Club offers many programs that are free of charge, promoting access for low-income children and youth in the community. The organization will also consider waiving membership fees on a case-by-case basis based on family need.
Girls Inc.	Girls Inc. inspires all girls to be strong, smart, and bold through life-changing programs and experiences that help girls navigate gender, economic, and social barriers.	Girls Inc. maintains an application based subsidy program. Depending on need, the organization will waive part or all of a program fee to promote access. The organization will work with other subsidy programs to reduce fees for eligible participants.
Grandview Children's Centre	Grandview Children's Centre is a fully accredited Children's Treatment Centre. Grandview provides a range of specialized paediatric habilitation and rehabilitation services and supports for children and youth living in Durham Region who have special needs.	Therapeutic Recreation programs are offered for children and youth living in Durham Region with special needs. Programs are offered at a nominal cost due to support from the Grandview Children's Foundation and government grants.

Organization	Organization Description	Promoting Affordable Access
YMCA Greater Toronto	The YMCA focuses on programming that promotes community support and development. YMCA health, fitness and recreation programs helps all members of the community to live active, meaningful lives.	The YMCA provides a combination of free programming and subsidized fee programs to support affordable access to their programs and services. Subsidy programs are available based on financial need.

1.6 Municipal, Canadian Tire Jumpstart (CTJS) and Region of Durham Affordable Access Programs and Results

The municipalities within Durham have worked collectively with the Region of Durham and Canadian Tire Jumpstart to coordinate affordable access to recreation and sport.

1.6.1 Regional Programs

The Region of Durham provides subsidy to low income residents through their Social Services Certificate Program and their Day Care Fee Assistance Program. Municipalities are provided funds from the Social Services Department to offset the costs of providing recreation opportunities to Ontario Works clients. Some municipalities also have a Day Care Fee Assistance Program agreement where the Region provides funding for children to attend municipal camp programs through subsidized child care funds.

In 2012, 613 children across Durham Region for a value of \$110,200 (funding rounded to 100) received funding for recreation programs through the Region of Durham’s Social Services Certificate Program.

1.6.2 Municipal Programs

Many Durham municipalities have a municipal subsidization policy to provide funding to low income residents to access recreation programs.

In 2012, 1,608 individuals across Durham were able to access recreation programs as a result of municipal subsidization programs. This equated to a value of \$211,200 in subsidized programs.

1.6.3 Canadian Tire Jumpstart

The Canadian Tire Jumpstart program subsidizes the cost of recreation programs for children 4 to 18 years of age. Canadian Tire Jumpstart allocates their total budget to “Chapters” across the country. In each municipality, a Chapter Member is established to ensure the funds are distributed effectively to children residing in their municipality.

Each municipality is given an allotted amount of funds to use for municipal and local recreation and sports for qualifying children. In some municipalities, the Municipal Recreation Department serves as the Chapter Member to approve and request funds for the community at large. In other municipalities, not for profit organizations serve as the Chapter Member and fulfill this role.

In 2012, Canadian Tire Jumpstart provided funds to 1,371 children who live in the Durham Region for a total value of \$172,600.

The municipalities have access policies in place or seek out local funders that can assist with fees or equipment. Canadian Tire Jumpstart provides funding for residents from low income backgrounds in order for them to participate in recreation or sport opportunities. The Region of Durham does not provide any direct programming but provides funding in order for agencies and municipalities to offer programs and camps. This approach has worked effectively and recent discussions by all of the parties is beginning to target programs and funding where they are most critically needed.

1.6.4 Number of Participants with Lower Incomes Funded Through Municipalities, CTJS and the Region of Durham – 2011 and 2012

This table demonstrates that efforts to reduce barriers and increase funding to ensure greater access to affordable recreation has proven a successful tactic. Each organization has increased the number of residents that can now participate with an overall increase from 2011 to 2012 of 19%.

