



CHARTER BROADSHEET NUMBER THREE

Summer 2013

Access to Affordable, Inclusive Recreational Activities

The impact of accessible recreation and the importance of programs that make it possible, cannot be overstated and is best represented in the words of parents who have seen the difference firsthand:

"I am a working, single parent with four children. I knew I needed to find a way to get my kids involved in recreational activities. But with a very tight budget, it was not possible to enroll them in the sports they wanted. Thanks to funding specifically set up to help families access activities, my kids are now involved and have seen success in other aspects of their lives:

- "Amanda" has received numerous scholarship offers for university as a result of her soccer. She has been able to continue soccer at this level with the help of the funding.
- "Melissa" now works as a lifeguard and swim instructor. She also has been able to



save for university.

- "Emily" continues to enjoy soccer and has been recognized as another scholarship hopeful.
- "Josh" is autistic. His participation in swimming, basketball and other activities, including summer camp, has made a tremendous impact in his life. His participation in these activities has boosted his confidence. I would not be able to afford programming for Josh." ~ Alisa

Since 2004, more than 121 agency support workers in Simcoe County have utilized resources such as Health STAR and Jumpstart. In 2012 through these programs alone, more than 1400 children and youth were linked to 192 sport and recreation organizations in Simcoe County – giving them the opportunity to participate in an activity that otherwise would not have been financially feasible.

Simcoe County Children and Youth Charter

Preamble: The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child affirms that all levels of government have a duty to help families fulfil their responsibilities and protect the rights of children. Furthermore, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples affirms the distinctive rights and needs of indigenous peoples with particular attention to rights and special needs of indigenous children, women, youth and children.

All children and youth have fundamental rights and freedoms. They deserve respect and support to realize their rights and full potential. Because children and youth are the future of our community, it is in our interest to ensure that they all have the opportunity to grow into healthy, independent and contributing members of our society. Everyone in the community has a role to play in their growth and development. We have a joint responsibility to ensure that children and youth are protected and safe from exploitation and neglect. Children and youth must have access to a fair share of our community's resources.

The Simcoe County Coalition of Child, Youth and Family Services invites government and all sectors of our community to join in ensuring all children and youth enjoy life-long good health and well-being through the provision of:

- ✓ Access to quality, inclusive child care and/or early education programs
- ✓ Safe places to play in their community
- ✓ Access to affordable, inclusive recreational activities
- ✓ Quality, inclusive, universal education system
- ✓ Governments that recognize the importance of children's needs and religion/spirituality
- ✓ Access to quality health care, mental health treatment and social programs
- ✓ Services that are delivered in the context of their family's culture, community and school

These rights apply to all children and youth without discrimination on the basis of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, record of offences, marital status, family status or ability.

Recreation is structured or unstructured physical activity that occurs in indoor or outdoor settings that enriches individuals by improving health, developing skills or building self-esteem. Having "access" to recreation means it's affordable, it is within your community and it's inclusive of different ages, abilities and cultures.

The complete charter is available for download in three languages at:
www.simcoecountycoalition.ca

What is happening now?

Sport and recreation have long been recognized as having tremendous benefit for children, youth and the community alike. Yet, recent studies have shown that one in three Canadian families can't afford to enroll their children in organized sport and recreation activities due to financial barriers. This statistic is a surprising reality proving that programs are needed to help break down this barrier.

Based on the systematic review of 232 studies, sedentary behavior among children and youth (assessed primarily through increased TV viewing for more than 2 hours per day) was associated with:

- Unfavorable body composition (greater BMI)
- Decreased fitness
- Lowered scores for self-esteem and pro-social behavior
- Decreased academic achievement

"Cost is a significant barrier to giving children the chance to participate in recreation," says Rob Armstrong, CEO, YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka. "Every child deserves the chance to run, play and experience the lifelong benefits of physical activity that go beyond just good health. Accessible and inclusive recreation truly is possible with the right community support and programs."

Is active play extinct? 92% of Canadian children said they would choose playing with friends over watching TV. Supporting and encouraging opportunities for safe, free, unstructured play, especially outdoors, may be one of the most promising, accessible and cost-effective solutions to increasing child and youth physical activity in Canada.¹

The COST of Inactivity:

\$76,000,000 in Simcoe Muskoka

It is estimated that 2.6% of health care costs are represented by physical inactivity. In 2010, for the population of Simcoe Muskoka, that meant \$76 million dollars!

**1 in 4
Overweight**

Approx 1 in 4 youth (grades 9 - 12) in the North Simcoe Muskoka LHIN is considered overweight or obese.²

35%
Activity limitations

In 2010, 35% of Simcoe Muskoka residents 12 yrs+ reported experiencing activity limitations often or sometimes because of a physical or mental condition.

42%
Inactive

In 2010, 42% of residents of Simcoe Muskoka aged 12 yrs+ would classify their daily leisure time as inactive.

If nothing is done...

The current generation of children will develop chronic illnesses much younger and be more affected as they age. The cost of obesity will grow, impacting our ability to fund other programs and services.

