



Niagara Community
Observatory

Parks and Recreation

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What is the Municipality Responsible for in the Parks and Recreation Sector?

Municipalities are the primary providers of parks and recreation. They are responsible for planning, funding, operating and maintaining local facilities, parks, and recreation programs. They establish service levels and priorities based on community needs and available resources.



Trends and Developments

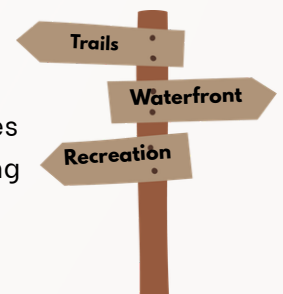
Economy and Workforce

Recreation remains a significant contributor to Niagara's economy and workforce ecosystem, generating approximately \$3 billion annually and supporting **approximately 40,000 jobs** across recreation, sport, outdoor experiences, and public amenities.



Economic Resilience

Recreation amenities, trails, parks, waterfront access, and family-oriented experiences are increasingly being recognized as **competitive advantages** for the region, reinforcing the connection between recreation, livability, and economic resilience.



Quality of Life

The recreation sector is strengthening the connection between recreation, nature, and quality of life. Recreation and public infrastructure create spaces that promote outdoor play, learning, environmental stewardship, and meaningful connection for children, families, and visitors.

Community Hubs

Recreation spaces continue to serve as community hubs in response to growing social pressures across Niagara. Facilities are being designated as warming and cooling centres in extreme weather. As encampments increasingly intersect with parks, trails, and recreation facilities, municipalities are shifting toward **coordinated approaches**—such as Welland's encampment response process that links public space concerns with outreach and housing services through regional partnerships.



Infrastructure Upgrades

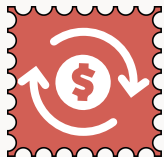
Demand for recreation infrastructure continues. Over the past 10-plus years, municipalities have been upgrading their recreational facilities, shaped by principles of accessibility, inclusion, and community health by emphasizing features such as indoor walking tracks, year-round trail access, and flexible spaces that support social connection and active living. The most recent is Grimsby's expansion of its main arena and large-scale multi-use initiatives being advanced in Welland and Niagara Falls.



Ongoing Challenges for Niagara



Municipal recreation departments are facing a significant workforce transition as experienced professionals retire, creating an urgent need for intentional succession planning



Demand for recreation infrastructure exceeds funding availability



Parking fees, user fees, equipment costs, transportation, and other associated expenses can create significant barriers for individuals and families

Questions for Municipal Candidates



Investment: What investments will you prioritize to renew and improve existing parks, recreation facilities and community spaces over the next term of Council?

Growth: As your community grows and changes, how will you ensure investment in parks and recreation keeps pace with the needs of residents? How will you protect and expand parks, natural areas and green space amidst increasing development pressures?



Access: What actions will you support to ensure parks, recreation facilities and programs remain affordable, accessible and inclusive for all residents?