Recipients (all ages)	2011	2012	Percentage Increase
Municipal Funding	1158	1608	38%
Canadian Tire Jumpstart	1330	1371	3%
Region Of Durham	649	767	18%
Total	3137	3746	19%

1.7 Barriers and Gaps

Barriers faced by low income residents were investigated through research and consultation conducted at the provincial and national level over the past several years. In a recent consultation with local Durham Region clients and service providers, similar barriers were identified. The five main barriers identified by low income clients and recreation providers include programs, facilities, affordability, capacity and accountability.

1.7.1 Program Knowledge

There is a lack of awareness of the programs and services available to low income residents and especially how to access programs at a reduced and affordable rate. There may be a lack of parental distrust of gaining access for their children and there is a perceived lack of structured, culturally sensitive and accessible programs.

1.7.2 Facilities

Transportation provides another barrier to low income residents as taking public transit add costs and time to attend a program. There is a perceived lack of places for informal and structured programs.

1.7.3 Affordability

The cost of programs prohibits low income residents from trying to register while equipment and transportation costs add to the difficulty. There is also a stigma attached to applying for a subsidy as proof of income is often a requirement.

1.7.4 Capacity

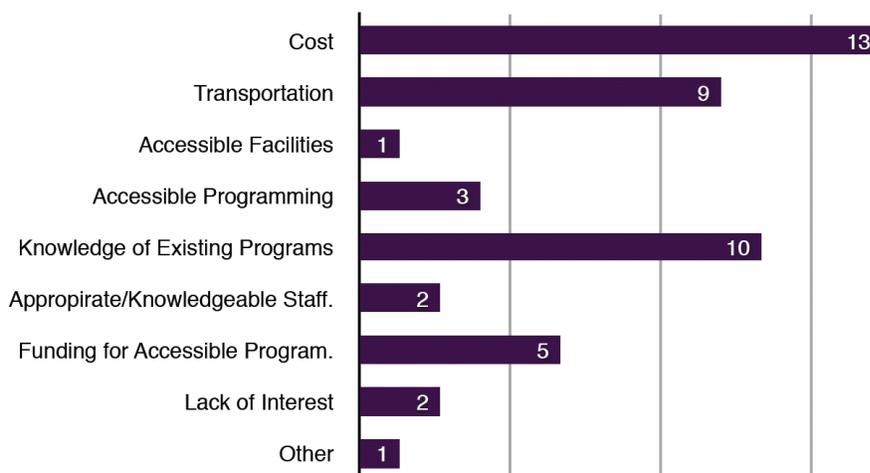
Low income residents feel that they do not have a voice in order to change access policies and address affordability issues.

1.7.5 Accountability

There is no central coordinating body where residents can access recreation programs; there are many points of entry which leaves navigating an often complex system a challenge for low income residents.

Source: Adapted from the Every One Plays: Affordable Access to Recreation for Ontarians

AAARD conducted a survey in November 2012 with eight local municipalities as well as six local and not-for profit recreation service providers. One of the questions asked about the primary barriers faced by individuals and families in accessing local recreation programming. The three most common barriers included cost, knowledge of existing programs and transportation. The following chart lists all the identified barriers:



While low income residents were identified as experiencing many of these barriers to accessing recreation programs and services, additional barriers may also be present for newcomers, individuals with special needs, children, youth and seniors.

