Report on the National Recreation Roundtable in Fredericton, New Brunswick

Prepared for the National Recreation
Process Work Group by
Dr. Don Lenihan
Senior Associate

June 2013

1. Introduction

Dr Ian Reid opened the National Recreation Roundtable in Fredericton, New Brunswick with a good-natured warning to participants: We plan to drain all the knowledge you have, he said. And, indeed, they made a rich contribution to the emerging Recreation Agenda.

According to Reid, the National Recreation Process is now more than half complete. The next major milestone will be the 2014 National Recreation Summit, where a draft Agenda will be discussed. The task of this Roundtable, he said, is to examine and refine the foundational elements and strategies being developed for the Agenda.

Brian Jonston opened the discussion with an overview of the discussion paper, a document prepared by him under the direction of the Work Group. The paper was the main focus of the Roundtable discussion, along with the findings of the P/T Consultations.

This report provides a critical summary of key themes from the Roundtable discussions of the paper, including the foundational elements, cornerstones and strategies, and several other key themes. As such, it focuses on points where participants were unclear about the discussion paper, in disagreement with it, or felt more work was needed.

However, the critical tone of the report should not overshadow the fact that, overall, participants had high praise for the paper, were enthusiastic about the NRP, and optimistic about the future of their sector. The Roundtable was a success and the NRP appears to be on track.

The report concludes with some high level observations about the process and the discussion paper, which the Work Group may want to consider as it plans the next stage of its work in developing the Recreation Agenda.

2. Foundational Elements

The first morning of the two-day Roundtable was dedicated to a discussion of the "foundational" elements for the Recreation Agenda, including a definition of recreation, a vision for the sector and several strategies to help realize the vision.

2.1 Defining Recreation

The discussion paper offers two definitions of recreation. The 1987 National Recreation Statement states that:

… Recreation includes all those activities in which an individual chooses to participate in their leisure time, and is not confined solely to sports or physical recreation programs, but includes artistic, creative, cultural, social and intellectual activities, and … is a fundamental human need for individuals of all ages and interests and for both sexes and is essential to the psychological, social and physical wellbeing of each Canadian;

(Also,) …recreation is an essential social service in the same way that health and education are considered as social services, and that recreation's purpose should be (a) to assist individual and community development, and (b) to improve the quality of life, and (c) to enhance social functioning.

The second definition is a revised version of the 1987 version that has been circulating since the National Recreation Summit:

Recreation includes all those activities in which an individual chooses to participate, and includes sports, physical recreation programs, artistic and creative expressions, social and intellectual activities. Recreation is a fundamental human need and right and is essential to the psychological, social and physical well- being of each Canadian.

Recreation is also an essential social service which has a three pronged purpose:

- o Citizen building
- o Community building
- o Environmental sustainability

Participants were asked to examine, comment on, clarity and, where appropriate, modify the definitions. Several important issues with the definitions surfaced:

- **LANGUAGE:** The most common concern was around style. Many participants found the definitions "long and wordy," as one group put it. Participants felt an adequate definition should be both accessible to the general public and provide guidance to decision makers.

  Regarding the latter, ideally the definition would use simple language to say what recreation is and would do so in a way that provides guidance on sorting roles and responsibilities. The definition should provide an authoritative point of reference that helps the field as a whole identify its national priorities, then cascades down to provinces and finally to the community level.

- **LEISURE:** Should leisure be included in the definition of recreation, participants wondered? The question provoked a number of discussions. Some felt recreation does not have to be limited to leisure time. According to one breakout group, "We're way past that. For example, for children, recreation happens during school hours."

  Similarly, some participants from Nova Scotia reported that their province has moved away from focusing on leisure because it doesn't do justice to the physical component.

Recreational physical activity is very broad and is often done in non-free time, they argued. Confining recreation to leisure time thus underplays the contribution recreation can make, say, to economic growth, through this kind of activity.

Others disagreed. They insisted on the need to preserve the traditional distinction between leisure and work, which they saw as part of the basic conceptual framework of recreation. Without it, activities such as riding a bike to work or watching a video at the office become recreation. This, they said, risks expanding the definition to the point where it covers almost everything—but something that includes everything includes nothing. These people worried that removing leisure from the definition threatened to make recreation so amorphous that it would not be able to do any real policy work.

