

**Interorganizational Relations in Local Governments:  
Issues in the Provision of Recreation Services**

Caroline Gagnon

B.E.P. (Specialization), University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Ontario

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Department of Human Kinetics

The University of British Columbia  
Vancouver, Canada

Date April 28, 00

## **ABSTRACT**

In order to deal with on-going environmental pressures and uncertainty, organizations have established linkages with other organizations as one strategy to deal with these new challenges (Fenell, Ross & Warnecke, 1987; Oliver, 1990; 1991; Thibault, Frisby & Kikulis, 1997). The establishment of partnerships is viewed by organizations as a new way of operating to control and minimize environmental pressures.

The purpose of this study was to identify and understand issues of interorganizational relations between local governments, specifically departments of Parks and Recreation and community organizations providing recreation and sport services. Specifically, reasons for being involved in partnerships as well as advantages and challenges of partnerships were investigated as part of this research.

The City of Surrey was selected as the research site for this study on the analysis of interorganizational relationships between its Parks and Recreation department and three community organizations providing recreation services and programs: Surrey Knights Swim Club, Surrey Youth Soccer Association, and Surrey Minor Hockey Association. The City of Surrey was chosen given its large territory, its population growth, its decreasing funds for recreation services, and its limited number of recreation facilities.

Through semi-structured interviews with key informants, issues on interorganizational relations were discussed. The main reasons for involvement were described as access to

financial and facility resources. With the economic pressures that local governments are facing, the establishment of partnerships represents an appealing option to meet these challenges. Furthermore, the Surrey Parks and Recreation department is linking with community organizations in order to gain credibility within the community. By establishing working partnerships with one another, community organizations and Surrey Parks and Recreation department are able to provide the same level of services to the community, consequently leading to the welfare of the community.

The final topic that was discussed during this research was the levels of intensity of the partnerships and its relation to loss of autonomy. Using Oliver's (1990) model, it was found that all levels of intensity were evident at one point or another in the partnerships and that these levels varied according to the environmental context. However, the loss of autonomy, as described by Oliver (1990) did not appear to be a factor influencing the partnerships. This might be due to the fact that all partners were involved in these partnerships for the same goals and purposes and not to compete against each other.

Interorganizational relationships were an intricate and important dimension of the organizations studied. It is essential for organizations to better understand issues surrounding partnerships in order to effectively engage in linkages that are beneficial to all partners involved in this process and to the public.

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

Recreation and sport services have been part of Canadian communities since the late 1950s and 1960s (Hunter, 1986; Searle & Brayley, 1993). In the 1970s, the Canadian government transferred the responsibility for the provision of recreation and sport services to provincial and local governments in response to economic restraints (Crompton, 1998; William, 1983). Consequently, local governments reorganized recreation and sport services (William, 1983), with regard to their structure for the provision of services, and facilities. During the same period of time, community organizations were formed by members of the community for the provision of recreation and sport services in their neighbourhood. Community organizations became an integral part of this system of leisure delivery. Community organizations, also referred to as community groups, nonprofit organizations or grass-root organizations, are defined as formal or informal citizen groups linking with each other to fulfill their recreational needs. They are usually private with a not-for-profit mandate and administered by a board of volunteer directors. For example, local soccer clubs were founded in order to fulfill the needs of the community, which local governments were unable to service (Searle & Brayley, 1993).

During the same period, people were starting to request and expect from the government that more structured recreation and sport activities be organized for the population (Balmer & Reid, 1986). These requisitions were in response to changes in the economy and in their lifestyles. People had more time to participate in organized recreation

activities, as their work hours decreased. Meanwhile, studies were starting to emerge demonstrating the benefits of participating in recreation activities (Chubb & Chubb, 1981; Ibrahim, 1991; Searle & Brayley, 1993). Local governments and community organizations responded by creating “an amazing system of programs and facilities. Our relative affluence as a society led to heavy emphasis on public sector provision” (Balmer & Reid, 1986, p. 37).

In order to fulfill their community’s needs, some local governments redefined their role with respect to recreation and sport services. The roles undertaken by local governments for the provision of leisure services differ from one community to the other, based on various factors such as public requests, economic situation, political interests (Hunter, 1986). A number of authors have described the various roles adopted by local governments concerning recreation and sport services (Balmer & Reid 1986; Hunter, 1986; Vail & Carmichael, 1993), and they seem to agree about local governments’ roles for the provision of recreation and sport services. Local governments should enable and/or directly provide recreation and sport services. As defined by Hunter (1986, p.18),

*enabling...refers to the act of assisting others in planning and delivering services through training, advising with administrative needs and providing other support services and resources [while] direct provision refers to the planning and implementation of services directly by the municipal agency.*

The role assumed by local governments and their Parks and Recreation department for the provision of recreation services is not necessarily purely enabling or direct provision. Characteristics of each role are often evident in communities (Hunter, 1986).

For the last three decades, local governments and community organizations have been servicing local residents with regard to recreation and sport services. Throughout the years, extensive and co-operative relations between the local government and community organizations were created. Local governments through their Parks and Recreation department might be responsible for some of the services provided, however these services are coordinated with community organizations in order to ensure a more comprehensive offering to the community members (Searle & Brayley, 1993; Vail & Carmichael, 1993). These linkages between local governments and community organizations were created in order for residents to have access to more recreation opportunities (Reid, 1989; Searle & Brayley, 1993). Community involvement and participation offered a different approach to local governments to satisfy growing societal needs (Prior, Stewart & Walsh, 1995; Ward, 1986). It became more difficult for local governments to directly provide all recreation services, given economic and political contexts. On the topic of linkages between local governments and community groups, Goodale (1983, p. 812) explained that,

*Calls for restraint, decentralization, devolution, privatization of publicly sponsored services, the residual principle of government involvement and so much more, along with authority programs affecting voluntary agencies, clearly indicate the need for - if not inevitability of - major shifts in the distribution of sector responsibilities between the public and the non-profit service agencies.*

Environmental, including social, economic, and political pressures did not disappear following the reorganization of the delivery system and the emergence of community organizations. Local governments still need to identify new ways of doing business and

recreation managers must do more with less (Crompton, 1998). In order to deal with limited financial resources, increased public needs and the trends toward public participation and accountability, local governments are now considering establishing partnerships in order to maintain the same level of services (Reid, 1989; Thibault, Frisby & Kikulis, 1997) without requiring more financial resources. In time when municipal budget are not keeping up with inflation in order to satisfy a “no tax increase” philosophy, local governments are left with less resources every year to provide the same level of services [or greater] to the residents. By establishing linkages with community organizations, local governments not only guarantee the delivery of services but they ensure community participation in recreation.

Munn, Field and Liddle (1988) demonstrated that involving the community in the decision making process led to an economic advantage as well as *a social gain* for local governments. The community members' involvement generates a sense of stability, continuity and purpose for the community. As Munn et al. (1988) argued, it is essential for people to be active members in their community so that their quality of living can be maintained. “The focus seems to be shifting from developing recreation facilities in communities to developing people in communities” (Vail & Carmichael, 1993, p. 24). By creating new partnerships, local governments can save resources, which can then be invested toward innovative initiatives (Balmer & Reid, 1986) such as subsidies for low income citizens and programs for people with a disability. The vision of community involvement is to create and improve existing services without requiring more resources

as duplication of programs and services are eliminated. As a result, it is possible to maintain the level of services without necessitating more tax dollars from residents.

Community involvement through these community organizations has forced local governments to establish interorganizational relations with them to provide recreation and sport services. Interorganizational relations have been defined as "the nature of actual working relationships between or among organizations" (West, 1986, p. 64). The increase in the number of partnerships between local governments and community organizations is directly related to the limited financial resources of local governments (Crompton, 1989; Searle & Brayley, 1993; Yoshioka, 1990) and environmental pressures (Thibault et al., 1997). Many studies, further discussed in the following chapter, have investigated issues surrounding interorganizational relations, however few empirical studies have been undertaken in the field of recreation (cf. Crompton, 1989; Vail & Carmichael, 1993; Vail, 1992; William, 1983).

Establishing partnerships with community organizations represents one solution to the environmental pressures (social, economic, and political) that local governments face every day (Thibault, Frisby, & Kikulis, 1999). In order to further our knowledge surrounding the need for partnerships, it is essential for both parties (local government and community organizations) to better understand issues associated with interorganizational relations for the provision of recreation services. While determining the reasons for involvement represents the first step in developing partnerships, it is

essential to also understand the advantages and challenges surrounding these interorganizational relations.

### ***Purpose***

As such, the purpose of this study is to identify and understand issues of interorganizational relations between local governments, specifically departments of Parks and Recreation and community organizations providing recreation and sport services. Specifically reasons for being involved in partnerships and advantages and challenges of partnerships will be investigated as part of this research.

### ***Research Questions***

In order to better understand interorganizational relations between local governments and community organizations, two research questions will be answered in this research. They are:

1. Why are local governments establishing partnerships with community organizations for the provision of leisure services?
2. What are the advantages and challenges of establishing relationships between local governments and community organizations?

## **CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Interorganizational relations have been the focus of many studies (cf. Baum & Oliver, 1991; Kanter, 1989; Thibault et al., 1997; 1999, Vail, 1992). The shift from perceiving organizations as autonomous entities to understanding the extent of interdependency among organizations is largely the result of environmental influences on organizations (Pennings, 1981). In order for organizations to deal with on-going environmental pressures and uncertainty, organizations have established linkages with other organizations as one strategy to deal with these new challenges (Fenell, Ross & Warnecke, 1987; Oliver, 1990; 1991; Thibault et al., 1997). The establishment of partnerships is viewed by organizations as a new way of operating in order to control and minimize environmental pressures.

Over the years, different aspects of interorganizational relations have been studied. Some authors examined the reasons behind the establishment of interorganizational relations (cf. Oliver, 1990; Yoshioka, 1990), while others analyzed the effects/impacts of these linkages (cf. Baum & Oliver, 1991; LaPage, Vaske & Donnelly, 1995; Oliver, 1991; Provan, 1982; Selin & Myers, 1995; Skinner & Gultinan, 1986; Skelcher, Hinings, Leach & Ranson, 1983). Some authors have identified types and/or categories of interorganizational relations (cf. Harrigan & Newman, 1990; Kanter, 1989; Smith, Dickson & Smith, 1991), while some studies have focused on interorganizational relations involving the public sector and not for profit organizations (cf. Bebbington &

Bebbington, 1993; Blau & Rabrenovic, 1991; Heimovics, Herman & Jurkiewicz, 1993; Saidel, 1991; Thibault & Harvey, 1997).

As for the field of recreation, only a few studies, investigating interorganizational relations between local government and its partners for the delivery of public recreation services and programs, have been identified (cf. Crompton, 1989; 1998; Thibault et al., 1997; 1999; Vail, 1992; West, 1986).

The purpose of this chapter is to review this literature. In order to do this, the chapter will be divided into two sections: a review of the literature on interorganizational relations in the recreation context and a review of the literature outlining interorganizational relations issues relevant to the research questions identified in the previous chapter.

### ***Interorganizational Relations in the Recreation Context***

Establishing partnerships between community organizations providing recreation services and local governments has become imperative for the provision and delivery of recreation services/programs. Societal, economic, and political changes have forced recreation professionals to consider their service delivery approach. Alternative ways of delivering services such as enabling the community to provide their own recreation services, by forming partnerships with community organizations by mutually exchanging resources in order to maintain public welfare through recreation (Vail, 1992; 1994) offer new possibilities from the already established service provider approach. In addition to linking with community organizations, the public recreation sector has established strong

linkages with the health, public safety, education and community planning sectors (Parsons, 1990; Thibault et al., 1999). Even though this study will be focusing on the recreation sector, Parsons (1990) demonstrated that the need for establishing interorganizational relations goes beyond recreation. Recreation, an integral part of community welfare, is also a significant component of the health system (Parsons, 1990).

Although partnership establishment is often part of the local government's agenda with regard to the provision of recreation services, few empirical studies have investigated the context surrounding interorganizational relations occurring Canadian communities (Thibault et al., 1997; 1999, Vail, 1992). As noted by Vail, "for the most part, researchers have been unable to define the type of partnerships and models that need to be identified to strengthen the municipal recreation delivery system" (1992, p. 221). This difficulty in identifying types of partnership is mainly due to the fact that establishing linkages with other groups is at its infancy stage for many local governments.

Aforementioned, only a few studies have investigated interorganizational relations between a local government and other community organizations for the provision of leisure services (Vail, 1992). Thibault et al. (1997) examined the influence of environmental pressures on interorganizational relations between parks and recreation departments and other organizations. They found that "local governments are increasingly relying on partnerships in order to acquire important resources aimed to maintain or enhance the quality of services offered to the public" (Thibault et al., 1997, p. 353). The establishment of these partnerships is attributed mostly to the need to respond

to environmental pressures facing local governments. Further to this study, Thibault et al. (1999) have identified how local governments interpret environmental pressures, such as economic, political and social pressures, are affecting the establishment of partnerships for the provision of leisure services to their community. They found that senior managers identified limited financial resources, political and social pressures as major reasons for developing partnerships.

*economic pressures as budget cuts and maintaining the same level of leisure services without increasing taxes. Political pressures... as the existence of competing values held by politicians, special interest groups and the public. Notion of accountability also surfaced in their interpretation. For social pressures, population growth and ethnic diversity were identified (Thibault et al., 1999, p. 130).*

As confirmed by these studies (Parsons, 1990; Thibault et al, 1997; 1999; Vail, 1992), the establishment of interorganizational relations with other groups is perceived by local governments as one solution to adopt in order to maintain and sometime increase the level of leisure services offered to the community.