When Durham Region low income families were asked about the gaps in accessible recreation opportunities through focus groups, they identified the following areas:

- Program and subsidy availability awareness
- Lack of collaboration/connection and similarities in approach across municipalities and with community organizations
- Some areas are well-served by subsidies; others lacking
- Subsidies based on previous year's income, not current year data
- Assistance is needed for equipment costs as well as program access

Recreation service providers identified the following gaps in accessible recreation opportunities for individuals and families through the AAARD survey:

- Lack of awareness about subsidy programs for sport and recreation
- Lack of long term sustainable funding for programs
- Lack of funding for subsidy for non-municipal programming
- Lack of accessible recreation programming overall
- As subsidy programs tend to be municipally managed, there is a lack of equitable access across the Region (Jumpstart helps fill this gap)
- Lack of activities that are of interest to diverse cultural communities

Respondents identified several strategies that could be pursued in Durham to help address the gaps and/or barriers identified above, including:

- A consistent region wide policy/standard/procedure on subsidy programs
- Regional cooperation/leadership in developing a consistent funding formula and providing region wide research and pilot programs
- Expanded funding for subsidy programs
- Program fees for low income residents might be based on income or adjusted on a sliding scale
- Training programs for staff who work in recreation programs to help them better serve clients with disabilities
- Centralized information source for recreation programming
- Cross-promotion between municipalities and organizations offering programming for low income residents

1.8 Client Input

The Community Development Council of Durham (CDCD) conducted a survey in the spring of 2012 seeking low income resident's input regarding subsidized recreation programming. The results of this survey have been included within the barriers, gaps and promising practices sections of this report.

Overall, the feedback from the clients was to continue what is working well and strive to eliminate barriers to access, improve awareness of what exists and how to access and enhance collaboration across municipalities and sectors.

Some of the specific recommendations included:

- The provision of transportation subsidies
- A link to recreation programs on the Immigration Portal
- Changes to application forms – simplify
- Raise awareness of what already exists by improving promotion and outreach efforts
- List benefits of each program and subsidies available, in all marketing material
- Seek business/corporate sponsors
- Host information sessions at Welcome Centres – include tours of recreation centres, sign-up process, free passes to increase comfort level
- Investigate the potential of developing a Newcomer Action Pass



Clients also indicated that improvements to reduce the administrative approval process and the potential stigma associated with the approval process would be beneficial. Some recommended actions included:

- Providing opportunities for online registration
- Determine criteria for people with special needs (currently only based on financial)
- Entrust subsidy approval and set-up process to more staff members
- Continuous updating of staff training
- Use of Community Leader reference letters in place of some forms – faster and more respectful
- Collaboration with community organizations that serve similar clientele – avoid taking same information from client (internal confirmation between orgs, on client's behalf when they sign up)
- Making vouchers the same everywhere to avoid stigma

1.9 Promising Practises

Low income residents across the Region of Durham have indicated that there are a number of programs and services that provide affordable and accessible recreation opportunities. Some of the most common promising practices include:

- Partnerships with Canadian Tire Jumpstart and Regional Social Services for program delivery and access
- Quick subsidy approval process, third-party billing
- Programs making efforts to foster social inclusion
- Partnerships for fundraising
- Outdoor facilities popular (no cost and good quality)

In summary the recreation program and service providers within Region of Durham are experiencing:

- A growing demand for no cost/low cost programs and services for residents from low income backgrounds
- A need to gain long term commitment for funding from all levels of government
- A need to work collectively with agencies serving low income clients to better promote access to affordable recreation
- A continued need to reduce the barriers to affordable access to recreation in Durham Region
- Increased promotion of activities and opportunities
- An opportunity to set targets and measure the effectiveness of improved communications, funding and outreach.

Section Two: “What Could Exist” A Framework To Advance Access To Affordable Recreation

2.1 Strengths, Challenges and Opportunities

The baseline data articulated in section one of this report demonstrates that there has been recognition of this issue, policy development and action taken at the regional level of government, within the municipalities and agencies involved with direct service provision. Determining the strengths, challenges, opportunities and threats will serve to identify where future efforts and resources could be directed.

