



**REPORT TO:** Co-Chairs and Members of Public Health and Social Services Committee

**SUBJECT:** ProKids Program - Providing Recreational/Cultural Opportunities for Children/Youth 2009 Year End Report

---

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That this Committee recommend to Regional Council that this report be received for information.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 13,882 is the cumulative total of children/youth who participated in the recreational/ cultural activity of their choice since the program inception in January 2000.
- In 2009, 2,702 children/youth participated, representing an additional 688 (34% increase) over 2008, owing primarily to donations received, including the continued support of the Niagara Region Chairman's Charity Golf Tournament.
- More than 225 recreational/cultural service clubs have supported ProKids placement opportunities since the program's inception.
- In 2009 ProKids administration activities focused on business improvements to streamline the referral and renewal process and on communications to widen the awareness and recognition of ProKids as a means to improve accessibility.
- Consistent with the communication strategy, a series of media events to recognize outstanding agencies participating in ProKids in four municipalities will be held in May 2010.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications directly associated with this report.

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on ProKids program activities in 2009, including new communication materials, improved business practices and upcoming service provider recognition events. ProKids continues to represent a significant investment in children that contributes to Council's Business Plan Objective of "Community and Social Well-Being" and Children's Services' mission "To ensure access to a coordinated, diverse range of affordable, quality services and supports for young children and families residing in Niagara".

## **BACKGROUND**

ProKids was implemented in Niagara based on research that concluded that spending dollars to promote the involvement of children/youth in subsidized recreational/cultural opportunities is a sound investment with concrete returns for families and children/youth.

Given the on-going success of Niagara's ProKids model, Community Services staff in Children's Services, Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities (SAEO) service areas and staff in Regional Housing (NRH), in partnership with community recreational/cultural service providers, continue to provide a subsidized community-based program for children/youth in Niagara. Since the program's inception in January 2000, a total of 13,882 children/youth have participated in a recreational/cultural activity of their choice.

Funding of \$250,000 to support the program is made available through the SAEO budget as part of the community reinvestment strategies that resulted from the implementation of the Ontario Child Benefit. Community and individual donations are crucial to the program in order to provide access for additional children/youth to participate, ongoing awareness of ProKids, and a degree of financial stability are critical to maintaining the program.

## **REPORT**

The ProKids model is one that is being delivered in approximately 50 communities across Ontario. Documented research (health, crime prevention, sports/recreation and social service sectors) indicates that child/youth participation in the recreation/cultural activity of their choice promotes:

- development of skills and competencies;
- exposure to program leaders and positive adult role models;
- improved physical and emotional health outcomes;
- development of psychosocial skills;
- improved self-esteem, academic performance, peer and family relationships;
- acquisition of pro-social values and development of life skills such as leadership, decision making and problem solving;
- opportunities to have fun, be with, and make friends; and
- has proven to show a marked improvement in many areas of their development.

ProKids also supports the recommendations outlined in the poverty report "A Legacy of Poverty" through the promotion of appropriate and flexible recreation/cultural programming which addresses the border determinants of health for children/youth living in poverty and mitigation of the negative effects of low income on children and youth in Niagara.

Investment in ProKids as a component of a preventative health model continues to be a good investment which reaps positive returns for participants and their families. The success of the ProKids program continues to be based on extensive community collaboration since the program's inception in January 2000 (see Appendix I).

The following chart represents the number of children who have participated in ProKids since its inception:

Year	Number of Children Placed
2001	716
2002	812
2003	1,311
2004	1,260
2005	1,575
2006	1,797
2007	1,695
2008	2014
<b>2009</b>	<b>2702</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,882</b>

Niagara Region continues to refine and implement a service delivery model that utilizes the existing Children's Services infrastructure as well as partnerships represented by a number of recreational/cultural, private sector businesses and social service organizations. The following represents components of the ProKids program:

- ProKids supports equitable participation of all eligible children/youth from birth to 18 years of age in the recreational/cultural activity of their choice across all Municipalities within Niagara.
- In 2009, 2,702 children/youth participated, representing an additional 688 (34% increase) over 2008, once again owing to community and individual donations received. In particular, a \$50,000 donation from the Niagara Region Chair's Charity Golf Tournament directly supported increased opportunities for children and youth.
- The YMCA of Niagara continues to be the program placement coordinator as selected by community representatives from Niagara Community Foundation, Ministry of Culture, Recreation and Tourism and the Trillium Foundation.
- The YMCA of Niagara is working in collaboration and through partnerships with community and government agencies to seek out additional donations to expand the \$100 allocated per participant annually in order that eligible children/youth can participate in the recreation/cultural activity of their choice.
- In 2009, ProKids partnerships continued with the addition of 25 new service providers to complement the list of approximately 200 existing service organizations providing access to recreation /cultural activities of the child's choice.
- Eligibility through Children's Services has been expanded beyond families in receipt of social assistance, subsidized child care and tenants residing in social housing units directly operated by Niagara Regional Housing. It includes children residing in affordable housing cooperatives and rent geared to income residences as well as children/youth whose families annual income is less than \$40,000.
- Access to service has been redesigned to support direct referrals from service providers in instances where clients are renewing a previous year's service provision (membership renewals) or in cases where clients sign with a specific service provider and wish to access ProKids funding to support their placement within the service option of their choice.

- As part of ongoing efforts to strengthen the ProKids brand, a new brochure was developed in 2009. The brochure very simply details eligibility and access criteria (See Appendix II).

Priorities for ProKids services in 2010 will be focused on the following:

- **Maximizing both placements and available opportunities** for children and youth through streamlined business practices that allow service providers the opportunity to complete referrals on behalf of new applicants who have pre-selected their activity of choice and update service requests on behalf of existing clients who wish to renew their application for the activity of choice.
- **Broaden awareness of the ProKids program** through community development projects and expanding access points for families, particularly where they would already be receiving services such as social assistance, affordable housing, education and early years services.
- **Improved program access** through electronic registration and use of new communication materials and media through planned recognition events.

ProKids has planned a series of service recognition events to take place in Fort Erie, St. Catharines, Niagara Falls and Welland in May 2010. These events will be hosted by Niagara Region Community Services and the coordinating agency, the YMCA of Niagara, to recognize exemplary local agencies/service providers for their commitment and participation in ProKids. Involvement of Regional Councillors and local politicians to recognize the selected agencies in their municipality is an important component to the success of the media events. This approach is consistent with the ProKids priority to raise awareness of the program for families in their local communities and encourage broader participation of service agencies in the ProKids program.

Submitted by:

Approved by:

---

Brian Hutchings, Commissioner  
Community Services Department

---

Mike Trojan  
Chief Administrative Officer

*This report was prepared by Janice Horner, Manager and reviewed by Kathryn O'Hagan-Todd, Director, Children's Services*

Appendix I - Service Providers by Municipality 2000 - 2009

Appendix II - ProKids Brochure

## Service Providers by Municipality 2000 - 2009

### Fort Erie Service Providers

- Ballet Plus School of Dance
- Carroll's Bowling Lanes
- Crystal Ridge Skating Club
- Fort Erie Golf Club
- Fort Erie Karate Club
- Fort Erie Skating Club
- Greater Fort Erie Youth Soccer Association
- Martial Arts One
- Peacock School of Dance
- Rolston Music
- Still River Music
- Thunder Bay Baseball (POATBA)
- Won Son Tae Kwon Do

### Grimsby Service Providers

- Grimsby Amateur Baseball Association
- Grimsby Basketball Association
- Grimsby Town Youth Soccer
- Lakemount Sportsworld
- Niagara Academy of Performing Arts
- Town of Grimsby

### Lincoln Service Providers

- Expressions Dance Co.
- Jordan Skating Club
- Lincoln Leapers
- Lincoln Minor Hockey Association
- Lincoln T-Ball
- Nexus Martial Arts
- Wolverine Elite All-stars

### Niagara Falls Service Providers

- Academy of Dance Arts
- Audrey Watkins Highland Dance
- Bond School of Music
- Centre Stage Dance
- Fight Club of Canada
- Geoffrey Champman Modeling
- Greater Niagara Baseball Association
- Happy Feet Dance
- Harold's Martial Arts
- Imagination Dance and Fitness
- Kindermusic
- Laurie Ewerts Danceworks
- Lightning Gymnastics
- Murphy's Music
- Niagara Falls Boxing Club
- Niagara Falls Minor Hockey Association
- Niagara Falls Ringette Club
- Niagara Falls Summer Swim Lessons
- Niagara Falls Titans Soccer Club
- Niagara Falls United Soccer Club
- Niagara Girls Softball League
- Niagara Regional Street Hockey Assoc.
- Niagara Sportsplex
- Ontario Conservatory
- Peterson Community Workshop
- Private Music
- Quantum Niagara Gymnastics
- Recreational Minor Hockey Association
- Seido Kan Karate
- Stamford Presbyterian Church
- Stamford Skating Club
- Tigers Lair
- Wendy Milinkovich Modeling

