

Reflecting Diversity in Parks and Recreation Services

Report to the City of Ottawa on the
Parks and Recreation Master Plan

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CAWI/IVTF
City for All Women Initiative
Initiative une ville pour toutes les femmes

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Acknowledgements

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- Vanier Community Resource Centre
- South-East Ottawa Community Health Centre
- Sandy Hill Community Health Centre
- Nepean, Rideau, Osgoode Community Resource Centre
- Orleans-Cumberland Community Resource Centre

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Executive summary

This study was undertaken by City for All Women Initiative (CAWI) /Initiative une ville pour toutes les femmes (IVTF), to contribute in the development of the Parks and Recreation (hereafter P & R) Master Plan. CAWI's main objective was to create opportunities for women to engage their communities and ensure their voices are heard in this consultation process. Multicultural and specific populations, including Aboriginal, African, Arabic, Somali, francophone, rural, seniors and youth were engaged through focus groups.

With funding and guidance from the City of Ottawa and United Way Ottawa, CAWI coordinated a Working Group of women from diverse communities and organizations. The Working Group identified the specific populations in the city whose views may not be heard through the City's online recreation consultation. Community partners were then contacted to sponsor focus groups with these specific populations. The Working Group developed a focus group guide based on the material and questions to be covered in the City's three White Papers: Service Delivery; Accessibility and Inclusion; and Tax Support, Revenue Generation and Subsidization¹. Thirty-three women were trained as facilitators as well as educated about the City's Parks and Recreation services. These women facilitated 14 focus groups with a total of 191 participants.

Generally, participants in the focus groups recognized the benefits of P & R and were very enthusiastic about the services available in the City of Ottawa. Many aspects of P & R are important to Ottawa residents, such as the availability of parks and green spaces, mental and physical well being, children and youth services, and water activities (e.g., swimming pools, splash pads and wading pools).

However, the focus groups also revealed a variety of shortcomings related to: service delivery (e.g., lack of park fixtures, scarcity of group-specific activities); accessibility and inclusion (e.g., prohibitive costs, lack of information, safety concerns, transportation issues); and subsidy-related issues (e.g., poor management, lack of information).

As a result of this study, CAWI is offering the following recommendations:

- Protect, improve and maintain green spaces.
- Reduce costs of P & R services and review selection criteria for subsidies as well as fee-assistance policies.
- Provide sensitivity training to staff dealing with inquiries about subsidies.
- Improve marketing and promotion about P & R services, particularly subsidy-related information.
- Offer more group-specific activities (e.g., family-friendly; women-only; Aboriginal).
- Increase and improve recreation facilities, especially swimming pools, splash pads and wading pools.
- Improve public transportation options to and from services and facilities.
- Implement safety measures in parks, including lighting and monitoring.

¹ Although the City of Ottawa looked into "Tax Support, Revenue Generation and Subsidization" for the Master Plan White Papers, CAWI specifically collected information only on subsidization and fee assistance—as well as some suggestions for revenue generation.

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I. Recommendations

As a result of CAWI's efforts to reach women and diverse communities in Ottawa, 14 focus groups led by community facilitators took place in various community centers in the region, as well as 3 training focus groups with the facilitators in training. Based on their comments and opinions concerning what needs to be included in the P & R Master Plan, CAWI developed the recommendations presented below.

Recommendation 1:

Protect, improve and maintain green spaces.

A majority of participants placed high priority on the need to protect, improve and maintain outdoor green spaces, including walkways, walking paths, bike paths, and flower beds; improve parks with convenient fixtures to increase comfort and cleanliness (e.g., benches, water fountains, more flowers, garbage bins, lighting, and washrooms). For the senior population, for example, lighting and accessible (paved) walkways are very significant issues; for the Muslim population, access to water is needed to wash hands before prayers, thus the community needs easily accessible washrooms or washbasins in the parks.

Recommendation 2:

Reduce costs of P & R services and review selection criteria for subsidy as well as fee-assistance policies.

Many focus groups called for improved subsidy services and reduced cost of services. Some of the suggestions for achieving these goals were: increase fee assistance; review selection criteria for fee assistance to include needy or tight-budget families, rather than just low income (especially for large families); improve promotion² and management of subsidies. Multicultural focus groups suggested that low-income families should pay lowest recreation costs, such that cost for P & R services is raised as family income increases. For the Aboriginal community, lack of full subsidy services is a significant barrier to accessing recreation services.

Recommendation 3:

Provide sensitivity training to staff dealing with inquiries about subsidies.

Many participants requested that City staff be especially sensitive when dealing with fee-assistance applicants, ensuring that their privacy is respected. Focus groups suggested that information about and applications for subsidies should be available online and in the Recreation Guide—rather than only in person at City offices.

Recommendation 4:

Improve marketing and promotion about P & R services, particularly subsidy-related information.

Participants also called attention to the need for more and improved promotion and marketing of P & R services³. The City should ensure that information about services is more readily available at P & R facilities, especially information regarding subsidies, which should be distributed more

² As the pie chart in page 20 illustrates, almost 80% of the focus group participants were not aware of subsidies provided by the City of Ottawa.

³ As the pie chart in page 9 illustrates, only 30% of the focus groups participants expressed awareness about the services offered by the City of Ottawa.

widely and available online; increase hours of operation; consider flexible registration process for recreational courses and activities (especially for children); provide direct line for emergencies in parks and to inform management about problems (e.g., safety concerns; cleanliness); increase partnerships, especially those with neighbourhoods involving direct consultation with community. The youth consulted in this project believe that equal and transparent partnerships with the private sector (as well as schools and the local community) could improve accessibility and inclusion in Ottawa's P & R services.

Recommendation 5:

Offer more group-specific activities (family-friendly; women-only; Aboriginal-specific).

Focus groups highlighted the need for additional programs and activities that are specific for children, youth, families, women and minorities, especially new immigrants. Examples include: culture-specific courses and activities (e.g., dance; "ethnic gardening," creating community gardens inspired by specific cultures of new immigrants); Aboriginal-specific recreation and spaces; women-only courses and schedules/hours (especially for swimming pools). It was also suggested by multicultural focus groups that the City should consider providing drop-in childcare at P & R facilities to help include families and single parents. The Aboriginal community proposed a partnership with the City: Aboriginal people can provide workshops in making dream catchers or drumming, in exchange for access to space for Aboriginal-specific recreation; that contribution should then be recognized in the Recreation Guide and other materials so that the community feels acknowledged.

Recommendation 6:

Increase and improve recreation facilities, especially swimming pools, splash pads and wading pools.

Participants accentuated their desire to see improved, enlarged and more numerous recreation facilities, especially swimming pools (as well as splash pads and wading pools). Other requests included: add drop-in Open Gyms for easy access to exercise; bike paths; basketball courts; skating rinks; tennis courts. The African francophone, multicultural, and Arabic communities prioritized access to indoor, community pools; Somali youth mentioned the need for more basketball courts and other sports (especially girls-only activities), while other youth expressed the wish for skateboarding and mountain biking facilities in parks, and an indoor recreation space exclusive for teenagers.

Recommendation 7:

Improve public transportation options to and from services and facilities.

The majority of focus groups mentioned that Ottawa should have improved public transportation options to and from P & R facilities. Participants also requested improvements to access roads, signs and parking at P & R facilities. The rural focus group in this study emphasized that transportation issues are a considerable barrier to accessing P & R services in Ottawa—those residents who do not have access to a car and who live far from recreation facilities are likely to be unable to participate in P & R activities.

Recommendation 8:

Implement safety measures in parks, including lighting and monitoring.

A common theme in many of the focus groups was the call for improved monitoring⁴ (due to concerns with exposure to drugs and crime) and lighting in parks. Participants also noted that the City should ensure that dogs are leashed, especially around children; verify if flowers and plants in City parks are safe; provide gates and fences around parks; regulate the activity of aggressive panhandlers in P & R facilities; improve roads and forbid driving lessons around park perimeters. Most of the communities mentioned lack of safety in parks, and the African francophone, multicultural, and senior communities emphasized the importance of improved lighting.

Although the majority of participants in the focus groups recognized the general benefits of P & R to their family's health and well being, and were very enthusiastic about the services available in the City of Ottawa, focus group discussions also revealed a variety of shortcomings which merit policy reviews in the upcoming P & R Master Plan.

⁴ Possibly with video surveillance, although this suggestion was controversial in focus group discussions.

II. Background

When the initiative to develop a comprehensive P & R plan was announced, the City of Ottawa indicated the desire to consult with residents to ensure the plan is responsive to their needs.

Since CAWI's primary focus is to ensure that the full diversity of women are able to inform city decision making, it brought together staff working on the P & R Master Plan and women⁵ from across the City to discuss how they would like to provide input to the plan. Based on the concerns that women raised, CAWI decided to conduct a series of focus groups to ensure that a significant diversity of Ottawa residents would be heard. To support this undertaking, City of Ottawa Diversity and Employment Equity Division offered to provide additional funding to match resources from United Way Ottawa, financially enabling CAWI to embark on this project.

