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Summer Camps 2020 Staff Report to Council

Report Number: 2020-47

Department(s): Recreation & Culture

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Meeting Date: June 22, 2020

Recommendations

1. That the report entitled Summer Camps 2020 dated June 10, 2020 be received; and,
2. That the staff recommendation of not offering any in person summer day camp programming in 2020 be approved; and,
3. That staff proceed with alternative programming including: promotion of virtual camps, exploration of small group short programs, and camper activity kits; and,
4. That Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with critical information regarding operation of Summer Camps, providing an awareness of the anticipated safety measures during the Covid-19 Pandemic and to seek direction on provision of this service in 2020.

Background

Each summer the Town of Newmarket operates a large and comprehensive summer camp program. Traditionally there are 30 to 40 camps offered each week for a 9 to 10 week period (depending upon the school break schedule). This provides a camp experience to approximately 1,000 children every week. These camps are offered in a variety of facilities including town owned and operated facilities, schools and third party

partners venues. Approximately 170 staff are hired each summer to oversee these programs.

For the 2020 summer season, registration opened in late February. Over 90% of all possible camper spots were filled with approximately 10,000 registrations. Had camps been able to proceed as they would normally, over \$300,000 in net operating surplus was anticipated.

On May 14th, Premier Ford announced that, should the number of new cases continue to trend in the right direction, that summer day camps would be able to proceed with very strict public health measures that must be approved by the respective Regional Chief Medical Officers. However, given the current situation with the Covid-19 pandemic and required public health measures, it was not possible to operate the 2020 summer camp season as previously planned. As such, all existing camps were cancelled and registrations were refunded in line with the direction taken by virtually all municipalities in Ontario.

Discussion

Municipalities across the province are now in a situation where new or drastically amended camp programs may need to be developed. Staff at the Town of Newmarket have been actively involved in discussions with the Ontario Camping Association and Parks and Recreation Ontario to learn about best practices, identify key planning in other jurisdictions and determine a path forward that ensures the safety of staff, participants and families of participants. On June 2, the province of Ontario released a guide on what public health measures may need to be taken to operate (see appendix A). This guide was heavily influenced by the Ontario Camping Association and is modelled after guides developed by the provinces of British Columbia and Alberta.

Key Public Health Measures

Staff have done extensive research on the provincial guide and additional guides that have been developed in other jurisdictions. Based on that research and analysis of common public health measures, the following public health measures, at minimum, would be required if we were to offer a camp experience:

- i) That a ratio of 4 campers to 1 staff person be observed for all ages.
- ii) That camps be segmented into cohorts of 10 (8 campers and 2 staff). These 10 individuals would only interact with one another. They would have no contact with anyone outside of their cohort. The cohorts must remain consistent for the duration of a five day camp.
- iii) Each cohort should have its own dedicated washroom in which no other camper, staff person or member of public utilizes.
- iv) Each cohort should have its own entry and exit protocols. This includes daily screening protocols of both staff and participants.
- v) Camp activities should be outdoors as much as possible. Indoor activities should be in large open spaces.

- vi) Social distancing (maintaining 6 feet separation between all people) should be maintained as much as possible. This includes spreading out of various activity stations, and incorporating more individual activities.
- vii) There should be no bussing of children at all.
- viii) There should be dedicated staff cleaning spaces regularly, focusing on disinfection of high touch areas throughout the day of operation with at least two formal high touch point cleanings during the day. There should be a thorough deep cleaning/disinfection of all spaces after the program concludes each day.
- ix) Singing should be avoided indoors. If participants are singing, they should do so outside and be a minimum of 6 feet away from all other individuals.
- x) If a space is required to be used by more than one cohort, it must be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected between uses by cohorts.
- xi) Each cohort should have dedicated equipment that is used only by that cohort.
- xii) There should be frequent hand washing and sanitizing for both participants and staff.
- xiii) There should be no food distribution of any kind – participants should bring all meals/snacks and be responsible for all of their own containers. Each participant should have a clearly marked area where storage of containers and personal belongings is appropriately distanced from the belongings of other participants.
- xiv) Communication for staff meetings, trainings and communication with parents should be done virtually. There should be no face to face meetings.
- xv) Staff and participants should wear face masks and other PPE any time social distancing measures cannot be practiced.
- xvi) Protocols must be developed for addressing participants who become symptomatic during the program including notification process of all participants, parents and public health officials. If a participant becomes symptomatic, all members of that cohort must also be isolated. If it is determined by Public Health that the participant should be tested, all members of that cohort will be required to stay home pending the results of testing.

