

“What we heard” Report Summary

Technical Safety BC - Trampoline Park Engagement

June, 2019

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Executive Summary

Following a fatality in Richmond and several serious injuries at BC trampoline parks in 2018, Technical Safety BC heard calls from local health authorities, parents and municipal governments for trampoline parks to be regulated to protect public safety.

In response, Technical Safety BC undertook a comprehensive review of the trampoline park industry. Based on our research and input from industry, experts, and the public, we are making a recommendation to the Province of British Columbia that trampoline parks be subject to regulation under the *Safety Standards Act*.

Our recommendation has been formulated based on research into available codes and standards, as well as consultation with the public, industry experts, operators, owners, and patrons of trampoline parks. We heard a general consensus that some level of regulation could benefit the industry and safety – and we will continue our work throughout 2019 to determine the kind of regulations that would be appropriate.

This report provides a summary of the feedback Technical Safety BC received through consultation including engagement with owners and operators of trampoline parks, gymnastics facilities, parents of elementary and middle school children in Richmond, New Westminster, Langley, Coquitlam, Burnaby and North Vancouver, and the general public.

The **input received from parents and general public** shows that safety is a top priority for trampoline park users, parents of young users, and potential users, and that the majority of people who provided input support the decision to introduce regulation to the trampoline park industry. Most respondents described their perception of trampoline parks being “unsafe”, and facilities’ ability to respond to emergencies was of particular importance to respondents; specifically, the need for regulation pertaining to staff qualifications and training.

When it comes to **owners and operators’ input**, the areas of divergence are greater than areas of convergence. The input received indicates that there is a divide and a significant difference in the perception of risks associated with trampolines between the organizations currently regulated by Gymnastics BC and organizations that are not. The variance in input on training required for supervision, ratio of coaches to patrons and whether inversions (i.e. flips) should be allowed is also aligned with this divide.

Safety of patrons is a high priority to all the owners/operators who participated in the engagement, and they are open to further exploration of how to increase the safety of trampoline parks. However, the majority of owners/operators specified it is very important to ensure that, should regulation be introduced, the regulating body can provide value, expertise, and adequate understanding of the industry. A number of owners/operators strongly expressed that they believe more work needs to be done to understand the data on injuries and what injuries potential regulation is trying to prevent.



Engagement Overview

- April 9: a workshop with owners and operators of gymnastics facilities with trampolines, trampoline parks and other trampoline facilities - **10 participants** from eight different organizations/facilities were in attendance.
- April 10 – 15: phone interviews with owners/operators who were unable to attend the workshop - **five interviews** took place with owners/operators of five different facilities.
- April 10: an open house for parents at Richard McBride Elementary School in New Westminster, organized by the Richard McBride Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) - input was received from **five parents**. This event was promoted through outreach to 27 schools, 14 corresponding PACs and 3,300 members of the “New West Moms” Facebook group. The Vancouver Sun wrote a [newspaper article](#) about the engagement.
- April 15: a presentation and survey distribution at the Glenbrook Middle School PAC meeting in New Westminster - input was received from **seven participants**, including parents, teachers and the school principal.
- April 13: a pop-up engagement and intercept surveys at the Killarney Community Centre in Vancouver - 125 people approached; surveys were completed by **50 people**.
- April 4 – 24: a public online survey was completed by **377**. The online survey was targeted towards parents across B.C. through various PAC and parents’ social media channels, including several posts by the BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (BCCPAC) representing 700+ parent committees.

What We Heard

Owners and Operators - Key Findings/Major Themes

Owners/operators are open to further exploration of how to increase the safety and they believe, to varying degrees, that defining and understanding the different business models of gymnastics facilities, trampoline facilities and trampoline parks will be an important consideration when defining any potential regulation.

There are several key findings that emerged from all received input – across the engagements:

- There is a significant difference in the perception of risk associated with trampolines between organizations regulated by Gymnastics BC and organizations not regulated by Gymnastics BC. The variance in input on training required for supervision, ratio of coaches to patrons, and opinions on whether inversions should be allowed, is aligned with this divide. In several cases, for this reason, the input received from organizations regulated by Gymnastics BC is summarized separately.
- Safety of patrons is a high priority to all the owners/operators and engagement participants spoke about different risk management strategies they already have in place – patron education/orientation, signage, staff instruction, response procedures, training/certifications for coaches, etc.