The objectives of this project were to:

- Create opportunities for women from diverse communities to engage their peers in informing the City of Ottawa Recreation Master Plan; and
- Help the City of Ottawa to develop a plan that ensures P & R services reflect the needs of the full diversity of residents, and contributes to their quality of life.

The outcomes were:

- The training of 33 women from diverse backgrounds, mostly low-income communities in facilitation skills.
- The engagement of diverse communities across the city in the P & R Master Plan consultation process; and
- The application of the Equity and Inclusion Lens (currently being developed for corporate-wide implementation in the City of Ottawa in 2010) to examine P & R services in the city of Ottawa.

This report seeks to illustrate a diversity of city residents' views on: P & R service delivery, accessibility and inclusion, as well as the subsidies provided to make recreation affordable to low-income Ottawa residents.

As an organization that is connected to community leaders and organizers around the city, CAWI is uniquely positioned to provide this report. CAWI was able to take into consideration the voices of specific populations, such as seniors, youth, African francophone, Arabic, Somali communities, Aboriginal people, as well as multicultural and rural and dwellers.

⁵ In an effort to include men's perspectives, organizers were invited to hold either mixed-gender or women-only focus groups. In the end, most chose women-only; in mixed gender groups, men were still a minority. It is hoped that other consultations were able to effectively reach this population.

III. Methodology

- CAWI coordinated a Working Group of women from diverse communities, organizations and the City of Ottawa to guide the study. The Working Group identified specific populations in the city whose views may not be heard through the City of Ottawa’s online consultation. The Working Group then identified community partners who would sponsor a focus group with those specific populations. Twelve sponsoring organizations identified community women to facilitate the focus groups.
- The Working Group developed a focus group guide based on the material and questions to be covered in the City’s three White Papers: Service Delivery; Accessibility and Inclusion; and Tax Support, Revenue Generation and Subsidization⁶. Questions were selected and designed so as to be relevant to participants.
- CAWI offered a one-day training session to the 33 facilitators where they were given the opportunity to learn about the City’s P & R services and how to facilitate their focus group. Following the focus group, facilitators met again to consolidate their learning.
- On the training day, the facilitators in training participated in their own focus groups; data collected from these 3 training focus groups is also included in the findings.
- There were a total of 14 community-based focus groups with a total of 163 participants. Including the training focus groups, there were a total of 17 focus groups included in this project, with a total of 191 participants.
- Co-facilitators were assigned to focus groups in their respective communities; these meetings were organized by participating organizations.
- Participating organizations were given the option to convene women-only or mixed-gender groups; therefore, some focus groups were open to both women and men, but mostly women participated.
- A designated CAWI member was present at all focus groups as a note taker; focus groups were *not* recorded, therefore this report is not based on direct quotes from participants, but rather reflect the notes taken during the focus groups.⁷
- Community leaders and the facilitators were given a focus group guide (i.e., a list of questions) and were encouraged to use the questions most relevant to their communities.⁸

⁶ Although the City of Ottawa looked into “Tax Support, Revenue Generation and Subsidization” for the Master Plan White Papers, CAWI specifically collected information only on subsidization and fee assistance—as well as some suggestions for revenue generation.

⁷ Though this decreases data reliability, it also greatly increases ease and outreach to community who might not have been comfortable participating in a recorded meeting.

⁸ Given this format the discussion many times did not answer the specific questions asked by facilitators, but rather took on new issues or split into parallel discussions; in this case, note takers moved participants “answers” to best-suited question(s).

- Data from the focus groups was analyzed using a selective thematic categorization; that is, thematic categorization was applied to data collected from the groups of questions (about service delivery, accessibility and inclusion, and subsidy services) that generated the most discussion.
- The objective of the broad report on findings is to illuminate “common themes” and summarize the most prominent topics discussed in the focus groups; therefore only the themes shared by at least five participants in the focus groups are presented in this report.⁹
- For each aspect discussed in the findings (service delivery, accessibility and inclusion, and subsidy services), specific information related to particular groups (e.g., Somali, Aboriginal, youth) is also presented.¹⁰
- The data is reported using the interpretive style, with a brief summary of each theme described, and additional notes where necessary to further explain the comments and provide greater depth of analysis.

⁹ This ceiling (that issues be mentioned at least five times in participants’ answers) was selected to give a wide perspective of the views shared in the focus groups (given limited number of participants). If the ceiling had been higher, too much information would have been excluded from this analysis.

¹⁰ In the analysis of specific communities or groups in the city of Ottawa, some answers may have been mentioned only once or twice—yet they are still included in this report to provide a wide overview of each community’s needs. That is because in the group-specific analysis, the objective is to present each community’s diverse perspectives on the city’s P & R services, rather than to focus on themes shared most often by focus group participants.

IV. Findings

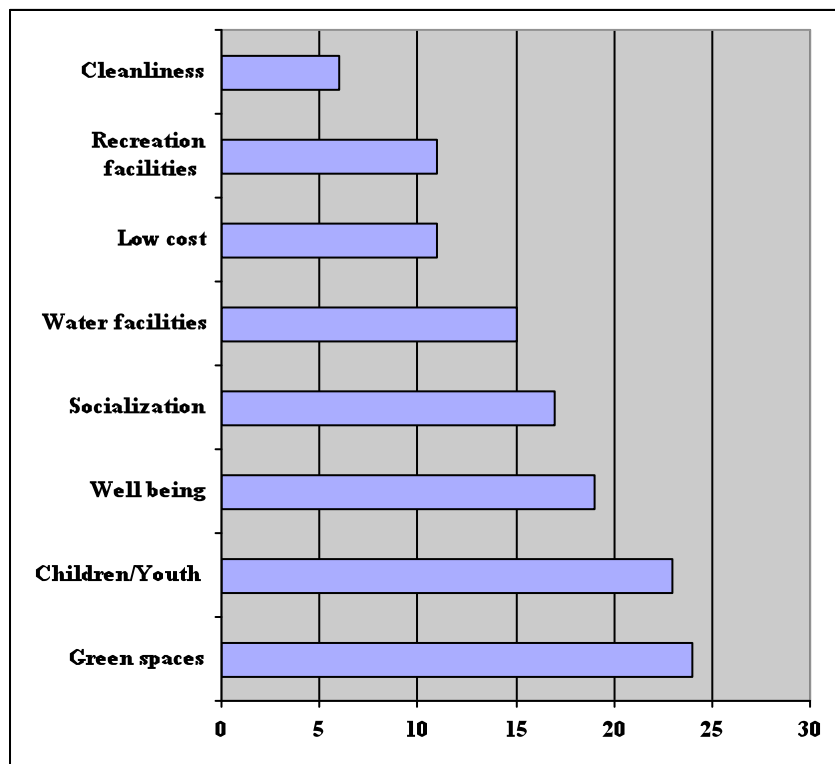
This section begins with an introduction presenting data from the focus groups discussions on *why* the residents of Ottawa think the City's P & R services are important, and *what* they like about them. It will also present some information on the proportion of Ottawa residents who are familiar with the City's P & R services.

Then the discussion of findings will focus on three different sections provided by the City of Ottawa as important aspects of the new P & R Master Plan: Service Delivery, Accessibility and Inclusion, and Subsidies.

IV.i. Introduction:

The focus groups began with an introductory section that consisted of asking participants why the City's P & R facilities were important to them.¹¹ Participants were also asked what they liked about the City's P & R services. Both those answers are represented in the bar chart below.¹²

I like Ottawa's P & R services and they are important to me because...



¹¹ Not all groups asked this question. Focus group facilitators were told that they didn't have to focus on this portion of the questionnaire because this was not part an intrinsic part of the topical discussions on service delivery, accessibility and inclusion, and subsidies. However, this question generated a substantial amount of data and it therefore sets the tone for this report.

¹² All bar charts in this report are based on the number of times each issue was mentioned in the focus groups. For example, the bar chart above indicates that participants in all the focus groups in this study mentioned the need for more and better park fixtures 28 times during their discussions about P & R service delivery in the city of Ottawa.

Green spaces

Participants emphasized that having green spaces (e.g., parks, trees, flowers, walking paths, bike paths) and opportunities to be outdoors and close to nature are very important to them. The importance of green spaces was mentioned by the multicultural, seniors, youth and rural communities.

Children/Youth

P& R are important for children and youth (not necessarily their own, but children in general). Some emphasized that P & R keep children off the streets, some valued that it works to keep children busy and safe, while others appreciated the opportunity for children to learn new skills. Others mentioned they like the fact that families can use recreation facilities together. The importance of P & R for children was mentioned by the Aboriginal, the Somali, the Arabic, and youth communities, and particularly by the multicultural and senior communities.

Water facilities

Ottawa residents enjoy the opportunity provided by City's P & R facilities to be in the water, especially swimming pools, wading pools and splash pads for children.

