

Data In Action: How CAN Active Insights Will Transform the Future of Recreation in Alberta

Did you know that Alberta's parks system spans over [43,500 square kilometres](#) while the province has over 7000 recreation and sport facilities? This natural and built infrastructure that Alberta is home to plays an important role in supporting healthy, active communities. As local governments across the province continue to invest in facilities, programs, and public spaces that encourage active living and strengthen community connections while communities experience population growth and increasing demand for accessible recreation opportunities, the need for reliable data has never been greater. Evidence-based planning has become an essential part of ensuring recreation opportunities remain accessible and responsive to the needs of Albertans.

To help meet this need, the [Canadian Parks and Recreation Association \(CPRA\)](#), in partnership with the [Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute \(CFLRI\)](#) and the [Sport Information Resource Centre \(SIRC\)](#), developed [CAN Active Insights](#) - a national online platform that brings together trusted Canadian data related to parks, recreation, sport, and physical activity. The platform is designed for municipalities, recreation practitioners, researchers, non-profit organizations, and policy-makers. It brings together data on infrastructure, demographics and community profiles, access and usage, movement patterns and trends, and economic and health impact in one centralized tool. By combining multiple data sources into an easy-to-use platform, CAN Active Insights enables organizations to better understand local needs, support funding applications, evaluate programs, and make informed decisions that strengthen recreation services. The platform also offers webinars, case studies, and practical resources to help users incorporate data into everyday planning.

For Alberta, CAN Active Insights has the potential to become a valuable planning resource for communities of every size. It provides communities with the tools to make strategic decisions that reflect the unique needs of the province. [Alberta is home to more than 330 municipalities, ranging from large urban centres to small rural, northern communities](#), each with its own recreation priorities and challenges. While some municipalities have dedicated planning and research staff, many smaller communities operate with limited capacity, making it difficult to gather and interpret data. CAN Active Insights helps bridge this gap by providing accessible, evidence-based information that can support recreation plans, facility development, grant applications and long-term planning.

“At ARPA, we know that strong communities are built when recreation and parks professionals have the right tools and information to understand the needs of the people they serve,” said **Steve Allan, Executive Director of ARPA**. “CAN Active Insights is a valuable resource for

Alberta's recreation sector, helping communities access data, learn from trends across Canada, and bring greater evidence into local planning and decision-making."

The platform also aligns with many of Alberta's broader recreation and [parks priorities](#), such as creating accessible and welcoming opportunities, and effectively managing sites for long-term sustainability. Communities across the province are working to improve access to recreation, increase physical activity, create inclusive and welcoming public spaces, and ensure infrastructure investments respond to changing community needs. Whether a municipality is planning a new multi-use trail, evaluating programming for older adults, identifying opportunities for youth recreation, or assessing gaps in facility access, having reliable data allows decisions to be made with greater confidence. By helping communities understand who they serve and where needs exist, CAN Active Insights supports more equitable and sustainable recreation planning across Alberta.

"CAN Active Insights makes important recreation, parks, sport, and physical activity data easier to find and use," said **Martin Sampson, CEO of CPRA**. "By giving communities a clearer picture of local needs and broader trends, it can help recreation professionals make informed decisions about programs, facilities, and future investments. Ultimately, having access to reliable data can help communities plan with greater confidence and ensure their recreation systems continue to evolve alongside the people they serve."

As the provincial voice for recreation and parks, the [Alberta Recreation & Parks Association \(ARPA\)](#) continues to connect Alberta's recreation sector with national initiatives, resources, and leading practices that strengthen communities. Tools such as CAN Active Insights complement this work by giving recreation professionals access to the evidence needed to support local decision-making while contributing to broader conversations about healthy, active communities across Canada. As Alberta continues to grow and evolve, collaboration between organizations like CPRA and ARPA will help ensure communities have the knowledge and resources to create recreation opportunities that benefit all Albertans.

For more information, visit canactiveinsights.ca or contact info@cpra.ca.