

# **Play and Natural Learning Spaces**

## **Design, Construction and Maintenance**

### **Policy Template**

#### **Introduction**

Having responsibility for the design, construction and operation of a play and natural learning space is a significant undertaking by an owner/operator. The facilities need to be in compliance with numerous standards and requirements throughout all phases of the design and construction process. Once in the ground owner/operators must ensure the facility continues to comply with existing standards throughout its lifecycle.

Ultimately, it is the users who will benefit from a well designed and maintained playspace that is playful, has connections to nature, and is safe and accessible. Having a comprehensive policy document outlining actions the owner/operator will take in this regard provides the necessary transparency and accountability expected by users.

The following provides a template for owner/operators to use in preparing a policy for the design, construction and maintenance of play and natural learning spaces under their jurisdiction. The information can also be used to embellish or update current policies. It should also be noted that while content for this document was drawn from an owner/operator of a large number of facilities, it can easily be adapted for application to individual facilities.

There are several specifics within the document that are of note:

- A core component of the template relates to compliance with CAN/CSA-Z614 *Children's Play and Equipment Standard*. It also includes Annex H, which is a new addition to the standard as of 2007 and provides for a minimum accessibility requirement.
- We support a 'designed' approach to playground development and as a result the template accounts for actions to be taken in this area.
- There are a number of supplementary documents that are required to enact the policy statements contained in the template. These include Requests for Proposals (RFP's), proposal evaluation documents, contractor/supplier contracts, and project sign-off process. These should be developed and added as enclosures where applicable.

Finally, while many play and natural learning space developments in Canada are overseen by committees on behalf of owner/operators, including Parent Advisory Committees, this document is targeted specifically toward the owner/operator. That said, it is important for these committees to request up-to-date owner/operator policies and where they are not in existence, to request that they be prepared prior to beginning their work.

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IPA Canada, 2009  
[www.ipacanada.org](http://www.ipacanada.org)

# **Owner/Operator Play and Natural Learning Spaces Design, Construction and Maintenance Policy<sup>1</sup>**

**Effective: \_\_\_\_\_**

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<sup>1</sup> This document was prepared from content contained in the City of Edmonton's *Playspaces Development Standard* (2008)

# Part 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Preface

The primary purpose of this policy document is to provide a consistent approach to the design, construction and maintenance of new and renovated play and natural learning environments under the jurisdiction of the Owner/Operator.

Adherence to the Canadian Standards Association CAN/CSA-Z614 *Children's Play and Equipment Standard* including Annex H, for the life of the facility, is a core dimension of this policy.

The policy will also ensure alignment with directives in Provincial Legislation as well as applicable Owner/Operator design and construction and operations procedures.

## 1.2 Policy Retroactivity

The conditions spelled out in the Policy are effective January 01, 2009. As CAN/CSA-Z614 is updated regularly, the most up-to-date version of the document will apply.

## 1.3 Definitions

Annex H – is a supplemental document approved for the CSA-Z614-07 version titled *Children's Play and Equipment that are Accessible to Persons with Disabilities*. The document spells out a minimum requirement for playspace accessibility. It is written in mandatory language for those who choose to adopt it as policy.

CSA – is the abbreviation for Canadian Standards Association, a non-profit governing body of independent, autonomous organizations that work towards the further development and improvement of voluntary standardization in the national interest. CAN/CSA-Z614 *Children's Play and Equipment* is the standard developed by the Technical Committee on Children's Playspaces and Equipment.

Professional Judgment – refers to the ability of an individual with current knowledge, skill, or experience, or a combination of these characteristics, in the field of playgrounds/playground equipment design, use, or operations, which enables the person to form an opinion or make a decision, or both, concerning a matter within that area of expertise. (CAN/CSA-Z614 'definitions', pg 4).

## 1.4 Application of CAN/CSA-Z614, including Annex H

CAN/CSA-Z614, including Annex H, is the standard to which play and natural learning spaces within the jurisdiction of the Owner/Operator will apply.

- All play and natural learning spaces designs shall meet the standard and be signed off accordingly.
- Construction procedures shall interpret plans in accordance with the standard and shall be signed off as in compliance at the completion of construction.

- Maintenance practices and schedules shall ensure adherence to the standard for the life of the facility.

## **Part 2. Site Master Plan Design and Equipment Layout**

### **2.1 Design Approach**

The Owner/Operator supports a ‘designed’ approach<sup>2</sup> to development of play and natural learning spaces under its jurisdiction. As such designers are expected to:

- Establish a comprehensive ‘program’ from which to establish the design. As part of this process, input is to be sought from children<sup>3</sup>, students, caregivers and associated staff.
- Utilize a ‘universal design’ approach in the preparation of a site master plan which in turn reflects the program statement, complies with all applicable codes and regulations, and provides for a diverse range of settings and play opportunities.

