July 30, 2019

To All Local Municipal Councils:

At the June 12, 2019 Board of Health meeting, members endorsed the Canadian Public Health Association’s Position Statement on Unstructured Play. At this meeting, staff was directed to inform municipal councils of this development and to share the position statement with you.

Unstructured play, whether outdoors or indoors, contributes to healthy child development—physically, mentally, and socially. The CPHA position statement is the most comprehensive of the statements that focuses on all types of unstructured play.

In 2017, Peterborough Public Health released an evidence review that looked at outdoor playspaces for children.1 While focused on outdoor play, the report clearly outlines the many benefits of unstructured play which is inclusive, welcoming and challenging to children of all ages and abilities. These spaces are ideally suited to encourage physical activity, foster social connections and promote good mental health.

Municipalities determine where play can happen in the public realm and what kind of play will be supported. For this reason, they are in a unique position to create supportive physical environments inside and outside that support and encourage unstructured play.

Peterborough Public Health is committed to supporting the best play experiences for healthy child development. We intend to use this position statement to move our work forward, beginning with ensuring that our key community partners are aware of the statement. We encourage you to consider how you might use the statement to inform the decisions you make regarding the environments and services that support healthy child development through play.

Sincerely,

Rosana Salvaterra, MD, MSc, CCFP, FRCP
Medical Officer of Health

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