While there was no clear resolution to this dispute, participants obviously viewed the question as central to the search for an adequate definition and expressed strong views on the matter. Further and close consideration of the question is needed to arrive at an acceptable definition.

- **A DEFINITION SHOULD BE MORE THAN A LIST:** Another question was whether more descriptive terms should be added to the proposed definition to fill it out. For example, several participants noted that the definition does not mention parks. Perhaps it should. Others wondered why nothing was said about play. This, in turn, provoked the reply that "recreation" is not just an umbrella term. Using it as such only turns the definition into a list. This, in turn, would leave us feeling that the definition has failed to capture what exactly it is that connects all the things on the list—which is what a definition is supposed to do.

- **"PUBLIC" RECREATION**: Many participants disliked the phrase "public recreation," which was used in the discussion paper. What exactly does the word "public" mean here, they asked? Some worried that it imposed arbitrary limitations on the field, possibly excluding important contributions from the private sector. Public recreation seemed to them a smaller space than recreation. Where does the growing role of the private and NGO sectors fit into this definition, someone asked? Where are the real boundaries? In this view, an adequate definition should help us understand the respective roles of the public/private and NGO sectors in the recreation field, rather than hiving off the public from the private. Several groups thought this might be solved through broader and more inclusive language, such as "recreation for Canada."

- **ESSENTIAL SERVICE**: The proposed definitions describe recreation as an essential social service. A number of participants were uncomfortable with the word "essential." Lumping recreation in with services such as fire, police and healthcare struck them as implausible and possibly self-defeating. They worried that others outside the field—especially those responsible for essential services—might view this claim as

exaggerated, leading them to dismiss the definition altogether. The idea of recreation as a "primary" service was seen as a possible alternative.

- **ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY:** Some participants wondered why environmental sustainability was included in the definition. They agreed that recreation involves advocacy for parks, green spaces and outdoor activity, but they worried that the language of "environmental sustainability" is too close to environmentalism. It takes us into issues that go well beyond outdoor recreation. Injecting it into the definition therefore may be stretching the meaning of the term. Perhaps we would be better to talk of recreation as happening in "healthy spaces," suggested one participant. "Quality recreation environments." was another option offered. In the end, the language most seemed to favour involved recreation and "environmental stewardship." If the definition is going to include a reference to recreation's relationship to the environment, this seemed to be the most acceptable option.

2.2 Providing a Vision

The discussion paper presents two vision statements for recreation as a field. The first emerged in the mid 1990's and is contained in the 1997 Benefits Catalogue:

> Canada's network of recreation services works together to inspire Canadians to embrace an active lifestyle that creates healthy, active, flourishing and sustainable individuals, communities and environments.

The second one comes from the work at the Recreation Summit and was proposed for further consideration at the Roundtable:

> A Canada in which all citizens are involved in meaningful, accessible recreation experiences that foster:
> - Mental and physical health and wellbeing and a self-confident, competent, contributing community citizen;
> - Communities which are healthy, inclusive, welcoming, resilient, and sustainable;
> - Natural environments which are appreciated nurtured and sustained.

Although the idea of a vision was clearly important to participants, they had less to say about the proposed vision than the definitions—presumably because they were more satisfied with it. Their comments focused more on style than substance. The following is a good example: "While the concepts seem right," reported one group, "the vision needs to be more inspiring."

Another group suggested the vision needs to "speak to Canadians." The proposed version falls short. It should use plain language—no bullets—and get back to basics, they said. To get buy in, it needs to be simple.

One participant compared the vision to the Active 20/20 vision: "The 20/20 vision is very aspirational—the idea that a sector can help define a nation. The (recreation) document needs to strike this aspirational tone."

Some participants proposed their own shorter, but broader vision statement: "A country of engaged communities where all people embrace the benefits of recreation to enhance their quality of life." Apparently, this was well received in their breakout group. People especially liked the reference to quality of life.

In sum, feedback from the group suggests they thought the proposed vision statement was going in the right direction, but needed to be more inspirational, as this final sample of comments suggests:

- The vision should cast a target for the future.
- It needs to be more inspiring—perhaps by focusing on "quality of life enhancement."
- The vision should be a one-sentence, inspirational statement.
- It has to be more inspirational and reflect the dramatic difference recreation makes.
- It needs to challenge us to do better.
- It should be simplified and maybe more aspirational.