Vail (1992) examined interorganizational relations in the study of the sport delivery system of the City of North York in Ontario. She specifically focuses on the interorganizational relations between community organizations and user groups. Vail's (1992) results showed a stronger line of communication between the North York Parks and Recreation department and community sport organizations than among community sport organizations. Sport organizations communicated rarely amongst themselves; their

perceived competition for facility access and human resources appeared to be deterrent to communication. As Vail (1992) argued, establishment and management of effective partnerships by way of communication becomes a priority for community organizations when interacting with the local government since local government are the "owner" of needed facilities. The competition for human resources among the community organizations providing leisure services is increased as potential volunteers have less time to commit.

West's research (1986) focused on interorganizational relations between social services agencies serving the needs of mentally and physically disabled people, and parks and recreation departments managing outdoor recreation programs and facilities. He explored the benefits, barriers, and strategies surrounding these types of linkages. In his conclusion, West (1986) stated that:

*positive functions of interagency cooperation included the expansion of access to programs and facilities, opportunities to share resources and reduce costs, and the potential for communication and mutual education about needs and problems. One negative consequence that can occur is the use of linkages by park personnel to channel handicapped groups away from contact with the general public, thus frustrating community integration goals (p. 63).*

Crompton (1989) described interorganizational relations between the public sector and the commercial sector for the purpose of building recreational facilities. He developed three categories of relationships: a) *using existing commercial facilities*; where the local government leases commercial building instead of developing/building their own; b) *facilitating new commercial projects*; where the local government motivates capital

commercial investment by producing minimal public resources; and c) *joint development with the commercial sector*; where the local government matches resources with the commercial sector towards the development of facilities (Crompton, 1989). In another study, Crompton (1998) investigated forces affecting the public sector when privatizing recreation services and programs. Four reasons for privatizing were outlined:

*(1) frustration with the inflexibility and relatively high cost inherent in the traditional approach of direct service delivery, (2) the convergence of political agendas from both the conservative and liberal wings of political spectrum, (3) recognition of the inherent inefficiencies associated with the monopolistic supply of services, and (4) awareness of the distinction between service provision and production (Crompton, 1998, p.89).*

From the research reviewed in the previous pages, it is clear that the establishment of linkages with other community organizations, non-profit or the commercial sector, is now perceived favourably and widely used by local governments as a strategy to fulfill the needs of the community with regard to the provision of leisure services.

### ***Interorganizational Relations Issues***

A number of studies outside the recreation sector have investigated various issues surrounding interorganizational relationships. Issues such as reasons for involvement, advantages and challenges and interdependency, (cf. Heimovics et al., 1993, Kanter, 1989, Oliver, 1990, 1991, Saidel, 1991) have yet to be investigated in the recreation field. In the following chapters, these issues will be addressed as they create a theoretical framework for answering the research questions of this study.

## **Reasons for Involvement**

There are many reasons for entering partnerships with other organizations. Determining these reasons becomes the first step towards establishing effective partnerships. The reasons for involvement in interorganizational relationships differ from one organization to the next, according to the organization's needs. However, commonalities have been found in the motives behind partnerships. Oliver (1990) has uncovered six determinants or motives for establishing alliances with other organizations. These determinants are: reciprocity, efficiency, stability, legitimacy, necessity, and asymmetry (Oliver, 1990). Even though these determinants are described separately, their influence and interaction on one another is essential to note. Organizations have many reasons for being involved in partnerships. When explaining the following reasons for involvement, it is important to acknowledge that some of these reasons overlap.

### ***i) Reciprocity***

Reciprocity describes an organization's motives to cooperate, collaborate and coordinate with potential partners (Oliver, 1990), creating a certain interdependence with potential partners. The concept of reciprocity occurs when both partners are pursuing the same goals and interest. To improve community welfare and leisure opportunities for all community members is one reason why the local government and community organizations join their efforts. As explained earlier in this research, the role of the government is to ensure that citizen's recreation needs are met (Vail, 1992).

## *ii) Efficiency*

Efficiency, is linked to an organization's needs to increase and improve its "input/output" by controlling environmental and organizational resources (Oliver, 1990). In time when resources are scarce and competition is high, it becomes essential for an organization to be more efficient in its operation. The search for external resources is viewed by many authors as the primary reasons for establishing partnerships and is used to analyze interorganizational relations, defining it as the resource dependency framework (cf. Fenell, Ross & Warnecke, 1987; Galaskiewicz, 1985; Galaskiewicz & Krohn, 1984; Oliver 1991; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Saidel, 1991; Skinner & Gultinan, 1986). While a number of theoretical frameworks such as population-ecology (Hannan & Freeman, 1978), natural-selection (Aldrich, 1979), resource dependency, institutionalization, and social class (Mizruchi & Galaskiewicz, 1993) have been used to analyze interorganizational relations, the resource dependency framework will be used to guide our understanding of the reasons behind interorganizational relationships between local governments and community organizations. The premise of the resource dependency framework is that organizations depend on each other for resources since "the direct procurement of facilities, materials, products, or revenues" allows an organization to ensure its survival (Galaskiewicz, 1985, p. 282).

In the current fiscal situation with local governments' parks and recreation departments, managers are expected "to do more with less". As a result, entering into partnerships with other organizations represents a feasible strategy to gain access to much needed resources (Crompton, 1989; Mayo, 1997; Thibault et al., 1997; 1999).

Organizational environment is an essential factor when dealing with the efficiency element given that it holds the much needed resources (Ulrich, 1984). In order to acquire external resources, organizations must maintain a certain level of stability with their environment. One way to achieve this stability is to establish relations with other organizations which control the required resources, which leads us to the third reason for involvement, stability.

### *iii) Stability*

Stability is related to the need by an organization to control environmental uncertainty (Oliver, 1990). In order to obtain a better control over the environment, partnerships are created. Organizational environment is defined as "everything outside an organization's boundaries" (Robbins, 1990, p. 206), while environmental uncertainty is defined as "the degree of heterogeneity and concentration among environmental elements" (Robbins, 1990, p. 219). Two levels of organizational environment are identified in the literature; specific and general (cf. Pennings, 1981, Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978, Robbins, 1990). For the purpose of this study, only the specific environment will be discussed due to its direct impact on interorganizational relations. The specific environment is made up of constituents directly influencing organizations such as: "customers, suppliers of materials, labor, capital, equipment, workplace, competitors, regulatory organizations and agencies" (Mulford, 1984, p.9), and public pressure groups (Robbins, 1990). These constituents influence organizational structure on a daily basis. For example, customers are a significant constituent to consider. Without any customers, organizations would not

survive and with many customers, organizations have to adapt their structure to respond to the demand.

Organizations must control their specific environment to minimize the level of uncertainty by manipulating organizational structure (Robbins, 1990). It is essential for organizations to limit the potential risks to ensure their survival, since a high degree of environmental uncertainty may indicate pressing changes for an organization (Robbins, 1990). Consequently, organizations may choose to establish new partnerships as a strategic response to stabilize their environment. As described in the recreation literature, entering new partnerships is one solution to manage environmental uncertainty (Thibault et al., 1997). Environmental uncertainty is an important topic when exploring interorganizational relations because it is often the underlying reason for entering into partnerships with other organizations (Galaskiewicz, 1985; Oliver, 1990; Provan, 1982).

#### *iv) Legitimacy*

Another reasons for involvement is the need for legitimacy. It represents the need for an organization to conform to societal norms, values, rules, and expectations (Oliver, 1990). In some instances, one partner may need or wish to establish a partnership with another organization for the credibility and reputation of the partner-organization. It has been discussed that an organization has better chance of survival if it obtains legitimacy and social support from its environment by improving its reputation in the community (Baum & Oliver, 1991). Further to the resources discussed in the efficiency section, political advocacy, legitimization (Galaskiewicz, 1985), and access to the legislative policy

process (Rourke, 1984) have been identified as key resources. Political advocacy, legitimization and legislative policy process are all related to an organization's ability to establish strong relationships with politicians and legislators, consequently leading to its acceptance and success in the community.

Gaining community legitimacy is perceived as essential in the development of community programs. As Thibault et al. (1999, p.135) argued, "increasing participation of citizen and interest groups in the decision making process affecting sport and leisure services and programmes is an important consideration".

Although financial resources may be an important reason for entering relationships, other types of resources can be equally as important. Organizations may not be able to acquire external resources by using their purchasing power; thus, it is important to find other means to obtain much needed resources. An example of these means, in the recreation field, can be identified by a community organization contacting the parks and recreation department about the availability of parks and/or facilities. Oliver (1991) stated that information sharing usually represents the first steps of interorganizational relations. By increasing communication and networking, organizations ensure healthier partnerships. Consequently, community organizations have to maintain favourable communication with the local government in order to meet the organizational needs. This may create a dependence for external resources, however without this dependence, organizational survival would be impossible (Heimovics et al., 1993).

*v) Necessity*

Another determinant for establishing partnerships is by necessity. Necessity is defined as the need for establishing linkages “in order to meet necessary legal or regulatory requirements (Oliver, 1991, p.243). This reason for involvement is not relevant to the purpose of this study, given local governments and community organizations are not forced in entering partnerships with one another. Even though the establishment of partnerships is sometimes perceived a need for these partners in order to deliver leisure and sport services, both partners are voluntarily involved in the partnership process.

*vi) Asymmetry*

Finally the last reason for involvement in the establishment of partnerships is asymmetry. Asymmetry is described as the exercise of power and control of one organization over another for its resources (Oliver, 1990). For the purpose of this study, the asymmetry element is not applicable due to the mandate of the public sector. This reason may not be relevant given the fact that local governments tend to assume a facilitator role when entering partnerships as opposed to a directive role (Vail, 1992). In most cases, local governments enter partnerships in order to maintain the same level of recreation services accessible to their community without any tax increase (Thibault et al., 1999). Local governments have not intention in taking over a service or an organization.

Even though Oliver's work (1990) was not specifically undertaken in the recreation field, a number of determinants will enable us to gain a better understanding of the reasons for the establishment of interorganizational relations between the parks and recreation

department and community organizations. As such, Oliver's work will form the theoretical framework for this research.

In addition to uncovering the reasons behind developing partnerships, it is also important to examine advantages and challenges of these alliances. Advantages and challenges will determine if the partnership is considered successful. In some cases, the balance between advantages and challenges will influence the future of this partnership. There are many advantages and challenges associated with partnerships between local governments and community organizations. The identification of advantages and challenges of these partnerships becomes an important exercise to help in our understanding of interorganizational relationships.

### **Advantages**

Several authors have identified advantages surrounding interorganizational relations (McLean, 1993; Smith et al., 1991; Vail, 1994). One significant advantage of establishing partnerships is related to resource sharing. Vail (1994) determined that by entering linkages, local governments were able to decrease the duplication of services resulting in decreased costs and/or an increased availability of resources when organizations are facing economic constraints. Furthermore, the local government is able to embrace new programs and services that would otherwise be impossible when partnering with community organizations (McLean, 1993), by relying on the use of each other's assets and strengths (Crompton, 1998). The elimination of service duplication does not only

help communities to ensure that a wide variety of services is offered, but that these services are delivered in the most efficient manner.

Another advantage of establishing partnerships with the local government is that both partners, local government and community organizations providing recreation services, can increase their visibility and credibility to the community (Crompton, 1998; Prior et al., 1995; Thibault et al., 1999; Vail, 1994). Community organizations are not only part of the community but are mainly operated by members of the community they are servicing. The benefits of establishing linkages are tremendous as it allows the local government to have a close link to its resident. The creation of a sense of ownership and involvement in the decision making process for these community associations has been beneficial for all parties, resulting in the betterment of community welfare (Prior et al., 1995). Furthermore, local governments' reputation and image may also be improved when partnering with the nonprofit sector (Crompton, 1998).

### **Challenges**

In addition to the advantages of interorganizational relations, there are also a number of challenges, concerns and fears. Organizations face some challenges when forming an alliance with another group. The loss of autonomy and loss of control are perceived as challenges associated with interorganizational relations (Oliver, 1991; West, 1986). As Mulford (1984, p. 177) explained these challenges include: "fears of loss of autonomy, fears that organizational participation will have unfavourable ramifications for image or

identity, and fears that participation will require the direct expenditure of scarce resources."

As explained earlier, the loss of autonomy is directly associated with the resource dependency framework. Even though resources are a major component of an organization's viability, other factors influence organizational autonomy when entering a partnership: organizational size, organizational characteristics, type of leaders (Heimovics et al., 1993; Skinner & Gultinan, 1986). These factors also affect the loss of autonomy when searching for external resources (Oliver, 1991). For example, an organization may lose leadership over a project in order for another organization to supervise and fund this project. Loss of autonomy is the direct result of a lack of resources and intensity level of the partnership (Skinner & Gultinan, 1986).

### **Loss of Autonomy**

There is a significant correlation between the intensity level in interorganizational relations and a potential loss of autonomy by the partners (Oliver, 1991). Organizational autonomy is defined as "the organization's freedom to make its own decisions about the use and allocation of its internal resources without reference or regard to the demands or expectations of potential linkage partners" (Oliver, 1991, p. 944). Skinner and Gultinan (1986) found that the more an organization has partners, the less is its chances of being controlled and less dependent by one of its partners. The loss of autonomy is an essential factor for organizations to consider when relying on partners for resources. Organizations have to understand the type of partnership and the reasons for their involvement, in order

to manage the loss of autonomy. If an organization relies solely on one partner for resources, a situation of dependence may be created (Oliver, 1991).

