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SUCCESSFUL FUNDING APPLICATION FOR CONTINUATION OF THE SWIM TO SURVIVE PROGRAM 2007/2008

The Community Services and Housing Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report, August 28, 2007, from the Commissioner of Community Services, Housing and Health Services:

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. This report be circulated by the Regional Clerk to the local municipalities for information.

2. PURPOSE

This report informs Regional Council of our successful application for \$47,227 in project funding from the Life Saving Society and describes how this alternate source of revenue will be used to provide basic water survival lessons to Grade 3 students in York Region in 2007/2008.

This report also provides results of the 2006/2007 Swim to Survive Program in York Region.

3. BACKGROUND

In November 2005, York Region, in collaboration with the nine local municipal recreation departments, local school boards, and the Lifesaving Society, launched the Swim to Survive pilot across York Region. The pilot was implemented in response to the high number of children that drowned in Ontario during the summer of 2005.

The Swim to Survive Program, funded through the Life Saving Society and the Community Development and Investment Fund, gives children in Grade 3 the opportunity to participate in three lessons to attain the skills necessary to survive an unexpected fall into water.

Participating schools were selected based on the following criteria:

- A high population of students whose families had limited financial resources.
- A high population of students whose families were new to Canada.
- A higher population of aboriginal students.
- A special needs program.

- Wait lists for learn to swim programs.
- Communities without a local swimming pool.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

4.1 Program teaches a child how to survive an unexpected fall into water

Swim to Survive provides children in Grade 3 with three basic skills: roll into deep water, tread water for one minute, and swim 50 metres. Children at this stage of physical development are typically equipped to achieve these skills. A parent letter goes home with the certificate the child receives at the end of the three lessons to stress that the Swim to Survive focus is survival training and the importance of follow-up swimming lessons.

4.2 Program delivery is a partnership of municipalities, school boards, and Life Saving Society

The Region co-ordinates the Program and provides funding through the Community Development and Investment Fund and the Life Saving Society. The municipalities provide pool space in-kind and school boards provide funding and identify schools to participate in the program. Classes are instructed by qualified instructor/lifeguards trained in the delivery of Swim to Survive and the ratio is one instructor to ten students.

4.3 Participation in the program continues to grow

In 2006/2007, 98 schools with a total of 3,330 Grade 3 children participated in the Program.

In 2007/2008, 104 schools with a total of 4,746 Grade 3 children will participate.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

York Region will receive \$47,227 in project funding from the Life Saving Society toward a total project budget of \$62,727 for the 2007/2008 school year. York Region's contribution of \$10,500 will be managed within the Department's approved budget. The remaining \$5,000 will be contributed by the two school boards.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The Swim to Survive Program will increase service to targeted populations across York Region. In partnership with York Region school boards and local municipalities, York Region will provide families and children in the selected schools access to basic water safety education and training.

7. CONCLUSION

The launch of the Swim to Survive Program in 2005, in York Region, was an innovative and ground breaking initiative.

In the 2007/2008 school year, the Swim to Survive Program, coordinated by York Region and funded through alternate revenue sources, will continue to provide Grade 3 students with the opportunity to learn the basic skills to survive an unexpected fall into water and may save children's lives.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.