



TOWN OF
HALTON HILLS
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MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Bonnette and Members of Council

FROM: Erin Cregan, Recreation Coordinator - Children

DATE: June 13, 2022

MEMO NO.: RP-2022-0008

SUBJECT: Summer Camp 2022 Update

PURPOSE OF THE MEMORANDUM:

The purpose of this Memorandum is to provide Council with an update on summer camp 2022 including staffing shortages, program registration levels and operational adjustments, recruitment strategies and future direction.

BACKGROUND:

In 2019, prior to the pandemic, the Town of Halton Hills operated 71 full day summer camps with a total of 2,257 full day program spaces. Over the 9-weeks of program, 1,906 participants registered in programs. For this level of programming, approximately 60 staff members were hired and complemented with volunteers. As is typical, approximately half of the team was made up of returning staff, with the balance new staff selected from a robust applicant pool.

Due to the pandemic, the Town of Halton Hills suspended all in-person summer camp programs in 2020 including the Youth Leadership Program. As a result, employment, leadership in training, and volunteer opportunities were terminated for the season.

In response to the pandemic restrictions and the requirements around limited interactions, a modified summer camp program was re-introduced 2021 offering a total of 1,054 spaces. Approximately half (504) of the spaces were for full day program and the balance (550) were for the new half day outdoor camps. A 98% registration fill rate was achieved. Youth Leadership Program was offered at reduced capacity. Overall staffing was reduced by 25% as compared to 2019, and due to pandemic restrictions, volunteers could not be involved in summer camp programs.

COMMENTS:

Staffing

For summer 2022, a more typical program was created, providing a total of 2,180 spaces. Inclusion support and programming for younger ages were increased based on trends from recent years. In total, a staff team of 65 was required. In addition to targeting staff from the previous summer, a comprehensive recruitment strategy was launched in January through the Town website and social media platforms, Halton District School and Catholic School Boards, and university/college job boards, but yielded less than half the usual applicant pool. A second recruitment effort was made in April with minimal results. Despite a return of 27 staff members from the previous summer, we were left with a 25% staff shortage. Staff continue to explore opportunities to maximize staff hours from other service areas.

Registration

Typically, peak summer camp registration occurs quickly following program launch. Since summer camp registration opened at the end of March, registration has been closely monitored, showing lower than anticipated numbers in some programs, particularly those for the younger age groups.

To address staffing shortages and lower than anticipated registration, a number of programs, primarily for the younger age groups, have now been combined or cancelled. In all cases, an alternative program has been offered to all registrants impacted by a cancellation. Inclusion support has been reduced by 1-2 spaces per week. The total number of spaces being offered in 2022 summer camps is 1526 (1296 full day & 230 half day), which is approximately 30% less than pre-pandemic levels. It is to be noted, that half day programs were not offered prior to the pandemic. Other efforts to minimize impact include a reduction in specialty camp options and a removal of extended hours.

Recruitment Strategies

Staffing has been identified as a critical focus area and the process has already begun to rebuild our staffing complement and applicant pool for future years. Volunteers are vital to the overall success of camp programs as many become future staff members. Volunteers will be part of the 2022 summer camp programs. The Youth Leadership Program will be offered again this summer with consideration to expanding this offering year-round as part of our leadership development efforts. The program introduces youth to employment opportunities within Halton Hills and provides them with opportunities to develop their skills and competencies. In 2022, the Town of Halton Hills, secured a grant through the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association providing one youth facing employment barriers with an employment opportunity. Staff were successful in recruiting a youth for this role. Staff are exploring unique ways to combine employment opportunities across service areas (e.g., aquatics, youth and camp staff) to provide employees a more fulsome employment opportunity.

Future Direction

As we exit the pandemic, staff will continue to assess the reasons for lower registration in some program areas, monitor community demographics, and thoroughly evaluate the summer camp program in order to determine an appropriate offering for 2023.

Operating budgets are being monitored to align base operating costs with projected registration and revenues to mitigate potential impacts to the base budget. This is a consistent trend across the industry and staff is working closely with municipal counterparts to address it and prepare for future years.

CONCLUSION:

In an effort to contain expenses while continuing to provide a high quality, much-needed service to the community, the 2022 summer camp program has been modified in response to a lower than anticipated registration and a reduction in suitable applicants for summer employment. Staff will continue to monitor registration levels and carry out further assessments to determine appropriate program service levels for 2023.

Reviewed and approved by,

Samantha Howard, Director of Recreation Services & Acting Commissioner of
Recreation and Parks

Chris Mills, Chief Administrative Officer