

## Background

The City of Greater Sudbury's Parks, Open Space and Leisure Master Plan Review (2014) includes a number of action items related to children and youth programming, including:

- Evaluate the delivery of leisure services on a regular basis, including consideration to new approaches that may improve service efficiency and cost effectiveness.
- Continue to undertake program planning in coordination with community partners and in response to local needs, with an emphasis on services that promote physical activity and social inclusion.
- Maintain and/or upgrade existing youth facilities to the degree possible, with priority placed on high-use facilities. Alternative options may need to be explored for underutilized and/or deteriorating facilities, in consultation with the affected community.

At the Finance & Administration Committee meeting of January 17, 2017, Council received a report titled Annual Grants Value for Money Review. The report provided results of the value for money audit conducted on organizations receiving annual community grants from the City of Greater Sudbury (City). Two of the organizations reviewed were youth centres (Rayside Balfour Youth Action Network and the Sudbury Action Centre for Youth). The report recommended that a review be conducted of youth centres for comparison and consistency of services across the community.

A report titled Population Health Community Priorities was presented at the City Council meeting of November 22, 2017. As per the report, Council endorsed ten community priorities including Play. One of the recommended actions for the City under the Play priority was to develop strategies to encourage active living, fun and play.

Children and youth direct programs offered through the Leisure Services Division have undergone only subtle changes since the creation of the City of Greater Sudbury in 2000. Since that time there has been a significant increase in the number and variety of other service providers of child and youth programming in Greater Sudbury.

The Leisure Services Division is responsible for direct program opportunities and programming including the following:

### Camp Sudaca

A municipal day camp for participants 5 to 14 years of age located on the east end of Lake Ramsey in Greater Sudbury. Campers enjoy swimming, canoeing, sailing, kayaking, nature crafts, mountain biking and other outdoor activities. Bus transportation is provided for participants. There are nine, one week sessions offered during the summer. In 2016 Camp Sudaca had approximately 650 participants.

### Camp Wassakwa

A municipal day camp for participants 5 to 13 years of age located on Bass Lake in the community of Whitefish. Campers enjoy activities such as canoeing, archery, sailing, crafts, kayaking, hiking and other outdoor activities. Bus transportation is provided for participants. There are eight, one week sessions offered during the summer. In 2016, there were 225 registrations at Camp Wassakwa.

### Neighborhood Summer Playground Program

Neighborhood Playgrounds offer convenient and affordable summer programs close to home for participants 5 to 12 years of age. Playground programs are offered each summer at approximately 30 locations throughout the City of Greater Sudbury. Programs are hosted at local community centres, field houses or schools. Field trips and special events add adventure to the program, bringing all playground participants together for city-wide celebrations. Participants enroll for the summer (July and August). English, French and Integrated programs are offered. In 2016 there were a total of 750 registrations in Neighbourhood Summer Playground Programs.

### Creative Arts Camps

This day camp provides campers opportunities to experience visual and performing art through arts, dance and drama. The program is offered for participants 6 to 14 years of age. Six, two week sessions are offered during the summer. The camp is held at a local high school or community centre. In 2016 there were a total of 75 registrations in Creative Arts Camps.

### Sports Sampler Camps

This camp teaches FUNdamental movement skills and FUNdamental sports skills along with the rules of the play and importance of playing for fun. Participants in this camp have access to a multi-sport facility and surrounding park. The program is intended for participants 6 to 14 years of age. Eight, one week sessions are offered during the summer. There were 75 registrations in Sports Sampler Camps in 2016.

### Leadership Camps

The City provides opportunities for individuals to further develop leadership abilities, start building skills for part-time jobs or for those who wish to experience camps in a new way through Leader-In-Training (LIT) or Counselor-in-Training (CIT) programs. These programs are for participants 14 to 16 years of age and are held as part of Camp Sudaca, Camp Wassakwa and Neighborhood Summer Playground programs. There were 50 registrations in CIT and LIT programs in 2016.

### Developmental Summer Programs

The City has recently partnered with Child and Community Resources to offer recreational summer programs for participants 8 to 18 years of age with multiple complex special needs.

### Youth Drop In Centres

Youth drop-in centres offer a variety of supervised activities for participants from pre-teen to 18 years of age. Centres offer a wide range of opportunities including sports, pastimes such as billiards and video games, movie nights, chat time and guest presentations on current issues. Internet access, homework assistance, peer mentoring and educational workshops are also offered. The sites connect youth with their local community, encouraging them to volunteer and make a difference in their neighborhood. Centres pride themselves on being smoke, drug and alcohol-free venues for young people to interact in a safe and nonjudgmental environment. Centres assist youth in developing positive friendships and growing up healthy. The City operates youth drop-in centres in Capreol, Dowling, Levack/Onaping, Ryan Heights,

Valley East and Walden. Drop in centres operate from September through June. There were approximately 7,500 visits at City operated youth drop-in centres in 2016-2017.

#### Courses, Classes and Lessons

There are a number of other recreation programs directly offered by the Leisure Services Division for children and youth on a program registration basis. These include:

- Swimming Lessons (Preschool 1 through Swimmer 9)
- Bronze Star, Bronze Medallion, Bronze Cross, NLS Certification, NLS Instructor courses
- Junior Lifeguard Club
- Ski and snowboard lessons
- Learn to Cycle program
- Mountain biking
- Tae Kwon Do courses
- Learn to Skate and Power Skating lessons
- Gymnastics programs
- Babysitting courses

## **Children & Youth Recreation Programming Review**

To assist with the evaluation of direct programming offered by the City as per the Parks, Open Space and Leisure Master Plan Review and to provide a review of youth centres as per Council direction, the City sought the services of a qualified supplier to conduct a review of direct programs offered for children and youth through a competitive process.

The successful proponent required sufficient and relevant expertise, experience and knowledge of municipal recreation programming and services for children and youth.

The successful proponent was expected to:

- Conduct a review of existing children and youth programming from a risk management and quality assurance perspective.
- Provide best practices related to children and youth programming.
- Conduct a market scan of other service providers in Greater Sudbury.

As part of the review, the successful proponent was expected to consider the following:

- Accessibility and affordability of programs.
- Maximizing use of existing Leisure facilities.
- Programs to address population health issues related to children and youth in the community (youth resiliency, for example).

The successful proponent, Leading Minds Inc., produced a detailed report reflective of the scope requested (Appendix A – Children & Youth Recreation Programming Review, attached).

## Key Findings

The Children & Youth Recreation Programming Review report provides various options for consideration within each of the programming categories outlined above.

Common themes throughout the document centre on:

- Equitable access to Play.
- City of Greater Sudbury as a Leisure Champion.
- Introduction of a Play charter.
- Use natural resources to encourage 4 season outdoor play.
- Evolution of programs and services towards unstructured, self directed play.

Specific attention was given to:

- Summer program portfolio suggesting alternatives to potentially stagnant programs/facilities.
- Youth centres – outlining which changes would encourage youth to participate.
- Affordable access to recreation – specific recommendations will be brought before Council under separate cover, but this initiative is very much a priority throughout this report.
- Creating resilience and confidence in children through the acceptance of higher risk play.
- Foundation of Population Health priorities within all programs.

The following is a summary of key findings and options for consideration as they relate to City of Greater Sudbury children and youth recreation programming.

### Play Equity

Play Equity is defined as the fundamental principle that all children and youth have equitable access to leisure programs and it should not be determined by where they live, physical or mental challenges, socioeconomic circumstance or their ability to pay. This theme provides the foundation of this report and has become internationally recognized through organizations such as IPA (International Play Association).

### Greater Sudbury Play Charter

Many Canadian communities have adopted Play Charters to assist in planning and policy decisions related to programs and facilities. The Children & Youth Recreation Programming Review report includes a recommended Play Charter for the City of Greater Sudbury:

Greater Sudbury is committed to promoting play, providing play opportunities, and educating all residents of Greater Sudbury on the importance of play to our community. Play looks like children of all abilities, alone or in groups, engaged, focused, solving problems, having fun. It can look physical, imaginary, creative, dramatic, social or energetic. Play sounds like laughter, conflict, imaginative stories. It can be boisterous or silent. Play feels like excitement and challenge. It can be scary, wondrous, doubtful, hesitant and thrilling.

We believe that:

- Play develops a core set of skills for healthy well-being.
- Play is a vital component of childhood; it is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated.

- Play is fun, uncertain, challenging and flexible.
- When children have opportunities to play they use creativity, innovation, and reflection to learn, experiment, solve problems, create new worlds, test boundaries, assess risk, and meet challenges.
- Play is a natural state for a child.

We will:

- Support play that encourages physical, emotional and social development.
- Understand and communicate that risk is a valuable component to play, and we will encourage, support and enable play that allows children to develop risk-taking skills.
- Create environments that children can control by providing flexibility in spaces and materials that promote inquiry and evoke curiosity.
- Embrace the natural environment and climate of Greater Sudbury and support children to play outdoors all year round.
- Educate and inform adults on the importance of play.
- Involve children in the decisions that affect their lives.

#### Recreation Program Specific Options

The report included several options for consideration as they relate to the direct programs offered by the Leisure Services Division, including:

- Overhauling the summer playground program to reflect the principles of the new play charter, offer new high-value activities, encourage self-directed learning and development, and promote creativity and free play.
- Designating summer playground staff as Play Ambassadors and provide training through such programs as PLAYLearnThink.
- Invite local providers to expand training programs for the City's staff on working with special populations.
- Continue to focus on offering affordable courses for beginners which provide fundamental skill development and consider expanding to include other sports or activities.
- Designate Camp Wassakwa as a Youth Leadership Camp and seek collaboration with community partners to design and deliver leadership programs.

#### Youth Drop In Centres

A review of youth centre support was included as per the previous direction of Council. The report includes the following recommendations related to youth centres:

- There were many benefits to the Rayside Balfour Youth Centre and Sudbury Action Centre for Youth operating models. Since they are driven by volunteer-based, non-profit community organizations it creates a heightened sense of ownership and commitment. An ability to access other revenue sources, are open all year round and offer extended operating hours.
- Redesign youth drop-in centre programs around civic engagement, leadership development and community development activities and engage youth directly in the process.
- Consider other City owned facilities as destinations for youth centres such as libraries, community halls located in arenas and playground facilities. As the City pursues the development of new community hubs, youth centres should be considered as a possible tenant.

- Design mobile pop up youth drop-in centres that can be setup and dismantled at various locations such as festival sites, parks and shopping mall parking lots to facilitate civic engagement.
- Review operating hours with a view of making youth drop-in centres more accessible during summer months and holidays.

#### Affordable Access to Recreation

The report provided a number of options for advancing the City's affordable access to recreation strategy. These options have been reviewed and incorporated under a separate report to Council. The following opportunities were noted:

- Build on the success of the skate exchange and bike exchange programs by developing a comprehensive equipment exchange program.
- Consider developing a Welcome Policy to give low income individuals and families access to leisure programs and services.

## **Summary**

As per the Parks, Open Space and Leisure Master Plan Review (2014), a review of the current direct children and youth programs offered by the City has been completed. The review includes support provided to youth centres and supports the City's efforts in the population health priority of Play as it identifies opportunities for active living, fun and play.

## **Next Steps**

Consideration will be given to the various program options contained within the report. As opportunities arise, through budget processes or program demand, these options will help to form the rationale for future decisions regarding leisure programs.

## **References**

Annual Grants Value for Money Review, Finance and Administration Committee  
(January 17, 2017)

<http://agendasonline.greatersudbury.ca/index.cfm?pg=agenda&action=navigator&id=1167&itemid=12444&lang=en>

Population Health – Community Priorities, City Council (November 22, 2017)

<http://agendasonline.greatersudbury.ca/index.cfm?pg=feed&action=file&agenda=report&itemid=30&id=1137>

Parks, Open Space & Leisure Master Plan Review (June, 2014)

<https://www.greatersudbury.ca/play/parks-and-playgrounds1/parks-open-space-and-leisure-master-plan-review-2014/>