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# The Corporation of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake Information Report to Council

**SUBJECT:** Youth and Family Programming – Survey Results  
**DATE:** 2023-12-05  
**REPORT #:** CAO-23-086  
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**DEPARTMENT:** CAO/Administration

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## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Aligned with the Vibrant & Complete Community Pillar outlined in Council's 2022-2027 Strategic Plan, the Town has prioritized the development of additional youth and family programs. This strategic focus reflects the Town's commitment to fostering a vibrant and complete community by enhancing residents' recreational experiences across various age groups.

In response to this commitment, the Town is currently conducting trials of new recreational programs designed for different age groups. The aim is to gather valuable feedback and insights that will help shape future programming efforts. The Town values resident input about these initiatives, recognizing the significance of community engagement in generating ideas for continuous improvement. As part of this effort, a recent community engagement campaign focused on youth and family programming was conducted, with the results detailed below.

### **Open House Details**

The Town held a Youth and Family Open House to gain feedback about programming. Approximately 75 residents participated in the Open House, and 35 children filled out a ballot for a chance to win a prize (pogo stick or bike).

The primary feedback received during the Open House was related to a desire for an indoor swimming pool and local lessons. Attendees also expressed that they enjoyed the open house layout and the ability to have their children freely play after school where the parents could connect.

### **Survey Details**

On September 27, 2023, Town Staff published two (2) surveys on Join the Conversation (JTC) for feedback about youth and family programming. These surveys were open until midnight on November 6, 2023.

**One-hundred fifty-nine (159)** respondents completed the Parents and Guardians survey, and

**fifty-nine (59)** respondents completed the Youth and Children survey.

Over the past two years, the average number of survey responses is 161 per project.

The surveys were advertised via a media release, on the Town's website and social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram), newspaper advertisements in the three local newspapers, and on the Town's digital information boards.

### **Survey Results**

Staff has reviewed and analyzed the survey data. A summary of the survey results and emerging themes can be found below. In alignment with best practices associated with survey analytics and to protect the anonymity of survey respondents, the raw written data of this survey will not be provided for public viewing. This best practice aligns with the *Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario*, whereby the agency advises reporting survey results as aggregated information without identifying specific individuals.

### **Survey Results Summary – Parents and Guardians Survey**

The survey gathered responses from 159 participants and covered various aspects of community engagement.

#### **Residency and Demographics:**

A significant majority (97.5%) of respondents were Niagara-on-the-Lake residents. The distribution across different communities within the Town was diverse, with Old Town having the highest representation.

#### **Age and Family Composition:**

The age distribution of respondents varied, with the majority falling within the 35 to 44-year range (45.9%).

Respondents mostly had two children (42.9%), with most children falling within the 4- to 7-year range (42.5%).

#### **Program Participation:**

A large number (66.4%) of respondents indicated that their children have participated in Town-run programs previously, with positive feedback provided on aquatics programs and summer camps.

Awareness of new programs like Try-It NOTL and Mini/Mighty/Major Movers was moderate, with constructive feedback on activity options and the need for more engagement.

#### **Preferences:**

Physical activity, consistent activities, and making new friends were rated as the most important aspects of youth programming.

Weekends and after school on weekdays were the preferred times for participation.

#### **Communication and Suggestions:**

Email and social media were the preferred communication channels for updates on youth and family programming.

Respondents expressed interest in a variety of programs, with strong preferences for

organized sports (68.0%), music (61.2%), and organized group classes (62.6%).

**Desired Improvements:**

Suggestions for improvement include the development of an indoor pool, increased opportunities for teenagers, and extended program availability during different times of the day.

**Survey Results Summary – Children and Youth Survey**

The Children and Youth Survey gathered insights from 59 participants, providing valuable feedback on community engagement, preferences, and desires.

**Demographics:**

98.2% of respondents live in Niagara-on-the-Lake, with most respondents living in Virgil.

**Age:**

Respondents predominantly fell within the 8-11 age group (56.1%).

**Program Participation:**

Nearly half of the respondents have participated in Town-run programming. The majority enjoyed the programs they participated in, with 88.5% expressing positive feedback.

**Desired Programs:**

Swimming remained a consistent theme in this survey, with respondents expressing a desire for year-round swimming opportunities. Interest in various sports, such as basketball, tennis, and volleyball, was demonstrated. Art programs were also reported as something sought after by respondents.

**Additional Comments:**

A general passion for swimming and a desire for more opportunities in this area was expressed.

**NEXT STEP / CONCLUSION**

**Survey Conclusion**

The Youth and Family Surveys highlight the community's enthusiastic participation in programs, specific activity preferences, and a consistent desire for an indoor pool.

The valuable insights received provide a roadmap for the Town to amplify and diversify youth and family programming, aligning with the community's desires and Council's Strategic Plan.

The call for increased programming availability for diverse age groups highlights a shared need within the community. The survey results offer excellent guidance for Council and Staff to evolve and expand program offerings, providing clear directions for the Town to cater to resident needs and preferences effectively.

**Next Steps**

Recreation Staff will continue to review and analyze the survey results of these surveys, as well as ongoing feedback received, and will develop new programming opportunities throughout 2024.

The Town understands the importance of providing inclusive programming that is accessible to all members of the community and is committed to providing high-quality programming that meets the needs and interests of its diverse community.

Staff will continue to reach out to the community for feedback about youth and family programming in the future. Furthermore, in 2024, Staff will be developing the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, a comprehensive blueprint for enhancing our community's recreational spaces. This plan aims to create a more inclusive and enjoyable environment for all residents. To ensure that the plan truly reflects the needs and desires of the community, the Town will be actively seeking input through additional surveys and public engagement processes. By collecting valuable data and insights from the community, the Town can make informed decisions and prioritize the projects that matter most to its residents. Together, we can shape our parks and recreation spaces into vibrant and welcoming hubs for all to enjoy.