Strengths In Addressing Affordable Access	Challenges In Addressing Affordable Access
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There is a strong belief that recreation provides all residents with a better quality of life ○ A strong desires exists to coordinate efforts with regional, municipal and not for profit organizations are underway to better include persons with low incomes ○ There is a recognition that costs are not the only barriers and that efforts need address multiple barriers ○ There are policies and funding mechanisms in place in most municipalities ○ The Canadian Tire Jumpstart Program has filled a large gap in the region and provides for a private partner to assist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Costs, transportation and knowing about opportunities are the greatest barriers to participation in Durham ○ Lack of data regarding the percentage of low income residents taking advantage of subsidy and access programs ○ Awareness of subsidy programs Inconsistent approach across the region to provide recreation opportunities to low income residents ○ process is cumbersome and sometimes humiliating ○ A business case is needed to demonstrate that Ontario Works clients reliance can be reduced through coordinated and consistent supports



Future Opportunities	Possible Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Demonstrate the collective commitment by asking all governments and agencies to sign a Charter that commits to advancing access to affordable recreation in Durham Region ○ Inventory all available opportunities within a municipalities and increase awareness opportunities such as training social service and health workers to provide guidance to clients about recreation opportunities and subsidies ○ Communication and promotion in predominant languages ○ Provide vouchers or a credit on a family’s personal identification number (computerized registration systems) ○ Providing localized no cost and low cost opportunities ○ Include information on related websites such as the Immigration Portal, Library websites etc. ○ Work with the Board of Education to provide information to potential participants. ○ Completing research that will provide a business case for consistent funding (decrease reliance on OW funding) ○ Pilot efforts to provide coordinated supports in an at risk area ○ Track the percentage of engaged participants year over year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Inconsistent funding for subsidy programs ○ Competing priorities for funding and resources ○ Capping of tax funded programs and services

2.2 A Regional Vision and Guiding Principles

It is clear that greater efforts need to centre on further research, better communication of opportunities, working more effectively together to reduce duplication and tracking participation. The following vision has been created to offer a picture of a brighter future that we can all work toward.

“All residents have the right to participate recreation, culture and sport in Durham Region due to physical, social, mental, economic, and spiritual benefits that participation brings to individuals and to the community.”

2.3 Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles will guide our work as we develop tools and mechanisms to advance affordable access to recreation in Durham Region.

1. All strategies to provide equitable access to affordable recreation, sport and culture will be **client focussed and respect the dignity of participants**.
2. All residents **feel included** within their communities regardless of their background; access to recreation is barrier free.
3. Related practitioners and agencies will **work collectively** under one framework to ensure equitable access to recreation, culture and sport.
4. A simple and seamless approach to **improving clients** for access is paramount to the success of the program.
5. Identifying and **addressing barriers** to accessing programs and services will assist in achieving our vision of full and equitable access to recreation culture and sport.
6. The **business case** (the savings generated by the number of participants exiting Ontario Works) will be developed and results reported out to partners and stakeholders.
7. **Building capacity** and developing partnerships will ensure that there is a sustainable program over time.
8. Equitable access to recreation, sport and culture is a **shared responsibility** in Durham Region between government, related agencies, for profit and not for profit organizations.

2.4 Targets

It is important to quantify what our common participation targets are in order to better coordinate programs and opportunities with like partners. Setting regional targets with localized coordinated service delivery will provide opportunities where people live and will provide local contacts and support.

Our target is to provide:

1. Daily recreation opportunities to all residents through the provision of open spaces, trails and other unstructured, non-fee based recreation opportunities.
2. The opportunity for low income residents to participate on a regular basis in an organized recreation program that may include, but is not limited to camps, learn to swim or leadership training opportunities.

2.5 A Charter to Advance Affordable Access to Recreation in Durham Region

The development of a Charter to Advance Affordable Access to Recreation in Durham Region will serve to demonstrate the commitment that program and service agencies have in providing recreation opportunities to all residents. The charter will serve to solidify one vision for the region and indicate that each organization is willing to play its part in a coordinated fashion.

Charter To Advance Access To Affordable Recreation In Durham Region

The Rights of all Durham Region Residents in Accessing Parks and Recreation Services.

