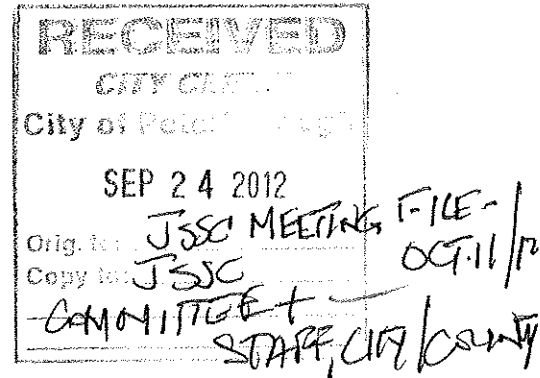


September 18, 2012

Members of the Joint Services Steering Committee
c/o City Hall
500 George Street North
Peterborough, ON K9H 3R9



To All Members of the Joint Services Steering Committee,

On June 27th, 2012 members of the Peterborough Partners for Wellness: Access to Recreation Working Groupⁱ met to discuss the proposed provincial budget cuts to the Ontario Works (OW) and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). We are very concerned about the proposed loss of recreational benefits of \$200 per OW or ODSP dependent child for each calendar year and would like to provide you with some grounded research to show the potential impact that could result from these cuts.

Based on 2012 projections, the total cost of the recreational benefit program for OW or ODSP dependent child is \$162,699. If this subsidy program is eliminated then there will be approximately 800 children in our community that will not be able to participate in recreational programming/activities. The City of Peterborough already offers a recreation subsidy program that was utilized by 382 children (that were not recipients of OW/ODSP) in 2011. The elimination of the recreational benefit for OW and ODSP dependent children will drastically increase demand on the City's Recreation Department subsidy program.

Additionally, there is no recreation subsidy program in the County of Peterborough which means that OW and ODSP dependent children living in the County will either go without recreation/sport activities or will apply to a third-program such as Jumpstart. Jumpstart is a recreation subsidy program that provides subsidies through corporate donation and fundraising. In 2011, 547 children living in Peterborough County and City received funding from the local volunteer-run Jumpstart chapter. The local Jumpstart volunteer coordinator stated that they do not have the man-power to raise additional funds to provide subsidies to the 800 children affected by the OW and ODSP discretionary benefit cuts.

There is a significant amount of research that demonstrates the short and long-term benefits that result from increased recreational opportunities for youth. We have collected a small snap shot of this research to highlight key messages below:

- Participation in recreational programming/activities has been shown to protect against the negative effects of poverty and is associated with lower rates of emotional and behavioural problems and school drop-outⁱⁱ.

- “Young people involved in recreation are less likely to turn to smoking, drug or alcohol abuse and crime.”ⁱⁱⁱ
- According to a report prepared for the Ontario Ministry of Health Promotion, “tax-payers are better off with improved access to recreation for low-income families. For each dollar spent on quality programs, more than a dollar’s worth of benefits are generated.”^{iv}
- In 2003, R. Singer reported that “for every dollar that is invested in physical activity, there is a long-term savings of \$11 in health care costs.”^v
- A 10% increase in the number of physically active Canadians has the potential to reduce direct health care expenditures by \$150 million a year.^{vi}
- An Ipsos Reid survey from January 2012 showed 70 per cent of all respondents across Canada say governments should provide more funding to build recreation centres and provide resources to make it easier for kids to build exercise into their lives.^{vii}

We recognize that the funding for the recreation benefit is in jeopardy due to Provincial cost cutting measures; however, based on the information presented above, we are concerned that these cuts are short sighted and down the road will have significant health and social impacts on children living in Peterborough County and City. Additionally, we feel that if cuts are made to the recreation benefit, children will either go without recreational opportunities or they will turn to existing subsidy programs that are already strained from the high demand in our region. We would like to recommend that the recreation benefit for OW and ODSP dependent children be continued. If full funding for this benefit is not feasible, we ask that you consider partial funding so that some of the most impoverished children can continue to have recreational opportunities that build skills, resilience and confidence.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our concerns. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Janet Dawson, Chair – Access to Recreation Working Group
Health Promoter
Peterborough County-City Health Unit

cc: Mayor, Doug Percy, Township of Asphodel-Norwood
Mayor, John Fallis, Township of Cavan Monaghan
Mayor, Janet Clarkson, Township of Galway-Cavendish & Harvey
Reeve, Dave Nelson, Township of Otonabee-South Monaghan
Ken Doherty, Director – City of Peterborough Community Services
Linda Mitchelson, Manager – City of Peterborough Social Services
John Kennedy, Clerk – City of Peterborough
Jeff Leal, MPP

ⁱ The Access to Recreation Working members include representation from Peterborough County-City Health Unit, Peterborough Regional Health Centre, YMCA of Central East Ontario, City of Peterborough Recreation Department, Trent Athletics and Heart and Stroke Foundation)

ⁱⁱ Canadian Parks and Recreation Association. (2007). Everybody Gets to Play: Ontario Supplement. Ottawa, ON: Author.

ⁱⁱⁱ Donnelly, P. & Coakley, J. (2002, December). The role of recreation in promoting social inclusion. Toronto, ON: Laidlaw Foundation.

^{iv} Totten, M. (2007, November). Access to Recreation for Low-Income Families in Ontario: The Health, Social and Economic Benefits of Increasing Access to Recreation for Low-Income Families. Toronto: ON: Ministry of Health Promotion.

^v Singer, R. (2003). The Impact of Poverty on the Health of Children and Youth. Toronto, ON: Campaign 2000.

^{vi} Gledhill, N., Katzmarzyk, P.T. & Shephard, R.J. (2000). The Economic Burden of Physical Inactivity in Canada. Canadian Medical Association Journal, 163(11): 1435-40.

^{vii} Ipsos Reid. (2011). Canadians' Perceptions of, and Support for, Potential Measures to Prevent and Reduce Childhood Obesity. Ottawa, ON: Public Health Agency of Canada.