



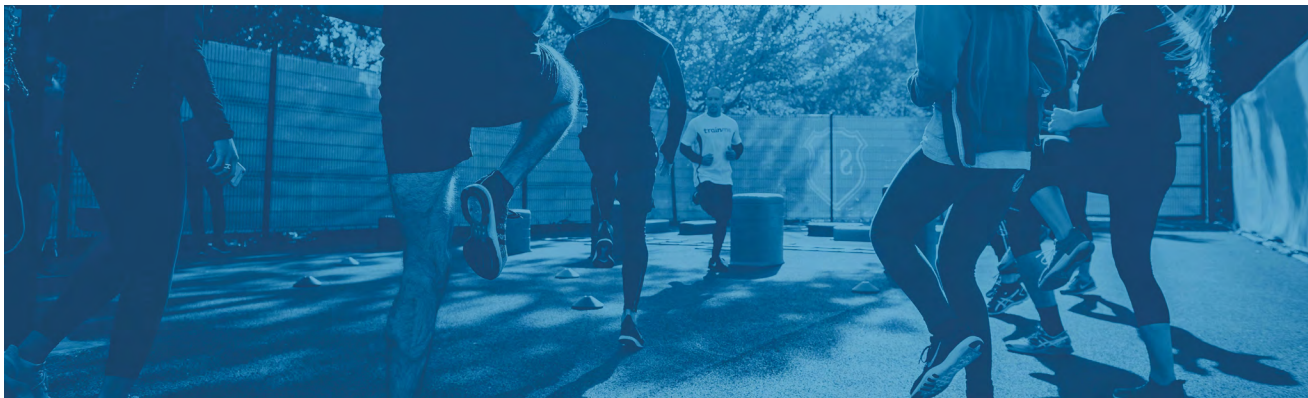
# **Sport, Physical Activity & Recreation Election Playbook:**

**KEEP ALBERTA MOVING**

# FOREWORD

Engagement with Sport, Physical Activity, and Recreation (SPAR) gets Albertans moving. This supports social well-being, promotes positive mental health, and fosters healthy child and youth development. In 2019 alone, sport, physical activity and recreation generated health savings of \$23.4 billion in Canada and we believe that improved policy and greater investment from the Alberta Government, will accelerate this impact immediately.

SPAR provides opportunities for people to improve their health and wellness, socialize and interact with others, learn new skills, have fun and find balance in their lives. This document will also highlight how the SPAR sector in Alberta supports significant economic activity and sustainable jobs.



We know SPAR can help improve the physical and mental health of Albertans, preventing many avoidable conditions, and easing pressure on our healthcare system. That is why we, as leading voices across the SPAR sector in Alberta, are united in calling for fundamental change to transform the role our sector can play.

Put simply, we have an exciting opportunity to make fundamental changes to enable more people to benefit from SPAR and by doing so we can slow, and reverse the proliferation of existing negative trends and their consequences for physical, mental, and social well being.

Through a common vision and a unified voice, SPAR organizations are partnering to allow for united and strengthened advocacy at a provincial level. This resource will provide background information about the SPAR sector, context of the current state of the sector, as well as changes that we seek that will dramatically increase the positive impact that SPAR can and will continue to have in the lives of all Albertans.

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*\*We would like to acknowledge the hard work of many organizations who have laid the foundation upon which this document has been created. This includes the 2022 report entitled **The Impact of Our Sector: A health valuation of sport and physical activity in Canada**; the 2020 Active Alberta Coalition report, **The Impact of Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation in Alberta**; and the United Kingdom document, **Unlocking the Potential: How sport, recreation and physical activity can help improve the health and wellbeing of the nation**. The relevance and timeliness of these documents speaks to the universal benefit of SPAR here in Alberta and around the world.*

# WHO'S AT THE TABLE

## History of the Collaboration

The SPAR sector is very diverse and represents a multitude of organizations, sub-sectors, individuals and relationships. The leadership group is currently represented by the following organizations who represent different facets of the sector and each of extended memberships, reach and networks.

### Alberta Sport Leadership Association

The Alberta Sport Leadership Association is a newly formed non-profit that represents the nearly 90 provincial sport and multi-sport organizations in Alberta. Their purpose is to unite and advance Alberta's sport sector through increasing the profile of sport by advocating the positive values and benefits; serving as the unified voice within the Alberta sport community to identify issues and seek mutually beneficial solutions; and providing overall leadership and strategic direction to the sport community.



### Alberta Recreation and Parks Association

The Alberta Recreation and Parks Association is a non-profit organization committed to building healthier and happier communities and citizens by developing and promoting recreation and parks. Its membership represents over 90% of the population of Alberta through municipal and non-profit organizations serving Albertans through recreation and parks programming, spaces and places.