Mental and physical well being

The second most shared answer was that P & R contribute to mental and physical well being. P & R activities are a means to staying fit and happy. Mental and physical well being was considered important to the Aboriginal, Arabic and rural communities, particularly to the Somali population, Youth and some multicultural communities.

Socialization

Many participants thought that P & R are important because they create a space for social interaction. Socializing is particularly important to the Aboriginal community (specifically cultural specific activities) and was mentioned by the Arabic, seniors, Somali and youth communities.

Low cost

Focus group participants also mentioned that the opportunity to participate in low-cost recreational activities provided by the City was very important to them.

Recreation facilities Participants emphasized that recreation facilities, which allow them to practice specific sports, are very important to them; these include bike paths, swimming pools, tennis courts, skating rinks, walking paths, as well as other sports fields.

Cleanliness

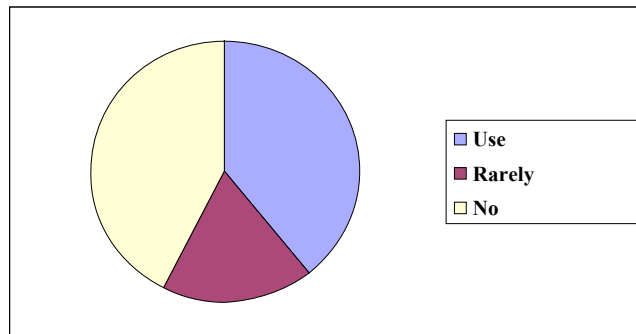
Participants noted that they like the fact that P & R facilities are clean.

As illustrated in the pie chart below, only 74 of the total of 191 participants¹³ said they use P & R services on a regular basis; the most common activity is swimming. However, 34 participants

¹³ This number (191) includes both participants in the community-based focus groups and the facilitators who participated in the training focus groups on May 12th, 2009.

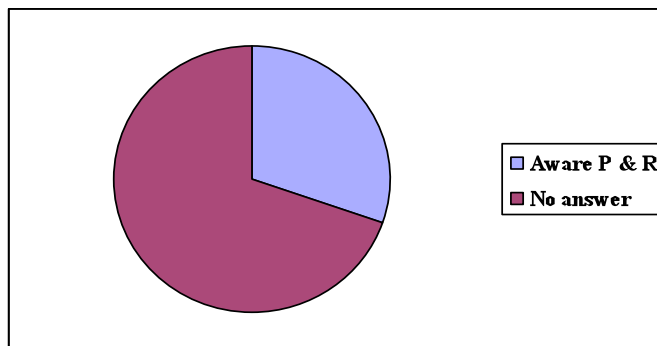
said they rarely use P & R services; this was especially prevalent among seniors. Cost is most often given as the reason for not joining P & R activities.

Use of P & R services



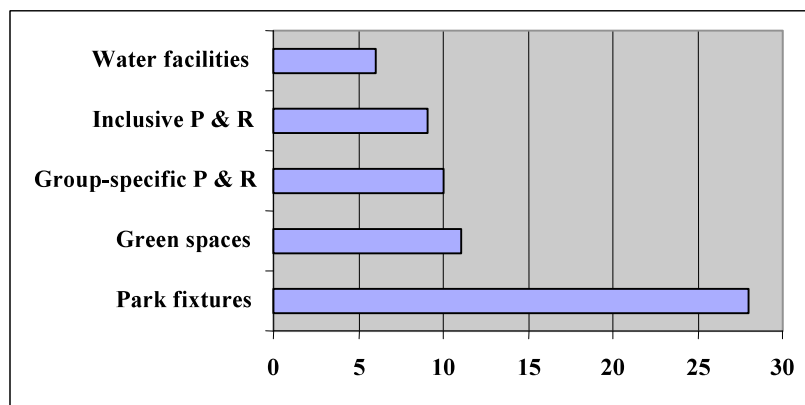
Most participants found out about facilities and programs through their community centers or associations as well as through friends and neighbors. However, only 57 participants believe they are aware of the P & R services offered by the City of Ottawa (see pie chart below).

Awareness of facilities and programs



IV.ii. Service Delivery

In regards to the City of Ottawa's delivery of P & R services, many focus group participants believe that the following should be offered:



- A significant number of focus groups participants mentioned that there should be more **park fixtures** such as garbage cans, benches, washrooms, lights, swings, and water fountains;
- Participants also felt strongly about maintaining **green spaces**;
- Many expressed a need for **group-specific activities** such as family-friendly recreational services, Aboriginal or women-only programs;
- Participants mentioned that the City's P & R services should strive to be **inclusive** of all ages, cultures and religions, abilities and incomes;
- Participants prioritized **water activities**, such as swimming pools, wading pools and splash pads as important P & R services delivered by the City of Ottawa.

Ottawa's diverse voices on P & R service delivery

Specific groups¹⁴ provided their own perspectives on the best ways for the City of Ottawa to provide P & R services to their communities:

Aboriginal

- This community feels strongly about creating facilities that are specific to the needs of the Aboriginal community, as well as spaces for community members to socialize; it is important for Aboriginal families to see each other and be with each other. Members of the Aboriginal communities (First Nation and Inuit) will travel a distance across the city to participate in a specific program if they know it is an opportunity to be together;
- Ways to accomplish this goal are: designate an arena for Aboriginal ceremonies; create an Aboriginal League for baseball or La Crosse (there was one in the past that was effective in bringing families together).

African-Francophone

- It is the City's role to develop and deliver P & R services, but community members and the private sector should also participate. The City's main responsibilities in delivering P & R should be maintenance and the creation of recreation services and programs;
- The private sector should play a role in delivering recreation programs only if they do not interfere with or replace city services and only if their participation builds better communities and partnerships with the City to offer affordable recreation services.

Arabic

- Focused on the need for youth-specific activities in general (separate activities for boys and girls);
- Participants noted that those who have chosen to cover their bodies because of religious beliefs find themselves forced to abandon certain physical activities, such as swimming—thus the need for women-only programs;
- Community had many ideas in regards to spaces that could be created by P & R, such as libraries (as recreation spaces inside parks); tents (umbrellas) to provide shade in parks with few trees; private women-only gyms (in parks, sponsored by the City);

¹⁴ See Appendix C for list of focus groups, number of participants in each focus group, and categories.

- Also suggested parks should have someone responsible for toys (as well as a place to store toys); this person would hand out balls, jumping ropes, etc. and collect the toys after kids are done playing.

Multicultural¹⁵

- Expressed a desire to see more group-specific P & R activities; specifically, family-friendly recreation services where parents and children can participate in the same activity, or separately but scheduled at the same time;
- Believe that everybody (e.g., lifeguards, staff, security) has the responsibility to develop and deliver P & R in their community;
- Suggested partnerships between business and community leaders (e.g., create a board composed of businesses representatives and communities members that could help advise on the delivery of services);
- Believe the City's role in P & R service delivery is to offer safe and clean environments and to offer on-site information (e.g., maps and schedules of activities in parks);
- City should provide more facilities (e.g., courts, washrooms);
- Agree with the private sector playing a role in delivering recreation programs as long as there is no extra cost attached; private sector can fund programs or at least match city funding, but members of the multicultural communities fear that private sector involvement in P & R services might give them too much power in setting priorities and plans, and thus call on the City to achieve the right balance.

Seniors¹⁶

- Felt particularly strongly about the need for more park fixtures; had very specific ideas such as pedestrian-friendly walkways; more or better lighting in order to feel safe using the existing walkways; on-site washrooms; and glider swings;
- Suggested that users, partners and community organizations should determine who develops and delivers P & R services in their community;
- Agreed that the private sector has a role to play in delivering recreation programs; private sector should partner with the non-lucrative sector to provide financial aid and develop services and infrastructure;
- The private sector should also provide human resources (e.g., provide an employee to offer a class in a local park or community association).

Youth¹⁷

- Would like to see teenage centers where information booths are set up that promote, educate and offer resources; this activity mega-center would offer wall climbing, indoor skate parks, as well as a mountain bike park; the Orleans area has been proposed as the location for this center as they feel it is particularly lacking in appropriate spaces for constructive teenage behavior;
- Believe it is up to P & R users to determine who develops and delivers programs and services and that the City's responsibility is to be able to draw together the potential users;

¹⁵ Multicultural focus groups were composed of a mostly urban, low-income, social housing population.

¹⁶ The Seniors category includes two francophone focus groups, and one Anglophone focus group.