Durham Region, Durham Municipalities and allied organizations are committed to providing **each** and every citizen with safe and enjoyable recreational experiences and believe that each citizen has the right in accessing recreation services. This Charter to Advance Access to Affordable Recreation in Durham Region describes these basic rights and the collective responsibility in working to ensure equitable access for all residents regardless of their status and background.

We believe that every citizen in Durham Region should have access to:

- Participation: Participate in quality, safe, affordable recreation and culture programs that are in harmony with the diversity of the community.
- Equity: Be encouraged to join in regardless of one's background and ability to pay.
- Active Living: Be physically active through participation in both organized and informal sports, recreational, and cultural activities.
- Access to Nature & the Outdoors: Experience nature and to access open spaces within their communities.
- Enriching Experiences: Experience the arts, culture, heritage, sports and recreation.
- A Welcoming & Inclusive Community: Be included in activities that build strong communities, engaged citizens and healthy family life.
- Engagement: Be engaged in the planning of recreation, parks, and culture in their communities and to participate in volunteer activities.

We will work together with all of our community partners to:

- Understand the barriers to participation in recreation and address them through policies, programs and our inclusive actions
- Educate residents as to the importance of participating in recreation and the benefits to the individual, families and communities
- Provide a balance of fee based and no cost/low cost opportunities that are accessible to all residents
- Subsidize residents who are in need to assist them in participating in the activities of their choice
- Measure our success and report out to the community and partners

Source: Adapted from the Charter for Recreation and Parks in Ontario

We commit to working together because the benefits to individual and communities are positive and worth our joint efforts. Research dictates that the provision of parks, recreation and cultural opportunities is an essential service that enhances individuals and the community alike. Recreation is:

- ✓ Essential to Personal Health
- ✓ Key to Human Development

- ✓ Essential to the Quality of Life
- ✓ Reduces Anti-Social Behaviours
- ✓ Builds Families and Communities
- ✓ An Investment in Community's Future

Source – CPRA – *The Benefits of Parks and Recreation*

We, the undersigned strive to work better together to include all residents facing barriers to participation in recreational pursuits.

2.6 A Framework to Increase Access to Affordable Recreation

It will take coordinated and continued efforts to increase access to affordable recreation in Durham Region. Collectively, we can move the bar if everyone is committed to a vision, can offer some resources, is kept informed and can play their part. The following framework demonstrates that many agencies and organizations do provide recreational opportunities and also provide residents with greater access; but coordinated efforts will use community resources more effectively and reduce duplication.

Regional Coordination

A Regional Coordinating Team made up of all agencies and municipalities will meet regularly to coordinate research, communications, and advocate, track participation, form new partnerships, increase opportunities, and provide an annual forum with new and existing partners at a minimum.

