

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE - FEBRUARY 19, 2008

RECREATIONAL SPORTS SAFETY AWARENESS INITIATIVE

Recommendation

Regional Council Mario Ferri and Councillor Sandra Yeung Racco recommend:

That the City of Vaughan support and endorse the educational and public awareness program as proposed by the Recreational Sports Safety Task Force, to promote safe recreational sports and activities.

Economic Impact

None.

Communications Plan

The taskforce has established a Media Sub-Committee comprising of representatives from York Regional Health Services, York Region Catholic and Public School Boards, York Region Police, City of Vaughan Fire and Rescue and concerned residents of Vaughan.

The purpose of this sub-committee is to execute a program promoting safe and healthy involvement in recreational sports and activities. It is the intent of the committee to launch an education and awareness campaign through various forms of public consultation, including conducting public forums, facilitating press conferences, creation and distribution of posters, production of video clips for presentation for television and radio consumption and any other initiative deemed necessary and appropriate.

Staff support is also sought from the Corporate Communication Department to assist in the enhancement and execution of this communication plan.

It is the intention of the taskforce to seek corporate business support and involvement from the public to financially assist in the execution of the Public Awareness Campaign.

Purpose

To increase public awareness and knowledge and take action to ensure the existence of proper safety practices and advocate for measures that will create safer environments by adopting injury prevention policies and strategies and by improving compliance with proper safety equipment usage. These objectives are aimed at reducing the number and extent of injuries and fatalities experienced by people engaged in recreational sports and activities.

Background - Analysis and Options

The Recreational Sports Safety Task Force was created in March, 2007 by Ward 4 Councillor, Sandra Yeung Racco and Regional Councillor Mario Ferri. Its mandate was to develop and execute an education program aimed at safety and injury prevention in recreational sports and activities such as tobogganing, skateboarding, skiing, snowboarding, etc. The committee is comprised of a coalition of concerned residents, York Region Health Services, Catholic and Public School Boards, Police Department, City of Vaughan Fire and Rescue and Dr. Charles Tator, a Neurosurgeon at Toronto General Hospital.

In the process of researching and documenting the status of injuries and fatalities resulting from recreational sports and activities, a variety of different sources were sought. Among those was

ThinkFirst Canada, founded by Dr. Charles Tator, Neurosurgeon at Toronto General Hospital. This organization offers a comprehensive elementary school-based program for students from Kindergarten to Grade 8. The program implements teaching strategies appropriate for meaningful learning, including family components. This is a series of home activities which reinforces the school-based lessons through family and community-based activities.

ThinkFirst, in its forthcoming book on catastrophic injuries in sports and recreation in Ontario, has documented the risks of tobogganing and has in fact categorized tobogganing as a very high risk activity. In terms of risk to the participant, tobogganing/sledding has been ranked #4 in the province behind diving, snowmobiling and parachuting, and ahead of known, and seemingly "risky" activities such as hockey, skiing and bicycling. It is noted that head, spinal, abdominal and facial injuries were the major types of catastrophic injuries that occurred.

Most injuries in the ThinkFirst study were deemed to be preventable by the health care professionals who reported the injuries. The risk factors identified including lack of adult supervision of younger children, sledding on non-designated hills or hills with obstacles and proximity to roads. ThinkFirst's study of other winter activities such as skiing and snowboarding indicates that helmet use reduces head injuries. Regulations requiring helmet use while sledding, or sledding only on designated hills, might impact more negatively on poorer families and individuals, and reduce participation, and so effort must be made to counteract this possibility.

To gain further support and information, the York Catholic District School Board and the York Region District School Board were approached by the taskforce and they both wholeheartedly endorsed this education and public awareness program and have provided the task force with letters of endorsement to this effect.

Safe Kids Canada - Municipal Issues in Child Injury Prevention - is a public policy body and advocates helmet safety. They have also endorsed and expressed support for this initiative. Their national focus has had considerable community involvement of over 2,100 injury prevention partners across Canada. Their mission, like ours, is to help prevent injuries to children, to increase public awareness and advocate for measures that create safer environments and practices. Safe Kids Canada works with government and industry. Safe Kids Canada does recommend helmet use for other wheeled activities, such as, skateboarding, in-line skating, scooters, etc. and with winter sports such as, skating, tobogganing, skiing and snowboarding.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2020

Enhance and Ensure Community Safety, Health and Wellness.

This report is consistent with the priorities previously set by Council.

Regional Implications

The impact of this initiative on the resources of the Regional Municipality of York is limited to the involvement and engagement of the York Region Health Services and Police Department. The benefits of this initiative may well be a reduction in injuries and fatalities resulting from recreational sports and activities.

Conclusion

A coalition of concerned residents, regional and municipal agencies, medical experts and like agencies, that make up the Recreational Sports Safety Task Force, have jointly concluded that there is value and a need to develop and implement a public awareness and education program to reduce injuries and fatalities resulting from recreational sports and activities.

