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Summer Camp 2025 & 2026 Information Report

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In accordance with the Procedure By-law, any member of Council may make a request to the Town Clerk that this Report be placed on an upcoming Committee of the Whole agenda for discussion.

Purpose

Summer Camp 2026 is fast approaching with registration opening February 18th for residents and March 18th for non-residents. The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an update on the success of the Town of Newmarket's 2025 Summer Camp season (highlighting registration statistics, parent/guardian feedback and staff testimonials) and provide some information about the upcoming season.

Background

For many years, The Town of Newmarket Camps has been known as leader and innovator within York Region. With a focus on belonging, quality, safety, vibrancy and growth, the Town of Newmarket Camps strives to create lasting memories through quality play.

We offer a variety of camp programming, and partner with local organizations to provide specialized camps to the community. Typically, 30+ camps are offered per week, for campers between the ages of 4 to 19 years old. Types of camps available include:

- **Sports** – Tennis, biking, swim, skateboarding/scootering, hockey, etc.
- **Specialty** – Dance, theatre, visual arts, crafts, cooking, etc.
- **General** – Outdoors, trips, etc.
- **Leadership** – Jr Firefighter, Jr Lifeguard, Counsellor in Training, etc.
- **Adapted** – Ohana, Endless Adventure & SENSE-ational Summer
- **Partnerships** – Computer programming, science, engineering, robotics, ultimate frisbee, karate, basketball, soccer, pickleball/badminton, medics, etc.

In preparation for each summer, well over 200 staff are hired in the following roles:

- Camp Coordinators & Behaviour Management Specialists
- Camp Director
- Senior Camp Counsellor
- Junior Camp Counsellor
- Junior & Senior Inclusion Facilitator

Discussion

While summer camps only operate in July and August, the rest of the year involves strategic planning, hiring, and training to ensure a safe, memorable, and fiscally responsible season.

Planning & New Programming

Given the size and scope of the Town's summer camp opportunities, it is a year round process. Immediately following each summer, all camps are evaluated and the planning and preparation process begins again for the following year. Based on feedback from staff, supervisors, parents/guardians, other departments and vendors, the following are highlights from Summer 2025:

- Continuing to partner with CYFS to offer Jr Firefighter.
- Launched Community Heroes camp, where we partnered with York Region Police, Central York Fire Services, York Region Paramedic Services and Ontario SPCA to introduce youth to the world of police, firefighters, paramedics and veterinarians.
- Partnered with new services providers to offer additional camp opportunities.
- Creating a new, affordable camp for children aged 8 – 12, called Camp Quest. This very popular camp received only positive feedback from parents.
- Doubling the number of Adapted Camps and introduced Endless Adventure for children 4 – 5 years old with disabilities and/or unique needs.

Registration

A few key details include:

- \$1.5 million in summer camp revenue
- 7929 camp registrations at an 87% fill rate
- 119 Adapted Camp registrations
- 190 campers were provided 1:1 support

Staff Hiring & Recruitment

To staff our camp services, 229 staff were hired. Our team consisted of 5 Camp Coordinators, 2 Behaviour Management Specialists, 38 Camp Directors, 84 Senior Camp Counsellors, 67 Junior Camp Counsellors and 33 Inclusion Facilitators. This was a 20% increase in staffing from the previous year.

The 2025 hiring process began in October 2024, as we reviewed almost 600 applications across all camp roles. Due to the increase in staffing, 70+ hours were spent interviewing potential candidates in January & February, and 76 hours were spent training all staff in May & June.

For the 2026 summer camp season, we anticipate the same level of staff and training.

At the conclusion of this summer, staff were asked to submit survey responses to get a better understanding of their experience as a Town of Newmarket employee. When asked what the most valuable thing they are taking away from this summer is, these were some of their responses.

“The most valuable thing that I am taking away from this summer is the friends that I made. I went into the job without knowing anyone which made work feel daunting. However, as the summer progressed, I made lots of new friends (both staff and campers) that helped me feel as though working at the summer camp, wasn't actually work, but instead a time that I actually enjoyed.”

- Ethan K. (Senior Camp Counsellor)

“I have really come to love mentoring other staff and volunteers over the years at camp. Watching my staff take on the challenge of being coaches to these Counsellors in Training (CITs) was amazing to watch! Watching these CIT's step up to the challenge! I truly feel like I was making a difference. Most CIT's had real growth they'll take with them outside that camp. I witness personal break throughs for my CITs when finding their camp voice; my staff when coaching and comforting CITs. I had a great summer! I also really appreciated all the opportunities I was given to help lead trainings and I'm very proud of CIT.”

- Justin P. (Camp Director)

“This summer was an incredible experience! I had the chance to meet so many new people and made a lot of new friends — a big part of that was working in my new position as a Float Director, which allowed me to connect with staff across different facilities. I also found myself feeling much more confident in trusting my own judgment, compared to previous summers. While I still had a lot of fun and gained valuable experience, that increased confidence helped me relax and not stress over every little detail. Overall, I had a fantastic time this summer!”

- Leah Z. (Float Adapted Director)

“The most valuable thing I am taking from this summer is the connection I built with so many campers. Getting to know them, watching them become more comfortable and see their personality shine throughout the week was such a fun experience. I loved that I could be there for the kids build a safe environment and help them have fun at summer camp. Overall watching the many connections I built with campers was very rewarding and something I look forward to hopefully do next summer as well.”

- Gabrielle D. (Junior Camp Counsellor)

“I learned a lot of new skills and was able to really find a deep passion for working with kids and teenagers with disabilities.”

- Sarah N. (Senior Inclusion Facilitator)

Parent/Guardian Testimonials

Each week, parents/guardians are asked to fill in a survey to provide Camp Coordinators with feedback regarding Newmarket Camps’ customer service, facilities, programming and staff. These responses are reviewed and addressed on a weekly basis. Here were a few comments that stood out this summer:

“Everyone was always so happy, welcoming and helpful at Hockey Camp! The staff were positive and engaging - I will sign up next year!”

– Parent from Hockey Camp

“The Inclusion Facilitators were very accommodating! I have two campers with disabilities and very different needs, and they both had a great time!”

– Parent from Camp OHANA (Adapted Camp)

“Skate & Scooter is such a great camp overall. My kids came home with an array of new skills and friends. They didn’t want to leave each day which says it all!”

– Parent from Skate & Scooter

“My son is pretty shy but came home every day super excited to tell us about all the activities he did at camp!”

– Parent from Minor Leaguers

“Such smart, caring, fun and responsible staff in Town of Newmarket Camps. Everything you could hope for!”

– Parent from Swimcycle

Future Plans

For upcoming summers, we are excited to focus on continuing to increase the quality of Town-run camp programming. This will include exploring new trip locations and special guests, while forming internal partnerships to provide unique programming at the Newmarket Public Library, Elman W. Campbell Museum and the Recreation Youth Centre.

Consultation

Not applicable.

Conclusion

The Town's summer camp programs play a vital role in strengthening our community. They provide parents with peace of mind knowing their children are engaged in safe enriching activities. Campers leave with a lasting impression of a summer filled with fun, friendship, and personal growth which they will carry with them for years to come. Camps also offer meaningful employment for youth, foster their personal growth help develop their sense of responsibility. These programs not only support families but also cultivate a sense of belonging and connection that benefits residents of all ages.

Council Priority Association

This report aligns with the following Council Priority: Diverse, Welcoming, and Inclusive Community

Human Resource Considerations

Not Applicable

Budget Impact

Not Applicable

Attachments

Not Applicable

Approval for Distribution

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Report Contact

For more information on this report, contact info@newmarket.ca.