It has been demonstrated that losing organizational autonomy can be a considerable threat to an organization (Provan, 1982). Organizations are usually not interested in losing their autonomy, especially when it may affect their decision-making abilities, as it might directly influence the organizational operation. Loss of autonomy is directly linked to the decrease of one's decision-making process of one's capacity to react to environmental changes and increased possibilities of future external influences (Oliver, 1991). It appears that organizations are willing to benefit from interorganizational relationships, however are not willing to lose their autonomy and/or power. When entering partnerships, parties benefit from gains, such as increased resources, even though some loss of autonomy, for at least one of the partners, is inevitable (Oliver, 1991).

### **Intensity of Interorganizational Relations**

Interorganizational relations are usually identified by their intensity level and differ from one partnership to the other. Many studies (cf. Harrigan & Newman, 1990; Kanter, 1989; McLean, 1993; Paulson, 1985; Skinner & Gultinan, 1986; Smith et al., 1991; West, 1986) have identified various levels of intensity regarding interorganizational relations. For the purpose of this study, we will focus on Oliver's (1991) intensity level of interorganizational relations because of its application in a study of interorganizational relations between the public sector and its partners. In addition, Oliver's model (1991) identifies the link between the intensity of interorganizational relations and loss of

autonomy. In order to explain and define types of interorganizational relations in the field of recreation, this study will provide an opportunity to test Oliver's (1991) model. Figure 1 outlines Oliver's (1991) framework.

Oliver (1991) divided the continuum of interorganizational relations into five levels of intensity: personal meeting, resource transfers, board membership, joint programs, and written agreements. These different intensity levels are directly linked with the organization's loss of autonomy. The more formalized a partnership is, the greater the risk of losing one's organizational autonomy. The first level, personal meeting, represents the level in which limited resources (e.g., financial, personnel, and facilities) are required by the partners. Since few resources are required from the partner, the organization will not experience a loss of autonomy. The level of intensity increases as partners write agreements, the highest level of Oliver's (1991) continuum. This level of partnership formalization is very intense and may result directly in a greater loss of autonomy.

It is important to note that even though loss of autonomy might represent a threat to one of the partners, in some instance, it represents the only viable solution for an organization. For example, two organizations may decide to ally in order to have access to each other's expertise. As a result of this partnership, both organizations may lose some autonomy however they gain tremendous experience by combining both their strengths. In this respect, both organizations are improving their own resources by depending on one another.

**Figure 1 - Scale of Interorganizational Intensity and Autonomy Loss**

| Type of relation                       | Personal Meeting                                     | Resource Transfers  | Board Interlocks   | Joint Programs   | Written Contracts  |
|--|--|---|--|--|--|
| <i>Low Intensity<br/>High Autonomy</i> | Informal director of meeting to exchange information | Exchanges of resources such as meeting rooms, personnel, equipment or funds | Appointment of external constituents to boards and/or committees of the organization | Joint work in planning and implementing specific programs and activities | Written agreement pertaining to personnel, client referrals, service provision |
| <i>High Intensity<br/>Low Autonomy</i> |  |   |  |  |  |

Source: Oliver, C. (1991). Network relations and loss of organizational autonomy. Human Relations, 44(9), p.950

Closely linked to Oliver's (1991) model, Pennings (1981) described interdependent relations among organizations in terms of three types of interaction: horizontal, vertical and symbiotic.

The first level of interdependence, horizontal, refers to organizations competing against each other for the same resources and for the delivery of similar services (Pennings, 1981). This interaction occurs at the same level of operation in the community (Mulford, 1984). An example of horizontal interdependence in recreation could be represented by different groups offering similar recreation services for the residents of the same community, such as a women's hockey association and a women's lacrosse league targeting the same clientele, young women, but in different season. A direct link between the provider groups is created to exchange resources, in this case, potential participants.

Vertical interdependence refers to the interaction between organizations at different levels of operation (Pennings, 1981). As an example, this type of interdependence could be found between one organization that depends on another organization for resources, such as a swimming club depending on municipal swimming pool to fulfill their clients' needs.

Finally, the symbiotic interdependence is defined as organizations that are working together towards the achievement of the same goals (Pennings, 1981). For example, the local government could link with different organizations for the purpose of improving the health of a community, such as a local government partnering with a church group to provide an after-school program. Organizations included in symbiotic interdependence are usually voluntary community organizations interested in economic development or

local land use (Galaskiewicz & Krohn, 1984). These different levels of interdependence will enable a better understanding of local governments' interactions with their partners.

In summary, as evident from the previous pages, there is a great deal of research investigating the phenomenon of interorganizational relationships. Some of the research reviewed in this chapter is specific to the recreation context while other studies outlined the issues and challenges associated with partnerships and alliances in the general context of organizations. In order to better understand issues of interorganizational relations between local governments, specifically departments of Parks and Recreation and community organizations providing recreation and sport services, Oliver's work (1990; 1991) will serve as the theoretical frameworks for this study.

### **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHOD**

The purpose of this study is to identify and understand issues surrounding interorganizational relations between local governments (parks and recreation department) and organizations providing recreation services. Since the main focus of this research is to better comprehend interorganizational relations, a qualitative research method approach is considered to be suitable. As Oliver explained by (1991, p. 959), “the use of qualitative approaches ... would permit richer insight into the process by which organizational participants select relationships and their motivation for doing so”. As well, Mulford (1984, p. 202) believes that “Qualitative approaches to interorganizational research attempt to discover, explore, and convey the social-psychological paradigms that govern perception, conduct, and reaction in interorganizational settings”. When using a qualitative approach, the researcher is able to investigate and explain social experiences between him/herself and what is studied (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Thus, by investigating interorganizational relations between a parks and recreation department and its community organizations, through people’s perspectives, the qualitative approach is deemed to be ideal.

Different data collection methods are utilized by researchers using a qualitative approach; “participation in the setting, direct observation, in-depth interviewing, and document review” (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 78). Following Thibault et al.’s work (1997), a combination of semi-structured interviews and document analysis were undertaken for the purpose of this study. Through semi-structured interviews and document research, it

was possible to collect data leading to a complete analysis of interorganizational relations between a parks and recreation department and its community partners.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the staff of parks and recreation department. Three key persons were invited to discuss the department's involvement in interorganizational relations with community organizations providing recreation services and programs. These selected public servants were active members of the decision-making process regarding interorganizational relations in parks and recreation. In addition, they had knowledge about past and current issues related to interorganizational relations in their department, especially partnerships with three selected community organizations used in this case study. Furthermore, two city councilors were asked to participate in this study. The city councilors selected were knowledgeable about interorganizational relationships between the Parks and Recreation department and community organizations providing leisure services. We believe that this selection of interviewees was representative of the views and perspectives of interorganizational relationships within the parks and recreation department.

In addition to the staff and politicians, interviews with leaders of three nonprofit community organizations were undertaken as part of this research. Historically, local governments have preferred nonprofit organizations to the commercial sector when selecting partners (cf. Bebbington & Bebbington, 1993; Heimovics et al., 1993; Saidel, 1991). This choice was influenced by the community organizations' mandate and philosophy resulting in the creation of numerous nonprofit organizations in local

communities (D'Amours, 1989). The difference in mandate between the nonprofit and the private sectors is the main reason for the government's preference to ally itself with nonprofit organizations. Nonprofit organizations are hybrids between the profit and public sector. "Like businesses, they must rely on voluntary exchanges to obtain revenues, and like governments, they usually provide services with public goods characteristics" (Heimovics et al., 1993, p.425). However, Yoshioka (1990) found that the mission statement for nonprofit organizations may differ from their actual practice. In fact, their management practices are becoming more business-like. As a result, the management of nonprofit organizations is similar to the private commercial organizations. The similarity may lead local governments to consider all partners equally.

In addition to their nonprofit mandate and philosophy, these three organizations were selected according to other characteristics such as: the number of registered participants, a balanced representation of the population and the maturity and structure of the organization. They were also representative of the various venues utilized for the delivery of recreation services (i.e., parks, pools, and arenas). In total, one interview per organization were conducted. The interviewees were active members of the decision-making process and were knowledgeable about past and current issues related to interorganizational relationships between their organizations and the local government.

All of these semi-structured interviews were conducted on an individual basis in the place of choice of the interviewees, to allow them to feel more at ease in their environment.

Following ethical considerations, the interviews were audio-taped-recorded, if authorized

by the subjects, and then transcribed. Questions with regard to their organization and interorganizational relations were investigated. A sample of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix A. The interviewees were encouraged to elaborate on topics related to the research and had the freedom to refuse to answer any question. The option of returning to prior interviewees to clarify issues emerging from other interviews were taken into consideration. Each interview is expected to last approximately one hour.

To support these interviews, a document analysis was conducted for each of the aforementioned organizations (parks and recreation department and community organizations). Different types of documents such as: minutes of meetings, financial reports, long and short term plans, legal documents relative to this research and programs were analyzed. "The review of documents is an unobstructive method, one rich in portraying the values and beliefs of participants in the setting" (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 85). "Content-analysis entails the systematic examination of forms of communication to document patterns objectively" (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 85). The availability of these documents may depend on the level of organization of the community groups. It is believed that most of the local government's documents were available and accessible. An advantage of accessing government's documents is the fact that they are rarely destroyed; dated documents are retained in storage facilities (i.e., archives). However, the situation may differ for the community organizations providing recreation services for the community. Community organizations tend not to be as bureaucratized as the parks and recreation department. This situation may lead to many obstacles for the collection of documents. For example, certain documents may have

been misplaced because of the high turnover of volunteers serving on the administrative board. Despite these apparent problems, it is believed that the analysis of all available pertinent documents enabled us to gain a better understanding of interorganizational relations between the parks and recreation department and community organizations.

### *Content Analysis*

The information obtained from the interviews were analyzed following a qualitative approach. When analyzing the qualitative data, the Atlas.ti, a qualitative data software analysis program was utilized. Atlas.ti software enabled the researcher to manage large bodies of text, such as interviews, via a coding process and the creation of theoretical models and theories (Miles & Weitzman, 1994). The Atlas.ti software program was chosen due to the ease of the researcher's ability to code, search, retrieve data in order to manage the gathered information, and build theory. Codes or themes were pre-determined according to the research questions of this study and according to the review of the research in the area of interorganizational relationships. All interviews were coded and analyzed individually. Pre-selecting the codes provided the researcher with a starting point for the analysis of the interview. Additional codes, or themes were identified according to other topics that were discussed by the interviewees. These procedures allowed for a better understanding of the nature of interorganizational relationships between local governments and community organizations.

### ***Role of the Researcher***

It is important to address the role of the researcher in this study as it may play a role in the research process and in the analysis of the data. The researcher has worked in the field of recreation and leisure services, more specifically in the local government - Parks and Recreation department for the last five years, first with the District of Maple Ridge and then for the City of Surrey. This work experience was gained at the middle management level in the role of community services coordinator at both local governments. At the time of the data collection, the researcher was employed by the Surrey Parks and Recreation department. As a representative of the local government and as a facilitator of interorganizational relationships with community organizations, the researcher was in an ideal position to better comprehend the partnerships between the local governments and community organizations. As such, the researcher's prior knowledge and experience benefited the data collection process, especially during the semi-structured interviews.

### ***Ethical Issues***

An ethical review of this research proposal was conducted by the University of British Columbia Ethics to ensure the protection of the research participants' rights. In addition to the ethical consideration, the four criteria of soundness for qualitative research methods were followed. These four criteria include transferability, credibility, dependability, and confirmability.

***i) Transferability***

Even though direct transferability of the findings is limited, many of the findings of this research can be used to enhance our understanding of interorganizational relationships in similar communities. Furthermore, this study will enable future researchers to identify potential issues emerging from the establishment of partnerships between local government and community organizations and, be useful to other local governments as they develop interorganizational relations with community organizations.

***ii) Credibility***

Credibility is demonstrated when “the inquiry was conducted in such a manner as to ensure that the subject was accurately identified and described” (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p.143). To ensure the credibility, interviews were audio-taped, and documents were analyzed as objectively as possible. Interviewees were also be asked to read transcripts of their interview, in order for them to confirm and/or add information. Furthermore, throughout the data analysis, the researcher had opportunity to discuss the findings with the interviewees.

***iii) Dependability***

The third criteria to consider is dependability. Dependability is defined by Marshall and Rossman (1995) as “the construct is which the researcher attempts to account for changing conditions in the phenomenon chosen for study as well as changes in the design created by increasingly refined understanding of the setting” (p. 145). Given the flexibility of this study and methodology method, it will be possible to adapt to the

changing environment surrounding this research. According to West's study (1984), the combination of document analysis and interviews on a small sample represents a balanced option for the analysis of interorganizational relations.

#### *iv) Confirmability*

According to Deslauriers (1991), the researcher has to examine all data to ensure that all procedures were followed, to verify and confirm that the results are congruent with the data. Therefore, two data collection methods were utilized. As a result, some degree of confirmability will be expected. Since 3 people from the local government and 3 people from community organizations providing recreation services were interviewed. The various interviews allowed for a realistic overview of the issues surrounding interorganizational relations between the parks and recreation department and community organizations.

#### *Research Site*

The City of Surrey was selected as the research site for this study on the analysis of interorganizational relationships between its Parks and Recreation department and three community organizations providing recreation services and programs: Surrey Knights Swim Club, Surrey Youth Soccer Association and Surrey Minor Hockey Association.