2.3 Three Positioning Statements

The discussion paper contains three "positioning statements," along with a list of values and principles, which, along with the definition and vision, were discussed as part of the "foundational elements." The three statements are as follows:

- **Recreation must be outcome driven:** The private sector is demand-driven and focuses on direct benefits and measures costs and benefits in terms of dollars. The Public sector is needs-driven and focuses on indirect benefits to all, which is the definition of public good.

- **Recreation must be inclusive in every way:** Recreation must serve such segments of our population that have barriers to participation.

- **Recreation needs to be relevant and compelling:** It must connect program/initiative to problem that is already in the heads of the decision makers

Generally, participants had little to say about these statements or the values and principles associated with them. Perhaps the single most important comment was that **collaboration** should be recognized somewhere in this list. Several people thought it was conspicuous by its absence and that this, more than any other principle, captured the approach that members of the recreation field felt they needed to act on to make real progress.

Beyond that, many of the comments were about the language, rather than the substance. One person commented that, while principles should guide decisions, these ones should be part of a tighter more deliverable package.

There were several references to the "jargon" in this part of the paper, such as the phrase "nexus of support," which participants felt weren't helpful.

The idea that recreation should be "inclusive in every way" seemed redundant to one group. Maybe the social determinants of health should be included here, suggested another.

3. The Cornerstones

The second part of the discussion paper proposes three "cornerstones," which support a series of "strategies" to build the recreation community and help realize its vision.

3.1 Community Building

Community Building is the first of the three so-called cornerstones. It is about connecting people to the community and working together towards common goals. The discussion paper links two key strategies to this cornerstone:

- Investments in physical infrastructure
- Coordination of community capacity-building strategies.

On the theme of community-building, participants' clearest message was on the importance of collaboration and taking a holistic approach to various aspects of community-building, such as funding, infrastructure and volunteerism.

FUNDING: While some participants called on senior levels of government to provide recreation with more money to carry out and coordinate community-building activities, they also felt the sector had to be more creative in solving its funding needs. This returned attention to the definition of recreation where, once again, the phrased "public recreation" was criticized as a possible obstacle. These participants felt it could limit their options. It's not just government that's delivering recreational services, they said, but lots of private sector organizations as well. They thought the recreation sector needed to think more strategically about how to partner with the private sector in order to leverage funds and that talk of "public recreation" was not helpful.

INFRASTRUCTURE: According to the members of one breakout group, the sector needs to rethink the way it uses physical and social infrastructure. It should "design and redesign itself to make better use of all kinds of community spaces and places." In this view, current planning

around infrastructure does not reflect how people in communities actually organize themselves and how they interrelate. Facilities that could be used for a variety of purposes are often viewed as having only a single purpose. This can result in a serious waste of opportunities.

To correct this, the sector needs to collaborate more to find ways to make the best use of the infrastructure available within the community. This, in turn, requires more and better data and information on communities, as well as better communications. The sector needs build better planning tools that can support a holistic approach to managing schools, police, health, churches and other community resources.

Aging infrastructure is a case in point. We have to be intelligent about how to replace Canada's aging infrastructure. We need to be more creative by considering options such as micro-financing and re-purposing old facilities.

One participant argued that the sector must ensure that there is adequate infrastructure near vulnerable populations, such as aboriginal peoples and other underrepresented communities.

VOLUNTEERS, SOCIAL CAPTIAL AND COLLABORATION: Volunteerism is a critical part of the social infrastructure within our communities. It plays and essential role in recreation, but volunteerism is changing and evolving. The recreation sector needs to recognize this and to modernize how it supports and recruits volunteers. It should take a more holistic approach that explores the links between recreation and other sectors, such as education, health and community services. Recreation must learn to partner more effectively with them.

Another group made a similar sounding argument when they talked about giving "community-building" a broader definition and more elastic approach. "We are the best community leaders and its time that we stop being shy about it," they declared. We need to recognize that we are social capital generators who solve problems through collaboration. We need to look at community-building more strategically, using new tools to support effective collaboration, such as an asset-based community model. We need to do a better job of sharing our best practices and failures in order to learn from them.

3.2 Citizen Building

With respect to the second cornerstone, citizen building, the discussion paper poses four basic strategies:

- A National Play Strategy
- After School Initiatives
- Support the 2012 Sport Canada and Active Canada 20/20 Strategy
- Arts Initiatives

One breakout group criticized the discussion paper for failing to provide a clear definition of citizen building. In particular, they said they were not sure if the paper was asking us to focus on building individuals or building leadership. These are quite different tasks, noted the group.

