

## **COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE , JANUARY 20, 2003**

### **SUPPORT FOR THE NATIONAL CHILDREN'S INFRASTRUCTURE FUND**

#### **Recommendation**

The Commissioner of Community Services in consultation with the Programs Manager and Programs Supervisor recommends:

That the City of Vaughan declares its support for the creation of a National Children's Infrastructure Fund; and,

That a letter from the Mayor in support of the submission made by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to the Federal Government Standing Committee on Finance be sent to the MP for Vaughan, King, Aurora and the Premiers' office.

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to obtain Council support for the National Children's Infrastructure Fund.

#### **Background - Analysis and Options**

The National Children's Infrastructure Fund would in part, support the development and maintenance of non-exclusive community play and recreation spaces and family-oriented community centers, would fund pilot programs designed to engage the wider community in recreation development opportunities, place funding priority on distressed neighborhoods and communities and revitalizing urban cores and with an initial investment of \$300 million over 3 years, would make a significant difference in the lives of many children.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the National Children's Alliance and the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association agree that quality, safe and accessible recreation opportunities are of vital importance to Canada's children and youth.

The Federal Government's September 2002 Speech from the Throne made an unprecedented statement about the importance of healthy living, physical activity and sport to Canada's health care system in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The National Children's Agenda is a commitment by Canada's governments that Canadian children should have a good start in life.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 31, states that children have the right to engage in play and recreational activities.

The new Canadian sport policy, recently endorsed by all 14 Federal-Provincial/Territorial governments, states that "Today, sport (and recreation) are widely accepted as a powerful contributor to personal and social development." Children and youth often face barriers to participating in recreation. The most common barrier is cost, with today's higher fees for programs, sports group membership and admission to recreation centers. Other barriers include transportation, language and culture.

For the increasing number of Canadian children and youth living in poverty, the rate of participation in recreation and physical activity is much lower than for others.

15% of Canadian boys and 11% of girls aged 18 and under say they never have access to after school programs, sporting and recreational activities (Save the Children Canada, *A Canada Fit for Children*, July 2001)

Children and youth living in poverty face more hurdles to healthy development. Children and youth living in poverty deserve the same opportunity to develop to their full potential through safe, quality accessible recreation programs and services.

Creating a new social inclusion framework which provides the necessary funding to support accessible recreational indoor facilities, outdoor public spaces and organized recreational programs and services, would transform neighborhoods into communities, would help ease the pressure on families and would contribute to a healthier outcome for the individual, the family and therefore to the community as a whole.

### **Conclusion**

A resolution from Council would demonstrate the commitment the City of Vaughan has to giving children a good start in life and would support the need for accessible leisure opportunities for all children in the community.

### **Attachments**

None

### **Report prepared by:**

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Respectfully submitted,

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Commissioner of Community Services