The City of Surrey was chosen according to its particular characteristics. Being the largest city in the province of British Columbia with a territory of 326 square kilometers (132 square miles), Surrey is divided into 6 different neighbourhoods, also called town

centres: Cloverdale, Fleetwood, Guildford, Newton, South Surrey and Whalley (City of Surrey, 1995). According to the last population survey, the City of Surrey had more than 286,000 residents, representing the second largest city in population in the province and one of the fastest growing cities in Canada (City of Surrey, 1995). Table 1 outlines the population of Surrey by its six town centres.

**Table 1 - City of Surrey Population Estimate by Town Centres**

|                            | <b>Cloverdale</b> | <b>Fleetwood</b> | <b>Guilford</b> | <b>Newton</b> | <b>South Surrey</b> | <b>Whalley</b> | <b>Totals</b> |
|----------------------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------------|----------------|---------------|
| <b>Population 1995</b>     | 26,000            | 34,000           | 40,000          | 67,000        | 49,000              | 70,000         | 286,000       |
| <b>Estimated pop. 2000</b> | 36,000            | 43,000           | 50,000          | 90,000        | 57,000              | 79,000         | 355,000       |
| <b>Estimated pop. 2006</b> | 49,000            | 49,000           | 64,000          | 105,000       | 71,000              | 86,000         | 424,000       |

It is estimated that Surrey's population will likely exceed 400,000 by 2006 (City of Surrey, 1995). This growth, of approximately 12 000 people per year (City of Surrey, 1995) will have an important impact on the way recreation programs and services will be offered in the City of Surrey.

In addition to this significant population growth, the City of Surrey is facing another important challenge in the area of parks and recreation. The City of Surrey calls itself the "City of Parks", however its parks and recreation department spends only \$49.63 per resident per year, while the average of other local parks and recreation departments in the Greater Vancouver Area is approximately \$103.00 (Munro, 1997). Surrey, in fact, is the local government in the Greater Vancouver Area that spends the least amount of money per capita on parks and recreation services. As well, the City of Surrey is lacking recreation facilities (i.e., pool, arena, and recreation complex) to fully service its residents (City of Surrey, 1995). The insufficiency of public recreation facilities is forcing Surrey's residents to travel greater distances to gain access to public facilities and, in some cases, residents who do not have access to transportation are denied recreation opportunities. Various organizational studies have defined the recreation needs of each of these town centres: Surrey Parks and Recreation Master Plan (City of Surrey, 1995); Cloverdale Master Plan (City of Surrey, 1997); and others are in the process of being completed: Newton, North Surrey and Guildford Master Plans. However, the overwhelming cost attached in meeting these recreation needs has led Surrey Parks and Recreation department to consider new strategies, such as the development of

interorganizational relations with other organizations, in order to effectively manage its recreation services, programs, and facilities.

A statement made in the Surrey Parks and Recreation Master Plan (City of Surrey, 1995, p. 12) outlines the importance of working closely “with other levels of government, as well as the Surrey School Board, the private sector and community organizations, in order to optimize the availability and use of facilities and services and to ensure the most efficient allocation of resources.” Surrey has acknowledged the importance of linking with various community organizations in order to appropriately serve the community and its residents.

The Parks and Recreation department of Surrey currently works with community organizations to facilitate the delivery of programs and services. The following paragraphs provide an overview of the three community organizations selected for this study. These organizations were selected according to their membership, long history of partnerships with the City of Surrey, organizational mandate, and the services provided. Since the researcher was a community services coordinator for the Surrey Parks and Recreation department at the time of data collection, it was important to ensure that the community groups selected for this study were not part of the researcher’s work responsibilities. In other words, the researcher had no prior involvement with these three community groups.

1. *The Surrey Knights Swim Club* (SKSC) was formed in 1972 and is presently located at the North Surrey Pool. It is a registered nonprofit society, overseen by an executive committee of 12 voting members and 8 non-voting members. One full time staff, three part-time and two volunteer staff have been hired by the executive to coach and administer the swimming club. At the last registration, SKSC counted 72 members (47 females, 25 males) ranging from the age six to 40 years old.

2. *The Surrey Youth Soccer Association* (SYSA) has been established since 1983. After a break up of the Surrey United Association, four teams created Surrey Youth Soccer Association. Five years later, they would merge with the West Fraser Association forming the presently known Surrey Youth Soccer Association. As a registered nonprofit association servicing the North Surrey residents, this soccer association counts over 1900 members divided in 135 teams, 27 being girls' teams. SYSA is administered by an executive of ten voting and five non-voting members.

3. *The Surrey Minor Hockey Association* (SMHA) was created prior to 1962, however no one knows the exact date due to missing documents. It was formed from the merger of North Surrey Minor Hockey and Newton Minor Hockey. It counts over 1450 members, forming 89 teams ranging from five to 20 years old, making this club the largest minor association in Surrey. Even though, SMHA service both girls and boys by forming mixed teams, only 11 members are girls. This nonprofit organization has an executive of 26 members though only seven voting positions.

## **CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In the previous chapters, the review of literature, theoretical framework and research methodology described matters surrounding the topic of interorganizational relationships between local government and community organizations providing leisure services. As mentioned previously, the City of Surrey was chosen as the research site for this case study analysis. Three community organizations providing leisure services in this community were also selected as partners of the City of Surrey, the Surrey Knights Swim Club, the Surrey Youth Soccer Association and the Surrey Minor Hockey Association.

For the purpose of this study, eight semi-structured interviews were conducted with different representatives from the three community organizations providing leisure services and from the City of Surrey and its Parks and Recreation department.

Specifically, two city councilors, three city staff and three representatives of community organizations providing leisure services in Surrey participated in these semi-structured interviews. City employees were all active in the decision-making process, but at different levels. One Parks and Recreation manager and two community services coordinators were interviewed. The differences in perception between the senior manager and Community Services Coordinators, with regard to the establishment of partnerships, allowed for a better comprehension of the situation surrounding interorganizational relations within this community. Furthermore, all community organization representatives were in the President's position and had been for numerous years, resulting in extensive knowledge surrounding interorganizational relationships between

their organization and the City of Surrey. The two city councilors were selected because of their knowledge of the issues involved in interorganizational relations with the Surrey Parks and Recreation department.

The following Table (Table 2) provides a profile of the individuals who participated in the semi-structured interviews.

**Table 2 – Profile of Interviewees**

| <b># of interviewee</b> | <b>City of Surrey Representatives</b>          | <b>Average Years of Experience</b> |
|-------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| 2                       | Community Services Coordinators                | 16 years                           |
| 1                       | Manager  | 23 years                           |
| 2                       | City Councilors                                | 7 years                            |
|                         | <b>Community Organizations Representatives</b> |                                    |
| 3                       | Presidents                                     | 8 years                            |

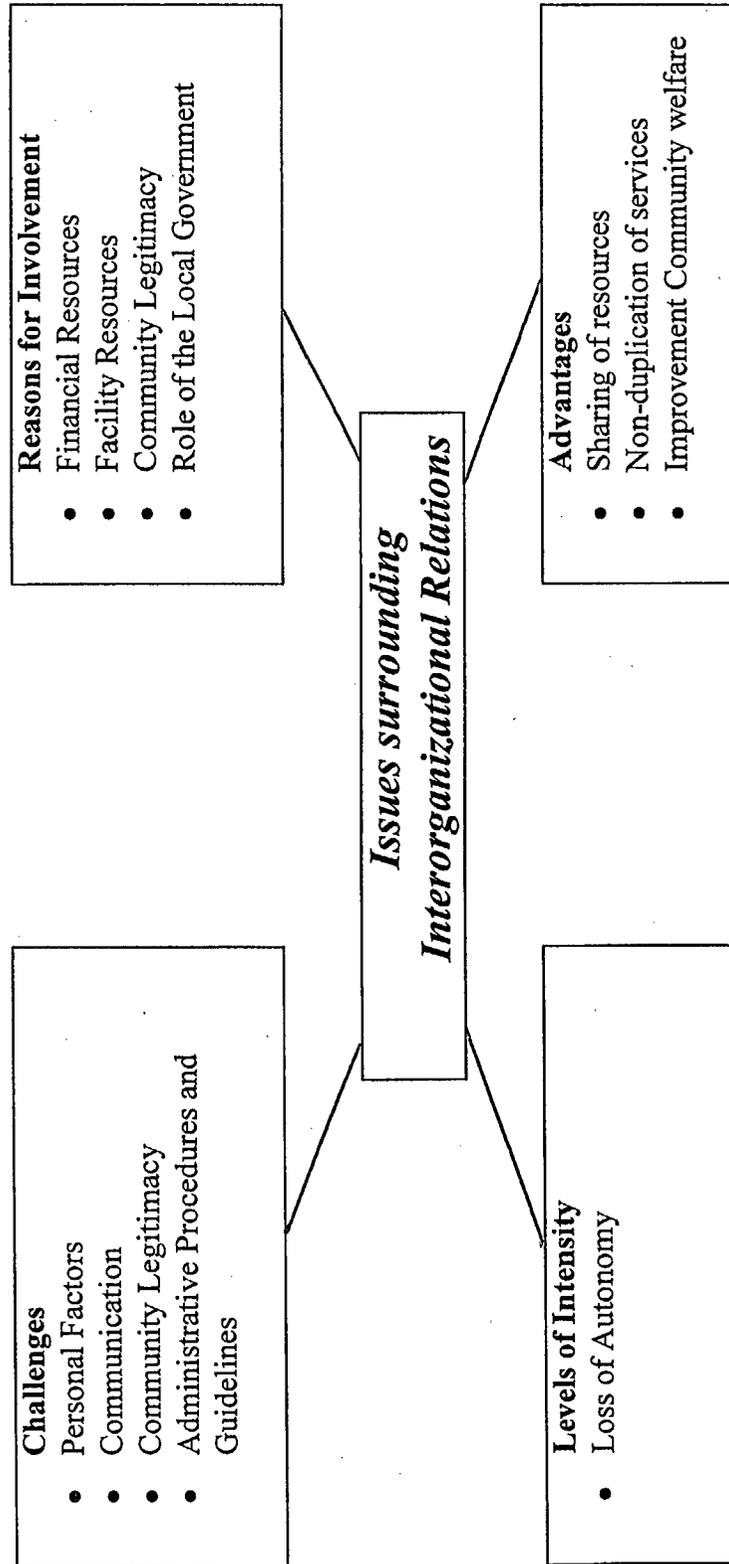
In addition to these eight interviews, two informal discussions were conducted; one with the Mayor of the City of Surrey and one with the General Manager of the Surrey Parks and Recreation department to better understand the context surrounding interorganizational relationships in the City of Surrey.

In order to complement the interviews and to better understand the climate surrounding interorganizational relationships between the Surrey Parks and Recreation department and community organizations providing leisure services, an analysis of documents was completed to confirm statements made by the interviewees. Documents such as policies and contracts between partners were analyzed. Even though these documents did not provide additional information related to partnerships, they did confirm statements made by the interviewees. As well, in order to better understand the dynamic within the community organizations themselves, one board meeting per community organization was attended.

When coding the interviews with the assistance of Atlas.ti, data were categorized in codes which originated from the review of literature. The codes consisted of: reasons for involvement, advantages, challenges, loss of autonomy and level of interorganizational intensity. As well, given the nature of the semi-structured interviews, additional codes were also uncovered at the time of coding. This flexibility during the coding of the data allowed for a better understanding of all topics emerging throughout the interviews. After coding all interviews, themes were grouped together according to the issues. These

issues will be discussed in the following pages. An overview of these issues is outlined in Figure 2.

**Figure 2 - Issues Surrounding Interorganizational Relations**



The study of interorganizational relations between community organizations and local government is a very significant and dynamic topic of discussion for the City of Surrey and its Parks and Recreation department. Numerous factors are directly affecting partnerships between Surrey Parks and Recreation department and its community organizations. As described by one city councilor:

*Parks and Recreation is probably one of the front-runner departments. It is through Parks and Recreation that we have our sports, our playing fields, and [our facilities]. We are trying to make sure that there is a community centre in each of the town centres. ... It is probably where the focus is placed, on Parks and Recreation. [The Parks and Recreation department] is going to be in the news all the time, and they will be doing things for sure because of the population growth. We grow at 1000 [residents] per month. So it is a big job to keep up with the growth. We don't have enough ice, pools, nor [developed] parks and we have tons of land (Interviewee #1).*

Establishing partnerships is viewed as a way of reacting to environmental changes (Galaskiewicz, 1985; Oliver, 1990; Provan, 1982). Therefore, the City of Surrey, via its Parks and Recreation department has increased the number of partnerships with non-profit and private commercial organizations. As confirmed by most public servants, the City of Surrey and community organizations are wanting to establish partnerships with one another.

*There is no doubt [that we have seen an increase in partnerships. And also], the community is coming to us and is looking for these partnerships (Interviewee #1).*

*The real partnership relationships are getting bigger all the time (Interviewee #3).*

However, there seems to be a discrepancy in opinion within the City of Surrey with regard to the number of partnerships that the City of Surrey has established over the past years. One Surrey Parks and Recreation Manager stated:

*[The number of partnerships] have stayed the same. I think 3 years is probably about the period of time it takes to hatch a project and so I have not seen any significant increase or decrease in partnerships. [Only] when a partnership/agreement is finally signed off on, that is when there is a partnership (Interviewee #4).*

The differences in opinion as it relates to the definition of partnership only confirm the importance to study the establishment of partnerships between the City of Surrey and the non-profit or/and the private commercial sectors.

