

Clause 23 in Report No. 5 of Committee of the Whole was adopted, without amendment, by the Council of The Regional Municipality of York at its meeting held on March 26, 2015.

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After-School Programs in York Region Social Housing

Committee of the Whole recommends adoption of the following recommendations contained in the report dated February 18, 2015 from the Commissioner of Community and Health Services:

1. Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. Council endorse the implementation of a pilot after-school program in four social housing sites, in Richmond Hill, Markham and Newmarket (2), for children and youth 7 - 17 years of age.
2. The Commissioner of Community and Health Services be authorized to execute the agreement for the provision of these after-school services subject to review by Legal Services.

2. Purpose

This report proposes the development and implementation of a two-year pilot program to provide free after-school programs in four social housing sites. This joint initiative between the Social Services and Housing Services Branches supports the development of a new program model that meets the unique needs of children and youth in social housing.

3. Background

Access to social programs can result in positive impacts for children and youth; however, families in social housing often have difficulty accessing them

Families with children in social housing communities face many barriers to getting access to program supports outside of their community.

Social housing sites have not had any social programs since 2012 because agencies have struggled to develop a model that has been responsive to these unique communities. Staff have identified that this gap has resulted in increases in youth loitering, police calls and concerns from residents that “kids have nothing to do”. In addition, as many parents are working, training or looking for work, unsupervised children and youth are not doing homework which results in poor achievement in education and increases the risk of ongoing poverty as adults.

Due to a variety of barriers including fees, transportation, social isolation, complex family situations or mental health issues, many families in social housing sites are not in a position to register their children and youth for community programs including local municipal recreation programs.

In October 2014, the Fair Access Project Partnership between York Region, the nine local municipalities and the school boards, implemented the after-school program called Drop Zone in schools in Markham, Richmond Hill, Georgina and Newmarket. Although this is an after-school option for all residents, none of these Drop Zone programs are located in close proximity to the social housing sites proposed in this report. Additionally, Drop Zone serves children 10-14 years of age while the After-School Programs in Social Housing will serve children 7 – 17 years of age in order to cover the spectrum of need that exists.

Internal and external partnerships are needed to provide an integrated, responsive program delivery model

Internal and external partnerships are needed to meet the needs of families in social housing sites, be responsive to community interests and meet the needs of children and youth.

The Social Services Branch currently oversees access to recreation programs for children and youth through the Positive Leisure Activities for Youth (PLAY) initiative and is well positioned in the community to provide leadership and oversight to this on-site program.

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Collaboration between the Social Services Branch and the Housing Services Branch will support guidance and program delivery through a designated community agency and provide families with the opportunity to access community resources.

Evidence-based research supports the benefits of programs after school for children and youth

Being excluded from recreation-based programs is both a result, and contributes to, cyclical and generational poverty.

In disadvantaged communities, when children and youth have nothing to do in the hours after school, this can result in low self-esteem, less resilience, lack of positive role models, poor school achievement and a continuum of generational poverty. The provision of after-school programs in social housing sites that are designed to meet community needs increases access for vulnerable children and youth, resulting in increased engagement in their communities and increased positive outcomes. It also is very cost effective.

The cost of these four after-school programs at York Region social housing sites is anticipated to be \$261 per month or \$12.00 per day with an average of 60 participants in each program.

Included in this cost per day per participant are guest speakers, youth outreach and technology.

4. Analysis and Options

The after-school programs will provide a model that is responsive and involves the social housing community while contributing to a healthy lifestyle for children and youth

The Social Services Branch and Housing Services Branch developed an evaluation profile to identify candidate social housing sites. The following considerations were used:

- Community isolation
- Number of children and youth
- Identified program gaps – children and youth hanging around resulting in increased instances of vandalism, negative social issues
- Community safety

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- Available, appropriate community space
- Willingness to work in partnership – Property Manager, tenants to develop program that is responsible to community needs

Four housing sites were chosen that are willing and able to work with the Social Services Branch and Housing Services Branch to develop a program. Not all social housing sites require this type of program support.

The four social housing sites and their attributes are identified below in Table 1.

Table 1
Four Social Housing Sites

Site and Local Municipality	Number of Units	Number of Children (Approx.)	Number of Youth (Approx.)	Facilities
Kinsmen Non Profit/Trinity Markham	187 (Kin)	80-90	60	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity room • Kitchen • Kitchen • Playground
Richmond Hill Co op Richmond Hill	105	40	35	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity room • Playground • Kitchen • Ravine
Brayfield Manor (HYI) Newmarket	81	70	35	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity room • Playground • Kitchen • Wooded area • Basketball
Mulock Village (HYI) Newmarket	104	80	45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity room • Playground • Kitchen • Wooded area • Basketball

Program delivery will be provided by a designated community agency

The Social Services Branch, in conjunction with Supplies and Services, will manage a request for proposal opportunity for community agencies with

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expertise in program delivery and mental health supports for vulnerable children and youth.

Programs will be based on the interests and needs of the children, youth and families in the identified social housing community. Data evaluation will be used to assess tangible outcomes for children, youth and families.

The programs will include a variety of engaging activities for children 7 – 12 years of age, youth 13 – 17 years of age.

These activities include the following:

Children (7 – 12 years of age)

- Homework Support
- Cooking/Nutrition Skills
- Active and Co-Operative Games
- Life skill development

Youth (13 – 17 years of age)

- Homework Support
- Healthy, Active Living and Life Skills
- Leadership opportunities/engagement in community programs
- Mental Health Supports
- Pre-employment skills

Family members will be encouraged to be involved in the programs. This involvement will increase awareness of the programs and services available in the broader York Region community.

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation will be a key part of the pilot. At the end of two years, an assessment as to whether and how to keep and/or expand the program will be made.

Link to key Council-approved plans

After-school programs in social housing sites contributes to the 2015 to 2019 Corporate Strategic Plan, supporting the strategic priority area of Supporting Community Health and Well-being, specifically contributing to the “Strengthening the Region’s network of human services to support people in achieving their potential”.

5. Financial Implications

This after-school program in social housing sites has a proposed budget of \$188,000 which will support program delivery costs including staffing, materials and equipment. This is included in the existing 2015 Community and Health Services budget. Given the significant increase of provincial 100 per cent funding for child care provided in the last two years by the province, it is possible to use Regional funds that had historically been directed towards subsidized child care, for this purpose.

At this time, there is no flexibility with current provincial funding to support this program. However, the provincial government is developing regulations under the Modernization of Child Care Legislation. This could result in a broadening of the requirements and definitions for use of funding for after-school programs. Any new information which could allow for the use of provincial funds in the future will be communicated if and when it occurs.

6. Local Municipal Impact

The needs of local communities continue to evolve across York Region. Increasing access to programs and services for children and youth is critical to support long term positive benefits and breaking the cycle of poverty. Through this initiative, children in Newmarket, Richmond Hill and Markham will benefit from the pilot.

7. Conclusion

The lack of after-school programs in some social housing sites have resulted in a variety of challenges and costs including increased youth loitering and police calls.

In addition to mitigating these issues, the proposed after-school programs in social housing pilot supports an integrated model of program delivery that engages and encourages children and youth in social housing sites to promote positive self-esteem, promote skill development. This contributes to a healthy lifestyle and promote leadership opportunities for youth. Focusing on engagement of children and youth, and supporting a model of prevention, will help lead to a stronger and more resilient families and communities.

After-School Programs in York Region Social Housing

For more information on this report, please contact Cordelia Abankwa, General Manager, Social Services at Extension 72150.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

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