



STAFF REPORT INFORMATION ONLY

Swim to Survive Program Update

Date:	October 30, 2012
To:	Community Development and Recreation Committee
From:	Jim Hart, General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	P:\2012\Cluster A\PFR\CD17-111412-AFS#16267

SUMMARY

This report responds to a request from the Community Recreation and Development Committee to provide an overview of the *Swim to Survive* program provided in partnership by the City of Toronto, Parks Forestry and Recreation (PFR) Division, the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) and the Toronto District School Board (TDSB). This information was requested as part of City Council's decision during consideration of the report, "Toronto District School Board (TDSB) and City of Toronto (City) Agreement for City's Use of School Pools (2012 -2017)".

Financial Impact

There are no financial impacts resulting from the receipt of this report.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of May 8 and 9, 2012, City Council, while reviewing item CD12.1, "Toronto District School Board (TDSB) and City of Toronto (City) Agreement for City's Use of School Pools (2012-2017)," requested the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation to report to the Community Development and Recreation Committee on the status of the "Swim to Survive" program.

City Council Decision Document – CD12.1, Rec. #10:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2012.CD12.1>

BACKGROUND

Drowning in Ontario

The Canadian Drowning Report 2012 Edition prepared for the Lifesaving Society Canada by the Drowning Prevention Research Centre Canada, indicates that "of the 347 preventable water deaths in Canada, 97 (approximately 28%) happened in Ontario". The report also notes that of the groups at risk, the newcomer to Canada population is among those at highest risk due to the lack of water safety education and in-water experience in their countries of origin. The Lifesaving Society research shows that most drowning occurs close to safety. *"If every child in Canada could pass the Swim to Survive standard, it could reduce the number of drownings by half."* (Lifesaving Society)

What is Swim to Survive?

Swim to Survive is a program that delivers basic in-water skills to prevent drowning, Swim skills are not innate - they need to be taught and is a life skill that all children need to learn. The Lifesaving Society has defined the minimum skills needed to survive an unexpected fall into deep water in the following skill sequence:

- *ROLL* into deep water
- *TREAD* water (1 minute)
- *SWIM* 50 metres.

The *Swim to Survive* program includes three in-water skill introduction classes (45 to 60 minutes in length) which focus on the ROLL, TREAD, SWIM skill sequence. The program is best delivered through the school system where access to all children can be scheduled as part of the school program and no registration is required. A permission form is signed by the parent or guardian for children to participate. There are no fees for the program.

In addition to the in water program components, Teachers are encouraged to augment the program through in-class activities to support the following drowning prevention messages: *Always swim with a buddy*, *Check the ice (Don't break the ice)*, and *Wear a lifejacket (choose it and use it)*.

The *Swim to Survive Program* began in 2005 and is now delivered across Canada. Since its implementation 474,800 children have participated in the program through partnerships with schools and public pool owners.

COMMENTS

Funding

The Lifesaving Society, Ontario Branch is responsible for coordinating the delivery of *Swim to Survive* in schools in Ontario through a grant program. To do this funding is

received from a variety of sources including the Ontario Ministries of Education and Tourism, Culture and Sport, the Barbara Underhill's Stephanie Gaetz Keepsafe Foundation and from contributions of partners such as School Boards and Municipalities. This funding, however, is not guaranteed year after year.

The City and the Toronto school boards receive funding from the Lifesaving Society for expenses incurred for swim instructors, pool permit fees, and some transportation costs.

The Lifesaving Society requires school boards and pool owners to coordinate the logistics of pool time and transportation of students. The pool facility staff arranges the pool time and swim instructors; the school board arranges student transportation and communication with parents. The Lifesaving Society supplies instructor materials, teacher and parent materials and the certificate template.

Swim to Survive in Toronto

Parks, Forestry and Recreation works with both the TDSB and the TCDSB to deliver the program to grade 4 students in Toronto. All children in both the TDSB and the TCDSB who participate in *Swim to Survive* receive a certificate which includes information about the City's swimming instruction programs so that the child's parent or guardian is aware of how to register for additional swimming lessons.

Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB)

Since 2006 Toronto's Parks Forestry and Recreation Division and the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) have partnered to offer *Swim to Survive* to all grade 4 students within the Board.

As the TCDSB has only two school pools, city-owned pools are made available for use. The City is responsible for identifying available weekday pool times and hiring and scheduling swimming instructors to deliver the program. The TCDSB is responsible for scheduling, transportation and overall supervision of students. The greatest challenge is delivering the program to schools where city-owned pools are not located within a reasonable distance. In some cases, schools are not able to participate due to travel times/distances.

2011/2012 TCDSB delivery of *Swim to Survive*:

- # of grade 4 students in the Board: 5,596
- # of grade four students participating: 5,300 (95%)
- # of primary schools in TCDSB with Grade 4 classes: 169
- # of schools participating in *Swim to Survive*: 157
- # of pools utilized to teach *Swim to Survive* for TCDSB students: 17

Toronto District School Board (TDSB)

The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) currently owns and operates 65 indoor swimming pools for student use during the day and community programming after school. The TDSB employs its own swim staff to deliver swim programs to students at school board pools.

There are 16,746 grade 4 students in the TDSB (2011-2012). The City's partnership in delivering the program is limited to the provision of pool time in areas of the City where there are no TDSB pools as well as the provision of printing all student certificates and translation of parent information.

2011/2012 TDSB delivery of *Swim to Survive*:

- # of grade 4 students in the Board: 16,746
- # of grade 4 students participating in: 2,663(16%)
- # of schools in TDSB with grade 4 classes: 406
- # of schools participating in Swim to Survive: 42
- # of pools utilized to teach Swim to Survive for TDSB students: 18

Conclusion

The City of Toronto Parks Forestry and Recreation Division demonstrates leadership when teaching school children the essential minimum skills required to survive an unexpected fall into the water. *Swim to Survive* saves lives and introduces children to a life-long love of water as many students go on to take additional lessons and become competent swimmers as a result of participating in the program. Since 2005 over 27,000 grade four students have learned Swim to Survive skills through the City's partnership with the TDSB and the TCDSB. In many of the classes the majority of the students are entering water for their first time.

The Swim to Survive Program is an example of a mutually beneficial partnership between the City, school boards, the Lifesaving Society Canada and a variety of external funders.

CONTACT

Anne Jackson, Manager Aquatics, Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division, Tel: 416-395-6191, Email: ajackson@toronto.ca

SIGNATURE

Jim Hart
General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation