

# **NEWS RELEASE**



**For Immediate Release**

## **BC FACING \$5 BILLION RECREATION DEFICIT**

*New study finds increasing usage putting too much of a demand on aging facilities.*

**Burnaby, BC (Wednesday, May 27, 2009)** – The BC Recreation and Parks Association (BCRPA) has released a new study indicating \$5.2 billion is needed over the next decade to upgrade and replace the province's aging indoor recreational facilities. The Recreation Facilities Assessment Study, entitled *A Time for Renewal*, found 68% of arenas, pools and rec centres are 25-years-old or older and are unable to keep up with the demands of a growing population that has changing needs. The study was released today at the BCRPA's Symposium, an annual conference of municipal parks and recreation professionals.

BCRPA Chief Executive Officer Suzanne Allard Strutt says it's absolutely critical that the recreation deficit be addressed immediately. "Recreational facilities are integral parts of our communities. They provide safe, low-cost or no-cost opportunities for people to participate in healthy physical activity. They are the places where communities gather to have fun at festivals and cheer their local sports teams. Our community centres and arenas are essential to our province's culture and quality of life." Allard Strutt also points out paying for upgrades and new facilities now will reduce repair costs in the future. In addition, she says this will make the buildings more energy efficient and environmentally friendly.

The study calls for increased funding from all levels of government. It suggests costs could be offset if neighbouring communities team up to build and share new facilities. It recommends municipalities explore partnerships with the private sector and non-governmental organizations as well.

Allard Strutt notes the \$5.2 billion figure is just a first step. "This estimate only covers indoor infrastructure like pools and skating rinks. While the study also examined our province's supply of playing fields, trails and parks, we have not yet determined how much it will cost to upgrade these outdoor systems. Shedding light on that deficit is especially important because studies show outdoor spaces are playing an increasing role in recreation. More people want to be active outside."

The study surveyed 848 indoor recreation facilities and 23,050km of outdoor systems. It is the first study of its kind in BC.

## **BACKGROUND:**

The British Columbia Recreation and Parks Association is a not for profit organization dedicated to building and sustaining active healthy lifestyles and communities in BC. Established in 1958, the Association is a central resource agency for members and stakeholders of the parks,

recreation, physical activity and culture industry, providing leadership, training and support to help meet national, provincial and local priorities. Through a diverse network of partners and extensive programs and services, BCRPA actively advocates accessibility and inclusiveness to recreation and physical activity and strives to bridge the gap between recreation and sport.

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