### Niagara-on-the-Lake Service Providers

- Niagara Regional Native Centre
- Shaw Festival

### Pelham Service Providers

- Fonthill Music Academy
- Pelham Minor Baseball Association
- Pelham Panthers Basketball Assoc.
- Pelham Soccer Club
- Town of Pelham

### Port Colborne Service Providers

- Centennial Pool
- Dance Expressions
- Dayboll Jiu-Jitsu
- Fitness Dance Studio
- Music Depot
- Port Colborne Minor Baseball
- Port Colborne Minor Hockey
- Port Colborne Tennis Club
- Port Colborne Youth Basketball
- Sir John Colborne Youth Soccer League (SJCYSL)
- Whispering Pines Art Studio

### St. Catharines Service Providers

- Baby and Me
- Backstage Dance
- Ball Hockey International (BHI)
- Ball Hockey Niagara
- Ballet Etc.
- Ballroom and Latin Dance Company
- Bethany Church - Upwards Basketball
- Broadway Lights
- Brock Niagara Aquatics
- Brock University
- Burtnik Karate
- Camberwell Stables
- Canadian Red Cross
- Cedar Ridge
- City of St. Catharines
- Class Act Studios
- Club Roma Soccer
- Concord Soccer
- Creative Dance Plus
- CYO Basketball
- CYO Minor Hockey
- Dance Designs
- Dance FX
- Darlene Brodeur School of Dance
- Defensive Arts Training Centre
- Fairview Bowling Lanes
- Garden City Kiwanis Hockey Association
- Goodlife Fitness
- Grantham Optimist Baseball Association
- Gymnastics Energy
- Janet Ulloa Art
- Janice Luey Dance Company
- Jeongs Martial Arts
- John Lument School of Music
- Lisa's Yoga
- Marina's Sew Much Fun
- Martial Arts Centre
- Merritton Athletic Association (MAA)
- Merritton Figure Skating Club (MFSC)
- Music City Instruments
- Jeongs Martial Arts
- Niagara Conservatory of Music
- Ontario Conservatory of Music
- Park Swim School
- Port Weller Soccer
- Premier Fitness
- Progressions Dance
- Rison's United Studio of Music
- Seido Kan Karate
- Skate with Friends
- St. Catharines Boxing Club
- St. Catharines Female Hockey Association (SCFHA)
- St. Catharines Jets Soccer Association
- St. Catharines Ladies Softball League
- St. Catharines Minor Baseball Association (SCMBA)
- St. Catharines Minor Hockey School
- St. Catharines Minor Lacrosse Association (SCMLA)
- St. Catharines Recreational Skate
- St. Catharines Rowing Club
- St. Catharines Summer Hockey
- Thorn Wrestling Academy
- Walter Octane's Music
- Winter club of St. Catharines

### Thorold Service Providers

- Fascination Dance
- Fit Together
- Super Cheer Niagara
- Thorold Amateur Athletic Association
- Thorold Community Activities Group
- Thorold Legion Baseball
- Thorold Soccer Club

### **Winglet Service Providers**

- Winglet Minor Hockey Association

### **Welland Service Providers**

- |                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| • Aero Gymnastics                 | • Plymouth Park Soccer League          |
| • Ball Hockey International (BHI) | • Private Music                        |
| • Central Music                   | • Sparkles Dance Company               |
| • City of Welland                 | • Sparkles Baton                       |
| • Curves                          | • Welland Minor Baseball Association   |
| • Dance Place                     | • Welland Minor Basketball Association |
| • Horses Unlimited                | • Welland Minor Hockey Association     |
| • Jolie's Dance Company           | • Welland Soccer Club                  |
| • Kingsway Bowling                | • Welland Tennis Club                  |
| • Modern Vision Martial Arts      | • X-Fitness                            |
| • Ontario Conservatory of Music   |  |