Numerous issues surrounding partnerships were discussed by the interviewees from: human, facility and financial resources; community legitimacy; agreements and guidelines. Table 3 provides the frequency of issues raised by interviewees. As noted, interviewees viewed some issues differently than others. We can also observe discrepancies in the percentage of repetition of these issues amongst the interviewees. These differences were noticeable according to their position within the organizations and the types of organizations they were serving. For the purpose of this study, information originating from the interviews was compiled into 4 major categories; reasons for involvement, advantages, challenges and levels of interorganizational intensity. These categories were guided by the research questions outlined in Chapter 1. Each issue will be further discussed in this chapter regrouping all themes under each category that were determined during the interviews, as identified in Figure 2. All themes were included in

the 4 selected categories except for human resources, evaluation and amount of partnerships. Even though these issues were helpful to better understand interorganizational relations between the City of Surrey and three community organizations, they were not relevant to the purpose of this research.

Another theme that was also discussed by all interviewees was the maintenance of interorganizational relations. With a number of quotes related to this topic, it appears that maintenance should be also addressed during the analysis. However maintenance of partnership was beyond the scope of this research. As such, it should be addressed in future studies.

**Table 3 - Frequency in Responses by Interviewees Surrounding Interorganizational Relations**

| CODE                        | 1         | 2         | 3         | 4          | 5         | 6         | 7         | 8         | Totals     |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| Advantages                  | 1         | 3         | 6         | 10         | 3         | 9         | 4         | 2         | 38         |
| Financial Resources         | 5         | 7         | 4         | 13         | 7         | 3         | 4         | 0         | 43         |
| Amount of Partnerships      | 2         | 0         | 2         | 2          | 0         | 1         | 0         | 0         | 7          |
| Challenges                  | 12        | 11        | 7         | 32         | 7         | 3         | 7         | 2         | 81         |
| Conflict                    | 0         | 6         | 0         | 0          | 0         | 0         | 2         | 0         | 8          |
| Communication               | 0         | 7         | 3         | 2          | 2         | 8         | 16        | 3         | 41         |
| Trust                       | 0         | 7         | 0         | 1          | 0         | 0         | 0         | 0         | 8          |
| Intensity Level             | 0         | 0         | 5         | 2          | 0         | 6         | 5         | 2         | 20         |
| Guidelines                  | 0         | 0         | 5         | 10         | 6         | 3         | 0         | 0         | 24         |
| Agreements                  | 0         | 1         | 4         | 8          | 0         | 2         | 1         | 4         | 20         |
| Types of Partnerships       | 2         | 5         | 6         | 11         | 9         | 5         | 3         | 2         | 43         |
| Sponsorship                 | 1         | 1         | 0         | 0          | 2         | 3         | 0         | 0         | 7          |
| Landlord/Renter Partnership | 0         | 3         | 2         | 1          | 0         | 3         | 0         | 1         | 10         |
| Interdependency             | 0         | 2         | 0         | 2          | 3         | 0         | 1         | 0         | 8          |
| Evaluation of Partnerships  | 0         | 2         | 0         | 1          | 0         | 0         | 0         | 0         | 3          |
| Reason for Involvement      | 6         | 5         | 7         | 28         | 6         | 6         | 7         | 8         | 73         |
| Community Legitimacy        | 2         | 0         | 3         | 9          | 1         | 1         | 3         | 1         | 20         |
| Facility Resources          | 4         | 3         | 3         | 3          | 4         | 2         | 2         | 4         | 25         |
| Human Resources             | 2         | 0         | 0         | 1          | 0         | 1         | 0         | 0         | 4          |
| Maintenance                 | 7         | 9         | 15        | 18         | 4         | 7         | 9         | 1         | 70         |
| <b>TOTALS</b>               | <b>44</b> | <b>72</b> | <b>72</b> | <b>154</b> | <b>54</b> | <b>63</b> | <b>64</b> | <b>30</b> | <b>553</b> |

### ***Reasons for Involvement***

As mentioned in Chapter 2, determining the reasons for involvement is the first step to form effective partnerships. Oliver (1990) categorized the reasons for involvement into 4 reasons; reciprocity, efficiency, stability and legitimacy. Even if Oliver's (1990) terminology might differ from what interviewees have mentioned, the reasons for involvement are similar. The reasons for establishing partnerships between community associations and the City of Surrey are significantly influenced by the organizations' mandate and their operations. However, the search to increase available resources (particularly financial and capital resources) seems to be the most significant reason to develop alliances for both sectors (non-profit and public), followed by community legitimacy.

### **Financial Resources**

The City of Surrey considers itself at the infancy stage of establishing partnerships due to the fact that the main reason for involvement with other community organizations is directly linked to the need to access other financial resources. Before the 1970s', budget restraint was not an issue for most municipalities (Searle & Brayley, 1983), however with the changes in the economy, the City of Surrey is now obligated to find other ways of counterbalancing its budget for the purpose of improving community services, thus the establishment of partnerships with community organization and with the private commercial sector. The lack of available resources is discussed in various ways by the City of Surrey interviewees. For example, interviewees discussed the need to increase operating revenues, the

reduction of operating costs, and the expansion or construction of new recreation facilities, for the purpose of improving the level of community programming/services, confirming the need for the City of Surrey to establish partnerships for the purpose of stability and efficiency (Oliver, 1990). Establishing partnerships represent a viable solution to acquire the much-needed resources. As explained by one Parks and Recreation employee:

*The programs that we are going to be offering in the future just won't happen because we do not have the resources to make them work, so we have to get partnerships (Interviewee #3).*

*We have to rely upon other delivery vehicles not just a city financially supported vehicle but public and private (Interviewee #3).*

Because of financial constraints, the City of Surrey does not only view non-profit organizations as potential partners but they also see private corporations as other possibilities. It appears that as long as the potential partner represents a viable opportunity and has a mandate that corresponds to the city's "values", the type of organizations selected becomes insignificant. However, some city employees have disputed the selection of a private commercial partner. As the two city councilors noted:

*In my point of view, before the 1990s ... we did not have to rely on private partners to operate the facilities. [The challenge of partnering with the commercial sector is that they] are not under the thumb of the city for operation. In the long run, people will not be able to afford to use facilities they have paid [throughout municipal taxes to build] (Interviewee #5).*

*There is always the big money issue. We had a recent situation that the money was supposed to be available by*

*private commercial enterprises and then the money was not (Interviewee #1).*

Private commercial partners have not always been perceived as beneficial for the community. The negative perception associated with establishing partnerships with the private-commercial sector is not only found in the City of Surrey but also in other Canadian communities. As found by Thibault et al. (1999), the development of linkages between the corporate and public sectors concerned some parks and recreation representatives and is, in some cases, difficult for the public to accept.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, research has demonstrated that local governments have favoured non-profit organizations over the commercial sector when selecting partners (cf. Bebbington & Bebbington, 1993; Heimovics et al., 1993; Saidel, 1991) due to the similarity of their mission statements and mandate (D'Amours, 1989). However, this situation is no longer applicable, as many local governments including the City of Surrey are considering both sectors as equally important in their search for financial resources. Even though non-profit organizations are still an essential partner for the City of Surrey, the commercial sector represents another option for the city to link with, in order to acquire much needed financial resources.

Another significant issue to discuss as it relates to the mandate of organizations partnering with the City of Surrey is that the discrepancies between non-profit organizations and the private commercial sector is diminishing with time. As explained by Yoshioka (1990), the non-profit sector seems to manage their

organizations similarly to the private commercial sector. The lack of available resources is affecting everyone, making it more difficult for non-profit organizations to operate without being financially accountable for their operation. As explained by one community organization representative:

*Eight years ago, the association was \$26 000 in the hole and now we are about \$100 000 to the good. We [receive funding from the Gaming Society]. ... We no longer depend on sponsorship [due to the difficulties surrounding the management of sponsorships]. Basically, [this surplus] is a cousin for the association (Interviewee #2).*

Without financial resources, community organizations would not be able to provide services to its community members. This “new” financial focus for non-profit organizations leads to them become more similar to their counterpart, the private commercial sector.

Even though this research was not investigating partnerships between the public and the private commercial sectors relating to the provision of leisure services, all public workers interviewed (councilors and parks and recreation employees) have discussed the potential for increases in resources as the main reason for the public sector to partner with private corporations. According to public employees, the private commercial sector will want to invest or partner with another organization only if capital gain can be obtained. This can be the case when partnering with local government. As mentioned by the city councilors:

*Private industries will enter into these partnerships that look good on paper and will be financially rewarding too (Interviewee #5).*

*Partnership with private businesses is difficult to get started. We are working very hard. They want to make money and there is only so much that [the city] can put into it (Interviewee #1).*

Another reason for involvement is to gain access to other sources of funding. The Surrey Parks and Recreation department has been partnering with community groups in order to obtain community input for the construction of new facilities, an issue further discussed in this section. As a result, community groups were formed to head these projects. As partners of non-profit association, the City of Surrey now has access to external sources of funding that a local government would not have otherwise. As explained by one city councilor:

*The Guildford Partners are fundraising for the new multi-purpose centre. [The city] gets a lot of very large donation from the non-profit organizations (Interviewee #5).*

Establishing partnerships for the purpose of having access to financial resources from, or in collaboration with community organizations, represents an interesting incentive for the development of efficient linkages. This situation is applicable with the community organizations studied in this research. All community group representatives interviewed have stated that their organization has donated large sums of monies to the city for the improvement of city owned facilities. In one instance, one representative stated that:

*[Our community group] donated thousand of dollars to the North Surrey and Newton Recreation Centres (Interviewee #2).*

Due to the difficulties of raising monies for the construction of new facilities, the City of Surrey is also linking with community groups to have access to external financial resources in order to meet the community's needs. As explained by a city councillor:

*It is also good for a nonprofit to raise money and put it in [the development of infrastructure. The City of Surrey] get a lot of vary large donations from the nonprofit organizations (Interviewee #1).*

To gain access to external resources, the Surrey parks and recreation department has linked with the Guildford Partners Community Association for the development of the new Guildford Recreation Centre. By establishing this linkage with a registered nonprofit organization, the City of Surrey is benefiting by gaining community input in the development of this project and also by having access to financial resources through nonprofit organizations. Throughout this process, the Surrey Parks and Recreation department has provided support to the Guildford Partners Community Association in order to facilitate the proper growth and development of this community association.

### **Facility Resources**

As previously described, the most significant reason for community associations to partner with the local government is closely linked to resources. In addition to financial resources, facilities were also discussed. The City of Surrey is linking with community organizations for the construction of new facilities, while community organization tend to link with the city in order to have access to these city owned facilities. Without access to these facilities, community associations are unable to

provide leisure services and program to the community. As mentioned by representatives from all community organizations:

*[The city] has the facilities that we need (Interviewee #2; #7 and #8).*

The city is looking to establish partnerships with these community organizations in order for them to provide leisure services in city owned facilities. By linking with community groups providing leisure services and by leasing space to these community associations, the Surrey Parks and Recreation department guarantees itself the delivery of these leisure services for the community and also increases its revenues with the “rent monies”. These issues will be further discussed in the section entitled “advantages”.

Accessing public facilities represent, in some cases, the only possibility for non-profit community organizations to efficiently offer their services to the community, due to the “preferred” rate for renting these facilities. The efficiency variable, described as the needs to increase and improve its "input/output" by controlling environmental and organizational resources, and the stability variable, defined as the need by an organization to control environmental uncertainty (Oliver, 1990) are supported through these findings and represent the primary reasons for establishing partnerships between local government and community associations.

### Community Legitimacy

Although, the main reason for involvement appears to be about issues surrounding the access of resources, another rationale for entering partnership has been determined as community legitimacy by the interviewees. For both partners, the desire to link with each other is attributed to the commitment to improve the community at large, confirming the need for legitimacy and reciprocity (Oliver, 1990). The public sector interviewees described the need for community organizations to be involved in their community for the purpose of enhancing community welfare.

*There is also a feeling of ownership when [the community] gets involved. It is their place. They have done this. It becomes a home place for them (Interviewee #1).*

*We are getting the community to help themselves (Interviewee #3).*

By partnering with community organizations, the City of Surrey also receives needed input from members of the community. Both, members of the community associations and Parks and Recreation department's staff, have referred to the importance of linking to each other for the provision of community information. The creation of these lines of communication allows for both partners to share information in order to improve community welfare. The purpose of linking with one another is not only viewed as a financial gain, but as an improvement to the community at large. As argued by Crompton (1998, p.101), "[interorganizational relations] enhanced organizational legitimacy on the public agency..., linking with nonprofit or commercial organizations may improve a park and recreation agency's reputation and image".

The City of Surrey is presently developing numerous Master Plans in order to meet the leisure needs of their growing community. As part of the process, community organizations are asked to participate in various community input sessions for the development of these plans, thus representing another reason for establishing partnerships. Interviewed community associations viewed committee involvement and participation as positive reasons for establishing linkages with the Parks and Recreation department.

