



**Release Date:** February 28, 2018

**Source:** Calgary Herald

**Sigler: Celebrating Our World-Class Sports City**

Sport is in Calgary's blood. It brings us closer together, and unites us. We love to play, spectate, train, compete, cheer, and celebrate sport. We live and breathe sport. Calgary has a wealth of facilities and programs that provide affordable multi-sport access to accommodate the active lifestyles of our diverse population.

A proven economic driver, sport and its beneficial impact on families and communities has been proven over and over again.

We are an Olympic city that is comfortable on national and international stages. We should all be proud of our athletes' accomplishments in PyeongChang. As part of our Olympic legacy, Calgary is also home to various prominent sport organizations, such as Hockey Canada, Canadian Sport Institute Calgary, WinSport, Canada's Sport Hall of Fame, and University of Calgary's Faculty of Kinesiology.

Calgary's ongoing investments - by the City of Calgary, Calgary Recreation, and others - in sport infrastructure have helped create a modern, world-class city where sport is important. In the past year alone, several major public sport facilities have opened, with more currently under construction for completion in 2019.

This is an excellent start, but more investment is needed to build and revitalize smaller community-level facilities.

Thankfully, nobody was injured or hurt at Fairview Arena this week when part of the roof unexpectedly collapsed. City of Calgary Recreation deserves kudos for its response and for taking its facility inspection responsibilities seriously. It's reassuring that City officials are working closely with Hockey Calgary to ensure that all important safety issues are addressed.

Fortunately, all the teams and players who use Fairview Arena have found other locations to continue their current season. Hopefully their medium-term requirements will also be accommodated.

This incident is indicative of a broader concern that many arenas across the country have aged beyond the typical expected lifespan of 30-35 years. Many of them were built in the period between post-war (1945) and Canada's centennial (1967). These arenas require significant upgrades and renovations to continue operating safely and sustainably, and in some cases need to be replaced entirely.

During that period, Canada's population grew quickly and became more diverse. Investment in sport facilities was recognized as a national priority that benefited all communities. Calgary was no exception. More recently, over the past decade Calgary has experienced many of those same trends and resulting challenges.

With over 380,000 Calgarians registered in sport with one of the more than 400 local sport organizations, it is important to have a clear understanding of how our current sport infrastructure serves our needs.

Sport Calgary, as the not-for-profit voice for sport in Calgary, conducts an ongoing assessment of citywide sport facility requirements. The *Sport Facility Supply and Demand Study (2014-2018)* identified some key findings, including:

- Calgary requires development of new facilities, but also enhancement of and better access to existing facilities
- Many sport organizations have implemented registration caps due to a lack of facilities
- Under half of facility operators indicated that a documented life cycle plan had been developed for their facility, and many reported having limited funds available in life cycle reserve funds
- Few sport organizations have financial resources to contribute to facility development and enhancement, but many are willing to help out by providing other resources

How does this affect you as a citizen of Calgary?

Sport participation leads to health, economic, and social cohesion benefits for our community. When everyone has equitable access to sport facilities, we create better outcomes for important groups like Indigenous peoples, low-income families, seniors, persons with disabilities, LGTBQ, and newcomers to Canada.

As Calgarians, we should continue to think big by supporting city-wide public investment in community sport facilities that allow us to safely play and be active for life!

*Murray Sigler is the Executive Director and CEO at Sport Calgary.*