The City of Vaughan is being requested to add its name to the list that support and endorse this initiative in order to assist in ensuring the successful implementation of Public Awareness Campaign in the City of Vaughan.

Attachments

1. Recreational Sports Safety Taskforce Terms of Reference
2. Members of the Task Force
3. Letters of Endorsement
4. "Where Is Your Helmet?" Flyer

Report prepared by:

Anita Micoli, Council Executive Assistant

Respectfully submitted,

Mario F. Ferri
Regional Councillor

Sandra Yeung Racco
Councillor, Ward 4

ATTACHMENT 1

RECREATIONAL SPORT SAFETY TASKFORCE (committed to the prevention of sports injuries)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

MANDATE:

The taskforce will undertake to research, produce and publicize reports, policies and by-laws for the purpose of preventing injuries sustained through participation in recreational sports, and advocate for their adoption and implementation.

In carrying out its mandate the taskforce will give due consideration, energy and resources to:

- undertaking the necessary research initiatives to document and produce data to support the initiatives of the taskforce
- establishing a community consultation program to engage and gather public input
- presenting to appropriate authorities the policies, by-laws and other initiatives developed by the taskforce, for approval and adoption
- establishing and implementing appropriate educational, promotional and advocacy plan in support of these initiatives
- designing and implementing a media strategy plan to support this initiative

MEMBERSHIP:

- the taskforce will be comprised of representatives from appropriate stakeholder groups to ensure inclusivity with taskforce members
- the taskforce will work in partnership with appropriate individuals, groups, agencies, organizations and institutions in support of these initiatives

STRUCTURE:

The taskforce will be co-chaired by Regional Councillor Mario Ferri and Ward 4 Councillor Sandra Yeung-Racco. Sub-committees may be established to undertake initiatives supportive to the overall goals of the taskforce.

ATTACHMENT 2

City of Vaughan

RECREATIONAL SPORTS SAFETY TASK FORCE COMMITTEE:

NAME	TITLE/ORGANIZATION
Adam Ford	York Regional Police
Andre Clifton	Fire & Recue Services, City of Vaughan
Angela Bortoluzzi	Executive Assistant to Reg. Councillor Ferri
Anna DeBartolo	School Board Trustee
Atul Kohli	Citizen Member
Aurelia Bertocchi	Citizen Member
Charles McCarthy	York Region District School Board
Cindy O'Keefe	York Region Health Services
Daniel Tiburcio	Safe Kids Canada
Dr. Charles Tator	Neurosurgeon, Toronto General Hospital
Dr. Raphael Awachie	Vaughan Safe City Committee
John Caruso	Fire & Recue Services, City of Vaughan
Loretta Bernard	York Region Health Services
Maria Alati	School Board Trustee
Mario Ferri	Regional Councillor
Mark Carniglia	Citizen Member
Michael Brooke	Citizen Member
Murray Loveless	York Region EMS
Rebecca Nesdale-Tucker	Safe Kids Canada
Reid Savein	The Cimaron Group/Citizen Member
Sahra Nalayeh	York Region Health Services
Sandra Yeung Racco	Ward 4, Councillor
Sandy Wells	ThinkFirst
Simon Lloyd	Vaughan Safe City Committee
Steven Xu	Citizen Member

ATTACHMENT 3



750 Dundas Street West, Suite 3-314, Toronto, Ontario M6J 3S3
☎ 416 915 6565 ☎ 416 603 7795

December 20, 2007

Councillor Sandra Yeung Racco
City of Vaughn
2141 Major Mackenzie Drive
Vaughan, Ontario L6A 1T1

Regional Councillor Mario Ferri
City of Vaughn
2141 Major Mackenzie Drive
Vaughan, Ontario L6A 1T1

Dear Councillors Racco and Ferri:

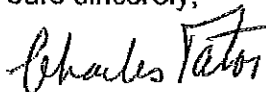
ThinkFirst is a national injury prevention foundation that concentrates on reducing the incidence of major head and spinal injuries. One of our major areas of interest is the prevention of catastrophic injuries in sports and recreation. Thus, the City of Vaughn's initiative to improve the safety of sports and recreation is of major interest to us, and we are highly supportive of your efforts. As you know I am a member of the Recreational Sport Safety Task Force of the City of Vaughn that you have initiated.

ThinkFirst strongly supports your efforts to develop an education and awareness campaign to improve the safety of tobogganing and sledding. It is our understanding that you will be starting a number of programs in schools and in the community, including media presentations, the development of a website, and a poster campaign. We applaud your efforts to educate the public about the importance of safety in activities such as tobogganing. We strongly support the recommendation that all tobogganers should wear helmets. Also, it is important to educate the public about the safe use of hills where tobogganing is performed.

With respect to tobogganing our organization has been pleased to provide you with recommendations for both the individual participants and for municipalities.

