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FAMILY STRENGTHENING PROGRAM UPDATE 2007

The Community Services and Housing Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report, April 3, 2008, from the Commissioner of Community and Health Services:

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. The Regional Clerk circulate this report to the Clerks of the local municipalities, the Minister of Community and Social Services and the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

2. PURPOSE

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

- All Our Kids Early Child Development and Parenting Programs
- Ontario Works/Social Housing Summer Day Camp
- Family Child Care Provider Training
- Positive Leisure Activities for Youth
- After School Programs in Social Housing Sites
- Youth Leadership Camp

3. BACKGROUND

Family Strengthening Programs are a range of programs and services for low income families in York Region

These programs are delivered at no cost to families and are designed to support and strengthen families and child development. Family Strengthening Programs responsive to the needs of low income families and are designed to provide families with access to:

- Parenting supports and community 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 those in need of parenting supports and services. These

programs offer families access to community based activities by removing barriers such as user fees and transportation costs, and by helping agencies establish programs in low income and immigrant communities.

Family Strengthening Programs provide benefits for children, families and communities

The Community and Health Services Department's Family Strengthening initiative supports research showing that investing in Family Strengthening Programs can be cost effective in reducing dependency on social assistance, health and other social services. It recognizes the importance of the family structure to the economic and social well being of the parent, and to the development of the child.

Family Strengthening Programs promote:

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

It is anticipated that some Family Strengthening Programs, combined with a range of return to work supports, will reduce the length of time participants require Social Assistance.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Family Strengthening Programs are responsive to the needs of children and their families

Attachment 1 provides an overview of the Family Strengthening initiatives administered by the Family and Children's Services Branch of the Community and Health Services Department in 2007. Over 5,600 children and their families received services through these initiatives.

York Region collaborates with community agencies to provide coordinated service delivery

The Community and Health Services Department works in collaboration with children's mental health agencies, municipal recreation departments, resource centres, child care agencies, and York Region Early Years Centres. Funding is administered and programs are monitored and evaluated through Purchase of Service Agreements.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

In 2007, Family Strengthening Program gross expenditures totalled \$584,323. Approximately 78% of these costs were funded through the National Child Benefit Initiative. The remaining costs were funded through a combination of cost sharing with the Province and 100% municipal funding and managed within the Department's approved budget. Table 1 outlines the program expenditures. These funds supported the delivery of services to over 5,600 children and their families.

Table 1
Program Expenditure and Revenue 2007 and 2008

Family Strengthening Programs	2007 Gross Expenditure	2008 Expenditure Approval
All Our Kids	\$168,963	\$188,000
Ontario Works and Social Housing Summer Camps	197,608	262,000
Supports to Informal Child Care Provider Training	89,520	90,000
Positive Leisure Activities for Youth	62,038	66,000
After School Programs in Social Housing	46,912	46,500
Youth Leadership Camp	19,282	19,500
Total	\$584,323	\$672,000
Sources of Revenue	2007 Revenue	2008 Revenue
Provincial Government Funding	\$104,022	\$160,000
National Child Benefit Initiative	454,295	472,000
Tax Levy in Budget Approval	26,006	40,000
Total	\$584,323	\$672,000

In 2008, the Province will withdraw the National Child Benefit Initiative. On November 15, 2007 Council approved municipal funds to replace these withdrawn provincial funds through the adoption of Clause No. 2 of Report No. 9 of the Community Services and Housing Committee.

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

The Community and Health Services Department remains committed to work in partnership with the community to continue to expand and enhance Family Strengthening Programs that are high quality, delivered cost effectively and continue to meet measurable objectives. The Community and Health Services 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 branches will continue to work together to provide innovative and responsive programs and services which support better economic outcomes for families. Research, using economic models, indicates that savings to tax payers down the road from family strengthening programs, including early intervention, are substantial.

For more information on this report, please contact Elizabeth Wagle, Director, Family and Children's Services Branch at Ext. 2089.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachment referred to in this clause is attached to this report.)