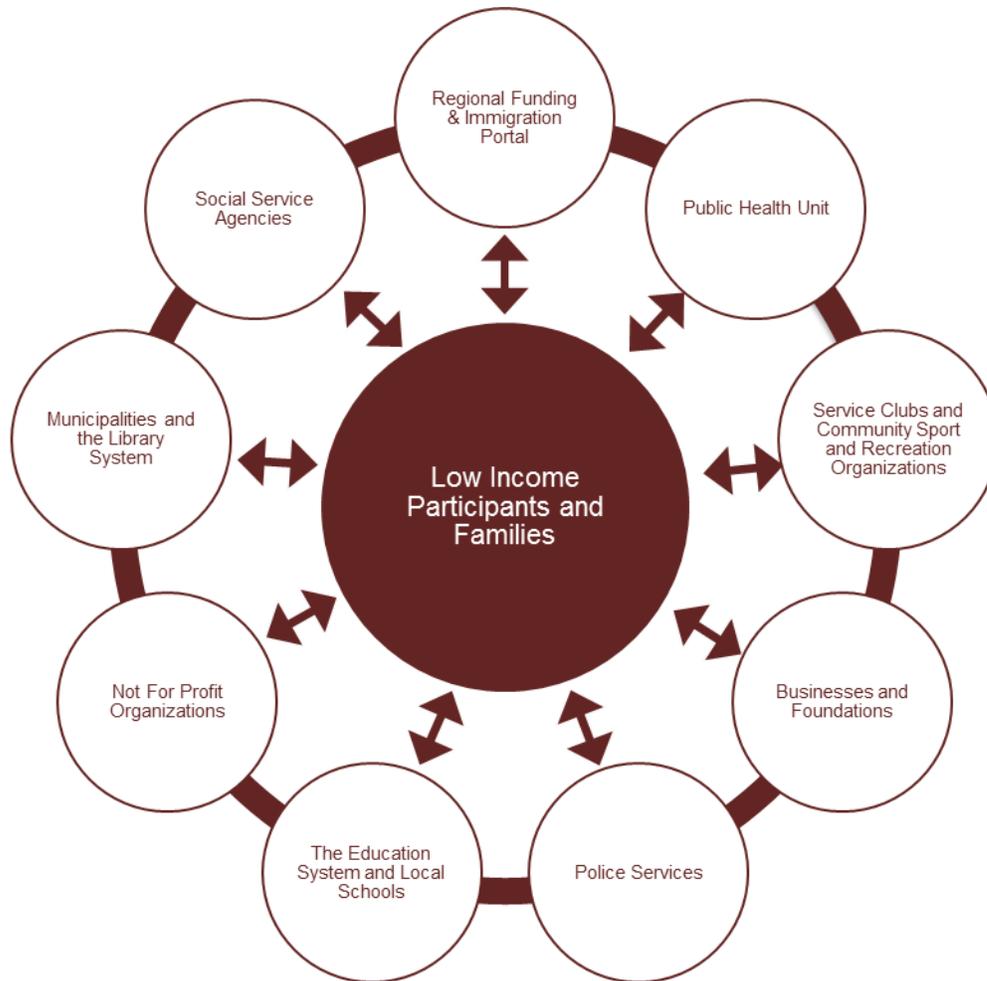


Municipal Delivery

Delivery at the municipal level will provide low income residents with local contacts and support. Communications at the local level will be the key to providing easy navigation through the service delivery system. Local providers will need to understand local issues and develop programs and initiatives that use resources wisely and maximize participation.

2.7 Our Partners

The following diagram demonstrates that there are a significant number of agencies and organizations that have an interest in contributing resources and time to increase participation in recreational pursuits. It also demonstrates how difficult the system might be to navigate for a resident or family from a low income family. A seamless “one stop shopping” approach would serve to ease entry into recreation opportunities.



2.8 Recommendations

The recommendations build on the research and actions that have been obtained through local research and a comparison to best practices in other jurisdictions.

It is recommended that a presentation be made to both levels of government (regional and municipal) and the boards of like-minded agencies and organizations on the findings housed in this report and recommendations to advance access to affordable recreation in Durham Region;

1. A launch is proposed that garners signatures of commitment of all regional partners on a Charter to Advance Affordable Access to Recreation in Durham Region;
2. A communications plan be developed to promote awareness of the opportunities within each municipality, while agencies and organizations to work to get the right information in the right hands (translation in predominant languages);
3. Attempts be made to bring opportunities to neighbourhoods to reduce transportation barriers;

4. Training sessions be coordinated with social service providers, educators, service clubs, to provide a tool kit that can be given to at risk and low income clients;
5. Research be conducted to build the business case for recreation and other supports in reducing reliance on social assistance and health care putting the investment where it belongs (reliant on funding);
6. Research, train and pilot an integrated approach in an at risk area within the region;
7. Develop a centralized tracking tool to compare successes year over year; and,
8. The Regional Coordinating Team be directed to provide information on multi-year funding requirements and options to see the work plan through.