Other people had issues with the word "citizen." Some suggested that it was too exclusive and could leave out immigrants or others. They thought the focus should be on individuals rather than citizens. One alternative would be to change "citizen building" to promoting "individual well-being" or something along these lines.

Regarding the four strategies, one breakout group argued in favour of a national play strategy. They agreed that recreation should be working to remove barriers and promote accessible programming. In part, this means supporting the active 20/20 and Sport Policy initiatives. The group saw the recreation field's role as especially important for promoting physical literacy. They also felt recreation could be working more closely with these other fields to link or align activities. We need to maximize our outdoor environment by sharing facilities, promoting each other's programs and building better partnerships, they said.

Another working group agreed with the idea of working jointly with Active 20/20 and sport policy. They also felt that after school initiatives were important—and underlined that there are important things going on between communities and schools—but felt the issue is not just after school. It is also before school, at lunch hour and on the weekends. Indeed, they encouraged participants to focus on the much broader question whether enough is being done to support recreation across the span of an entire life. Organizations of all sorts should be working together to ensure that all these needs are met, they said.

A third group report said its members felt that a National Play Strategy should not be placed under early childhood development. They did not want it to include only children 0-4. The group also endorsed having a "culture and arts piece," but warned that arts and culture is not treated the same way across provinces. Some of it is included in recreation, some under other headings. They thought it might be beneficial for provincial officials working with the arts communities to get together and share their experiences. In the end, however, they noted that priorities are likely going to be very different in each province/community.

Generally speaking, participants thought that a citizen-building strategy should aim at the following goals:

- remove barriers, and promote accessibility
- adopt and promote physical literacy as a foundation to build upon
- integrate sport policies into the field
- share facilities and resources
- encourage contact with the natural environment
- promote opportunities to expand recreation

3.3 Environmental Sustainability

Environmental Sustainability is the third cornerstone. It is about supporting, nurturing, sustaining, and interpreting the environment. The two strategies proposed in the discussion paper include:

- Bringing nature into urban settings
- An enhanced urban parks program

In general, the idea of environmental sustainability was warmly received and widely supported by the participants. They saw it as underlining the role of recreation in helping people to reconnect with nature, while not deepening our footprint. They thought that creating and sustaining safe and supportive environments was very important.

Nevertheless, if they liked the concept, many were not satisfied with the way the paper positioned sustainable development. Their responses can be subdivided into two main views.

One view was that sustainable development should be a cornerstone, but that a change in language is needed. Some of these people felt the term "sustainable development" doesn't really capture the relationship between recreation and the environment. It should be replaced with "environmental stewardship," or something similar. In this view the "built environment" should also be reflected in the cornerstone, and the connection to the environment should be based on reconnecting to nature through recreation. Some thought the language from aboriginal texts could be valuable here.

"Supportive environments" (including parks, trees, open space and much more) was another term that was suggested as a replacement. Some participants thought this was more flexible and allowed very different kinds of environments to be included, such as urban centres that don't have parks and green spaces.

Some participants took a different view. They thought that sustainable development should not be a cornerstone at all. One argument was that environmental sustainability is an outcome of the other cornerstones. We should not confuse intent with outcome, said one participant. Perhaps it could be a part of community building, he suggested.

Another argument was that making sustainable development a cornerstone exaggerated or misrepresented recreation's links to the environment, which are based more on enjoying the outdoors. It's not clear why recreation requires a cornerstone based on environmental sustainability, they said. If recreation feels such a link is important, said one, maybe it should focus more on developing creative partnerships with sectors whose primary mandate focuses on the environment, such as forestry.

Given the lack of consensus here, more clarity is needed on the environmental aspect of recreation. Does this imply a more engaged and activist responsibility for protecting the environment or is it more focused on an appreciation of the outdoors?

3.4 Additional Comments on the Cornerstones

- **A FOURTH CORNERSTONE?** The question was raise whether there should be a fourth cornerstone: economic sustainability. This received little attention and, where it did, most felt it should not be counted as a cornerstone of the field. These participants felt that doing so would create conflict between it and the other cornerstones.