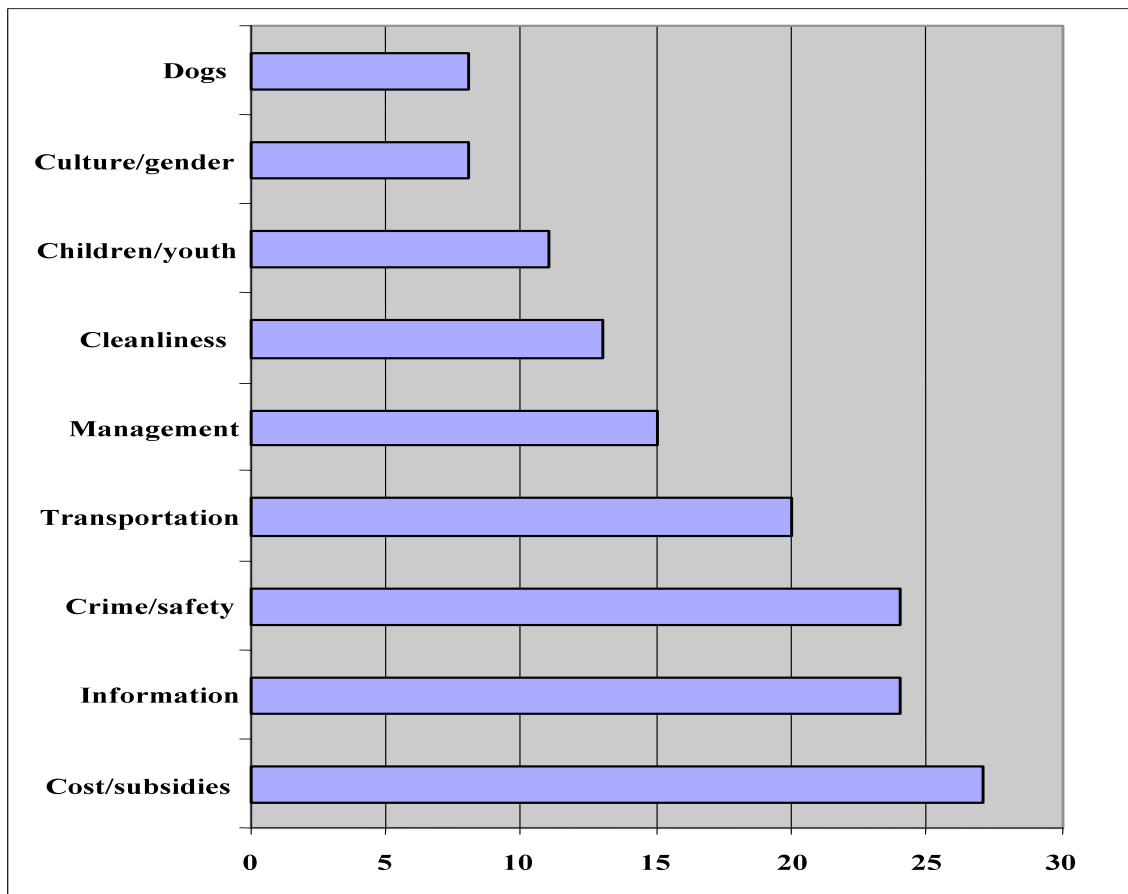
¹⁷ The Youth category includes two focus groups: one was composed of Somali youth; the other represented both francophone and Anglophone high-school students.

- Private sector should play a role in delivering recreational programs by sharing resources, costs and tasks;
- **Somali** youth would like to see more activities for girls (especially adolescents); this would include not just sports (e.g., soccer, basketball) but also self-defense courses (e.g., karate). Some of these Muslim participants emphasized that women and youth who have chosen to cover their bodies because of religious beliefs find themselves forced to abandon certain physical activities, such as swimming—thus the need for women-only programs;
- **Somali** youth would also like to see learning activities for children;
- **Somali** youth think the private sector can play a role in delivering recreational programs as long as they pay a “luxury tax” to enable the City to finance subsidized recreational services.

IV.iii. Accessibility and Inclusion

The most frequently discussed issues in this section concerned barriers to access and inclusion, and how to address them.

Barriers to inclusion and ideas to improve accessibility of P & R



- **Costs and financial barriers** to the City’s recreational services; focus group participants believed that **access to subsidies** should be expanded and more readily available. Some of the mechanisms proposed include: subsidize private facilities; empower directors of

local recreation centres to make decisions about fee assistance; provide access to recreation programs and activities at lower costs; provide balanced costs option (lower prices for those who are using services part time); consider factors other than income (e.g., number of children; mortgage; care for elderly parents); improve access to information about subsidy services; shift application process to the community level (not at the recreation centre); diversify application process so that it is available through hard copy (e.g., mail), as well as online and face-to-face.

- **Lack of information** and awareness about available programs, and a belief that the City's marketing regarding its P & R services is not reaching Ottawa's communities. Hence the City should increase efforts to promote City services and knowledge about current offerings. Participants' suggestions include: increase partnerships to promote City's P & R services, especially between recreation centres and local schools; promote through newspapers, handouts and flyers in grocery stores, as well as info boards in parks and schools; distribute maps and graphics that show location of P & R facilities in the city; widely promote free programs and activities; improve intercommunication between different City offices and facilities; increase community participation in the decision making process concerning next year's P & R activities in their neighbourhood.
- Concerns about **safety** in the City's P & R facilities; participants were concerned about crime and exposure to drugs. Participants also made suggestions for improving safety in the City's parks, such as improved lighting in parks; increase monitoring; provide gates and fences around parks; ensure plants and flowers are safe (i.e., for children); forbid driving lessons around city parks; and video surveillance¹⁸.
- Lack of public **transportation** to and **parking** at the City's P & R facilities. Some of the proposed solutions for better transportation to and from P & R facilities were: improve public transportation to P & R facilities; provide more parking and paved access roads to parks; install speed bumps and signs on roads bordering parks.
- **Management issues**, such as cumbersome registration processes, lack of open classes (with no need to register), limited hours of operation, and lack of access to facilities (e.g., locked bathrooms during recreation activities hours). Suggestions to improve management of the City's P & R facilities were: increase flexibility (e.g., in scheduling, rentals); provide drop-in Open Gyms in recreation centres; provide open courses (no registration required), especially for children; improve sensitivity training for staff, especially regarding subsidy services; simplify the registration process.
- Concerns with **cleanliness** and general maintenance of P & R facilities. Suggestions included maintaining grass, bushes and flower beds; providing more garbage bins and improving garbage removal; and enforcing dog waste removal by dog owners.
- There should be more programs and activities specifically for **children and youth**. Ideas suggested were: field trips to city parks; include children and youth in consultation process about P & R services; provide drop-in hourly childcare at P & R facilities; provide rotating, mobile entertainment teams (e.g., bookmobile) at city parks; provide a

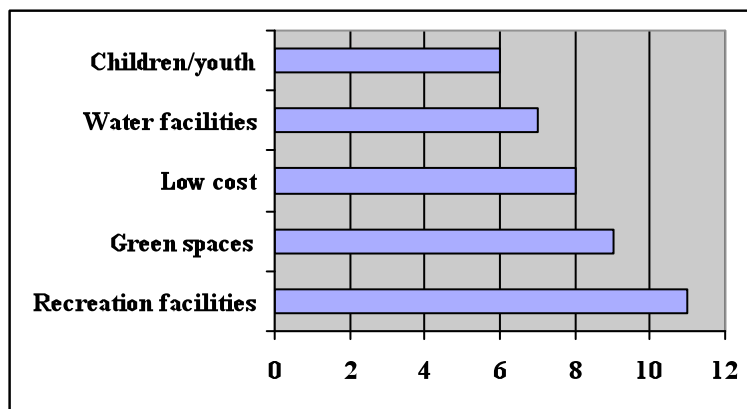
¹⁸ This was a controversial suggestion; some participants disagreed with the idea of video surveillance.

youth centre and supervised, after-hours spaces for teenagers; make parks more appealing to youth (e.g., skateboarding facilities).

- Similarly, participants suggested there should be more city programs and activities that are **culturally sensitive** and designed to enhance integration of new immigrants and culturally appropriate services for Aboriginal people. Some of the proposed solutions included: e.g., community gardening and festivities based on cultural backgrounds in each neighbourhood; translation in multiple languages and cultural interpreters; culturally specific activities (e.g., ethno-specific dance courses; activities adapted to community’s multicultural, or rural profile or Aboriginal specific programming); and designated time for women-only activities (e.g., swimming, basketball and self-defense lessons).
- Finally, some participants proposed solutions specifically designed to improve safety and cleanliness related to **dogs** in Ottawa’s parks. Participants proposed limiting access to designated parks or dog enclosures; providing dog waste disposal units; improving dog-owner policies: dog owners must keep dogs leashed, keep dogs away from areas where children are playing, and improve dog waste removal in the parks.¹⁹

Focus group participants also considered what they wish the city to maintain in its new P & R Master Plan. Some of the most frequent themes in these discussions were:

City should maintain and have more of...



- Keep the existing services and add more **recreation facilities** (e.g., bike paths, skating rinks, basketball courts);
- Keep and improve on City’s **green spaces**, such as parks, flower beds, and walking paths;
- Keep and improve on current subsidy services and **low-cost** recreational activities, as well as free activities in the City of Ottawa;

¹⁹ Although concerns about dog waste removal in city parks was also reflected in the “cleanliness” category, where focus group participants complained specifically about dogs in parks and suggested solutions to ensure they are safely leashed and pet owners are coerced to remove dog waste, then their comments were placed in this separate category. The creation of this category dedicated to “dogs” reflects the significance of “dog-related barriers” to accessibility in the focus groups discussions.