*I would like to think, for example with the 50 meter pool, that we took a global look at what that facility could provide to the community and therefore, gave a meaningful input about ... how that new facility could be developed to serve all the people [in the community] (Interviewee #7).*

The need for community involvement and approbation has been discussed in the review of literature as part of community legitimacy - reasons for involvement - confirming that organization enter partnerships in order to gain legitimacy supported by increasing public participation in the decision making process (Oliver, 1990; Prior et al., 1995; Thibault et al., 1999). By partnering with the community organizations, the City of Surrey has been able to legitimize their actions to the community, and correspondingly, community associations have been empowered in their own community by participating in the decision making process related to the provision of leisure services. Furthermore, it is not only important for the City of Surrey to have community approbation for the purpose of legitimacy, but also to have community support because it is the members of the community who will be using those services. As stated by a city councilor:

*Businesses, societies and non-profit organizations are where the biggest support comes from. It is crucial to have their support for the facility and programs provided in the city (Interviewee #1).*

Even existing community organizations are changing their delivery system to meet the need of the community. Community organizations are not only providing the basic services to their members, but are now expanding their services to other members of the community. As noted by one city staff:

*Some community associations are now providing some leisure programs and activities. The Surrey Knights Swim Club, a long standing North Surrey sport group is now providing activities for the community at large and members are volunteering their time to make it happen in order to touch kids that may never join their club (Interviewee #3).*

Another interesting reason, related to the community legitimacy issue for one community association, as perceived by a city employee, is its need for acceptance from other community organizations providing the same leisure service within Surrey as well as in other municipalities.

*They would like to take over the building because it would enhance their reputation (Interviewee #4).*

Not only it is important for community associations to be accepted by its memberships and the community at large, but also for the perception of other community organizations delivering the same leisure services, becomes significant for some community organizations. Even though community input for public services seems to be a practice that is well accepted and needed by the partners involved in this process, it is sometimes viewed negatively by some community organizations.

This issue will be further discussed later in the section titled “challenges” of this chapter.

### **Role of the Local Government**

According to the literature, the local government is viewed as the facilitator of these partnerships, instead of taking a leadership role in this matter (Vail, 1992).

Confirmed by a city employee:

*So [the Surrey Parks and Recreation department is] facilitating [partnerships] rather than directing them. So that is the plus side of the partnership (Interviewee #3).*

However this statement by Interviewee #3 is not reflected throughout this study. This situation is not always occurring. The city of Surrey is assuming both roles (facilitator and leader) in order to ensure that services are provided and that community needs are met. The city is no longer waiting and helping community organizations to come to them in order to form these essential partnerships. They are pursuing these partnerships with a more directive role when needed. For example, the Surrey Parks and Recreation department recently needed some financial support for the purchase of capital equipment.

*[When the city needed new protecting glass for the arena], they came to us (Interviewee #2).*

Consequently, they approached local community organizations to support this initiative. The City of Surrey is now more direct in their partnership endeavours in order to fulfill the needs of the community.

To investigate the reasons for involvement represents the first step in understanding interorganizational relations between partners. However, establishing partnerships with other organizations is not only advantageous, but also has its challenges. The advantages and challenges described by the interviewees have been regrouped according to topics of discussion, as seen in Figure 2, and will be further discussed in this section. It is imperative to understand both, the advantages and the challenges, in order to fully understand the partnerships.

### *Advantages*

Advantages of establishing a partnership between a local government and community organizations providing leisure services are closely intertwined with the very reasons organizations partner. As described by Thibault et al. (1997), organizations are considering establishing partnerships as one approach to control environmental changes and uncertainty.

Interviewees have identified numerous advantages of establishing partnerships with one another. The advantages can be categorized into three areas of discussion: sharing resources, non-duplication of services, and improvement of community welfare. Even though these advantages are distinct issues, they are also closely linked with one another. By sharing resources, partners are now ensuring that duplication of services does not occur, resulting in the betterment of the community.

### Sharing Resources & Non-Duplication of Services

According to the interviewees, the search of resources represents the most significant advantage for organizations to seek partnerships. When partnerships between community organizations and the Parks and Recreation department are established, members of both parties described the benefits of an important increase in recreation services and programs available to the community. By partnering with community organizations, the local government ensures that recreation services are provided to its residents and that duplication of services does not occur. As noted by representatives of community organizations and a member of the Surrey Parks and Recreation department:

*We provide a service to the community and that's how [the city] benefits [from partnering with us] (Interviewee #7).*

*We don't want to compete with [community] programs (Interviewee #7).*

Crompton (1998) explained that by developing interorganizational relations, there will be a “removal of service duplication or use of complementary assets and strengths to deliver services jointly” (p.101). This confirms the situation that is occurring within the City of Surrey. Resources, not dedicated for the provision of these specific services offered by the community organizations, are now available for the Parks and Recreation department to support or subsidize other programs in the community that would not be available otherwise. For example, if the local government was not partnering with a figure skating club, it may not be in a position to offer figure skating programs to its resident. If the city offered figure skating program, it would need financial resources to hire qualified instructors, to administer

these programs and to train personnel. Instead of investing resources in figure skating, the city can allocate its resources to other programs. As noted by McLean (1993) and Vail (1994), establishing linkages allows local government to eliminate duplication of services and as a result, opportunities for leisure services are improved. As explained by interviewees;

*It gives people more flexibility, more options (Interviewee #6).*

*We could make better use of our resources, staff resources, to other projects in the community (Interviewee #4).*

This reallocation of resources benefits the community at large, not only in terms of programs and services, but also by the construction of new recreation facilities.

*The advantage is that with the current budgetary climate and make up of council, and with the view that taxpayers won't pay any more money, that these facilities won't get built without these partnerships (Interviewee #5).*

*Donated monies are used for the improvement of the facility [thus] ensuring a service in the community (Interviewee #2).*

### **Improvement of Community Welfare**

There seems to be a direct correlation between the reallocation of resources and the betterment of the community welfare. Community welfare represents another advantage for establishing interorganizational relations between the local government and community organizations.

*It creates a state of community; people have ownership and stake in their community (Interviewee #5).*

Community welfare has been discussed in the literature as an advantage of establishing partnerships between local government and community organizations (Prior et al., 1995). The community as a whole benefits from these partnerships. As described by a Surrey Park and Recreation manager:

*[Community organizations] contribute a lot to the community in terms of quality of life through their sport. Also, by being involved in the management of their facility, [community organizations] could look after issues such as vandalism and education within their association (Interviewee #4).*

Also by interacting with one another, community organizations and Parks and Recreation are now able to improve their visibility and credibility (Vail, 1994).

*We benefit from [partnering with the Surrey Parks and Recreation department] by them understanding our programs and also by us sharing information on how they can provide better facilities and work with our community organization to make sure that we can still provide [services to the community] (Interviewee #7).*

Furthermore, Vail (1994) argued that one advantage of establishing these partnerships is the decreasing costs of services. The findings of this study support this statement. It appears that monies saved by sharing resources are transferred directly to other programs thus increasing the number of services to the community without increasing municipal taxes for the provision of leisure services. Since the Surrey Parks and Recreation department's budget has not increased over the last few years, partnerships have been used to meet the growth needs. As stated by a city employee:

*[Community organizations] enable us to expand services to the community with real constraint facing our department*

*and we are not able to do or provide all the services that the community requires (Interviewee #4).*

The same scenario may not occur in the case of private commercial-public partnerships. Even though this study does not explore this type of partnership, it is interesting to see that partnerships might not directly results in decreases in cost for the population. As noted by a city councilor:

*Even though it is a city facility on city land, the running of it has been contracted out, so it is slightly more expensive but still fits within our mandate of charging people. And the difference is justified because there is a 50 meter pool, 2 ice arenas that are opening in October. So the level of services they are getting is higher than in the other facilities. It is so much newer, state of the art (Interviewee #1).*

### **Challenges**

Challenges surrounding partnerships between local government and community organizations are exceptionally important to discuss as they represent the turning points for some of these partnerships. If the challenges are perceived as greater than the benefits, partnerships are vulnerable. Organizations will decide if the partnership is worth maintaining by comparing the challenges with the benefits.

Even though all interviewees have discussed the importance of establishing and maintaining successful partnerships, many challenges have been identified in order to maintain successful partnerships. It is also important to note that identified challenges were not necessarily viewed as disadvantages, but more as issues that

should be addressed to ensure the success of partnerships. The challenges described by the interviewees were as different as the people interviewed. Based on the qualitative data collected, challenges were categorized into the following groups: personal factors, communication between partners, establishing balance for community legitimacy, and lack of procedures and guidelines. Results regarding each of these categories are explained in the following pages.

### **Personal Factors**

One challenge identified by many interviewees is that partnerships are created by people (staff and volunteers) and that everyone has different strategies for enabling and handling these partnerships. It becomes essential for all players involved in the process of establishing partnerships to develop new skills in order to complement their professional experiences, education and values differences (Thibault et al., 1999). As noted by a Parks and Recreation staff:

*This is a community group and their players keep changing. The people, who you are negotiating with, keep changing and they have different ideas and the range of commitment varies depending upon the personality of the person you are talking to (Interviewee #4).*

Personal factors such as: personal agenda, time and commitment restraint, and different levels of skill were identified by the interviewees as being problematic. Ensuring that all staff and city representatives have access to continuing professional development and managerial support would positively influence the “partnership experience” (Mayo, 1997). In addition, staff differences within Surrey Parks and

Recreation is identified as the reason why partnerships are handled differently at the neighbourhood level. Given differences in philosophy and the lack of written procedures, discussed later in this chapter, city employees handle the establishment of partnerships differently resulting in discrepancies within the city. As noted by one city employee.

*Each town centre, I think, deals with community groups differently (Interviewee #3).*

### **Communication**

Communication between partners was noted as the key component for maintaining successful partnerships.

*Most of the partnerships that I am involved with work well. I think communication is the key. The more you communicate or set meetings with [community organization], the better partnerships are working (Interviewee #6).*

The lack of communication between partners is identified by both Surrey Parks and Recreation department and by community organizations. As explained by a member of a community organization:

*I don't think there was any effort made by the club to communicate who we were other than the fact that we need a [facility] (Interviewee #7).*

Because of this lack of communication, one community representative acknowledged that feelings of disbelief were present within their organization.

*It is not that we don't trust them; it is that we don't believe them. It is not their fault. They are slaves to council (Interviewee #2).*

By not sharing proper information with this community organization, the Surrey Parks and Recreation has lost some credibility in the eyes of this group.

Included in the category of communication between partners is the lack of shared information and direction. It is important for all players involved in nurturing the partnership to understand the goals, values and background of the partners and their reasons for being involved (McLean, 1993). By knowing their reasons for being involved and the mandate of each organization involved in the partnership, it may lead to a better environment for this partnership.

Communicating between managers and staff was identified as a challenge. Informing all players of the direction which an organization will be taking with regard to interorganizational relations is the foundation of establishing partnerships (Kanter, 1989). As stated by a city employee:

*The direction [from managers and council is not well communicated]. We get mixed messages. We are being told that community development partnership [are important], yet there's staffing cut backs [making it more difficult to meet their objectives] (Interviewee #3).*

As explained by a city manager and a member of one community organization:

*One of the big dangers is to go into a partnership without knowing what the outcome should be and I think the department, as stewards of the service, must have their act together first before you can go into a partnership because ultimately we are responsible for the quality of the program that is created by this partnership (Interviewee #4)*

*The challenge we really have is to understand their mandate and if we understand their mandate, then we can better understand the decisions that are being made (interviewee #7).*

This lack of knowledge or shared information between management and staff is creating a sense of instability within the Surrey Parks and Recreation department, thus creating difficulties when establishing partnerships. According to the interviewees, keeping open lines of communication would benefit the partnership in the long run. To help solve this challenge, partners seem to have included communication as part of their priorities. As noted by all partners, efforts have been made to ensure that lines of communication are improved and sustained.

*I think that it is essential to meet with these groups at the beginning of the season or at the beginning of establishing a contract (Interviewee #6).*

*We set some specific goals and, part of that, was that we would increase our communication to all parties in Surrey, in other words, Council, Parks and Recreation and the community (Interviewee #7).*

In many instances, a lack of communication, not only between the two partners but also within the organizations, especially the Parks and Recreation department, appears to create a sense of uncertainty for the partners.

*One of the problems that we have faced over the years is that [the Surrey Parks and Recreation department] does things without telling us... They will close the [facility] down [for maintenance] and not tell anybody (Interviewee #2).*

Although communication with partners and within the department was considered essential to successful partnerships, partners agreed that much more could be

accomplished with respect to this issue. Interview data found; that communication only occurs when one of the partners has a request; and that partners communicate with each other only when they have “to do business”, and not to inform. Findings indicated that communication between partners is kept at a minimum and is largely focused on the acquisition of facilities or other resources. These results were also evident in Vail’s (1992) research.

### **Community Legitimacy**

The balance between financial resources restrictions and community legitimacy has been noted as another challenge when establishing partnerships for the provision of leisure services. Establishing partnerships in order to minimize environmental uncertainties created by financial pressures is a challenge that Surrey Parks and Recreation department is facing, thus resulting in challenges that staff are facing with regard to the delivery of leisure services. The lack of increase in the department’s budget leads to a situation where city employees are expected to do more with less. The department must re-evaluate their way of doing business. It has been a challenge for the Surrey Parks and Recreation department to remain focussed on their mandate.

As noted by one city manager:

*The danger is dependent on swinging too far to the accountability aspect of it and losing the rationale as to why we are there. ...It’s trying to create a balance and ultimately we hope we’re not losing anyone in terms of reducing those program services that are not money generators. ...We obviously are looking at trying to expand the resources available for the public recreation, but at the end of the day what work have we done to ensure that quality is there? (Interviewee #4).*

## Administrative Procedures and Guidelines

Interviewees from the Parks and Recreation department identified a lack of formal administrative procedures and guidelines when establishing partnerships with community associations as an important challenge. Although the lack of guidelines had been noted by a city manager, as part of the 1998 Surrey Parks and Recreation department's objectives, no guidelines were in place at the time of the data collection.