- **THE CORNERSTONE METAPHOR:** The metaphor of "cornerstones" troubled some participants. For one thing, the sections of the paper dealing with the definition, vision, positioning statements, values and principles had already been described as "foundational" concepts. But isn't a cornerstone part of a foundation, asked one participant? The confusing metaphors left some wondering exactly how these cornerstones fit into the overall theoretical structure of the discussion paper. At a minimum, said the participants, the metaphor of the cornerstone should be revisited.

- **INTERDEPENDENCE OF THE CORNERSTONES:** Some participants argued that concepts such as community-building and citizen-building are dynamic and relational, but a cornerstone is static and has clear boundaries. The idea of interdependence is also important here and needs to be recognized. How does the discussion paper capture this dynamic and relational nature of the cornerstones, they wondered? Another participant suggested that the cornerstones were closer to what management experts call a "core business." Do they belong in the foundational elements section, he asked?

- **A MISSING LINK?** Reports from the group discussions suggested there was confusion about the relationship between the strategies and the cornerstones that support them. To some, the list of strategies seemed arbitrary. As one participant put it, "Why this list of strategies and not some other?" Another participant felt there was "something missing" between the cornerstones and the strategies. He said the paper needed some kind of concept or mechanism that explained where the list of strategies came from how they relate back to the cornerstones. No one was sure what the 'missing link' was, but there was agreement that the participant had put his finger on something important. When asked how many agreed that something seemed to be missing, most in the room raised their hands. More work needs to be done here to provide a clear conceptual link between these elements of the theoretical framework.

Notwithstanding the many and diverse comments on the various strategies, it should be underlined that there was considerable support for them. Here are a few examples of the

overall comments on the strategies:

- after-school initiative
    - good things are going on across the country
    - best practices are being shared
    - different communities face different challenges
    - need to be more flexible, not just after-school
    - should be endorsed and supported
- recreation for life, need to focus on engagement across the life span
- volunteering is part of citizen building
- need to create environments that encourage people to be active in volunteering in their communities
- arts and culture is an area to explore, should look at places that it is well delivered in conjunction with recreation
- parks should always be included with recreation
- parks should be better positioned in the document
- must address the deficit of green spaces and parks
- Focus on parks seemed to be limited, doesn't take into account "recreation habitats"
- conflicts between tourism and protected space
- need to collaborate with other environmental stakeholders
- nature literacy is critical to develop in children
- spaces and activities have to remain relevant in shifting society
- literature on parks is limited, excludes "unsculpted" spaces
- more coordination in trail linkages
- strengthening links between park systems
- access to green spaces is a priority
- "stewardship and connection with parks and green spaces"
- nature literacy is important
- importance of children and youth relationship with recreation spaces
- take better advantage of sport and recreation activities
- recreation puts purpose into green spaces
- trails – recognizing the trans Canada trail system but also creating more links between prov trails, municipal trails etc.
- designating land in municipalities for trails and parks
- should have urban designs to make communities more walk-able
- talked about have programs through gardening within schools

4. Overarching Requirements

The last major part of the discussion paper focused on the "overarching requirements to anchor the strategies." The five areas listed might be described as major systems or "soft"

infrastructure to support the growth and development of the field. There was little disagreement among participants on the value of any of these "requirements." That is not surprising. After all, it is hard to see how the field could prosper without effective systems to support communications, knowledge-sharing, professionalism, measurement and service improvement. Such systems are essential to the future of the sector—hence the term "requirements"—and each one on the list is already the subject of a large literature in the management field.

However, if there was wide agreement on the need for these capacities or systems, it was clear from the breakout discussions that the organizations and governments who participated in the Roundtable were at very different stages in their respective efforts to build them. There is thus a gap between, say, the concept of knowledge sharing and the real capacity to engage in it.

The challenge for the future will be to link different and complementary initiatives in ways that will help build the systems needed for communications, knowledge-sharing and so on. By and large, this kind of collaboration will have to proceed on a case by case basis, and mainly from the bottom-up. Perhaps the best way to describe the "strategy" for moving forward on the Requirements section of the discussion paper is:

1) Let a thousand flowers bloom; and
2) Encourage lots of collaboration between different players on the ground.

