
SUMA Position Statement

SUMA is interested in working collaboratively with the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sports (PCS), the Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association (SPRA) and the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM) on developing a Saskatchewan Recreation Sector Policy. Recreation and leisure programs are about quality of life and it is central to a strong and vibrant community.

By working with major stakeholders, SUMA hopes the new policy will clarify the roles and responsibilities of many organizations and stakeholders in recreation throughout the province. We believe the policy must rethink the way we provide recreation services, and encourage regional co-operation among neighbouring communities for designing programs, operating facilities and building of new recreation and leisure infrastructure. Most importantly, the policy will serve as a guide for long-term planning in the recreation sector, and developing services and programs enjoyed by all Saskatchewan residents.

Key Messages

- Recreation and leisure services improve quality of life, and benefit all residents of Saskatchewan.
- SUMA wants to see a provincial recreation policy that will guide how Saskatchewan provides recreation and leisure programs and services in the province.
- SUMA believes the new policy must:
 - clarify the roles and responsibilities of different recreation stakeholders, such as the provincial government, local governments, non-profit associations, and community groups;
 - encourage regional co-operation among neighbouring communities; and
 - develop a long-term plan to serve a growing population and changing demographics.

Current Status

The policy is currently being developed by the Ministry.

Background

In 2010, Premier Brad Wall asked the Ministry, with assistance from SPRA, to review the current framework, and to identify best practices and future opportunities in the provincial recreation sector. The goal is to develop a provincial recreation policy that will guide the sector's future development.

SUMA responded to Premier's mandate letter and met with the Minister to offer our support and assistance in the development of this new framework. For more than two years, SUMA has worked with both SPRA and the Ministry on drafting this policy.

Currently, urban governments own and often operate recreation and leisure facilities, such as arenas, parks, playgrounds, and green spaces. Many urban governments also directly manage recreation and leisure services, while others provide funding to community groups to administer these programs. In many urban communities, volunteer groups play a significant part in delivering of community recreation; without them, many services will not be offered.

SUMA members have identified several recreation issues over the years:

- Cost-sharing of recreation facilities and programs, especially between rural and urban municipalities.
- Aging recreation facilities that cannot meet growing demands.
- Rising costs to provide services and programs lead to increase user fees.
- SaskPower’s demand surcharge for recreation facilities.
- Urban governments cannot find trained recreation facilitators.
- Appropriate recreation programs and services for changing demographics.

Strategic Context

At present, urban governments spend 20 per cent of their budgets on operating recreation and leisure services. This amount does not include capital costs to renew and construct new facilities. We believe that this percentage is poised to increase as the population continues to grow in Saskatchewan. Urban governments have a vested interest in the outcome of the provincial recreation policy because we are owners, operators, and developers of recreation infrastructure and programs.

Contacts

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