Accommodating These Measures in Newmarket Summer Camps

Staff are concerned about our ability to accommodate all of these measures at all times during a camp day. The public health measure that staff are most concerned about for compliance is perhaps the most significant measure in maintaining safety for participants – ensuring social distancing is enforced. It should be noted that children will have been out of the structured school environment for over 3 months, will have not had regular interaction with peers and will clearly be excited at the prospect of spending time in a different environment with friends and peers. This does not present an ideal environment to foster an understanding of the continued need for social distancing. Additionally, the day camp environment is traditionally one that encourages close interactions as children engage in an assortment of games and activities. So participants will have to learn completely new patterns of behavior from previous camp

experiences without the benefit of having experienced and learned these patterns in a more controlled school environment.

Newmarket Summer Camp 2020 Experience

Should Council wish to proceed with Summer Camps in this manner, new camp programs would need to be planned, promoted with a period of registration to commence after appropriate promotion. Additionally, the reduced number of staff that would be hired would have to undergo extensive training. This training would need to be done virtually – there is concern about the effectiveness of training the subject matter and content effectively in a virtual setting.

By utilizing dry pads (rinks) at Magna Centre and Ray Twinney Complex, Halls 1 & 2 at Newmarket Community Centre & Lions Hall, and the entire Youth Centre, we could accommodate approximately 150 campers per week this summer.

The Camp experience would be dramatically different from any previous camp experience. Camps would be most similar to our general summer day camps where there is a mixture of active games, quiet games, and crafts. The types of games and crafts will be changed to ensure public health measures are incorporated. Additionally, all games and activities that would incorporate large numbers (ie. playing large games of dodge ball) would be eliminated. As per the public health requirements, field trips and swimming would both be eliminated. These typical camp activities would be replaced with smaller scaled activities and more individualized camper experiences.

Inclusion Programming

The City of Toronto has received guidance from Public Health officials that a number of public health measures will be required for campers with special needs who require one on one support. These requirements include wearing of face shields, gloves and full gown covering by staff in order to ensure the safety of staff members as social distancing is not possible in these situations. It should be noted that this PPE would be required to be worn by staff in a primarily hot outdoor environment, representing a different risk factor for those staff members.

In addition to staff related concerns, the response of vulnerable individuals who may not fully understand the Covid-19 pandemic is also relevant. Staff are concerned about how the vulnerable participants will respond both physically and emotionally to a staff member who is fully equipped in PPE.

Municipalities are in a difficult position. Municipalities must make of one two very difficult choices: i) place staff and vulnerable participants in a stressful and difficult position by offering one on one support with the necessary personal protective equipment and protocols; ii) indicate that one on one support is not available due to public health requirements in light of Covid-19 – this would place the municipality in a vulnerable position as there is a human rights obligation to accommodate all individuals.

Some municipalities have cited this concern as a major factor in their planning as to whether or not to proceed with summer camps.

What Other Municipalities are Doing

There has been extensive consultation with municipalities across the Region. At this point, most municipalities in York Region are proceeding cautiously with planning some form of summer camp experience. Some municipalities are considering holding off for July and only offering camps in August. Municipalities are exploring alternatives to in person camps including virtual camps, “camp in a box” ideas, etc. The Township of King has determined that they will not offer any in person summer camp experience in 2020.