### Alberta Schools Athletic Association

The Alberta Schools' Athletic Association is a voluntary, non-profit organization that has been established to coordinate a program of worthwhile athletic activities for the young people of Alberta in an educational setting. The membership, currently 373 high schools, ultimately determines the policy of the Association through representation on the provincial Board of Governors.



### Calgary Adapted Hub Powered by Jumpstart

Calgary Adapted Hub powered by Jumpstart (CAH) is a collective of seven Calgary-based organizations committed to providing quality sport and recreation opportunities for children, youth, and families living with disabilities in the city of Calgary. The Hub's goal is to maximize available programs and create bold new ones through knowledge-sharing, research, education, evaluation, and—above all else—collaboration.



### Ever Active Schools

Ever Active Schools is a registered national charity designed to create and support healthy school communities. We engage and support schools through a Comprehensive School Health framework, which addresses health and education goals to improve the social outcomes of children and youth in Alberta.



### Fitness Alberta

Fitness Alberta is a non-profit organization whose passions are standards, professionalism and evidence-informed education for personal trainers and group exercise professionals. Their certifications are recognized across Canada, North America and internationally. Powered by the AFLCA, the organization has supported the fitness industry with certification and professional development for 40 years and enjoys a community of more than 2,000 certified exercise professionals across Alberta.



### Mount Royal University, Department of Health and Physical Education

Mount Royal’s Bachelor of Health and Physical Education (BHPE) responds to the growing need for community health and physical activity champions in Western Canada and beyond. The BHPE focuses on creating experienced and well-rounded graduates prepared to become strong health and wellness advocates in the community or pursue further education at a graduate or professional school level.



### Canadian Sport Institute Calgary

The Canadian Sport Institute Calgary (CSI Calgary) is a non-profit organization dedicated to building, creating, and educating athletes, coaches, and sport-science professionals. We are a part of many journeys through high-performance sport – from medal counts and Olympic or Paralympic podiums to overcoming injuries and pushing past personal barriers. But we want to be known for the legacy of the people we develop and the positive mark they leave in our community.



### Free Play

Free Play for Kids mission is to provide marginalized kids and youth with the opportunity to play in a safe, accessible, and inclusive environment at no cost to them or their families—because when kids are empowered through play, their families, their schools, and their communities are empowered as well.



# INDUSTRY BACKGROUND

SPAR is woven into the fabric of our communities, positively impacting the lives of all Albertans. SPAR creates memories we all cherish and provides us with sanctuary in challenging times, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, more than 82% of Albertans believe that sport contributes to an improved quality of life.

Among the many ways in which SPAR makes Alberta stronger, the sector provides a significant contribution to the province through improved health outcomes, strong economic value, and broad participation. The following highlights but a few of the ways in which SPAR makes Alberta healthier, more connected, and more prosperous.

## Improved Health Outcomes

- + Over **2.2 million cases of health conditions were prevented in 2019** as a result of sport and physical activity participation, including over 600,000 each for Coronary Heart Disease, Type 2 Diabetes, and Depression.
- + An increase in physical activity would increase Alberta GDP by a cumulative **\$1.13 billion and would decrease absenteeism in Alberta by nearly 10,000 days annually by 2040.**
- + A **20% increase in physical activity** amongst Albertans would reduce Alberta health care spending by over **\$150 million annually**. Increased physical activity will help Albertans live longer and enjoy a better quality of life.

## Economic Value

- + In 2019, **10.2 million Canadians participated in health and fitness clubs** throughout the year, contributing to a total **social value of \$14.63 billion dollars.**
- + The SPAR sector contributes as much as **2% to Alberta's GDP and supports 88,000 jobs**, more than **3.5% of total employment.**
- + In addition to the numerous opportunities for careers in the sector, jobs in the SPAR sector also provide meaningful employment experiences that contribute to the career paths of many teachers, health care workers, and social service professionals.
- + In 2019, Sports Tourism in Alberta was valued at **\$537 million dollars.**

## Participation & Volunteerism

- + It is estimated that **24% of adults and 59% of children** participate directly in organized sport.
- + Sport has the highest volunteer rate and number of volunteer hours of any other organizations in the nonprofit sector.
- + Annually **13.6 million hours of volunteer time** are dedicated to amateur sport in Calgary alone.

# CURRENT STATE

With all this in mind, is the full power of SPAR currently being fully harnessed in Alberta? Sadly, no. But can it? 100% yes. To do this the SPAR sector needs to be empowered, supported, and protected so that it can grow and realize its full societal potential.