- Keep the existing services and add more **water facilities**, such as swimming pools, splash pads and wading pools to the City of Ottawa’s P & R facilities;
- Focus group participants also emphasized the need for continued focus on activities for **children and youth**, including opportunities for families to do activities together.

Focus group participants also offered many suggestions related to **increasing access to and interest in** Ottawa’s P & R services:

- Organize parks and community-based, grassroots environmental initiatives through carbon trading systems (through companies that need to buy “green credits” from the City; e.g., institute a “Green Credit Program” for social-ecological, community-based programs);
- Increase cultural links to specific communities, specifically gardens in local parks could be linked to community’s culture (e.g., Asian gardens in Asian parts of town); and
- The City should view its parks in an active way, as part of the landscape that is transformed by each community—and thus increase community participation in the design and maintenance of Ottawa parks.

Ottawa’s diverse voices on P & R accessibility and inclusion

Specific groups provided their own perspectives on the best ways for the City of Ottawa to ensure P & R services are inclusive and accessible to their communities:

Aboriginal

- Aboriginal people most likely to have difficulty accessing P & R services are Aboriginal people on limited income, those new to the city who do not know services are available, and mothers with children who cannot access services when there is no childcare—hence lack of full subsidy services, lack of information for First Nations or Inuit who have moved to Ottawa from rural communities or the north, and lack of childcare are significant barriers to accessing recreation services;
- Registration is also considered a significant barrier to accessing P & R services—recreation service users must time it just right to get in, since classes fill up quickly;
- In order to make it easier for the Aboriginal community to access P & R services, the City of Ottawa should: establish an Aboriginal liaison who goes to the Aboriginal agencies and events to provide them with information about the recreation services/camps; go to Aboriginal agencies to walk people through the steps to apply for a subsidy; include a page in the recreation guide about Aboriginal programming (some of it may be programming provided by partners); provide childcare; provide safe places for children to camp overnight; work with organizations serving Aboriginal people who have been criminalized to identify positive recreational activities that will help them to rebuild their place in the community;
- To ensure that the City is making the best use of spaces already available, including creating safe spaces for community gathering, it was suggested that: in posters, recreation guide and other advertising of P & R services, City should include Aboriginal symbols (e.g., the medicine wheel) to help Aboriginal people feel welcome; provide spaces for Aboriginal people to provide Aboriginal-specific programming; designate an arena for Aboriginal ceremonies.

African-Francophone

- The barriers to P & R accessibility and inclusion are: facilities are too crowded; programs are too expensive compared to the number of children in some families (i.e., large families need fee assistance); lack of safety in parks; when parks are too far from house—lack of convenient transportation options; lack of women-only spaces; and drug problems (in P & R facilities);
- Some of the suggestions for making P & R more accessible include: increase safety in parks with park patrols (police); increase lighting in parks; schedule programs and services to offer women-only programs and spaces; allow barbecues in parks; increase amount of garbage bins in parks;
- This community believes in universal access to P & R facilities, but notes that those most likely to have difficulty accessing P & R services are people on low income; seniors; single-parent families; and newcomers. The City could make it easier for them to access P & R spaces and services by creating more parks and offering regular bus transportation;
- The City would make best use of spaces already available by making police and security agents more visible in P & R facilities, and by providing women-only programs;
- In order to ensure that private partners offer safe, accessible, affordable programs in the community, the City should set up binding control policies in their agreements with private service providers;
- P & R services that the City should maintain: community pools (e.g., Corkstown); existing P & R programs and bike paths; and parks (green space).

Arabic

- The City should maintain in the new plan for P & R services in Ottawa: choices for kids' activities; play structures for kids; benches to sit on; swings for kids; swimming pools; open-air cinemas in parks; basketball courts (need to be fixed with fences to protect kids playing outside sports area); and garbage cans (important to have several garbage bins in parks to keep them clean);
- To make best use of spaces already available, the City's parks are supposed to be clean (garbage is a health hazard for kids); and dogs need to be on leashes;
- To ensure that spaces are safe, there should be more security guards.

Multicultural²⁰

- The barriers to inclusive and accessible P & R services mentioned most often in the multicultural focus groups were: lack of convenient public transportation, which is especially difficult to those who live far from P & R facilities; financial barriers (recreation services are too expensive for low-income families); the registration process, especially for parents with young children; hours of operation (facilities are not available when people need them most); age gaps in recreation programs (e.g., few programs for 11-13 year-olds); and safety concerns (e.g., insufficient lighting; aggressive panhandlers; unleashed dogs);
- Other barriers mentioned included:
 - a) Costly rental prices;

²⁰ See footnote 11 for a definition of this category.

- b) Users don't know where to go to voice their needs and don't know where to go to access recreation programs (i.e., lack of appropriate information about and poor management of P & R services);
 - c) Waiting lists for indoor pools;
 - d) Not enough closed-in pools;
 - e) Facilities are too small;
 - f) No childcare;
 - g) Parks not clean;
 - h) Shortage of workers for special needs;
 - i) Lack of women-only programs (e.g., need women-only swimming pool schedule at Plant pool);
 - j) The fact that the concept of recreation is new to some cultures;
 - k) Age and lack of motivation were also considered barriers to accessing recreation programs.
- Many of the ideas provided to ensure P & R recreation services become more accessible relate to making them child, youth and family oriented: provide field trips for kids or outings for families; make swimming mandatory and ensure there are enough facilities to provide these services; provide more opportunities for older children; make parks more appealing to youth (e.g., skateboarding); provide drop-in child care (call 24 hours in advance to book); make hourly childcare affordable.
 - Partnerships were also suggested as way to increase access to P & R. For example, City can partner with local communities to provide maintenance for "abandoned" parks in their neighbourhoods and/or increase partnerships between recreation centres and schools to increase promotion of activities and participation in P & R programs;
 - Promotion and marketing of P & R services: there should be more promotion through newspapers, handouts and flyers in grocery stores, as well as notice boards in parks and schools. Neighbours should be involved in promoting P & R services in their communities; there should be field trip tours on "Where are the parks" in Ottawa, and distribution of graphics that show location of all City parks.
 - The City should seek to consult with local communities more often and more effectively: survey residents on what they want in a questionnaire and commit to a follow through on the answer; have a month of each year (e.g., May) dedicated to getting feedback from residents about what they want regarding City's P & R services; and involve children and youth in needs assessment;
 - There were also many suggestions on how to improve management of P & R services, specifically in relation to minorities. Staff could benefit from more and better sensitivity training; activities (include ethno-specific programs, e.g., dances) that allow people to learn about other cultures; City could hire culture-appropriate staff to outreach and encourage integration for new immigrants; offer more women-only programs; City could improve communication between all the city facilities;
 - Participants in these focus groups also suggested more flexibility in registration and scheduling: create Open Gyms (on a drop-in basis); and keep registration open for programs, which will increase participation and children could attend according to their own schedules;
 - In relation to subsidy services, participants suggested that City ensure financial access by raising subsidy services (one focus group suggested 90% increase); take other factors into

- account than income to decide who is eligible for subsidy or not²¹. Private facilities should be subsidized (provide fee assistance for private facilities); directors of local recreation centres should be empowered to make decisions about local subsidy services;
- In terms of facilities, participants want to see them grow with the communities they are serving, find them closer to where they work and live, as well as wider hours of operations. They want more indoor pools; clean, fenced (e.g., Dundonald Park) and supervised parks for safety; drinking fountains. Ensure that dog owners keep their dogs closer on the leash;
 - Low-income communities are most likely to have difficulty accessing P & R services, but also youth, seniors, people with special needs, minorities (because of their specific needs²²), single parents, and families on a tight budget;
 - Priority for use of parks recreation facilities should be given to low-income families; there should also be women-only and men-only facilities;
 - To ensure that P & R facilities are safe, the City should: increase supervision; lighting; police presence (on bicycle); more payphones (not everybody owns a mobile phone); security buttons; hire more students in P & R services; and clean up the graffiti;
 - To make best use of spaces already available, the City should increase security; provide picnic tables in the shade (e.g., at McNabb Park); provide more recycling bins; clean parks and facilities more often (spring cleaning is always late); have more flowers; and make more parks accessible during winter;
 - To hold partners accountable, the City should implement legally binding agreements; have regular meetings with partners and community and ensure that Big Sisters, Big Brothers are available at all times. City should perform police checks for educators; get security clearance and references from established organizations for staff and volunteers; ensure buildings are up to code (have space approved by the City before use); increase staff (change regulations); and ensure more information about partnerships is distributed;
 - City should maintain in the new plan: financial assistance; free programs for activities people cannot afford; lower costs than for-profit organizations; subsidy services for lower-income families and single parents; affordability of programs and services; green spaces and grass; clean parks, and clean and well-maintained recreation facilities; bike paths and trails; skating rinks; wading pools (splash pads only cater to certain ages); swimming should be mandatory; dog parks for off and on leash; promotion of P & R programs should be increased; children and youth programs (programs for younger children, e.g., 0-6 years); combo programs for children and families; available places and programs for youth (e.g., pools, skating programs, rock climbing)²³; ways to keep youth engaged/involved (staff to keep youth engaged; e.g., walk-in programs); places specifically designed so youth can be engaged in the community; and special-needs programs.