This letter brings our strong endorsement of your efforts.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Charles Tator
Founder and Past-President
ThinkFirst Foundation of Canada



Health Services Department
Public Health Branch

January 30, 2008

Councillor Sandra Yeung Racco and Regional Councillor Mario F. Ferri
City of Vaughan
2141 Major Mackenzie Drive
Vaughan, ON L6A 1T1

Re: Vaughan Recreational Sports Safety Taskforce

Dear Councillors Racco and Ferri:

Unintentional injuries are the leading cause of death and disability for people aged one to 44 years old. The prevention of injuries is an important health promotion mandate. Through our partnership with the City of Vaughan, we aim to raise Vaughan residents' awareness of injury prevention and the use of helmets for various sporting activities. All York Region residents deserve to live and play in a safe environment.

The Vaughan Recreational Sports Safety Taskforce (VRSST) is a coalition of community members, businesses and agencies interested in preventing recreational sports injuries. The initial focus of this group will be winter sports such as tobogganing, skiing, snowboarding and skating.

As a member of the VRSST, York Region Community and Health Services Department, Public Health Branch will assist the taskforce to plan, implement and deliver injury prevention education through existing municipal communication channels. The aim of the injury prevention education will be to enhance positive attitudes, knowledge and skills regarding helmet use, safe tobogganing and the prevention of other recreational sports injuries.

The York Region Community and Health Services Injury Prevention & Seniors Program looks forward to participating in the educational initiatives of the VRSST, utilizing best practices in health promotion and injury prevention.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Loretta Bernard".

Loretta Bernard
Manager, Injury Prevention and Seniors Program
York Region Community and Health Services Department



THE EDUCATION CENTRE

60 Wellington Street West
Box 40, Aurora, Ontario L4G 3H2
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Fax: 905.727.1931
Website: www.yrdsb.edu.on.ca

January 9, 2008

The City of Vaughan
Parks and Recreation Department

I am writing at the request of Councillor Sandra Racco to express the York Region District School Board's support for an educational campaign directed to all residents of the City of Vaughan concerning the use of protective helmets for cycling, roller-blading and other high risk sports.

Many staff, trustees, students and school community members throughout the York Region District School Board are very familiar with the dangers associated with high risk sports, which are popular among many age groups.

As part of a community-wide educational campaign by the City of Vaughan, Board schools would be pleased to facilitate the distribution of educational literature about helmet safety and head injury prevention.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Bill Hogarth'.

Bill Hogarth
Director of Education

January 2008

Vaughan Recreational Sports Safety Taskforce

What could be more traumatic than having your child suffer life altering injuries—including permanent brain damage, paralysis and even death—caused by seemingly fun winter activities such as tobogganing, snowboarding or skiing?

We all want to keep our children safe from injuries, and while many parents tend to shrug off recreational winter sports as something ‘every kid does’, several factors make winter activities such as tobogganing more dangerous than in previous generations: Faster sledding devices, changing weather patterns, increased ice, and limited areas where these types of sports can safely take place.

However, these injuries are easily preventable.

The *Vaughan Recreational Sports Safety Taskforce* (VRSST) is a coalition of concerned residents, businesses and agencies interested in preventing recreational sports injuries. In co-operation with the City of Vaughan and members of its council, we aim to promote injury prevention and helmet use for recreational sports, beginning with tobogganing.

The primary role of the Citizens’ subcommittee is to advise and brainstorm with the other members and agencies in VRSST; to provide feedback as necessary; and to promote further interest and support among fellow residents. The Citizens’ subcommittee has canvassed at two public events to date: the Rick Hanson Wheels in Motion Toronto event (June 2007) and the Thornhill Village Festival (September 2007). At each event, an overwhelming majority of attendees reacted positively to our message.

VRSST’s ultimate goal is to assist in creating injury prevention education programs that will target Vaughan residents in order to enhance positive attitudes, knowledge and skills regarding helmet use, safe tobogganing and the prevention of other recreational sports injuries.

As the Citizens’ subcommittee, we look forward to participating in the educational initiatives of the VRSST.

Regards,

Aurelia Bertocchi
Atul Kohli
Simon Lloyd
Steven Xu

ATTACHMENT 4

Where's Your Helmet?

Citizens Promoting Mandatory Use of Helmets
for Recreational Sports



**A helmet
might save
your child's
life and
prevent
serious brain
injury.**

Did You Know?
Cost for typical treatment of
snow-related injuries:

Hospital treatment	\$27,936
Outpatient services	\$15,243
Lost parental income	\$1,500
Lifelong care of a paralyzed patient	Up to \$8,000,000



**Wearing a
helmet
can reduce
the severity of
head injuries
by up to 53%.**

Contact: City of Vaughan - (905) 832-8585
Councillor Sandra Yeung Racco (ext. 8342) or
sandra.racco@vaughan.ca
Regional Councillor Mario Ferri (ext. 8350) or
mario.ferri@vaughan.ca



SUPPORT OUR GOAL OF MANDATORY HELMET USE