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FAMILY STRENGTHENING PROGRAM UPDATE 2006

The Community Services and Housing Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report, March 28, 2007, 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 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) Early Child Development and Parenting Programs
- Ontario Works/Social Housing Summer Day Camp
- Family Child Care Provider Training
- Positive Leisure Activities for Youth (PLAY)
- After School Programs in Social Housing Sites
- Youth Leadership Camp

3. BACKGROUND

Family Strengthening Programs are a range of programs and services delivered at no cost to families and designed to support and strengthen families and child development in York Region. Family Strengthening Programs are not duplicated services 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.

3.1 Benefits

The Community Services and Housing 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, may reduce the length of time participants require Social Assistance.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

4.1 Outcomes and Indicators

Attachment 1 provides an overview of the Family Strengthening Initiatives administered by the Family and Children's Services Division of the Community Services and Housing Department in 2006.

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 York Region Early Years Centres. Funding is administered and programs are monitored and evaluated through Purchase of Service Agreements.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Program Costs

In 2006, total Family Strengthening Program expenditures were \$996,102.

The majority (61%) of these costs were funded through reinvestment of the National Child Benefit (NCB) within the Community Development Initiative Funding (CDIF). 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.

Table 1
Program Expenditure and Revenue 2006

Expenditure	Amount
All Our Kids (AOK)	\$194,804
Ontario Works and Social Housing Summer Camps	430,077
Supports to Informal Child Care Provider Training	89,600
Positive Leisure Activities for Youth (PLAY)	63,511
After School Programs in Social Housing	205,500
Youth Leadership Camp	12,610
Total Program Expenditure	\$996,102
Revenue	
Provincial Government Funding	\$(273,134)
National Child Benefit Reserve	(606,184)
Tax Levy in Budget Approval	(116,784)
Total Revenue	\$(996,102)

Funding concerns may arise after 2007 should the Province decide to stop the NCB claw back, which is currently reinvested in community programs, and not replace it 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

The Community Services and Housing 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 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 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 such as Gina Browne's "When the Bough Breaks", 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 of the Community Services and Housing Department.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

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