²¹ One focus group cited the example of a woman who has 7 kids and based on the income of the family, the City has denied them subsidies (fee assistance)—even though the family’s income is not enough to cover other priorities, let alone recreation programs.

²² One example mentioned is that Muslims need access to washing stations to clean themselves if they were in contact with dogs before they pray—and that is not as easily available in city’s P & R facilities.

²³ Note taker emphasized here that focus group participants noted: “It cost us more when kids are in trouble”—showing that community sees a link between lack of available recreation options and unwanted behavior in youth.

Seniors²⁴

- Barriers to accessing P & R services include: unpaved paths for wheelchairs and walkers (difficult to walk to parks because of age); poorly maintained walkways in winter; lack of security (specifically insufficient night time lighting in parks and pathways); dogs (when unleashed; owners do not remove poop); poor transportation (i.e., buses going to parks are not regular; not enough parking at facilities); not enough benches and tables in parks; lack of cleanliness; insufficient garbage bins; not enough water fountains; need to have separate parks for children and quiet areas for the elderly; lack of marketing and promotion of information about P & R services;
- Ideas for making P & R services more accessible: offer transportation to parks; keep dogs in designated areas; not allow dogs in parks when children are playing; implement security in the parks; provide better access to walkways or paved walkways; provide barbecues and picnic tables in parks; provide shelters from rain; plant more flowers; engage in more partnerships that promote City-offered services; invest in human resources to come visit/inform partners and organizations; provide trainer offering services for the elderly such as Tai Chi (e.g., they could come once a week, indoors or outdoors);
- Those most likely to have difficulty accessing P & R services are: people in wheelchairs; those who don't have means of transportation; those who speak limited English or French. To improve access, seniors suggested adapting transport to their needs (for those on wheelchairs); lowering costs of services (e.g., half price for second child); and lowering required age to be considered elderly (suggested age is 55);
- To ensure P & R services are safe, the City should think of having parks patrols; the Neighbourhood watch program should be promoted; the community should be more involved; all providers should respect city rules; increase transparency; to ensure programs are more accessible, City should lower costs (all children should be able to access recreation);
- To make best use of spaces already available, the City needs to increase promotion; adapt to neighborhoods;
- To hold partners accountable, seniors suggested implementing committees; improving communication, and offering resource personnel;
- City should maintain in new P & R plan: services and programs offered in French; the capacity to offer all age groups and special needs groups; free parking; parks and paths; bike paths on roads; flowers; free and affordable program for seniors.

Somali

- Barriers to accessing P & R services include: parks and surroundings are not clean; people light fires; safety issues (e.g., many driving instructors are providing driving lessons close to P & R facilities, causing accidents; unleashed dogs that scare children); some plants in our parks are causing allergies;
- Ideas for making City P & R services more accessible include: swimming pool (children are bored during summer); increase safety (e.g., gate around the park; some in favour of video surveillance, others were not); install benches, tables, and toilets; put up signs stating clearly that “unleashed dogs not allowed” and strengthen policies related to unleashed dogs; make sure plants and flowers planted in parks are safe for children and people to be around; put up signs forbidding driving lessons to take place around parks;

²⁴ See footnote 12 for a description of this category.

create a safe space for Muslim women wearing a hijab to be together and enjoy recreation (women-only programs, e.g., swimming lessons, dancing and basketball; arts, crafts; perhaps devote one afternoon or create a suitable schedule for Muslim women only).

Rural

- Barriers to P & R access include: lack of knowledge about available services (City doesn't outreach to community despite some spaces being underutilized); P & R services are more expensive than they need to be, especially hidden costs of sports equipments and clothing; price of skating programs; lack of convenient transportation; not enough bike paths; seasonal effects (i.e., it is more expensive to access outdoor sports in winter); some programs are run by small clique (e.g., Nepean sailing club); and not enough flexibility for retired members of the community;
- Ideas for making P & R services accessible in their community involve: more bike paths (more communication between the City and NCC); P & R programs at lower costs; lower prices for those who aren't accessing full time (balanced costs); increase communication and promotion of activities; increase local programs and facilities²⁵;
- Those most likely to have difficulty accessing P & R services are: people on low income; people with transportation issues (i.e., if no car, has to reside close to facilities, because of poor public transportation options); and tight-budget families (not necessarily low income).
- To make best use of spaces already available, the City should avoid charges (e.g., fields) and help with insurance fee (e.g., scouts have hidden insurance costs of \$100);
- To ensure that partners offer safe, accessible, affordable programs in the community, the City should cancel agreement/contract if group (partner) hasn't fulfilled obligations; and have someone from the City in the Board of Directors.
- The City should maintain in the new plan: existing P & R programs; parks (outdoor green space should be maintained—community is concerned about encroachment on park space, e.g., the bridge considered at Andrew Hayden Park); swimming pools (e.g., community pools such as Corkstown); bike paths; Sportsplex; public beaches; and tennis courts.

Youth²⁶

- Youth emphasized the following barriers to accessing P & R services: lack of information about available recreation programs; financial situation; lack of equipment (e.g., skates, rackets); lack of services; lack of partnerships (services could be managed by other organizations); not enough places for teenagers;
- The **Somali youth** believe that barriers to access include: poor scheduling of recreational activities; lack of “resource people” (i.e., users do not know who to reach within P & R when they wish to suggest new ideas that would benefit their community); not enough advertising about P & R programs and activities; not enough security/safety in parks; and false perceptions (e.g., that parks are not safe; that City-provided recreational programs are “not for me”; that “only boys go”);

²⁵ Participants noted that facilities in their neighbourhood (this focus group discussion was held at Centennial Library) are “packed, maxed-out.” In effect, this focus group expressed concern at the idea of making P & R facilities in their area more accessible: “Why would you want to make it more accessible when some facilities are overpopulated?” Participants expressed particular concern regarding overuse of outdoor programs and sports fields.

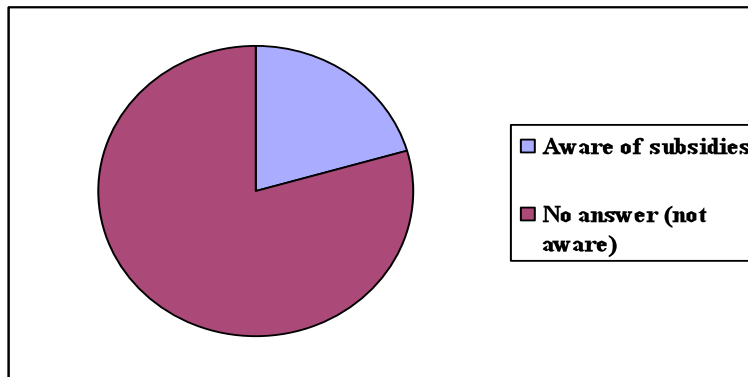
²⁶ See footnote 17 for a description of this category.

- The ideas proposed by youth to make Ottawa’s P & R services more accessible were: improve transportation services to P & R facilities; support youth center, provide supervised environment for teenagers and engage in proactive consultation with youth (go to the community, get women and various cultural groups involved); talk to city employees; consider community needs and particularities (e.g., adapt P & R services to specific needs of rural, urban and semi-urban communities; adopt a neighborhood approach, for example: Glebe services should be different from Orleans, Sarsfield); partner with Sketch Orleans; build another skate park (currently, Orleans youth go to Gatineau); provide mountain bike park; provide indoors skate park (Fallingbrook is the suggested site);
- To improve access to P & R services, youth suggest promoting and informing Ottawa residents about available programs, including subsidies—by making sure that city staff is well informed; recreation guides are more easily accessible, that website is user friendly, and through the local media; partnering with schools and after-school day care; offer transportation to services after school;
- To make access to P& R services and spaces easier, the **Somali youth** suggest: organizing activities through schools (bringing classes to parks, e.g., teach math through music in the parks); increase ease of use: use magnetic cards, rather than pin numbers for recreational activities; improve City of Ottawa registration online (currently not well organized); more communal activities for the neighbourhoods; implement an “equipment library or bank” to loan out equipment in P & R facilities; more bicycle rentals;
- The youth focus group believe those most likely to have difficulty accessing P & R services are new immigrants; single parents; low-income families; and rural residents (due to distance and lack of convenient transportation options).
- City should make better use of community centers, since currently access to rooms and centers is complicated (e.g., doors are often locked; there are too many rules); should post information on doors at centers (e.g., for more info, call 123-4567);
- To make best use of spaces already available, the **Somali youth** suggested: keep the shores clean (in parks along rivers, the shore is not always clean); parks need more cultural and eco-friendly activities (e.g., Somali evening of singing and dance; ethnic cooking lessons; gardening);
- To ensure that P & R facilities are safe, the **Somali youth** recommend more monitoring;
- To ensure their partners offer safe, accessible, affordable programs in the community, the City should diversify partners and spend more on human resources than for equipment; to hold partners accountable, the City should prioritize management based on results, with precise objectives and follow up, and measurable outcomes for both City and partners; City should engage in equal and transparent partnerships;
- The City should maintain in new P & R plan: pools; parks; nature, green space (youth are worried about deforestation); and accessibility. The **Somali youth** suggest maintaining (and increasing) sports activities for girls, especially teenagers (e.g., soccer, basketball).

