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Town of Aurora
Memorandum
Community Services

Re: Recreation Needs Assessment for Persons with Disabilities – What We Heard

To: Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee

From: Lisa Warth, Manager, Recreation

Date: May 16, 2024

Recommendation

1. That the memorandum regarding Recreation Needs Assessment for Persons with Disabilities – What We Heard be received for information.

Background

Over the past several months, staff in Community Services have been working with consultants from J Consulting Group to develop a needs assessment as it relates to recreation participation for persons with disabilities. An extensive community engagement plan was developed to gather information from those living with disabilities, those that support individuals with disabilities, and community organizations that serve those with disabilities. Engagement activities included focus groups, interviews, online surveys and telephone surveys.

This memorandum provides a summary of what we heard through these community engagement activities.

Analysis

Who We Heard From:

- 144 disabled people
- 76 caregivers to persons with disabilities
- 25 parents of persons with disabilities
- 16 community organizations

- 17 members of Town staff and Council
- 10 members of Town Advisory Committees

What works well:

- There is strong support for the Recreation Needs Assessment for Persons with Disabilities
- Program participants find Town programs welcoming
- Inclusive and empowering programming is fundamental
- Quality of care and support leads to positive experiences
- Summer and Spring Break programs are highly valued

What are the challenges:

- Demand for programming with support is growing
- Many disabled people are not participating in recreation activities
- There are financial barriers to accessing recreation
- The built design in some facilities is not fully accessible
- Transportation is a barrier to accessing programming
- There is a lack of sufficient resources to offer inclusive programming
- There are limited programs for youth and adults
- Some caregivers and persons with disabilities may not be aware of what programs are offered by the Town

How can we improve?

- Increase representation among those with lived experience
- Increase options and variety of programming
- Provide more adaptive sport and fitness equipment options
- Increase one to one supports and lower ratio programs
- Reduce barriers to accessing programming
- Invest in staff training
- Improve awareness of the Town's programs
- Increase community engagement and collaboration

Based on the information gathered through the community engagement phase of the project, the following goals were developed:

Inclusive Programming and Empowerment – Ensure diversity of programming that is inclusive, adaptable to individual needs, and empowers participants.

Quality of Care and Support – Prioritize well trained staff and adequate resources to provide support, enhancing the overall experience for participants.

Accessible Spaces and Programs – Address financial, transportation, and accessibility barriers to full participation.

Representation and Engagement – Create volunteer and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, creating more active engagement and representation in all aspects of recreation.

Adaptive Equipment and Supports – Increase the availability of adaptive sport and fitness equipment and provide more support to ensure inclusivity and greater accessibility.

Communication and Awareness – Enhance communication and awareness of program offerings with diverse and accessible information distribution.

As this project progresses, actions and an implementation plan will be developed to support these goals. At that time, staff will present a final memorandum to the committee on this project.

Attachments

None.