### **2.2 Equipment Supplier Plan Submission Requirements**

Where play equipment has been called for in a design, equipment supplier’s proposals are to include the following:

- Project title/description
- Equipment layout plan revision #
- Listing/log of each Equipment Supplier represented
- Disclaimer stating that design complies with CAN/CSA-Z614, including Annex H
- Specified protective surface zones around the equipment
- Specified no-encroachment zones
- Heights of all decks/platforms, overhead apparatus and swing cross-bars
- Built-in scale
- 3-D drawings from all 4 angles
- Table specifying number and type of ground level play components confirming accessibility requirements

### **2.3 Plan Approvals**

The general components for approving the site master plan design and the associated equipment layout plan shall include the following:

- Circulation of plans for comment as appropriate. Reviews of the plan should include certified playground safety inspector (CPSI).
- Formal sign-off by the owner/operator of site master plan design
- Formal sign-off by the owner/operator of the equipment layout design. The *Playground Equipment Sign-off Checklist* shall be used as a guide to finalize approval of the proposed equipment layout (Attachment 5.1).

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<sup>2</sup> See *Play for All Guidelines: Planning Design and Management of Outdoor Play Settings for All Children*. Moore, Goltsman and Iacofano, 1988, MIG Communications.

<sup>3</sup> See *Involving Young People in Civic Matters*, Child Friendly Edmonton (2008)  
[www.edmonton.ca/childfriendly](http://www.edmonton.ca/childfriendly)

## Part 3. Construction

### 3.1 Plan Deviations

Playground equipment shall be constructed and installed according to specifications as shown on the approved design plan, notes, and manufacturer's specifications.

Deviations from the approved design plan during construction or installation can significantly impair both the function and safety of playgrounds. Unauthorized changes from the plan may result in delays. Therefore, all design changes shall be solely communicated through the Owner/Operator's assigned project manager for approval, prior to implementation.

### 3.2 Inspections

The Owner/Operator and CPSI inspectors are authorized to determine and prioritize deficiencies by applying the CAN/CSA-Z614 Standard, including Annex H and their professional judgment. These deficiencies shall be documented and submitted in a report format. In determining or clarifying a deficiency and its severity, the inspectors are authorized to:

- Assign class hazard criteria to prioritize correction deadlines
- Quote references from, or provide an interpretation of CAN/CSA-Z614

### 3.3 Deficiency Corrections

All deficiencies shall be corrected by the Supplier/Contractor/Installer and approved by the inspectors. The Inspector's judgment shall supersede Supplier's policies regarding inspection procedures and deficiency corrections. Failure to correct deficiencies as directed may lead to the following corrective action:

- The Supplier/Contractor may be subject to a daily penalty charged against the contract, until deficiencies are corrected or;
- The Owner/Operator Operations staff may be dispatched to correct the deficiencies. The associated charges shall be billed to the Supplier/Contractor.

The Inspectors shall assign class hazard criteria to indicate the nature and priority of repairs:

Equipment Hazard Class	Criteria	Nature of Correction	Correction Timeline upon issuance of the inspection report
Class 'A'	Any condition which has the potential to be life threatening or can cause severe, permanent injury	Equipment shall be removed, modified or replace	3 working days Take playspace out of service immediately*
Class 'B'	An condition which has the potential to cause serious but non-disabling injury	Equipment shall be removed, modified or replaced	5 working days Take playspace out of service immediately*

Class 'C' including accessibility deficiencies	Any condition which can cause slight injury, or may not have caused injury but does not meet current standards, or that does not comply with the accessibility standard	Equipment may be removed, modified, replaced.	14 working days
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*Priority ranking classification adapted from the International Loss control Institute. Currently published in The Consumer Product Safety Commission Playground Audit Guide*

\* Use of construction hoarding fence is recommended

3.4 Construction Site

The Contractor/Supplier shall maintain the construction site and keep the site and temporary fencing secure until the playground is officially opened. The playground site shall not be opened until all Class A and B deficiencies are corrected.

3.5 Transfer of Ownership

Transfer of ownership shall not take place until the playground is officially opened (see clause 3.5). It is at that time when the terms of any product warranty come into effect.

3.6 Equipment Maintenance Kit

The equipment Supplier/Installer is responsible to provide a fully stocked maintenance kit upon arrival of the playground equipment.

3.7 Equipment Installation Check-Back

The equipment Supplier/Installer shall return 30 days after the installation, to inspect and tighten all loose hardware.

## Part 4. Maintenance

4.1 Site Inspections

- The Owner/Operator will conduct a safety inspection of the site using the 'Operations Playspace Equipment Safety Inspection Checklist' and within the timelines outlined. NOTE: Templates for Playspace Equipment Inspection Checklists examples can be found in Annex B of CAN/CSA-Z614-07
- The Owner/Operator will arrange for an independent CPSI inspector to inspect the site on an annual basis and respond to deficiencies noted in a timely manner.

4.2 Reports

The Owner/Operator will prepare a yearly report for each play site, summarizing inspections undertaken and actions taken to ensure the site complies with the CAN/CSA-Z614 standard, including Annex H, and any other applicable standards.