The good news is that, as the following collection of comments shows, participants clearly support moving in this direction:

- not clear that there is a lack of research but there is a lack of connection between practices
- needs to be a focus on knowledge transfer in measures and values, centres of excellence to that end
- people are looking for assurance and quality and standardization
- need to develop common indicators perhaps based on corner stones and measure those
- more scope for a lot more standardization across the company (a how to)
- training that results in certification that can be used across the country
- use of technology is important as we move forward, the power of webinars
- marketing messaging: need for national voice
- willingness to share what is done in one province with other provinces
- tool in Alberta that can be used to evaluate service delivery
- support of collaboration and partnerships
- need to improve systems for measuring impacts of public reaction
- have common messages to attract people
- field needs a stronger national voice
- need to work with and align with other organizations and fields

- ask the organizers of roundtable to distribute list of people with contact
- professional development, service excellence – need to build the capacity at a national level to try to coordinate some of this stuff
- worthwhile to invest in a knowledge mobilization specialist
- service excellence – if municipalities hire professionals for this it would b harder to cut
- must include education for communities that the value that it brings

5. Linking the Initiatives

The question of whether or how to link or align the three initiatives of the National Recreation Agenda, Action Canada 20/20 and the Canadian Sport Policy was discussed at the Roundtable. After hearing presentations on the other two initiatives, participants broke out into discussion groups to answer three questions. They then reported back to each other in a plenary session, as follows:

1. What are the potential benefits/desired outcomes of aligning these 3 initiatives, keeping in mind the wide array of stakeholders?
- intentional programming
- political benefits; together we are strong
- help better inform resource allocation in other areas
- convergence – infrastructure, engineering, funding, equity, access
- decision makers coming together
- more holistic when you have all three together
- allows for combined messages that are more powerful when you bring all three together
- more chance of success with all of these documents together
- optimal use of resources and skill sets across all three sectors
- funding through strategic partnerships
- national to local messages – physical literacy
- define a common glossary of terms
- enhancing collaboration
- identifying the gaps in recreation
- need for more work in arts, culture
- needing to link with other agendas or efforts so that recreation is partnering with other things
- convergence and collaboration
- trying to move from the current 0.1% of healthcare budget spent on sport, recreation to 1.0%

2. Where should we focus efforts to align these three initiatives?
- to look around as we develop the rec agenda. Have to actually have a rec agenda first.
- separate but complimentary
- co-inform and share strategic plans
- advocacy
- physical literacy, active transportation, infrastructure
- coming up with common outcomes
- develop and then use a lense that lets us look at our work through the lense on all three
- focus on collaborative groups
- need to communicate about the three to students, universities, practitioners, etc
- incentive funding for partnerships
- decrease crime, illness, sedentary
- lowering of healthcare cost
- data and policy
- has to be the municipalities and the delivery agents
- we should have some outcomes that are exactly the same, why don't we
- strong focus having an aligned system should have flexible and multiple pathways
- aligning the timing for the review process
- common plain language between areas

3. What process should we follow in order to align these three initiatives?
- simplify. Lowest common denominator and build on from that.
- confirm alignment inside the circles and outside
- don't use exclusionary terms
- have a national forum before the next summit with these three groups to talk about areas of overlap
- support our leadership at the national level
- municipal recreation people need to be on board with this initiative
- start by formalizing the next step; concrete governance model
- education, understanding, framework
- articulating the interdependencies
- developing action groups for areas where venn diagrams overlap
- agreeing to create a harmonized accord

6. Conclusions

The various sections of this report suggest ways to clarify and strengthen the important work in the discussion paper. These range from putting greater emphasis on collaboration to clarifying the relationship between cornerstones and strategies. By way of a conclusion, it may be useful to step back from the discussion paper and provide a few observations on the process as a whole, based on the discussions and comments from the Roundtable.

6.1 Does the word "Agenda" capture well what we are trying to do?

At one point during the Roundtable, the facilitator asks participants how they felt about the word "Agenda" as a term to describe the final product of the NRP. Did they think it captured well what the process and the group should be working towards? Only two people said they felt it did. The rest of the participants seemed ambivalent, at best. For most, the idea of an "agenda" didn't seem to set the bar high enough. They expected more, but what?

According to one participant, the process was launched to provoke a discussion, but he said he now felt that didn't go far enough. Some other participants went on to say they wanted the process to articulate common goals that could help unite the sector. Many felt confident that such goals could be found. But, to do this, they felt something more than an agenda is needed—perhaps a "strategy" or a "policy" would be better, they said.

However, they also insisted on the need to respect their diversity and differences. As one participant said, "We want something that we can ALL work towards together, but in a way that recognizes our individual differences. There are 13 P/T jurisdictions in this room. We need the flexibility to accommodate them."

