

# Memorandum

Date: March 7, 2023

To: Members of Council

From: Kathleen Prochilo, Supervisor, Programs, Community Services

Subject: Inclusive Recreation Services Update

The Town of Caledon offers recreational-based programs designed to meet the needs of people with disabilities and their families. Town staff are trained to ensure that dignity, integration, and equal opportunities are embedded in all aspects of our services and programs. We strive to create an inclusive and accommodating environment with opportunities for people to connect and feel a sense of belonging and offer every person the opportunity to participate.

The purpose of this memo is to share with Council information about the current inclusive services and opportunities offered by the Community Services, Community Programs Team.

## **Support and Programming Options**

The Town offers both inclusive and adapted opportunities in all program areas, including aquatics, fitness, skating, camps and general interest.

### **Inclusive Opportunities**

Inclusive programs are for individuals who may require some additional assistance to participate in any recreational program alongside others. Upon request by a family, an inclusion staff will support the participant as they engage in program activities. All recreation programs are inclusive to individuals of all abilities.

Inclusive opportunities have been prevalent and highly successful in camp programs. In 2019, 5% of camp registrations were dedicated to integrated (inclusive) opportunities, representing 128 spots. In 2022, 3.5% of registrations were dedicated to integrated opportunities, representing 56 spots. This number is lower than previous years due to decrease in demand (comfort level following the pandemic) and staff availability. In 2023, 5.4% of registrations will be dedicated to integrated opportunities, representing approximately 135 spots.

### **Adapted Opportunities**

Adapted programs are for participants with disabilities who want to participate in a recreation program with others who have similar interests and abilities. These programs are modified to meet the needs of a specific group of participants. This could be through equipment, content and rules, structure, support, or environment. Inclusion staff support participants as they engage in program activities.

Examples of adapted programs include Fun Club, a program focused on socialization in the gymnasium and pool; Activity Time, a one-hour program that provides a variety of activities, including arts and crafts, physical activity, and group games; Adapted Swim Lessons, a one-to-one environment to provide basic water instructor and water

safety; and Drop In Adapted Swims, a shallow water swim designed for individuals with special needs and/or disabilities and their families.

### **Ensuring a Good Fit: Participant Profile**

Ensuring there is a good program fit is especially important in setting up participants for success. Prior to joining Town programs, families are asked to fill out a Participant Profile and take part in a short meeting to allow staff to meet the participant before starting. The information collected is only provided to the staff working directly with a participant to prepare and educate the staff for an overall positive experience.

### **Partnership Programs and Funding for Support**

Various partnerships support both adapted and inclusive programming opportunities in many ways, including financial assistance, specialized services, staffing resources, and expertise/training.

The Town has been working in partnership with Brampton Caledon Community Living (BCCL) to provide camp funding to Caledon families for a number of years. The funding covers the camp registration fees and the cost of an Inclusion Counselor for up to two weeks per summer per camper approved for funding through BCCL.

Other partnerships enable the Town to provide specialized programs that would not be possible without the expertise of the partner organization. For example, working with Brampton Caledon Community Living and Kerry's Place provides the opportunity to offer a specialized program for individuals with developmental delays in Town facilities.

Town staff continue to pursue and research opportunities to partner in expanding service delivery and the variety of inclusive and adapted programs. For instance, staff recently met with representatives from White Birch with the intention to work together to provide new adult programming options. Such partnerships will offer new programming options while assisting with the Town's challenges in recruiting qualified staff.

### **Snoezelen Room**

The Snoezelen room is a multi-sensory room located at the Caledon Centre for Recreation and Wellness and is used independently by the public, during the seasonal adapted programs and year-round camps.

The Snoezelen room is for everyone, there is no restriction in age or ability. The relaxed atmosphere is filled with pleasant surroundings, soothing sounds, and tactile experiences. Light effects and comfortable seating allow participants to self-regulate by choosing sensations. The Snoezelen room provides opportunities for interaction and engagement.

### **Specialty Programs Staff Team**

The Specialty Programs team, oversees Inclusive Recreation services, and includes two full-time staff, 15 casual part-time seasonal staff and 15 contract Summer Camp staff. In addition to dedicated staffing resources, inclusive opportunities and equal participation are embedded in all recreation roles, and all staff are responsible for ensuring integration and accessible programming and services.

The Town's dedicated staff are part of a team that champion a diverse lens for recreation services and support systems and enhances the customer experience through streamlined and knowledgeable service.

The Specialty Programs team facilitates over 100 opportunities annually for participants with disabilities, including intake process, placements, support, evaluation, third party financial administration and procedure development.

This position is also responsible for 2000 - 3000 camp registrants, nearly 100 staff, Learn to Skate programming, and all subsequent daily responsibilities.

Full time support for this area includes a Coordinator and Programmer. The Programmer position, approved through the 2022 Budget process, was critical in meeting current and future community needs associated with camps and inclusive services. The significant increase in the need for staff support has increased over the past five years and required a dedicated staff resource who is trained and focused on ensuring participants and staff have a safe and quality experience.

### **Inclusion Facilitator Position (Part-Time)**

An Inclusion Facilitator position is required to ensure quality of support required in the community. This position will provide support for participants with a disability, who need assistance integrating into recreation programs or participating in adapted programs. Recruitment for this position is anticipated to start mid-2023.

### **Training**

To ensure integration and equal opportunities are embedded in all aspects of our culture and programs, training topics pertaining to this area have been incorporated into all program areas (Aquatics, Arenas, Camps, Fitness, and General Programs staff teams, totaling over 200 casual staff).

Currently, all Arena and General Programs staff are given the opportunity to shadow a shift with the Inclusive Services team to increase exposure, experience and generate interest in inclusion services and support.

### **New for 2023**

Through participant and family feedback, new programs will be offered in 2023 to meet the demands and needs of individuals with special needs. New programming will include adapted dance, pickleball, soccer and general drop-in programs focused on fun social interaction.

### **Future of Inclusive Recreation Services**

Town staff are dedicated to continuing bridging services with community partners and providing opportunities for all individuals to participate in local recreation programs. They will continue to work closely with municipalities in the region and across Ontario to identify trends, develop training, increase program offerings, and advocate for inclusivity of all.

Training focused on Inclusive Recreation for all casual staff will continue throughout 2023 in an effort to build a staff team that champions a diverse lens when facilitating recreation programs. In addition, the future part-time Inclusion Facilitator position will include a job description that will assist with targeted recruitment and onboarding, and ensure expectations are established and met.