



INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Chair and Members Emergency & Community Services Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	April 25, 2016
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Recreation Needs Assessment for Persons with Disabilities Progress Update (Year 3) (CS13043(a)) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Courtney Groves 905-546-2424 ext. 1758
SUBMITTED BY:	Jack Brown Director, Recreation Community and Emergency Services Department
SIGNATURE:	

Council Direction:

Not Applicable.

Information:

On November 12, 2012, the Emergency & Community Services Committee received the Recreation Needs Assessment for Persons with Disabilities Study (the Study) and related Action Plan (Report CS12013). An update was provided to Council one year after implementation of the Action Plan (Report CS13043).

The Study identified future needs for recreational programs and activities for persons with disabilities. The Study also recommended improvements for service delivery, ways to remove barriers to participation, provided a list of then current recreational opportunities for persons with disabilities in the City of Hamilton, and recommended the development of new programs.

Recommendations from the Study were organized into five key result areas. An action plan was developed to address and monitor the year one through year three recommendations (attached as Appendix A to Report CS13043(a)). The Study identified action items in the following key result areas:

- (a) Service Improvements
- (b) Partnership Development
- (c) Public Awareness and Marketing
- (d) Programs and Facilities
- (e) Performance Measures

The following information highlights the Recreation Division's response to key initiatives from the 53 action items identified.

Service Improvements

Service Improvement recommendations identified action items focused on strengthening staff skills, expertise and networking opportunities to engage persons with disabilities, while expanding the "Fit for Everyone" culture of the Recreation Division and provide greater inclusiveness and innovation.

The Recreation Division has implemented the Inclusive Training Plan, which was developed based on the priorities addressed in the Study to ensure recreation staff at all levels are equipped to accommodate persons with disabilities. Training is done on a sessional basis, with modules related to Introduction to Inclusion, Adapting Programming, Behaviour Management and Support Worker training.

Procedures for inclusion were developed including: Commitment to Safe Spaces (aimed at ensuring all recreation centres are barrier free and welcoming to all marginalized populations), Feeding Tube Procedures (for children/youth in camp programs) and Safe Lifts and Transfer Procedures (for patrons requiring assistance from a wheelchair). These procedures ensure a dignified process for accommodating people with disabilities while maintaining staff safety.

Partnership Development

Partnership Development recommendations focus on the expansion of the Recreation Division's work with existing partnerships, the development of new partnerships and building upon existing networks for persons with disabilities in the Hamilton community.

The Recreation Division continues to participate as an active committee member for Community Transition Network (CTN) and Mohawk Therapeutic Recreation Advisory Committee. New partnerships were developed with the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Hamilton (to offer adapted yoga on a weekly basis) and with the Ontario Wheelchair Sports Association to offer introductory wheelchair basketball lessons for the Hamilton community (also part of Pan Am Legacy program).

Public Awareness and Marketing

These recommendations identify effective methods to improve the Recreation Division's publications, by making them more accessible through incorporating inclusive thinking into marketing initiatives and communication plans.

The Recreation Division has added the international symbol of accessibility to the Recreation Guide publication. The symbol is accompanied by a statement which reinforces the City's commitment to the inclusion of persons with disabilities, and steps to take if accommodations are required. Programs designed specifically for persons with disabilities are highlighted on the Adapted Program page in the front section of the

Recreation guide. The “Inclusion Newsletter” was developed as a communication tool for persons with disabilities and is distributed each session to families and local service agencies.

In addition, the Recreation Division launched the “We’re Here” Campaign in 2015, through posters and the Recreation guide advertisement, communicating the commitment to creating safe spaces with inclusive access to recreation services and programs.

Programs and Facilities

Programs and Facilities recommendations suggest a renewed commitment for programs and capital projects that support accessible facilities and improvements to these facilities.

Subsequent to budget approval in 2015, the Recreation Division launched the support program in fall, winter, and spring sessions for persons with disabilities at recreation locations city wide. The program provides persons with disabilities with a trained staff to enable participation in public recreation programs (registered gym/club or aquatics). Support staff are provided at no additional cost to families and assist in better meeting individual needs through lower staff ratios.

In response to community feedback and identified need, new equipment was purchased to increase program accessibility, including an all-terrain wheelchair for outdoor programs, and adapted personal flotation devices (PFD’s) for aquatic programs. Further, the City’s first mechanical sit to stand lift was purchased and installed at Westmount Recreation Centre. Using the mechanical lift equipment, a support person is able to stand the participant with disability and pivot them from their wheelchair to the water wheelchair/or toilet.

In collaboration with Public Works, the Recreation Division secured a \$25,000 funding grant through Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) for 2016. The grant will help offset the purchase of two new adult change tables (that can be raised and lowered to height requirements) and four pool lifts/ramps to facilitate improved accessible aquatic facilities within the City.

Performance Measures

The Recreation Division, Program Development Unit, provides annual information updates to Recreation Management, Council, the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities, and relevant community stakeholders on the progress of action items related to the Needs Assessment and recreation services for persons with disabilities.

Summary

An extensive amount of work has been completed in response to the action items identified in the Needs Assessment for Persons with Disabilities Study. As of the end of 2015, work on all 54 recommendations has been initiated within the Recreation Division and now actively informs program, service, and facility needs. A comprehensive summary of the 2013-2015 recommendations and related progress is attached as Appendix A to Report CS13043(a).

Staff will begin to address Year 4/5 recommendations, with a focus on maintaining and evaluating current service levels, improving facility amenities, and increasing program spaces and partnerships.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix A to Report CS13043(a) - Needs Assessment for Persons with Disabilities
Action Plan