Virtually all municipalities across the province have cancelled all existing programs. Most were considering an alternative program but needed to have a fuller understanding of public health requirements in advance of formalizing program offerings. So far, Oshawa, Hamilton, Bradford and New Tecumseth have officially cancelled all summer camps and programs and are not planning for any modified program. York Region District School Board has also cancelled all summer camps and programs.

The City of Ottawa and the City of Toronto have both announced that will move forward with offering in person summer camp experiences. These camp experiences will be dramatically different from their traditional offerings in order to accommodate the provincial and public health guidelines.

Parks & Recreation Ontario has facilitated numerous discussions among municipalities across the province. The general consensus among municipalities is one of concern about safety of day camp environments and reluctance to offer a camp experience.

On June 10th, the Ontario Camping Association issued a press release stating the following: “Most OCA accredited day camps have decided not to run given the risks and the provincial and public health guidelines.”

Conclusion

Staff believe that a positive camp experience can be created for children. However, we are concerned that staff and participants will be in placed in a situation that carries an uncomfortable amount of risk for the health and safety of all involved. It is our professional opinion that summer camps should be offered under these measures only after children have learned and experienced these types of measures in a controlled school environment. Children will experience these types of measures when they return to school. Staff would feel much more confident offering a summer camp experience after children learn and practice these measures in a school environment. Therefore, staff are recommending that no summer camps be offered in 2020.

It is recognized that a decision not to operate Summer Day Camps will have significant impacts for families during what has been a very difficult time. While many parents rely

on summer day camp as a mode of child care while at work, there are also many families that rely on summer camp as a constructive activity that engages children while providing some respite for parents. Recognizing this need, staff are ready to provide a number of alternative programs that could provide some respite for parents and positive experiences for children. Many of our vendor partners are offering virtual camp experiences. Using our marketing channels, we can help promote these virtual camps while also supporting local businesses. Additionally, staff are able to offer a series of one or two hour registered programs in a number of outdoor spaces (weather dependent). Lastly, staff are also prepared to develop camp at home kits that could be purchased by families and would include daily activities, supplies and detailed instructions.

Though these alternatives would not address need for child care, they would provide meaningful and fun experiences for families at a time when it is needed.

Business Plan and Strategic Plan Linkages

The strategic vision of the Town of Newmarket is rooted in the concept of being Well Beyond the Ordinary – this vision is achieved through focus on the well being of our community. The recommendation of cancelling summer camps is aligned with this vision of ensuring the wellness of our community first and foremost.

Consultation

There have been ongoing discussions with the Ontario Camping Association, Parks & Recreation Ontario, and with all other municipalities in York Region.

Human Resource Considerations

Potential summer camp staff were interviewed and selected. They were advised that offers of employment were tentative only and contingent upon provincial direction around provision of summer camps. Potential staff have been advised that all previous offers have been cancelled. Should we proceed with camps, those who were offered positions previously would be contacted and offered positions based on seniority and previous experience with our camp programs. It is expected that about one third of those offered positions may be offered employment in a modified program.

Through redeployment of full time staff within the Recreation & Culture Department, stronger professional supervision would be provided at all camp sites, while minimizing financial impacts.

Budget Impact

It is anticipated that a smaller scaled camp can operate in a manner that covers all direct program related expenses (camp staff, and program supplies). So, from a camp operational perspective, the net anticipated revenue of \$300,000 will not be realized in

2020. Therefore the financial situation of the Recreation & Culture Department would be similar whether or not we proceed with a smaller scaled camp operation.

Any of the options for alternative programming would be offered on a cost recovery basis.

It should be noted that should we proceed with camps there are implications from a facility usage and maintenance perspective that do have cost implications (including utilities, materials and supplies, etc). The primary cost implication from a facility perspective would be use of utilities. By opening Ray Twinney Complex, Newmarket Community Centre and Lions Hall, and Youth Centre for summer camps, the Town will incur approximately \$120,000 in utility expenses.

Attachments

Appendix A – Ministry of Health – COVID-19 Guidance: Summer Day Camps

Approval

Colin Service, Director, Recreation & Culture

Ian McDougall, Commissioner, Community Services

Contact

Colin Service