- Owners/operators are open to further exploration of how to increase the safety of trampoline parks, but the majority of participants specified that if regulations are introduced, it is very important to ensure the regulating body can provide value, expertise, and has adequate understanding of the industry.
- A number of owners/operators very strongly believe that more work needs to be done to understand the data on injuries and what injuries any potential regulation would be trying to prevent.

Themes of Convergence (Where Participants Tend to Agree)

- Many owners/operators are already using a number of **risk management strategies**: patron education, signage, staff training and National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) certification for coaches, response procedures, staff-to-patron ratio, ASTM standards and regulation of equipment, engagement between coaches and participants, software for maintenance checks, daily maintenance, skill testing, set curriculum, supervision by a Risk Management Coordinator, keeping detailed injury reports, etc. The safety and risk management strategies currently in practice are developed based on best practice from similar organizations, consultations with industry professionals, industry expertise from other industries, minimum standards provided by International Association of Trampoline Parks, etc.
- Many owners/operators believe that few injuries are related to equipment failure and are generally related to how equipment is used (i.e. **patron behaviour**).
- Owners/operators expressed concern that their **business models are very different** (ranging from one-on-one instruction with a coach, to trampoline facilities that are used as coaching facilities, to trampoline parks that are used solely for recreation/fun and have no coaching capabilities).
- Several owners/operators believe that more work needs to be done in order for Technical Safety BC to understand the business models of different facilities, the **data on injuries** from trampoline usage in trampoline facilities vs backyard trampolines, and what kind of regulation (by Technical Safety BC) would provide most value.
- Across the input received from gymnastics club owners/operators, there is a high degree of convergence on the need to increase, shift or standardize risk management strategies at trampoline parks, including implementing and/or **increasing staff-to-patron ratios, education, training and/or certification of staff/coaches/park attendants**, introduction of safety procedures and rules for patrons attending trampoline parks, and limitations for flipping/inversions.
- Most owner/operator participants disagree with the proposal to introduce professional engineer review/approval of equipment, due to a perceived lack of **professional engineers** with experience in trampolines, and the cost of such review/approval.

Themes of Divergence (Where Participants Disagree)

- The use of **foam pits** in trampoline facilities is an area of divergence in all the input received. Some owners/operators believe that foam pits are too dangerous for a fun, trampoline park environment, whereas others said foam pits are a very useful and important tool, but just need to be managed properly.
- Several participants in the workshop and most gymnastics facility owners/operators have a concern with **staff-patron ratios** at trampoline parks/facilities, including the ASTM



standards' staff-patron ratio of 1:32. Non-coaching facilities, however, think this concern is unfair as it comes exclusively from coaching facilities, which have a different business model, different clientele and programs that are based on small, limited-in-number class-size.

- There is significant divergence in opinion between owners/operators on whether children should be allowed to do **flips** without instruction and/or supervision. Some participants believe it is safer for children to try flipping in a facility where coaching/First Aid response is available than to flip on backyard trampolines. Others believe that flips/inversions should only be allowed with gradual and supervised progression. Some owners/operators explicitly ban flips/inversions and strictly monitor this rule.
- Several participants said there would be advantages to having some level of standard and regulation of trampoline parks. For **equipment standards**, several owners/operators thought that the most efficient way to introduce them is at the supplier level – in order to eliminate trampoline parks that are poorly designed. In contrast, several participants spoke about the negative impact regulation could have on the fun aspect of trampoline parks, and potential impacts of over-regulating trampoline parks on creativity in new Olympic sports, such as freestyle skiing and other X Games sports. These athletes would have no feeder training facilities or would need to train in more difficult/dangerous environments.
- **Certifying coaches** – even within gymnastics facilities there is disagreement on whether staff at trampoline parks should be required to obtain NCCP certification; some gymnastics facilities believe that this is absolutely required, and others think this is too much to ask from trampoline park attendants as they do not act as instructors of other gymnastics skills. Some participants said a customized, shorter or informal version of NCCP training would be more appropriate.
- Several owners are in favour of **regulation** and think it's required to increase safety. Some owners/operators believe potential government regulation could help increase safety at certain facilities with regulation of safety protocols, compliance with ASTM standards for equipment, staff training and certification, and increased supervision. If regulating equipment, Technical Safety BC could establish minimum standards (for instance, minimum height requirement under trampolines), and eliminate equipment of questionable quality that is not manufactured by reputable manufacturers.
- With regards to the **cost** of potential regulation through Technical Safety BC and how it would impact facility operations and business model, some owners/operators thought that the estimated cost was reasonable, some thought that some regulation fees would be acceptable, and several owners/operators from across the spectrum (from gymnastics clubs to trampoline facilities) strongly felt that the cost was prohibitive and would have a negative impact on their business operations.