IV.iv. Subsidy

As shown in the pie chart below, only 20 percent (39 out of 191 participants) stated they were aware of or use the City’s subsidies for P & R services. Since this was a direct question to focus group participants, no answer was considered as an indication that participants were not aware of the City’s available subsidy services:

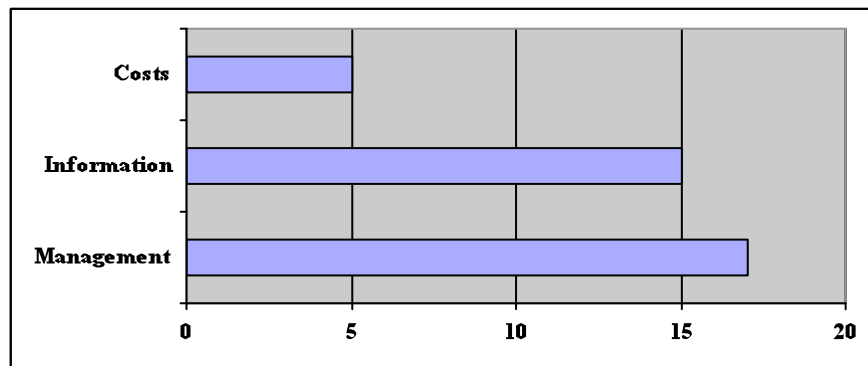
Awareness of subsidies



The pie chart above illustrates that the key problem with P& R subsidies is that most residents are *not aware of its availability*. This was reflected in focus group discussions.

The issue that generated the most data in this aspect of the study concerned ways the City of Ottawa can make subsidies more accessible for those who need it. Participants noted that:

How to make subsidies more accessible

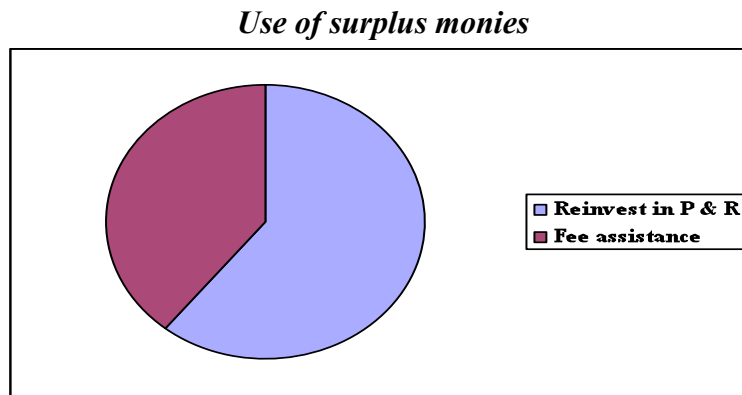


- **Improve the management of subsidy program.** City employees should be trained specifically to process subsidies to ensure the program is well managed and staff is knowledgeable about the application process. Particularly, staff should be trained to be sensitive when answering inquiries about subsidies; there were complaints in the focus groups²⁷ that the process of applying for subsidies involved dealing with at times insensitive staff who shouted across the room while searching for subsidy forms that frequently proved difficult to find; this indicated to the participants that the subsidy application process is poorly managed, and that staff are not trained specifically to deal with needy and low-income families who may be very timid about exposing themselves as applicants;
- Acquiring **information about subsidies** should be easier and simpler, with opportunities for accessing information online or in print (in the City's P & R guide); subsidies should also be **promoted** in the City's P & R facilities;

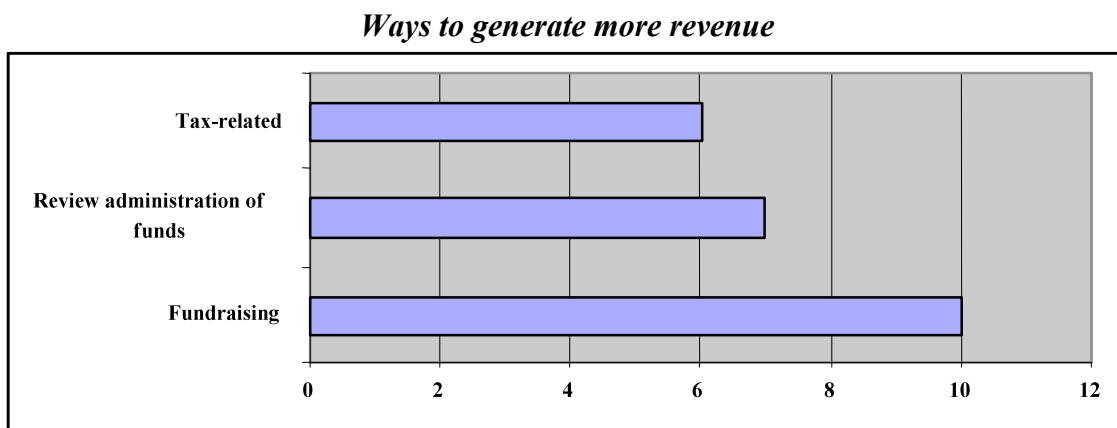
²⁷ This discussion occurred when participants discussed (and agreed with) the story used to illustrate this issue in the focus groups (see Appendix B, Seema Needs a Subsidy).

- **Costs** should be lowered or waived completely for needy families and **subsidies** should be more generous to ensure low-income and needy families²⁸ have access to City’s P & R services.

In regards to how the City should use **surplus monies**, participants who discussed this issue were divided into two groups: 60 percent (14 participants) who believe that the City should reinvest in P & R, and 40 percent (9 participants) that believe surplus monies should be used for subsidies or fee assistance. The pie chart below illustrates this divide:



Focus group discussions also produced ideas regarding **revenue generation** for access to P & R services (see bar chart below). The suggestions shared most frequently include: fundraising; reviewing City’s administration of funds; and tax-related suggestions, such as reforming tax structure to make it an adequate source of income for the City, or impose a recreation tax.



Suggestions proposed by participants in the focus groups to **make subsidy services more accessible** include:

- Those who are in financial need should have priority when it comes to subsidies. City needs to look at *spendable* income after considering applicants’ specific financial burdens,

²⁸ The definition of “needy family” used here is based on the notion of *spendable income*, which was suggested in the focus groups; see below the suggestions proposed by participants in the focus groups to make subsidy services more accessible.

such as mortgage, elderly parents living at home, or sick children. Caring for more children (e.g., large families) and seniors were specifically emphasized as heavy expenses;

- Ottawa residents should be able to apply only once a year for the subsidization process (eligibility valid for whole year);
- Streamline the subsidization process (e.g., offer special cards for eligible applicants);
- Transfer unused portions of subsidies to other family members or “bank” them for the following year;
- Request required tax forms directly from the federal government, rather than asking applicants to provide them;
- Implement a volunteer bank which offers users the option to volunteer for the City of Ottawa as payment for recreational services; volunteers could donate their “hours” to others;
- Research best practices in other cities (e.g., in Sannich, BC, an activity card which allows 52 swims a year is available for subsidized P & R users).

Ottawa’s diverse voices on P & R subsidy services

Aboriginal

- Aboriginal participants suggested that the City make the application process for subsidies confidential; people shouldn’t have to apply openly at the reception desk. Subsidy applicants should be able to call to set up an appointment where they would be treated with dignity. Alternatively, they could go to Aboriginal agencies, where staff would guide them through the various steps to apply for a subsidy.

African-Francophone

- Subsidy issues did not generate much discussion in this community. They did, however, provide ideas to make P & R more affordable such as: utilize revenues from City-managed parking areas; and fundraising.

Arabic

- This community thinks that more subsidies are needed; the 25% subsidy is not enough for families with 2-3 kids. They say that costs for P & R are prohibitive; more subsidies are necessary.

Multicultural²⁹

- The multicultural community’s main concern is lack of information or access to information about subsidies. City should better promote subsidies (e.g., they can collaborate with doctors or teachers who can promote the idea in different languages). This community feels citizens aren’t aware that the 25% unsubsidized portion of program fees can be waived or that City has an agreement with the Canadian Tire Jump Start Foundation that offers grants in the community for people to access recreation programs. They feel low, fixed-income or struggling families shouldn’t have to pay at all for City programs and that surplus monies could be used to support these families through either

²⁹ See footnote 11.

sports equipment or language-appropriate subsidy advisors. They have suggested many ways to make P & R more affordable, such as:

- a) Low income families should have lowest recreation cost; cost should increase as income increases, such that recreation services would have highest cost for high income earners;
- b) There should be a kids-specific membership;
- c) Lowering costs in areas identified as low-income neighbourhoods;
- d) Build local partnerships (e.g., partnerships with local cultural centres, such the Somali Centre, or the Chinese community centre);
- e) Connect with politicians at all levels—propose reallocations of existing funds, such that the federal and provincial governments could give more money to the City to deliver programs;
- f) Push for long-term funding for programs rather than annual allocations, which are subject to cuts.

