



Budget 2024 Consultation

Template for Public Hearing Participants

The Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services invites British Columbians to share their ideas and priorities for the next provincial budget. The Committee thanks all British Columbians for their continued participation in the annual budget consultation.

Should you wish to provide written information in support of your presentation, you must use this template.

Instructions:

Please provide your comments by filling out this submission form.

You may provide up to **three** recommendations (maximum 50 words each) along with your explanation for each recommendation (maximum 300 words each). Should you include more than three recommendations, additional recommendations will not be considered part of your formal submission and may only be reviewed for informational purposes.

The order of recommendations does not reflect priority.

Please ensure that your recommendations and explanations are captured within the body of the submission. Information provided through links will not be considered to form part of the submission and may only be reviewed for further interest.

If you require assistance or support to make a submission, please contact the Parliamentary Committees Office at 250-356-2933 or 1-877-428-8337 (toll-free in BC).

Please note, submissions are considered public documents and may be posted on the Committee's website and can be made available upon request to interested parties. Please do not include any personal information within the body of your submission. The Parliamentary Committees Office will remove an individual's personal contact information prior to posting or disclosing any submissions.

Additionally, the names of all individuals and organizations who provide input to the Committee are listed in the Committee's final report which is made publicly available at the conclusion of its work.

Contact Information:

First Name*:

Last Name*

Katie

Fenn

Organization (if the presentation is on behalf of an organization)

BC Recreation and Parks Association (BCRPA)

Submission Form

Introduction (100-word limit)

Please provide any general background information relevant to your submission (e.g. the work of your organization or relevant personal experience).

BCRPA has been the voice of recreation and parks for the province since 1958. BCRPA's mission is to build healthy and resilient communities across the 126 communities, 4500 members and 3000 fitness leaders that make up the provincial organization, representing 97% of the province from a municipal and regional perspective. Our strategy is anchored by four pillars of society well-being: addressing the physical inactivity epidemic, supporting climate change adaptation through community resilience, reconciliation through relationships with Indigenous communities particularly through land stewardship, and embedding Equity, Diversity and Inclusion as fundamental decision making principles in space and facility design, and program implementation.

Recommendation 1 (50-word limit)

A 3 year \$3M/year investment to address the Aquatics Crisis post COVID-19

Recommendation 1 Explanation (300-word limit)

Use this space to provide background information relating to recommendation 1 and to explain why it should be included in the next provincial budget.

At present, programming rates for aquatics are running at 30% of the pre-pandemic capacity (Vancouver statistic, May 2023). This is a confounded issue, as demand is at an all-time high due to the cohort of children that did not have access to aquatic programming for 2 plus years during the pandemic.

Swimming is a fundamental life skill, particularly for a province that is coastal and abundant with many natural bodies of water widely enjoyed for recreating. Investment now will ensure that this cohort of children does not result in longer term crisis involving increased drownings or injury.

In our province, we have been working with the Ministry of Health and BC's Lifesaving Society to address this issue through a multi-factorial approach. This includes: recruitment and retention for aquatics staff; reducing the minimum age of lifeguards and instructors to 15 years; and piloting partnerships with schools and with recreation to provide aquatics training programs. All of these factors need provincial funding support.

Quebec has seen considerable success in recovery for aquatics with a \$5M provincial investment/year for 3 years. Ontario is reporting statistics to support recruitment and retention focused funding for lifeguards and aquatics instructors. Nationally, there is a joint federal budget request for \$15M to support recovery.

This investment in British Columbia will ensure equitable access to learning the fundamental life skill of swimming while also expanding support for employment opportunities in the aquatics field and creating innovative approaches to the inclusion of equity-deserving groups such as intergenerational and co-participation programs. At present the demands on the aquatic system are further increasing inequity, as those with socioeconomic means to navigate waitlist and registrations systems are the ones receiving service.

Recommendation 2 (50-word limit)

A one-time \$500,000 investment to support the provincial roll out of the National Recreation and Parks Infrastructure Database.

Recommendation 2 Explanation (300-word limit)

Use this space to provide background information relating to recommendation 2 and to explain why it should be included in the next provincial budget.

Recreation infrastructure in BC is largely at an end-of-life cycle state. This is significantly due to the fact that there was a large investment in post-war building for recreation facilities without a sustainable succession plan in place for these spaces. Further, pools and arenas are the number one emitters of CO₂ in most municipalities compared to all other public assets.

A data-informed approach to addressing infrastructure needs, greenhouse gas emission reduction targets, and future planning across the province requires a robust and visualized data set to guide decision-making. This will further enable the ability to consider a provincial network of recreation facilities that benefits residents in a more equitable way across the province.

The Canadian Parks and Recreation Association has led the building of a national database, and we are about to enter the phase of provincial data input. A cohesive and organized approach to data input, cleaning, and analysis in the province will ensure the compilation of a complete data set that can be trusted to inform clear future decision making to address the infrastructure crisis.

This investment will support a systemized data entry and analysis approach by resourcing a provincial data engagement and analytic group. Ensuring that the full set of municipal infrastructure assets across the province are entered consistently and efficiently; alongside, clear analytics and reporting.

Recommendation 3 (50-word limit)

A 3-year scaled investment of \$1M in year 1; \$3M in year 2; and \$8M in year 3 to support the transition to free recreation, thereby expanding accessibility and inclusion of equity-deserving groups, increasing opportunity for physical activity in all populations and acting as a health, specifically mental health, cost-saving lever.

Recommendation 3 Explanation (300-word limit)

Use this space to provide background information relating to recommendation 3 and to explain why it should be included in the next provincial budget.

We know from the research and as individuals, that the two key protective factors to well-being (mental, physical, emotional, social) are being outside in green space and being physically active. We know that we have an unsustainable health care model in Canada, and the shift to strategic investments in prevention are critical to the long-term viability of our universal system.

We have seen successful trials in direct “free recreation” through social prescribing and nature prescribing (eg. PaRx) programs. In these programs, in place of or as an augment to prescribing medication, clients are given access to free social recreation programs, and dosing of time spent in nature. These programs while successful still have direct costs to the health care system with the onus on family physicians and MSP billing.

A phased programmatic approach to free recreation beginning with a target population of 14-25 year olds who are not currently accessing traditional recreation programs would be an immediate efficiency and effectiveness upstream based solution to the downstream clinical and mental health crisis we are currently facing. This targeted proof of concept approach will also demonstrate long term viability of free recreation as an offset and cost reduction strategy for the health care system. This model has been proven many times in numerous national and international jurisdictions.

We require your acknowledgement that you have read our [privacy policy](#) (required in order to formally receive your submission).

I have read and agreed to the Privacy Policy of the Parliamentary Committees Office.

We also seek your permission to post your submission on the Committee’s website following the release of the Budget 2024 Consultation Report. Please note that we only post submissions on the website where consent has been received; however, any submission may be provided to interested parties upon request as submissions are considered public documents.

I consent to having my submission posted on the Legislative Assembly website.

Upon completion, please save this document with your last name and first name or organization name (if applicable), and email to financecommittee@leg.bc.ca.

Thank you for taking the time to participate in the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services' Budget 2024 Consultation.

To learn more about the consultation and the work of the Committee, visit the [Committee's website](#).