

Town summer camps now eligible for child care subsidy

By Brock Weir

Aurora families relying on child care subsidies will soon be able to enrol their kids in Town of Aurora summer camp programs. This new eligibility comes through a new agreement between the Town and the Region of York.

According to John Firman, Manager of Business Support for the Town of Aurora, York Region provides a Child Care Subsidy to low income families to help offset the costs of child care for kids up to the age of 12, but this subsidy has previously been ineligible for municipal summer camps.

Historically, the Town has not met the established criteria to be deemed a licensed child care provider by York Region and has therefore not been eligible to receive Child Care Subsidy payments, said Mr. Firman. This has meant Aurora families who are eligible for and rely upon Child Care Subsidies to enroll their children in summer camps have not been able to register in Town camps as the Town was not licensed to receive these funds. Staff have worked with York Region to resolve the licensing issue and have now been granted approval to enter into a Child Care Services Agreement, thereby making it possible for families in receipt of the Child Care Subsidy to enrol in Town camps.

Councillor Wendy Gaertner said she was thrilled a deal had been struck between the Region and the Town, but questioned why the Town was not previously able to come to terms with the Region on the Child Care Subsidy. She also clarified whether or not this would have an impact whether families can use the subsidies to enrol their kids in after school and weekend programs.

There are certain requirements to the regulations of the number of children, the types of programs, supervisory care for a child, [and] the day to day activities the child would be participating in, said Robin McDougall, Aurora's Director of Community Services. It comes around more to the child care provisions of looking after a child: what is in our facilities? What is available to that child, and the support staff that provide that opportunity.

It is an opportunity as it relates to the Region. The Region has a PLAY program, which is more generic about recreational play programs, that is more generic about recreational services. It doesn't define it as child care; this expands into the child care genre, the child care element of support for our family. It is very specific for those with low income. The Region will be the one to define who qualifies. The municipality is not part of that assessment.

For Councillor John Abel, it was a matter of accessibility and whether children with disabilities would also be eligible under the new criteria.

Similar to our other opportunities working with the Region, there is another opportunity for inclusion support for individuals that might need support, whether it is with physical disabilities or mental disabilities, they can come into our programs. We can work with the Region to support it in a different way. With childcare service, we certainly can accommodate the participants for that need, but certainly it isn't necessarily homed in on that opportunity. There is another method for us to support those individuals.