Children who do not have recreational facilities available in their neighbourhood are less likely to engage in physical activity after school.³ A national longitudinal survey of children and youth indicates that only 36% of 2-3 year olds and 44% of 4-5 year olds regularly engage in an unorganized and physical activity each week.⁴

Impact on Children and Youth

"Creating and offering programs that are accessible and inclusive is of the utmost importance to the Orillia Youth Centre. The outcomes we see from being able to involve all participants regardless of monetary limitations or physical barriers, are incredible and we will continue to work to ensure we are meeting the needs of our youth".

Volunteer, Orillia Youth Group

"Accessible, Inclusive recreation is an integral piece we need to be able to provide towards building our children's social and life and movement skills." *Volunteer, Certified PlayBall Coach, Simcoe County.*

"Partnerships for recreation for families permit me to pro-

vide children with success within their peer groups." *Volunteer, Boys and Girls Club, Midland, ON.*



The at-risk groups are identified

Increasing access to recreation is part of the solution to reducing obesity. Based on the data, priority groups at a higher risk of being physically inactive: people with low-socio-economic status, children,



youth (aged 12-19) and seniors. Policy makers should focus greater attention on addressing opportunities for these populations. Encourage your local government representatives to support increasing access to recreation.



The rewards and benefits are many and important:

Recreational activities help develop:

- Decision-making skills
- Co-operative behaviors
- Positive relationships and feelings of empowerment
- Fair play behaviours
- Proactive thinking and planning
- A solid moral code of behavior
- Children's cognitive and motor skills

Individuals with more highly developed motor skills tend to be more

active, popular, calm, resourceful, attentive and cooperative.

Recreation also provides children the chance to learn, consolidate, and practice the skills necessary for further growth and learning.

Independent goal pursuits, such as looking for fun and enjoyment, increase participants' goal attainment in other areas.⁵

The benefits of recreation are particularly important for children.

In addition to stimulating physical

and motor development, recreational opportunities can help children learn valuable skills related to quality of life, such as confidence, communication, determination, leadership and goal-orientation.⁶



Local Initiatives

For 24/7, multilingual information about community resources call 211, TTY 1-888-435-6086 or online at www.211SimcoeCounty.ca



Active Transportation plans developed by municipalities, in consultation with community partners, make any form of human-powered transportation a safe and convenient way to access recreation in your community i.e. active & safe routes to school/work.

Subsidized Programs Available

Health STAR and Canadian Tire Jumpstart are working examples of social intervention programs that link financially disadvantaged children and youth to sport and recreation opportunities.



The funding for recreational opportunities is managed via YMCA, municipalities and private providers.

Summer Camps offer new activities to keep kids active

Day camps give your child the opportunity to learn, grow, make new friends, try new activities, and have fun. Several community organizations, municipalities and your local YMCA offer a subsidy option for families. For an active place where your child will build friendships, learn new skills, gain independence, and play, contact a day camp provider in your community.

Coordinated Approach to Children's Health (CATCH)

The YMCA in partnership with the Simcoe County District School Board (SCDSB), is introducing CATCH to elementary schools across the county. CATCH is a mind-set that participants and leaders adopt; it becomes the way to deliver



programming to children in a fun, inclusive and productive way. The goal of CATCH is for children to adopt a healthy lifestyle that continues outside of structured activity.

Children need to reduce inactive time and be active every day.

Children should be active every day and aim for at least 60 minutes of active play each day. Children and youth should aim for no more than 2 hours of screen time per day.⁷

At least ONE HOUR every day!



NO MORE than 2 hours a day



Implementing Best Practice Approaches

Affordability – Ensure a range of affordable recreation programs will be in place in every community across the province. Where user fees exist, fee assistance will be provided for those facing financial barriers. Establish community-based partnerships that will determine how to make affordable access to recreation a reality in communities. Policies will reduce financial barriers to participation in physical activity, sport and

recreational programs.⁸

Places to Play – All communities should have formal and informal spaces where people can participate in recreational activities. Rental fees will not be a barrier to community use of public space.

Awareness – Reach out to low income residents ensuring awareness of the existence and importance of affordable recreation opportunities.

Built Environment - A walkable community is a sustainable and worthy investment. Find ways to support and create a culture of walking, cycling and wheeling in your community e.g. install bike parking in public gathering spaces and accessible sidewalks.

Simcoe Muskoka Medical Officer of Health Dr. Charles Gardner says “*Most people aren't going to realize health benefits through organized physical activity and sport alone. Our environment has to support an active lifestyle.*”

Footnotes

1. Is Active Play Extinct? 2012. Active Healthy Kids Canada Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth. Active Healthy Kids Canada.
2. Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (2011) Ontario Student Drug use and Health Survey (OSDUHS). 1977 – 2011 Toronto, Ontario: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
3. Tucker, P., Irwin, J. D., Gilliland, J., He, M., Larsen, K., & Hess, P. (2009). Environmental influences on physical activity levels in youth. *Health & Place*, 15(1), 357-363.
4. Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines. Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology. <http://www.csep.ca>. Accessed 21 December 2012.
5. Estes & Henderson, 2003 *Enjoyment and the Good Life*, Parks and Recreation Magazine.
6. Role of Recreation in promoting social inclusion. Peter Donnelly, Jay Coakley Dec 2002
7. Source: www.csep.ca/directives
8. Ontario Task Group on Access to Recreation for Low-Income Families (2009). *Affordable Access to Recreation for Ontarians: Policy Framework*. Every One Plays. <http://lin.ca/resource-details/15518>

