



Monday February 11, 2008

ALBERTA RECREATION AND PARKS ASSOCIATION (ARPA) ELECTION STRATEGY ANNOUNCED

Edmonton, AB - The leaders of the Alberta's political parties are being asked to state their commitment and plan to support better quality of life and health for Albertans with an investment in recreation and parks said a letter forwarded today by the Alberta Recreation and Parks Association (ARPA).

The letter, to Premier Ed Stelmach, Kevin Taft, Brian Mason, George Read and Paul Hinman from the Association's President Shelley Shea, questions the leaders on their respective Party's formal positions on recreation and parks, and more specifically focused on the following three priorities:

- Implementation of a dedicated program to develop and enhance essential community parks and open spaces in Alberta's urban and rural municipalities.
- Allocation of new provincial funding to help build healthier communities in Alberta through recreation, sport and wellness initiatives which promote active lifestyles, social inclusion, quality assurance of programs and volunteerism.
- Extension and enhancement of the *Major Community Facilities Program* to ensure Alberta's municipalities are able to keep up with new recreation facility demands generated by large, rapid and continuing population increases as well as the tremendous backlog of lifecycle upgrades required to maintain the current inventory of community facilities.

In releasing the leaders' letters Shea stated, "Extensive research has clearly demonstrated that recreation and parks, in its broadest context, including sport, play, physical activity, arts, culture and outdoor activities are key components of improving the health, well-being and quality of life of Albertans. As well, such activities reduce crime and vandalism, improve child development, reduce workplace absenteeism and strengthen families and communities".

She added, "These initiatives are vital to maintaining and improving the quality of life in Alberta and it is important that we know each Party's position in terms of commitment to support public sector recreation and parks programs and services. Albertans will be selecting the individuals who will govern our province for the next four years and their support for improved health and well-being through improved recreation and parks should be an important consideration in that decision."

The Association has established February 20, 2008 as the deadline for receiving responses to the letter. All responses will be provided to the Association's members and released publicly. ARPA has over 900 direct municipal and other public and corporate members, and represents thousands of Albertans through these organizations.

Shea concluded, "Recreation and parks are essential elements of a healthy future for our province. I encourage all Albertans to get involved in this election campaign to help ensure that our public recreation and parks infrastructure is there for us and for future generations. A modest investment now can make that happen."

The letter and accompanying attachments to the Party leaders are attached. More information on the benefits of recreation and parks, the election activities of ARPA, and on the Association itself can be found on the special internet election web page set up by the Association @ (www.arpaonline.ca/es).

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