### **West Lincoln Service Providers**


- West Lincoln Youth Soccer Club

### **All Province Providers**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| • Boys and Girls Club of Niagara                 | • Niagara Children's Art Gallery                      |
| • District School Board of Niagara (DSBN)        | • Niagara Elementary Instrumental Music (NEIM)        |
| • equipment                                      | • Niagara Regional Minor Football Association (NRMFA) |
| • Girl Guides of Canada                          | • Niagara Spears Football                             |
| • I CAN T.E.R.                                   | • Ontario Early Years Centres                         |
| • Mad Science                                    | • Scouts Canada                                       |
| • Nancy Gruhl Powerskating                       | • YMCA of Niagara                                     |
| • Niagara Catholic District School Board (NCDSB) |   |

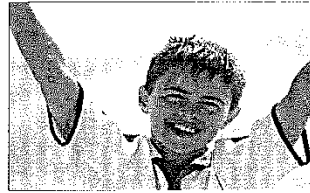
## What is ProKids?

Participation in sports and recreational activities promotes healthy child development and self-esteem.



ProKids provides opportunities for kids and youth from low income families to participate in a sports or other recreational activity of their choice. Delivered through a partnership between Niagara Region, the YMCA of Niagara, and more than 200 sports and cultural organizations, ProKids matches kids with activities available in their community.

ProKids is based on research that shows that participation in sports and recreational activities promotes healthy child development and self-esteem and is linked to increased academic and social performance.



# ProKids

providing recreation and cultural opportunities for children 6-18 years


For more information and to register, call 905 984-3750 or 905 945-2271 ext. 750 (Grimsbly only) or email [pro-kids@niagararegion.ca](mailto:pro-kids@niagararegion.ca)

Niagara Region  
 Building Community, Building Lives.



# ProKids

providing recreation and cultural opportunities for children 6-18 years



Because everyone deserves a chance to participate

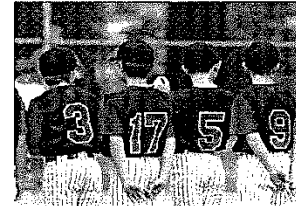
## Financial disadvantage shouldn't keep anyone from participating in sports or the arts.

**Who is eligible to join?**  
 Children and youth from 6 to 18 years from families with an annual taxable income below \$40,000 are eligible to participate.

**Is there a cost?**  
 ProKids will cover up to \$100 of the cost of the activity. In cases where the cost exceeds \$100, some sports and cultural organizations will waive the additional amount.

**How do I register my child?**  
 Parents need to take the following steps to register their child in a ProKids activity.

**Step 4 - Discuss options with ProKids Coordinator**  
 Once you've confirmed your child's eligibility and indicated the desired activity to Niagara Region Children's Services, the ProKids Coordinator will contact you. The Coordinator will work with you to enroll your child in the activity of their choice. If the activity is not available in your community, the Coordinator will discuss other options for you, including accessing the activity in another community or choosing an alternative activity.



**Step 5 - Enjoy watching your child participate!**  
 Actively support and encourage your child in their activity by attending their practices, games and performances.

**Note:** You will need to register your child each year.

**Step 1 - Discuss activity options with your child**  
 It's important that you take the time to discuss with your child what sport or activity he or she is interested in. Review the choices listed in this brochure, and knowing your child as you do, give them the best advice you can. Before registering your child, make sure you have decided on an activity.

**Step 2 - Determine if your child is eligible**  
 Determine if your child meets the program eligibility criteria by calling Niagara Region Children's Services at 905 964-3750 or 905 945-2271 ext. 750 (Grimsbly only).

**Step 3 - Indicate preferred activity**  
 Advise the Children's Services representative of your child's activity of choice. This information will be forwarded to the ProKids Coordinator.



ProKids partners with many sports and cultural organizations to offer the following activities:

Acting/Drama	Lacrosse
Arts and Crafts	Literacy Education
Badminton	Martial Arts
Baseball	Modeling
Basketball	MultiSport
Bowling	Music
Boxing	Parent & Tot program
Cricket	Racquetball
Cultural	Rowing
Curling	Rugby
Dancing/Cheerleading	Scouting/Guides
Fencing	Skateboarding
Fitness/Weight Training	Skating (ice/roller)
Football	Slimey
Golf	Soccer
Gymnastics	Special Needs Program
Hockey	Swimming
Horseback Riding	Tennis
Jump Rope	Volleyball
	Wrestling