In the end, most agreed that the word "Agenda" will do for now, but it seemed clear that it does not capture their sense of what the project is—or should be—about, as we can see from this sampling of the comments that participants offered:

- "agenda" will do for now, but not the word for the future
- maybe "agenda" should not be included in the title of the end document
- the word "agenda" does not set the bar very high
- we're talking about more than just a list of things here
- "agenda" may have political overtones

6.2 Who is the audience for the document?

Another interesting exchange was sparked by the question: Who is the intended audience for the discussion paper? According to Brian Jonston, it is aimed at the same audience as the 1987 Recreation Statement—which is a very broad audience, but mainly of stakeholders. Some participants insisted that the process should be trying to speak to the broader public, as well, and suggested that the paper was too "academic" for this.

An interesting and quite passionate exchange followed. In the end, there seemed to be agreement that the NRP should pass through a number of stages and, as it does, the target audience will broaden. At the moment, the process is trying to engage stakeholders, not the general public. The discussion paper—and the primary documents supporting it—therefore

have to be more technical in nature. They are dealing with big policy issues and foundational questions.

In the end, however, participants thought the process needs to reach out to the broader public, though they were unclear on what kind of tools or documents would be needed for that: A policy? A charter? A declaration? Or something else? As the Work Group looks ahead to the next stages of the process, it should consider how it plans to meet these expectations.

6.3 The idea of an "enabling" policy

Traditional policy is prescriptive. It shapes people's behaviour to promote or prevent certain outcomes, such as drinking and driving or saving for retirement. There are various tools to do this, such as regulatory requirements, tax incentives or the threat of incarceration. In recent years, a new approach to policy has been surfacing that deals with behavioural change differently. Rather than prescribing actions, it enables them.

This kind of policy rests on the assumption that the people targeted by the policy are already relatively motivated to act in ways that support the policy's goals, so it doesn't have to prescribe the behaviour. However, they may be prevented or hindered from acting this way by obstacles standing in their path, such as regulatory barriers or a lack of opportunity. Enabling policy works to remove such barriers and thereby facilitate action and cooperation to achieve the goals.

Most participants agreed that, whatever the final Recreation Agenda includes, it is likely enabling rather than prescriptive. Its real task will be to help organizations, governments and people to work together to achieve a shared vision through the pursuit of shared goals and strategies.

Participants seemed to strongly favour this view. At the same time, some felt that the language in the discussion paper—especially around the cornerstones—sometimes sounded more prescriptive than enabling. Participants encouraged the working group to keep this distinction in mind as the work progresses.

6.4 What do we do together? What we do on our own?

We've seen that, while participants believe the sector shares common goals and they were optimistic about the prospects of identifying them, they also insisted that how these would be achieved would differ from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. If the participants agree on many things at a high level, they also recognize that every community is different and effective policy and programming must respect that.

The real challenge lies in striking the right balance between uniformity or agreement and diversity or difference. It is easy to err on either side. Too much uniformity produces resistance and resentment from organizations, communities and even provinces, who will feel they are being controlled. On the other hand, too much diversity leaves community members feeling that the vision and goals they want to unite them are abstract and distant. The community may agree on the words and ideas, but the real work they are doing on the ground feels far-removed from the ideas.

This may explain participants' sense that there was a gap between the cornerstones and the strategies under them. The cornerstones and strategies sound good in theory, but when participants focused on what they were actually doing in their own organizations, they seemed to have trouble making the connection back to the strategies and the cornerstones. There was a feeling that "something was missing."

As the Work Group members consider their next steps, they should reflect carefully on this question of where and how to strike the right balance between unifying structures—such as the definition, vision, goals and strategies—and the vast diversity of activities under way in the field.

6.5 Overall views on the discussion paper

Perhaps the best way to conclude this report is with a final sample of comments from the participants, this time reflecting their views on the discussion paper as a whole:

- focus on enabling a national recreation culture
- parks needs a better presence in the document
- the target audience needs to be clarified
- the key messages in the document need to be widely understood
- need consistency in the wording of the document throughout
- we can't ignore the effect of technology
- the document should be able to be re-packaged for different audiences.
- is the community in agreement on public vs. private in the recreation sector
- the document should be viewed as a base document from which you can peel off what you need want from it. Not a single purpose document. Should be able to disassemble for different audiences.