Users (Public) - Key Findings / Major Themes

Parents and the public are asking for more adequately-trained supervision at trampoline parks. The general perception of respondents is that trampoline parks are “unsafe”.

Respondents described a range of equipment and operational factors that contributed to the overall perception of trampoline parks being unsafe; however, routinely cited injury (either media/anecdotally sourced or personal/acquaintance experience) as being a key contributor to their position on park safety.

Safety is a top priority for trampoline park users, parents of young users, and potential users, with the vast majority of respondents supporting the introduction of regulation to the industry. Although safety was among the top concerns for trampoline park users, parents of young users, and potential users, a facility’s ability to respond to emergencies was also of particular importance; specifically, the need for regulation pertaining to staff qualifications and training (First Aid/emergency response), in addition to better emergency response protocols and documentation.

By and large, respondents agreed with the need to regulate both facility (equipment) and operational aspects of trampoline parks; however most identified aspects such mandatory user/patron orientation, maximum number of patrons at one time, patron-to-staff ratio, staffing levels, and separate trampoline areas by age groups, as being key. Additionally, respondents highlighted staff characteristics and behaviours (e.g., ability to enforce rules and attentiveness) as being important contributing components in making a facility safer.

With regulation being broadly endorsed by respondents, most accepted a potential increase in fees; however, a significant proportion of individuals expressed the opinion that the raise in costs should be absorbed by facility owners instead of the patron.

Based on the input received, the most frequently mentioned themes in the open-ended responses were related to:

- **Operations:** There were 201 mentions of operational aspects and concerns, such as understaffing/insufficient supervision, lack of rules, policies, procedures and protocols, and lack of standardization for trampoline parks.
- **Injury:** Survey respondents mentioned injuries 111 times, with references to both personal and acquaintance injuries as well as anecdotal and media reports.
- **Staff qualifications and training:** This was mentioned 89 times, including comments about staff specifically lacking First Aid/emergency response training.
- **Support of regulation:** Across all open-ended text input, there were 42 comments in general support of regulation.



Themes of Convergence

- The perception of the majority of public respondents is that the trampoline parks in BC are **unsafe or relatively unsafe**.
- Most survey respondents are **very highly in favour of safety regulations being introduced** at trampoline parks in BC.
- There is a **high degree of support for regulation** in all potential aspects of regulation outlined in the survey: operations, staff qualifications and training, maintenance of equipment and overall facilities, equipment design and technical specifications, insurance requirements, and the design of the facility overall.
- More than half of all respondents would be **willing to pay at least a 10% increase in cost** for a trampoline park entrance fee to support the cost of regulation (33.79% would be willing to pay an increase of 10%, and 28.3% would pay any price to ensure that all aspects of trampoline parks are regulated by the government).

Themes of Divergence

- Even though most respondents in the public survey thought that trampoline parks are unsafe, respondents have also selected all other numbers in the 1-5 scale (progressively decreasing in quantity), with seven respondents (1.95%) describing their perception of trampoline parks as very safe (5/5).
- Most respondents are highly supportive of regulation, but a total of 12 survey respondents (3.31%) described their support for regulation as “very low”. Those few who are not in favour of regulation are not opposed to an increase in safety, staff-to-patron ratio, etc., but **do not see the value** in Technical Safety BC regulating trampoline parks.
- When it comes to the willingness to pay for the potential costs of regulation, public input is quite varied. The greatest number of respondents (33.79%) would be willing to pay 10% more for trampoline park admission, followed by 28.30% who would pay any price to ensure all aspects of trampoline parks are regulated by the government. However, **16.48% said they would not be willing to pay** for the increased measure of safety, and only 5.22% of respondents would be willing to pay 50% more.

Next Steps

Technical Safety BC is making the recommendation to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing that trampoline parks be regulated under the *Safety Standards Act* in order to increase safety at trampoline parks and other facilities with institutional trampolines. We will continue our work throughout 2019 to determine the kind of regulations that would be appropriate.

Technical Safety BC is also continuing its work to review the Amusement Devices industry and regulation system more broadly, throughout the remainder of 2019. A separate engagement process will be planned and undertaken to support this review.

While Technical Safety BC has been asked to provide recommendations related to potential regulation of the trampoline park industry, it is the Provincial Government's decision whether regulations will be introduced and, if so, how the industry would be regulated.

