

4

RECREATIONAL PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN OF ONTARIO WORKS PARTICIPANTS AND SOCIAL HOUSING RESIDENTS

The Community Services and Housing Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report, April 1, 2004, from the Commissioner of Community Services and Housing:

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. This report be received for information by Committee and Council.

2. PURPOSE

This report provides Committee and Council with information about the 2003 Recreational Programs for Children of Ontario Works Participants funded through the re-investment of National Child Benefit (NCB) funds.

3. BACKGROUND

In 1998, the federal, provincial and territorial governments collaborated on the development of the National Child Benefit (NCB). The NCB focuses on improving support to low-income families with children. It has two main elements: increased federal benefits for families with net incomes below \$32,000 through the Canada Child Tax Benefit, and provincial and territorial reinvestments in services and benefits for children in low-income families.

The Province, in turn, directed that municipalities reinvest these funds in programs that meet NCB objectives of helping to prevent and reduce the depth of child poverty and/or promoting attachment to the workforce, resulting in fewer families having to rely on social assistance.

In October 1998, Regional Council approved the creation of a reserve to hold funds accrued as a result of the decrease in social assistance costs due to implementation of the Federal NCB and establish a plan to reinvest the funds.

3.1 Reinvestment Research Study Child Care / Recreation

In 1998, McMaster University published a research study entitled *When the Bough Breaks*. The study indicates that providing quality subsidized child care and recreation programs for children of Ontario Works families promotes an attachment to the workforce by their parents, begins to address child poverty, can reduce dependency on social assistance, health and social services and promotes healthy child development. Based on this research, staff developed a program that would support families on Ontario

Works by providing children with access to recreation programs offered by area municipalities.

3.1.1 Recreation Pilot and Program Expansion

In June 1999, York Region entered into a Purchase of Service Agreement with the City of Vaughan for the provision of a pilot summer day camp program (including camp packs) for children of Ontario Works participants. The program was attended by 39 children of 26 parents.

In April 2000, Council approved an expansion of the summer day camp recreation initiative and entered into Purchase of Service Agreements with the Town of Markham, Richmond Hill, Newmarket, Whitchurch/Stouffville and the City of Vaughan. The programs were attended by 278 children of 168 parents.

In February 2001, Council approved the continuation, and a further expansion, of the program to include all nine area municipalities.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

In 2003, a total of 331 children attended summer day camp recreation programs.

4.1 Ontario Works Participants

During July and August 2003, a total of 210 children, representing 148 parents participating in Ontario Works, attended summer day camp recreation programs across the Region.

Ontario Works Case Coordinators developed a plan of activities for Ontario Works participants to follow while their children attended summer day camp. Table 1 identifies these activities.

Table 1
Ontario Works Participants
Activities of Parents During the 2003 Program

Activity	Number of Activities
Employed Full-time or Part-time	63
Job Search	49
Community Placements	9
Employment Placements	0
Job Skills Training	6
Basic Education	14
Temp Deferred	32
Total	173*

*Some parents participated in more than one activity.

4.2 Housing Residents

During July and August 2003, 89 school-age children, of residents who reside in family units owned and managed by Housing York Inc., attended summer recreation programs across the Region.

4.3 Tri-Partnership Summer Camp - Jersey Public School

The 2003 recreation program continuation included a tri-partnership between the Regional Municipality of York, The York Region Board of Education and The Town of Georgina Recreation Department. The tri-partnership provided 32 children, of low-income families, enrolled in the Performance Plus Jersey Public School with an opportunity to participate in a four-week camp experience. The camp experience also provided two youth with an opportunity to participate in a Leadership in Training Program.

4.4 Verification of Registration and Eligibility

During the 2003 program year, staff of the Community Services and Housing Department streamlined registration processes by implementing single phone line access to registration and continued enhanced monitoring and verification procedures with approved municipal recreation departments.

4.5 Relationship to Vision 2026

This initiative supports the following action areas of Vision 2026:

- Fostering effective working relationships with community agencies and organizations.
- Responding to children in need.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Program Costs 2003

In 2003, funds available from the NCB reserve fund for reinvestment in the NCB summer day camp recreation program totalled \$275,000. Table 2 illustrates how these funds were used.

Table 2
Program Costs 2003

Program Cost	Amount
Enrolment costs for children	\$242,000
Camp pack purchase costs	32,000
Administration	1,000
Total	\$275,000

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The NCB summer day camp recreation program has provided 331 children of Ontario Works participants, and residents who reside in family units owned and managed by Housing York Inc., who live in communities throughout the Region, with access to supports to promote healthy child development and parental attachment to the workforce.

7. CONCLUSION

The summer day camp recreation program is an example of integrated family focussed programming across the divisions within the Community Services and Housing Department.

The summer day camp recreation program provided by local municipalities and funded out of the NCB Reserve Fund has provided children of Ontario Works participants and social housing residents and their families across York Region with access to supports which promote healthy child development and parental attachment to the workforce.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.