Seniors³⁰

- Seniors believe City should be more sensitive and treat people seeking financial assistance with respect. They feel children, seniors and low-income families should have priority for subsidies. However, City should consider applicants on a case-by-case basis. Seniors think surplus monies should be put toward getting information out to the schools so that children can inform their parents.

Somali

- This community feels that that the City should provide full subsidy services for low-income families.

Rural

- The rural community had many suggestions for generating monies for access to P & R, such as reviewing the City's administration of funds. They also suggest that the City approach corporations and communities to sponsor P & R facilities; e.g., corporations and communities can "adopt" their local recreation centre(s).

Youth³¹

- Youth feel that the City needs to better promote information about available subsidies, and that families with low spendable income should have priority;
- **Somali** youth expressed that the process is too complicated; City should lessen bureaucracy for access to subsidies and ensure the subsidy user's file is efficient (e.g., use phone numbers to identify subsidy program users). This community feels that subsidies aren't enough for larger families with low-income. They say these families should be fully subsidized, i.e., the City should waive the 25 % fee;
- **Somali** youth gave the following examples for ways to making P & R more affordable: Community gardening (e.g., a co-op or food bank, where profits benefit community programs) and recycling programs (profits to benefit City parks). They feel that if

³⁰ See footnote 12.

³¹ See footnote 17

programs were more affordable and culture-specific (e.g., fitness programs for women only), more people would attend and there would be greater profit.

V. Advertising

When asked if **advertising** could be used to generate revenues for P & R services in Ottawa, focus group participants answered that:

- Advertising is acceptable as long as it is standardized and strictly controlled, and limited³²;
- Advertising should be respectful of P & R customers, family-sensitive, and educational and harmless for children;
- No sexual content; no smoking or alcohol advertising.

Policies on advertising in P & R facilities should be created in consultation with communities (e.g., a committee). Revenues from advertising should be used to improve P & R services in Ottawa and to increase subsidy services.

Privileged access to advertising in P & R facilities should be given to:

- Stimulate the local economy (i.e., local businesses should advertise; no multinational corporations);
- Ads that promote healthy lifestyles and healthy food;
- Corporate sponsorship to subsidize recreational events (specific events, such as races and competitions).

Therefore most of the focus groups participants in this study, which discussed advertising in City's P & R facilities, emphasized that advertising is acceptable—as long as it is limited, strictly controlled, respectful, educational and family-sensitive.

³² Some said it should not be allowed in parks (only indoor facilities) because it adds visual pollution; others suggested it should be limited to Recreation Guide and/or sponsored events, not year-round advertising in P & R facilities.

VI. Conclusions

The information presented in this report was developed as a result of a focus group project sponsored by CAWI and developed in partnership with community women, community organizations and the City of Ottawa, with funds from the City of Ottawa Diversity and Employment Equity Division and United Way Ottawa.

The objectives of this project were to:

- Create opportunities for women from diverse communities to engage their peers in informing the City of Ottawa Recreation Master Plan; and
- Help the City of Ottawa to develop a plan that ensures P & R services reflect the needs of the full diversity of residents, and contributes to their quality of life.

The women who contributed their time and insights to organize, facilitate and participate in focus groups hope that the City of Ottawa will utilize the findings and recommendations to ensure that Ottawa's parks and recreation facilities contribute to the well being of the full diversity of residents. Women who participated in this project will be invited to share this report with their communities and encourage them to continue to make their views known so as to continue to improve recreation services.

Women across their diversity have proven to be an excellent source of knowledge to inform city planning. As mothers, grandmothers, care provider, social service workers, community volunteers and students, they have specific insights for good city planning and have informal links into their communities. CAWI will seek future opportunities that enable women to enhance their community engagement skills and engage their communities in city planning.

Appendix A

Focus Group Guide

INTRO:
<u>Question 1.</u> P & R are important to me because...
INFO SESSION ON CITY AND P & R.
<u>Question 1.</u> How many of you use city parks and recreation facilities on a regular basis? _____ What for:
<u>Question 2.</u> How many of you rarely use city facilities? _____ Why not?
<u>Question 3.</u> How many of you were aware of the facilities and programs available in the city? _____
<u>Question 4.</u> How did you find out about what's available?
CITY / PRIVATE / PROFIT / NON PROFIT VISUAL
<u>Question 5.</u> How many of you use non-profit, private facilities? _____ What for?
<u>Question 6.</u> How many use for-profit, private, facilities? _____ Why? or Why not?
THEME 1: ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION
<u>WHAT WE LIKE</u>
<u>Question 1.</u> What do you like about current parks and recreation services in your community? Why?
<u>Question 2</u> What kinds of things should the city be sure to maintain in their new plan?

<u>BARRIERS</u>
<u>IDEAS FOR MAKING CITY PARKS AND RECREATION SERVICES MORE ACCESSIBLE</u>
<u>Question 3.</u> Who is most likely to have difficulty accessing parks and recreation services? Why?
<u>Question 4.</u> How can we make it easier for them to access both the space and the services?
<u>Question 5.</u> How can the city make best use of spaces already available? How do they ensure they are safe?
<u>Question 6.</u> What should the city do to ensure their partners offer safe, accessible, affordable programs in the community?
<u>Question 7.</u> How do they hold their partners accountable?

<u>THEME 2: MAKING IT AFFORDABLE</u>
<u>Question 1.</u> How many of you have accessed parks and recreation subsidies, or know someone who has?
<u>STORY: SEEMA NEEDS A SUBSIDY</u>
<u>Question 2.</u> What are some ways that the city can make subsidies more accessible to someone like Seema?
<u>Question 3.</u> Who should be given priority for parks and recreation subsidies and why?
<u>Question 4.</u> Do you have any ideas for generating more money for access to parks and recreation programs?
<u>Question 5.</u> What should the city do with surplus monies it gets from recreation programs?

Question 6. How can this money benefit people like Seema?
THEME 3: SERVICE DELIVERY
QUESTIONS TO ASK TO HELP DRW THE PICTURE (Continue to ask questions until you have a pretty good idea of what services should be available, how they should be delivered, and by whom)
Question 1. What kinds of park and recreation services should the city be offering in our community?
Question 2. How should these services be delivered?
Question 3. What kinds of facilities and/or spaces should be created and /or used?
Question 4. Who should be involved in the development and delivery of parks and recreation services in our community?
Question 5. What should the city's main responsibilities be with regards to the development and delivery of parks and recreation services?
Question 6: should the private sector play a role in delivering city recreation programs? Why or why not?
TIME PERMITTING
Question 1. What about advertizing? Should we advocate advertizing as a way of generating revenue?
Question 2. If yes, how should this money be used? What happens if advertizing dollars dry up?
Question 3. How do we choose who gets to advertize and who doesn't?
WRAP UP / COMMENTS

Appendix B

Seema Needs a Subsidy

Seema is the mother of two children, an 8 month old daughter and an active 7 year old boy, Andrew. Andrew has always liked to swim but has never had lessons. And now he has an idea that he would really like to play basketball.

Seema wants her son to be involved in those two activities and she has decided she too needs to be in some exercise program. With the end of school year approaching, she also needs to register Andrew to a summer camp. She checked the City recreation guide and saw the prices. \$72.50 for each course and an average of \$75 a week for day camps! How could she and her husband possibly afford that! The rent, the food and all those basic needs would have to come first.

Seema has heard from a friend that the City gives financial assistance to help pay for recreation. She picked up a recreation guide to look for information on the subsidies, but could not find it. Maybe her friend was wrong.

So she went to her local recreation centre to ask it. When she walked into her recreation centre, there were other people lining up. She hated to ask for a subsidy in front of them. So when it was her turn, she asked the staffperson in a low voice. But then to her dismay, the staff person turned to shout across the room to ask a colleague where she could find the form for a subsidy.

Seema felt humiliated. She took a deep breath as she left the recreation centre. She needed to fill out the form, and then return with the form and documents to prove address and source of income.

When filling out the form that night, she discovered that she will still have to pay 25% of the cost of any program. That would be \$20 for each program and that there is a limit of \$160 per person per year. Sigh! She could not afford the two classes for her son, register him for the summer camp and still take a class for herself. A choice would have to be made. She would register him for the two classes, and hope to take exercise for herself another year. However, she would still be unable to afford the summer camp. What would you do if you were Seema? Is there suggestion you could think of that could help Seema provide affordable recreation to her family and herself?

Note: This story was created based on real life stories that women shared in designing the training.