*Strategic result area, which dealt with protocol for partnerships, was identified, as staff needed some type of framework within which to operate (Interviewee #4).*

*Because it is a fairly new thing, a number of people do not know what the parameters are or how far you can go with this (Interviewee #6).*

The lack of guidelines is making it a challenge for Surrey Parks and Recreation department staff to enable these partnerships according to the council's mandate, as their mandate is not clear and does not appear to be accessible to staff. As noted by Thibault and Harvey (1997, p.58)

*When an organization is set on developing links with other organizations found in its environment, its intentions should be explicitly laid out in its strategy. The strategy will allow the organization to formalize how it will identify the organization it wants to "partner" with, how these links will be initiated and fostered, and what mechanisms will be developed in order to allow the organization to measure if and to what extent the links are beneficial.*

By not clearly understanding each partner's mandate and goals, future challenges arise that could be otherwise be avoided. This challenge is partially due to the fact that the establishment of partnership is a new phenomenon for the City of Surrey.

*There are not many guidelines in fact, we just got the ability to change legislation in order to legally form the partnerships. So it is at a very green stage (Interviewee #5).*

The benefit of establishing these procedures is not only to provide guidelines for staff but for the purpose of improving the program delivery system. It appears that without these guidelines, individuals are left on their own with regard to establishing partnerships in their own area. As a result of no guidelines, discrepancies may be created within the community.

*Each town centre has their own idea of what that is and they are going about it in different ways (Interviewee #3).*

By developing formal plan and procedures, partners are now able to seek partners that are really meeting their needs, thus reducing future challenges caused by the lack of formalized planning (Thibault & Harvey, 1997). All interviewees have acknowledged the importance of establishing efficient linkages, however no formal "plan of action" had been developed prior to the investment of valued resources in the establishment of partnerships.

It is interesting to note that the topic of written policies and procedures was not an issue for community organizations. The problems of not having any guidelines for partnerships, does not seem to be an issue for the volunteers of these community organizations. This could be due to the fact that community organizations have few partners and therefore the management of these partnerships is relatively straightforward. For the City of Surrey however, managing a multitude of partners is not easily accomplished without formal rules, procedures, and policies in place.

Furthermore, members of the Parks and Recreation department have noted that no formal method of evaluating the outcomes of these partnerships exists.

*From my perspective, there is no process in place to evaluate the quality of work [from these partnerships]. ...In the long run, we are going to see, particularly if there are many failures, a lobby for some strong evaluation and guidelines (Interviewee #5).*

As McLean (1993) noted, by setting up benchmarks prior to the establishment of the partnerships, it enables all partners to evaluate the relationship. Without a proper mode of evaluating the success (or failure) of the partnerships, resources (i.e., staff time and financial) may be unnecessarily wasted.

For community groups, the outcomes become the main criteria for evaluating the partnership. As long as the community organizations' needs are met, most of these organizations will consider the partnership to be successful. Consequently, the need for formal evaluations is not a priority as long as the outcomes of the partnership are considered to be positives. This may be due to the fact that non-profit organizations tend to be less formalized and also that they are mainly dealing with only one partner, the Surrey Parks and Recreation department. Since community organizations tend to be more dependent on their partnership with the City of Surrey because of their need for city owned facilities, they must be comfortable that the partnership is working well to ensure the delivery of their services. In general, partnerships were viewed as a positive experience, even though challenges were identified throughout the interviews.

*It is an experience by itself. It is not totally negative, it is not totally positive (Interviewee #2).*

### ***Level of Interorganizational Intensity***

The final topic covered in this chapter will focus on the linkages between the level of interorganizational intensity and its relation to the loss of autonomy. As explained in the review of literature, the relations between the level of interorganizational intensity and the loss of autonomy are positively correlated (Oliver, 1991).

During the interviews, many levels of interorganizational intensity between Parks and Recreation department and community organizations were identified. Even though, the focus of this study was to explore interorganizational relations between the Parks and Recreation department and community organizations, other types of partnerships were identified, such as public-private commercial and sponsorship partnerships. Although public-private commercial and sponsorship partnerships are beyond the scope of this study, they could be important subjects for further studies.

As described in the review of literature, the level of interorganizational intensity will be examined using Oliver's (1991) model. According to Oliver's (1991) model, interorganizational relations can be categorized into five levels of intensity: personal meeting, resource transfers, board membership, joint programs, and written agreements. The partnerships between community organizations and the Surrey Parks and Recreation department studied in this research can be examined using various levels of interorganizational intensity. When examining the intensity levels

of the partnerships, all five levels were found, from personal meetings to written agreements, sometimes within one partnership. Partnerships were viewed as having various levels of intensity depending on the situation. For example, one community organization may have had a written agreement as it related to usage of a city owned facility, however it may have a verbal agreement for the organization of a community event. The level of intensity of the partnerships appears to be adapted according to the need of the situation.

The least formalized type of partnership according to Oliver (1990), personal and informal meetings, have been used most extensively when describing interorganizational relations between community organizations and Parks and Recreation department. These types of meetings between the Parks and Recreation department and community organizations are occurring on a regular basis. Personal and informal meetings were used by all groups involved in this research to communicate with one another. For example, one City of Surrey employee states:

*I ... basically meet with them on a monthly basis just to find out 'is there anything that we can be doing to assist you' (Interviewee #3).*

However, these meetings have not proven to be sufficient to enable information sharing and keeping the lines of communication open and efficient. As previously explained, communication appears to be the key of success for these partnerships. However, communication has been challenging in certain instances for some of the

partners, making it difficult to have successful partnerships when verbal communication is the foundation of the relationships.

The second level of intensity, resources transfer, seems to be a very important level to describe these partnerships, because it represents the foundation of the partnerships. The three community organizations involved in this case study have experienced at some point, resources transfer. Resource transfer has not only been identified as financial resources but as exchange of information, services and expertise for the purpose of improving recreation services and facilities

With scarce resources, community organizations and Parks and Recreation department are linking with community organization for the delivery of recreation programs to the community, confirming the second level of intensity by Oliver (1990). Although the transfer of resources appears to be one-way only (i.e., community organization transferring funds to the Surrey Parks and Recreation department via rent monies or funds dedicated for capital purchase), the transfer is also evident from the City of Surrey to community organizations via municipal subsidies and grants. Facility/field allocation policies were established for the purpose of ensuring that community organizations would benefit from a subsidized rate when using city owned facilities. As stated by a community organization representative:

*[The city] is the landlord. They see a way to make money  
[however] we are subsidized to a large extent, so*

*technically they do not make any money, maybe recover some of their costs (Interviewee #2).*

The third level of interorganizational intensity is related to board interlock. Board interlock, as proposed by Oliver's model (1991), is not reflective of the situation occurring in the City of Surrey. Committees, including city staff and community members, are formed for the purpose of a specific project and not for the management of community organizations. The Parks and Recreation department initiate community boards in order to receive input from the community and its stakeholders. For example, all individuals interviewed have been involved in some sort of community meetings for the implementation or development of new facilities and new policies. Groups have been part of the ice allocation committee or part of the development of the new recreation complex. The purpose of these boards interlock is to ensure that the community's needs are met and that information from the department is shared. However, some have mentioned that these Community boards involvement was token and that the final decisions were still being made by the city and not by these boards.

There have been some efforts made, according to all interviewed members of the community organizations to work together on common programs and events with the Parks and Recreation department. For example, the City of Surrey hosts community events and invites community associations to participate in the planning and implementation of these events for the sole purpose of promoting their programs and the associations. As mentioned by a Parks and Recreation employee:

*We work together [with community organizations] on some projects. We have the Newton Community Festival, once a year. [Community organizations are involved in that celebration]. [They] promote their association and we can call on them for help in special events that we do at the arena (Interviewee #6).*

Even though the establishment of joint programs appears to be at the beginning stage, verbal and informal agreements seem to be the way of doing business.

The type of partnerships “written agreement” was the most common level of intensity used for the partnerships discussed by all groups.

*Basically, they are the renters of the facility and I am like the landlord (Interviewee #3).*

It is interesting to note that even though the written agreement (Oliver, 1991) corresponds to the most formalized type of partnerships, a written agreement was the first type of partnership established between community organizations and the Parks and Recreation department. The City of Surrey had recreation facilities that community organizations needed to provide their services. So, in order to provide their services, community organizations had to lease these facilities from the city, making them a tenant of the city.

*The relationship is purely based on the needs of the community organizations. We, the city, own facilities that their constituents use (Interviewee #4).*

At this level of partnership, contracts are signed and a transfer of resources is made, for the purpose of facility usage. Fees and usage are based on already established policies.

*The city writes us a contract each year and hands it to us, outlining the tenants' responsibilities and we sign it and we send it back. It describes the hours and the costs (Interviewee #2).*

For one community association, the degree of formalization has increased, beyond the "landlord/tenant" agreement. From using a city facility to operating a city owned building, this written agreement (Oliver, 1991) is evolving into a more formalized partnership. The community association is now responsible for the operation of a concession, resulting in the establishment of a highly formalized partnership via written agreements and legal contracts. It is not viewed as a partnership but more as a business contract. A city manager described that:

*The partnership between the Parks and Recreation department and the Surrey Youth Soccer Association is a quasi-partnership. It is more a financial arrangement with the people who run the concession. We get a percentage of the profit (Interviewee #4).*

This offer was also made to another community organization involved in this study.

This offer was refused due to the lack of direct benefits for the community organization.

### ***Loss of Autonomy***

A significant factor related to Oliver's work (1991) was the relation between the level of intensity and the loss of autonomy. As described in the review of literature, loss of autonomy represents an important threat to the establishment of partnerships (Oliver, 1991; Provan, 1982). It is interesting to note that based on our analysis, the intensity of the type of partnerships does not appear to be linked to the loss of autonomy.

Interviewees from the non-profit organizations have not mentioned loss of autonomy

as an issue. As well, their partner, the Surrey Parks and Recreation department did not discuss loss of autonomy. This may be a result of the fact that all community organizations have been involved in partnership with the Parks and Recreation department for a significant number of years. As established organizations, the interviewees felt that the city needed them as much as they needed the City of Surrey for the provision of leisure services.

As opposed to the findings of Skinner and Gultinan (1986), creating partnerships with the non-profit sector did not raise any concern for the loss of autonomy, even though the premise of establishing these linkages is based on the acquisition of resources. Both parties seemed very autonomous even though they needed each other for the delivery of their services. Both groups are involved in partnerships for the purpose of cooperating, collaborating and coordinating their efforts, and not to take over one another.

However, interviewees, when discussing commercial and public commercial partnerships, were afraid of losing some control over the services, possibly resulting in a loss in quality of leisure services.

*I think that [contracting out] reduces the quality of the services, and there is no quality analysis to determine if the work is being done better by companies outside of the community compared to the city that has a commitment to those jobs in the city (Interviewee #5).*

The fear of losing autonomy to the private commercial sector has not been addressed. It appears to be a more significant concern to public servants than their partnerships with non-profit organizations.

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS**

The conclusions of this research will be discussed according the four following issues: 1) summary of the results found in this study; 2) transferability of the research findings; 3) recommendations for the research site and all partners involved in this research; and 4) recommendations for future studies.

### ***Summary of the Results***

The purpose of this research was to identify, and better understand, issues surrounding interorganizational relations between local governments, specifically departments of Parks and Recreation and community organizations providing recreation services. Overall results indicated that issues surrounding interorganizational relations between local government and community organizations could be grouped in four categories: reasons for involvement, advantages, challenges, and level of intensity.

The main reasons for involvement were described as access to financial and facility resources. With the economic pressures that local governments are facing, the establishment of partnerships represents an appealing option to meet these challenges. Furthermore, the Surrey Parks and Recreation department is linking with community organizations in order to gain credibility within the community. By establishing working partnerships with one another, community organizations and Surrey Parks

and Recreation department are able to provide the same level of services to the community, consequently leading to the welfare of the community.

The advantages of establishing these partnerships were identified as sharing resources and non-duplication of services, improvement of community legitimacy, and community welfare. While, the challenges were described as personal factors, lack of communication and trust as it relates to community legitimacy, and lack of administrative procedures and guidelines.

The final topic that was discussed during this research was the levels of intensity of the partnerships and its relation to the loss of autonomy. Using Oliver's (1990) model, it was found that all levels of intensity were evident at one point or another in the partnerships and that these levels varied according to the environmental context. However, the loss of autonomy, as described by Oliver (1990) did not appear to a factor influencing the partnerships. This might have been due to the fact that all partners were involved in these partnerships for the same goals and purposes and not to compete against each other.

### ***Transferability of the Findings***

This study investigated interorganizational relations between the City of Surrey and three community organizations providing leisure services. Due to the limited number of partnerships investigated, transferability of all findings to other partnerships found in this municipality is limited. The use of the qualitative approach to better

understand the issues surrounding interorganizational relations between local government and community organization providing leisure services to the community allowed us to uncover a number of key findings. The benefits of using a qualitative data collection method enabled a thorough understanding of the context surrounding the three selected partners in relation to the City of Surrey. It also allowed for an overall comprehension of the interorganizational context in place between the Surrey Parks and Recreation department and its partners.

