

CHAPTER 3

THE B.C. SHIFT

British Columbia is developing and promoting a new vision for the province – a high quality of life for all B.C. residents and communities within a healthy, sustainable environment and a healthy, sustainable economy.

Within this provincial context, the vision of the parks, recreation and culture sector is shifting. No longer is our vision and mission about programs and facilities; no longer is our role about being a service provider. Today, our vision and mission embrace the essence of the Province's vision of a high quality of life for British Columbia's residents, families and communities because we play a fundamental role in achieving that vision. Today, the parks, recreation and culture sector is stronger, more effective, more innovative, and better positioned than at any point in its history to work toward this vision. In fact, the Province's vision is best realized with the participation of parks, recreation and culture.

As the parks, recreation and culture sector continues to shift toward a quality of life vision, community-based programs and provincial initiatives are growing in popularity. Whether it's a garden club in the City of Vancouver, park play days in the Regional District of Central Okanagan or a province-wide osteo-fit program, the parks, recreation and culture sector is influencing individuals and communities, the environment and the economy. In fact, success stories abound.

Ensuring British Columbians experience this quality of life, however, requires a shared vision, a coordinated effort and a comprehensive plan to inspire and engage the many stakeholders.

For an historical overview of the parks, recreation and culture sector in Canada and in B.C., refer to Appendix A. For success stories from B.C.'s parks, recreation and culture sector and for highlights of current provincial initiatives, refer to Appendix D.

CURRENT TRENDS IN B.C.

British Columbia is changing. Acknowledging and understanding these changes is a helpful tool in understanding the context in which the parks, recreation and culture sector operates as well as identifying the sector's need to adapt to these changes. The following list summarizes some of the significant trends occurring in B.C. and the issues they pose.

Activity Timing

Changes in time-of-use patterns for parks, recreation and culture programs and facilities alter expectations.

Demographics

Current demographic trends are affecting the needs, expectations and opportunities in B.C. communities, particularly as the baby boomer generation heads into early retirement.

Diversity

Increasing social diversity in B.C. communities offers benefits and challenges in cultural richness and accessibility – physically, culturally and linguistically. The expectations of access and the definition of public services vary among ethnic groups.

Economy

British Columbia has witnessed strong overall economic growth in the last few years and it has experienced its lowest unemployment rate in 30 years. The province has experienced a major shift from reliance on natural resources to a more diversified economy, which includes a thriving tourism industry.

Environment

There is an increased interest in the environment and climate change issues as well as a growing desire among many B.C. residents to make a difference in their community.

Inequity

The widening gap between income levels creates a greater need for lower cost access to parks, recreation and culture facilities for some and a greater ability to pay for certain services by others.

Infrastructure

One of the greatest challenges in the trend profile is aging infrastructure and related future costs, triggering a need to reconsider existing facilities and expectations and invest significant public resources in upgrading or maintaining the facility infrastructure.

Partnerships

The rise in partnerships as a foundational approach to program delivery entails changes in the use and planning of facilities as well as in the time required to create and maintain partnerships.

Programs

Changes in program delivery mechanisms continue to expand and diversify, pending partnerships, funding and other issues.

Scope

The scope of interest in parks, recreation and culture activities is growing and there is a steady evolution in the desire for and expectations of activities and facilities.

Social Activities

Changing patterns of individual and social activities as the province's demographics change create additional expectations for recreation and technology.

Sustainability

A growing sense of stewardship and a commitment to sustainable communities is changing expectations and desires in response to local and global challenges. Increased demand for 'green' public facilities entails a different approach and most likely additional costs.



Technology

Changes in technology for the use and management of parks, recreation and cultural facilities mean changes to their design, expectations and maintenance.

Volunteers

A significant decline in volunteers is affecting parks, recreation and culture. Project-based and short-term volunteering have had more success than the request for longer commitments.

Wellness

Increased concerns about risk factors leading to chronic diseases and a new focus on overall wellness is changing expectations and desires for facilities and programming.

This strategic plan is a proactive response to the trends and issues facing the parks, recreation and culture sector in British Columbia and it is a ten-year action plan for contributing to the quality of life of our residents.

For a comprehensive report on current quality of life trends and their implications on the parks, recreation and culture sector in B.C., refer to Appendix B.

Understanding British Columbia and the context it provides for the sector is also important. For an overview of British Columbia and its many facets such as population, geography and economy and its increased focus on health promotion, refer to Appendix C.