This is particularly important now as consistent upward pressure on health spending and associated public services due to increasingly complex, long-term needs are often the result of preventable conditions. The Government of Alberta is currently set to spend 45% of its operating budget on health by 2024-25, up from 32% in 1999-2000. However, Government investment in the SPAR sector has not kept pace with provincial economic conditions and population growth. Per capita provincial funding for sport is now only 37% of what it was in 1993.

Driven by the COVID-19 pandemic, Alberta has seen sharp declines in levels of physical activity - particularly amongst children and young people - which has been accompanied by decreased physical and mental wellbeing. These challenges require a rapid response to mitigate the risk of negative long-term impacts.

Furthermore, recent high-profile cases that have compromised the physical, emotional, and mental safety of participants, athletes, and their families have highlighted the critical importance of safe sport practices across the entire SPAR sector. Lack of capacity, suitable resources, and overburdened governance structures have permitted these unforgivable instances to occur all too often, casting a shadow on the incredibly positive impact that SPAR can make in the lives of Albertans.

This is NOT sustainable. A much greater emphasis – and associated resources – must be placed on prevention, including through getting more people, more active, more often. These resources will contribute not only to better health outcomes and opportunities for Albertans to participate, but will also pave the way for stronger governance structures that will promote accessibility, inclusion, accountability, and safe sport throughout the entire sector.

These are undoubtedly difficult times: we are still recovering from COVID-19 and in the midst of a cost-of-living crisis. But the scale of the challenges we collectively face is why we believe now is the time to do things differently, rather than doing more of the same, to unlock the full potential of SPAR. As Einstein noted: “Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.”

We know that as a sector we have a lot of work to do, but we are committed to making the changes needed to become more inclusive, more accessible, and more innovative. We believe that NOW is the point of maximum opportunity, where the Government of Alberta should seize upon the chance to unlock the potential of SPAR to help achieve our Province’s Priorities.

# CHANGES WE SEEK

DESIRED SECTOR OUTCOMES	SPECIFIC ASKS
<b>Increased Recognition of SPAR within Alberta Political Landscape</b>	
Stronger platform to advocate for future requests, initiatives, and communications	Recognition of SPAR within the political platform of all major Alberta political parties, and thereby reflected in the business plans of relevant ministries
Increased contacts and communication channels inside the political system	

<b>INCREASED INTERNAL GOVERNMENT CAPACITY TO SUPPORT SPAR</b>	
Documented priority alignment between provincial government policy and SPAR sector organizations	Appointment of an Associate Minister of SPAR or Creation of a Ministry of Wellness (focusing specifically on upstream programs) or Ministry of Sport, Recreation and Culture
Specific ministerial staff dedicated to the advancement of SPAR at a provincial level	
Stronger platform to advocate for future requests, initiatives, and communications	

<b>INCREASED PUBLIC INVESTMENT INTO THE SPAR ORGANIZATIONS, PROGRAMS, TRAINING, &amp; INFRASTRUCTURE</b>	
A commitment to sustained and predictable funding to the SPAR system (PSO/PROs; grassroots) to support capacity, training and delivery of key programs such as safe sport and coach development.	Additional \$25 Million/year to PSO/PROs Long-term grant agreements (3-5 years)
Increased investment in volunteers, seasonal/casual employment and training with a focus on the development of young leaders.	Additional \$25 Million/year in grant opportunities that invest in projects that support the aforementioned outcomes
Increased investment in low or no-cost SPAR programming for children and youth with a focus on equitable access by diverse, indigenous, and vulnerable populations.	
Joint partnership between government, academia, and SPAR sector organizations on the pursuit of longitudinal health economics research projects	
Specific investment in community SPAR infrastructure	Additional \$50 Million/year dedicated for SPAR infrastructure (retrofits, upgrades and new facilities) provided through an open process, and accessible to all facility operators.

# FURTHER READINGS

RESOURCE	SOURCE	RESOURCE LINK
Alberta Child and Youth Well-Being Action Plan	Government of Alberta	
Canadian green spaces during Covid-19: Public health benefits and planning for resilience	National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health	
2021 Chronic Disease Prevention Survey Data Release	Alberta Policy Coalition for Chronic Disease Prevention	
Profiling Volunteerism: An Alberta Nonprofit/ Voluntary Sector Initiative Discussion Paper of the Value and Contribution of Alberta Volunteers	Government of Alberta - Alberta Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women	
Report - The Impact of our Sector: A health valuation of sport and physical activity in Canada	Fitness Industry Council of Canada	
The Impact of Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation in Alberta	Alberta Active Coalition	
Unlocking the potential of sport, recreation and physical activity to improve the health and wellbeing of the nation	UKAdvocacy	