During the investigation of partnerships between the City of Surrey and the three community organizations, certain trends and similarities were found between the partnerships. All community organization representatives mentioned that issues such as the lack of facilities, type of partnership, lack of communication, and reasons for involvement were concerns that they were all facing when dealing with the Surrey Parks and Recreation department. These patterns may be evident in the situation that is occurring with other community organizations in the City of Surrey. The transferability of the findings within the City of Surrey might be more applicable than the transfer to other communities. Even though community organizations have different backgrounds, mandates and offer different services to their community (Searle & Brayley, 1993), the organizations with whom the partnership is established is the same. When investigating linkages with the Surrey Parks and Recreation department, patterns found throughout this research might be important to better understand the situation with other community organizations servicing the citizen of Surrey.

It is important to note that discrepancies were found between the three partners, regarding trust issues and communication. The direct transfer of the results may be more applicable if selected community organizations provide similar leisure services and with a comparable environment and organizational context. The findings of this study, however, could be useful as a starting point for the investigation of interorganizational relations in other communities.

### ***Recommendations for the Research Site and Community Partners***

As described in chapter 4 of this research, local government and community organization representatives identified challenges surrounding interorganizational relations. They are; personal factors, communication between partners, establishing a balance for community accountability, and lack of procedures and guidelines. In order to facilitate successful partnerships, it is essential for partners involved to lessen the impact of, or to eliminate these challenges. All challenges are closely intertwined and related to each other. It is difficult to be working on one challenge in isolation. Therefore, this section of the conclusion offers recommendations to the Surrey Parks and Recreation and its community partners in order to enhance partnerships growth and development for the future.

Throughout the semi-structured interviews, interviewees described personal factors such as; personal agenda, time and commitment restraint, different skill levels, and differences in philosophy as being problematic. Closely linked to this issue is the lack of formal administrative procedures and guidelines when establishing

partnerships with community organizations. These two challenges are closely linked because of the direct influence on one another. For example by not having written and formal procedures, it becomes challenging for Surrey Parks and Recreation employees to standardized the management and maintenance of community partnerships without being influenced by their personal agenda, beliefs, and skills. With proper training, written guidelines and consistency within the organization, it would be easier for individuals to work with partnerships.

Furthermore, the balance between financial resources restrictions and accountability with the community has been noted as other challenges when establishing partnerships for the provision of leisure services. Establishing partnerships in order to minimize environmental uncertainties created by financial pressures is a challenge that Surrey Parks and Recreation department is facing. By ensuring that adequate resources (i.e., financial and time) are allocated, interorganizational relations can become a viable and positive experience for all players involved in the process.

Also, lack of communication, not only between the two partners but also within the organizations, especially the Parks and Recreation department, appears to create a sense of uncertainty for the partners. Open lines of communications represent the best option for partners in order to deal with this challenge. As noted by many interviewees, communication is the foundation of all partnerships.

### **Summary of Proposed Recommendations**

1. To establish written policies and procedures when working with community organizations providing leisure services in order to maintain consistency in the establishment and maintenance of these partnerships;
2. To commit time and resources to these important interorganizational relationships;
3. To develop benchmarks and standards in order to evaluate these partnerships;
4. To ensure better training for city representatives as it relates to the establishment and maintenance of interorganizational relationships;
5. To improve communication between Surrey Parks and Recreation and community organizations that play a role in the provision of leisure services;
6. To improve communication between Surrey's department and its town centres;
7. To encourage and increase communication between the partners and the city; and
8. To ensure that the reasons for involvement are known and understood by all partners before entering the partnerships.

### ***Recommendations for Future Research***

During the semi-structured interviews, community and City of Surrey representatives discussed other issues that were beyond the scope of this study. These include: interorganizational relations between the local government and the private-commercial sector, maintenance of interorganizational relations, and sponsorships versus partnerships. Although these issues were mentioned by some interviewees,

they were not addressed in this thesis as they were not part of the objectives set out for this study.

These issues could definitely be addressed in further studies on interorganizational relationships. Local governments are no longer exclusively partnering with non-profit organizations for the provision of leisure services (Yoshioka, 1990), and by doing so, local government ensure that a wider variety of leisure opportunities is offered to the community (Crompton, 1989). Given that one of the major reasons for establishing partnerships is to acquire resources, local governments are looking at potential partners that can fulfill this need, thus the need to consider private-commercial sector. Furthermore, the private-commercial sector has realized that adults have more time and money to invest towards their leisure activities, making it a profitable venture for some private companies (Balmer & Reid, 1986). Even though this research was focusing on non-profit partners, the study of interorganizational relations between the local government and the private-commercial sector is a significant topic of discussion as it might represent the way future partnerships are established for the provision of leisure services.

Another topic that may be investigated in future studies is the maintenance and management surrounding interorganizational relationships. This research has focused on the initiation, challenges and advantages of entering partnerships with other organizations however, the maintenance and management of these partnerships is essential in order to ensure the viability of these linkages. The investigation of the

maintenance and management of partnerships warrants further research in the recreation context to ensure a better understanding of the factors affecting the longevity of alliances between organizations.

The last topic that was mentioned by representatives of the City of Surrey, but to a lesser degree, was the sponsorship versus partnership issue. The Surrey Parks and Recreation department has created a corporate sponsorship initiative for the purpose of increasing financial resources. As a result, interviewees described these types of partnerships as another type of partner that local representatives are seeking for the continuity of leisure services. Sponsorship was not viewed as a business transaction but a potential partner for the betterment of the community via leisure services.

### **Summary of Recommendations for Future Research**

1. To investigate interorganizational relationships between local government and the private-commercial sector;
2. To investigate the sponsorship versus partnership issue; and
3. To investigate the maintenance of interorganizational relationships.

These recommendations are based on the findings originating from the partnerships between the Surrey Parks and Recreation department and three community partners. Interorganizational relations are an intricate and dynamic dimension of any organization. It is essential for organizations to better understand issues surrounding

partnerships in order to effectively engage in linkages that are beneficial to all partners involved in this process.

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## APPENDICES

### *Appendix A: Interview Questions for City Councilors*

1. Can you tell us about how your background and your role as a city counselor? How long have you been in the position? How did you get into politics? What is your mandate? How would you describe the political climate in your community (not sure whether we should ask this one)?
2. Do you have a particular interest in parks and recreation? What role do you see the department playing in your community? In your view, what are the major challenges currently facing the parks and recreation department?
3. Your parks and recreation department has formed a number of partnerships with community groups, other public sector, non-profit sector, and commercial sector partners over the years. Do you see any advantages to these partnerships? For example, does the public benefit from them in anyway? Are there any disadvantages?
4. In many communities, the number of municipal park & recreation partners have increased in recent years. Is this the case in your community? Why do you think this is the case (e.g. the economic, social, political pressures)? What are the current political pressures that are influencing partnership development by the parks and recreation department?
5. Has there been a shift in the type of partners over the last 3 years (e.g. from public & nonprofit to commercial? Do you expect to see a shift in the types of partners over the next 3 years? Why or why not? What are the potential consequences of the shift (or not shifting) (e.g. for the city, the department, the public)? What have the responses of the public, city council, the parks and recreation department, and the media been to these changes? Are you in favor of partnerships between parks and recreation and commercial sponsors?
6. In your view, are there any changes that the park and recreation department or council need to make to manage partnerships more effectively (e.g. its priorities, the way it is organized/structured, staff skill sets, how it allocates resources).
7. In terms of accountability, how do you determine whether a partnership is successful or not? Can you give us an example of a successful partnership? Why was it successful? How about an example of an unsuccessful partnership (note that actual names of firms or individuals do not need to be mentioned)? Why was it unsuccessful?

## *Appendix B: Interview Questions for Community Organizations*

1. Can you tell us a bit about how your organization operates. For example, how many members do you have, out of how many facilities, with how many full-time & part-time staff, and volunteers? How do major decisions get made? What are the major issues that you are currently facing? Would a copy of your annual budget be available for future references?
2. How important is your partnership with the Surrey Parks and Recreation department? Please explain.
3. Please identify the different directions that your organization is taking with respect to partnership with the Surrey Parks and Recreation department?
4. What does this partnership entail and how does it represent the direction of the “name of association” is taking?
5. How did the partnership evolve / or who initiated it, the Surrey Parks and Recreation or the “name of association”?
6. How formal is the partnership between the Surrey Parks and Recreation department and the “name of association”? Do you have copies of this agreement.
7. How does the “name of association” benefit by partnering with Surrey Parks and Recreation?
8. How does the Surrey Parks and Recreation benefit by partnering with your organization?
9. Ultimately, how do your members benefit from this partnership?
10. What are the advantages of partnering with the Surrey Parks and Recreation department?
11. What are the disadvantages of partnering with the Surrey Parks and Recreation department?
12. What has the “name of association” had to invest to make this partnership work?
13. What have the Surrey Parks and Recreation had to invest?
14. What challenges does the “name of association” face when developing, maintaining and evaluating this partnership (e.g. are communication and co-ordination problems, is the role of the recreation professional being redefined, is confusion created for the public)?

15. Has this partnership been successful?

*Appendix C: Interview Questions for Surrey Parks & Recreation Staff*

1. Can you tell us a bit about how the Surrey Parks and Recreation department operates. For example, how many citizens do you serve, out of how many facilities, with how many full-time & part-time staff, and volunteers? Do you offer direct programs or do community development or a combination of both? How do major decisions get made? What are the major issues that you are currently facing? Would a copy of your annual budget be available for future references?
2. How important are partnership with other public, nonprofit, commercial and community group to your department? Please explain.
3. Have the number of partnership with your department increased, decreased, or remained about the same over the last 3 years? Why do you think this is the case (e.g. economic, social, political reasons)?
4. Has there been a shift in the type of partners over the last 3 years (e.g. from public-nonprofit to commercial, education-health)? Do you expect to see a shift in the types of partners over the next 3 years? Why? What are the potential consequences of the shift or not shifting?
5. Have these developments required your department to change its values, the way it is organized, or the way it does business in any way? What are the public and city council's views on these developments?
6. Does staff require new skill sets to effectively deal with partners? Does your department have any strategies or procedures in place for managing partnerships - Would these be beneficial?
7. What other challenges does your department face when developing, maintaining and evaluating partnerships (e.g. are communication and co-ordination problems, is the role of the recreation professional being redefined, is confusion created for the public)?
8. Overall, what needs to be in place to make these partnerships work? Other than the absence of these factors, is there anything else that typically results in failure or "less than satisfactory" partnerships from your department's perspective?
9. Please identify the different directions that your department is taking with respect to partnerships?

***These following questions will be asked to the Surrey Parks and Recreation staff about specific partnerships (i.e.: Surrey Knights Swim Club, Surrey Minor Hockey Association, Surrey Youth Soccer Association)***

1. What does this partnership with the “name of association” entail and how does it represent the direction your department is taking?
2. How did the partnership evolve / or who initiated it, the Surrey Parks and Recreation or the “name of association”?
3. How formal is the partnership between the Surrey Parks and Recreation and the “name of association”? - Do you have copies of this agreement.
4. How does the Surrey Parks and Recreation benefit from this partnership?
5. How does the “name of association” benefit from this partnership?
6. Ultimately, how do your customers / clients benefit from this partnership?
7. What are the advantages of partnering with the “name of the association”?
8. What are the disadvantages of partnering with the “names of the association”?
9. What has the Surrey Parks and Recreation had to invest to make this partnership work?
10. What have the “name of the association” had to invest?
11. Were any challenges encountered with regard to the partnership with the “name of association”?
12. Has this partnership been successful?

***Appendix D: Letter of Consent***

*[Name of the director or general manager]*  
*[Company name]*  
*[Street address]*  
*[City, Province]*  
*[Postal Code]*

*[Date]*

Dear *[Name of the director or general manager]*  
*[Name of organization]*

A study, entitled *Interorganizational Relations in Local Government: Issue in the Provision of Leisure Services*, seeks to identify and understand issue surrounding interorganizational relations between local governments and organizations providing leisure services. The research has chosen to undertake this study in the City of Surrey.

To this end, *[name of organization]* has been invited to be part of this study. Two research methods will be used for the purpose of this study: documentary research and semi-structured interviews. Different documents relevant for this study will be needed such as: minutes of meetings, financial reports, long and short term plans, relevant legal documents, and any documents that may be relevant to this research.

In addition, one of your member or staff is requested for a semi-structured interview that will last approximately one hour. With their permission the interview will be tape-recorded. This person should be knowledgeable about past and present issues related to interorganizational relations with the City of Surrey and should be an active member of the decision making process with your community group. During this session, different issues will be discussed so that the researcher can further understand the actual situation of the partnership with the City of Surrey.

The information gathered in this study will be kept strictly confidential by the researcher, and at no time will you be identified. Your name will be known only to the researcher and will not be published in any form. In accordance with research guidelines at the University of British Columbia, your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time.

I have read and received a copy of the letter of introduction for my files. I understand that which is required of participants in the study entitled *Interorganizational Relations in Local Government: Issues in the Provision of Leisure Services*.

I **CONSENT** to participate in this study.

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Name (please print)** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Job Title** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Name of Organization** \_\_\_\_\_

I **DO NOT CONSENT** to participate in this study.

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Name (please print)** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Job Title** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Name of Organization** \_\_\_\_\_

***Please return this consent form in the self addressed stamped envelope.  
Thank you for your collaboration!***

**Address:** Caroline Gagnon  
School of Human Kinetics  
University of British Columbia  
210 War Memorial Gym  
6081 University Boulevard  
Vancouver, BC  
V6T 1Z1