

4

FAMILY STRENGTHENING PROGRAMS UPDATE

The Community Services and Housing Committee recommends adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report, February 28, 2006, from the Commissioner of Community Services, Housing and Health Services:

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. This report be received for information.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide Committee and Council with information regarding the Family Strengthening Programs administered by the Community Services and Housing Department. Programs included in this initiative are:

- All Our Kids (AOK)
- Ontario Works/Social Housing Summer Camp
- Family Child Care Provider Training
- Positive Leisure Activities for Youth (PLAY)
- Lead, Experience and Develop (LEAD)
- Social Housing After School Programs
- Adolescent Leadership Camp

3. BACKGROUND

The Community Services and Housing Department supports research showing that investing in family strengthening programs can be cost effective in reducing dependency on social assistance, health and other social services.

Family Strengthening Programs are not duplicated services and are designed to provide families with access to:

- Parenting supports and resources.
- Community based programs and services.
- School readiness programs.

Families who are eligible and most likely to participate are those with a low income, recent immigrants and/or in need of parenting supports and services.

Without these opportunities, it is likely that these families and their children would find access to community programs difficult. Barriers, such as user fees to recreation programs, transportation, lack of agency capacity to deliver no cost services, are addressed through the Family Strengthening Programs.

3.1 Benefits

The Community Services and Housing Department recognizes the importance of the family structure to the economic and social well being of the parent, and to the development of the child's full potential.

Family Strengthening Programs therefore promote:

- Increased employment supports and opportunities for parents.
- Improved social, emotional and educational outcomes for the children.
- Stable, healthy families by improving their ability to achieve independence.
- Opportunities for families to engage in their communities.

It is anticipated that Family Strengthening Programs, combined with a range of return to work supports, will reduce the length of time participants require Social Assistance. Further analysis will be done in the future to track exit rates where families are accessing family strengthening initiatives along with employment and other supports and the resulting potential savings to York Region.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

4.1 Outcomes and Indicators

Attachment 1 provides an overview of the Family Strengthening Initiatives provided by the Family and Children's Services Division of the Community Services and Housing Department in 2005.

4.2 Collaboration

The Community Services and Housing Department works in collaboration with children's mental health agencies, municipal recreation departments, resource centres, child care agencies and community agencies which are affiliated with York Region Early Years Centres through Purchase of Service Agreements.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Program Costs

The majority of Family Strengthening Programs are 100% funded through reinvestment of the National Child Benefit (NCB) and the Community Sport Opportunity Fund. The exception is the summer camp for children of Ontario Works participants which is cost shared by the Province at 80:20.

Table 1 outlines the programs expenditures.

Table 1
Program Expenditures

Program	Gross Expenditure
All Our Kids (AOK)	\$193,214
Ontario Works and Social Housing Summer Camps	398,971
Family Child Care Training	85,280
Positive Leisure Activities for Youth (PLAY)	56,650
Lead, Experience and Develop (LEAD)	3,849
Social Housing After School Programs	54,953
Adolescent Leadership Camp	33,970
Total	\$826,887

Funding concerns may arise after 2006 should the Province decide to stop the NCB claw back, which is currently reinvested in community programs, and not replaced with other provincial funding.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Family Strengthening Programs provide York Region families and their children with access to quality programs and supports within their local municipalities which promote healthy child development and parental attachment to the workforce.

7. CONCLUSION

York Region remains committed to working in partnership with the community to ensure that Family Strengthening Programs are high quality, delivered cost effectively and continue to meet measurable objectives. The Community Services and Housing Department recognizes the importance of family structure to the economic and social well being of the parent and to the development of the child's full potential. As part of York Region's Family Strengthening Initiatives, departmental divisions will continue to work together to provide innovative and responsive programs and services which are associated with positive outcomes for families in need.

Report No. 2 of the Community Services and Housing Committee
Regional Council Meeting of March 23, 2006

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachments referred to in this Clause are attached to this report.)