



Recreation and Sports in Niagara

Participation in formal and informal sports and recreation activities promotes health and well-being for people of all ages. The presence of recreation and sports in Niagara enriches our quality of life and helps to boost our economy by attracting local, provincial, national and international visitors to participate and spectate. Taking part in recreation and sport activities helps people to connect with their community and their environment - to build friendships, leadership and teamwork skills, enjoy being outdoors, and to gain a sense of purpose, belonging and community spirit.

Rating

3a a little
progress
is being
made



Things we are doing well!

Niagara is hosting significant international sporting events. The St. Catharines rowing and Welland flatwater sport venues are official sites for the July, 2015 Pan Am Games and the Para Pan Am Games rowing and canoe/kayak sprint events. In August 2015, the World Dragonboat Racing Championships will be held at the Welland International Flatwater Centre, with 4,000 participants from more than 30 countries. The weeklong January 2016 world championships for International Ice Hockey Federation under-18 girls will be held in the new Meridian Centre arena in St. Catharines; it is projected to create a \$4.2 million economic spinoff.

Several programs offer financial assistance to families for children to participate in sports and recreational activities; the Prokids Program offered through the YMCA, the Jump Start Program sponsored by Canadian Tire, Kid Sport Niagara Region and the Investing in St. Catharines Youth Fund are examples.

Cycling for pleasure and fitness is growing in popularity among local citizens and tourists. Niagara Region's bike map shows 282.2 km of official trails in Niagara, mostly off the road, away from street traffic and connecting all the municipalities together. Research done for Niagara Parks shows that 84,000 cycle tourists visited the Niagara region in 2010; that same year cycle tourism contributed \$104 million to the Ontario economy.

The Niagara Sport Commission has been involved in over 40 sporting events over the last 4 years, with an economic impact of over \$75 million in Niagara. Total economic impact of events at the Welland International Flatwater Centre from 2011 to 2014 is over \$80 million, with an annual average of 12,000 international visitors.

EMERGING ACTIVITIES

1

In 2014, Niagara was selected by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care as one of 45 communities to participate in The Healthy Kids Community Challenge. This 3-year initiative will focus on delivering local programs and activities that support children and youth to be more active and healthy to help prevent and combat obesity.

2

The focus on Active Transportation in Niagara is growing among diverse players, including those involved in cycling, tourism, transit, economic development, municipal planning, Age-Friendly and health and wellness.

3

Linkages are strengthening between Niagara assets in the areas of recreation, sport tourism, economic development, the arts, culture, and heritage. Examples include the Illuminaqua concert series featuring Old Welland Canal scenery and the Canoe Art Project; and the 2013 Laura Secord 1812 Bicentennial Event and Commemorative Walk from Queenston to St. Catharines.

4

Demand is growing in Niagara for recreation and sports opportunities for older adults and para athletes; planning to meet this demand will interweave Age-Friendly and accessibility planning principles, along with appreciation for Niagara's natural assets.

Suggested Action Steps

Gather comprehensive evidence on the current and potential economic impact of sport tourism for Niagara. This information would support a sport hosting strategy that achieves impact by leveraging strengthened partnerships within Niagara and globally.

Inventory existing sports facilities in Niagara, as a basis for strategic planning to focus on opportunities for attracting: athletes training at the national level; new settlement; and new investment in our region.

Explore research done at Brock University on Bouldering within the Niagara Glen as a model of integrating and providing access to world-class rock climbing within Niagara.

Deepen our understanding of barriers, including accessibility, financial and transportation concerns that limit people's participation in recreation and sports.

Indicators

Facilities and Participation

Economic Impact

Coordinated Planning

Bike Friendly Municipalities are designated by the **Share the Road Cycling Coalition**.

Of Ontario's 444 municipalities, 24 have received this status. Of those 24, Niagara Region has 5 local municipalities that have designations:

Pelham - Silver
Grimsby - Bronze
Thorold - Bronze
Welland - Bronze
St. Catharines - Bronze

Source:
Venture Niagara,
May 2014



282.2km of multi-use trails in Niagara

