

Staff Memorandum



To	Mayor A. Nuttall and Members of Council
Subject	Camp Access 2025
Date	October 29, 2025
From	K. Datema, Director of Recreation & Culture Services
Executive Member Approval	J. Schmidt, General Manager of Community and Corporate Services
CAO Approval	M. Prowse, Chief Administrative Officer

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide Members of Council with an update on the success of Camp Access 2025.

About the program

This year marked the pilot launch of the Camp Access Program, an initiative designed to support families experiencing financial, social and personal challenges by providing at risk youth with a safe, enriching and inclusive summer camp experience. The program welcomed a diverse range of participants – including children with disabilities, newcomers adjusting to life in Canada, and families navigating economic hardship – and quickly became a catalyst for opportunity, growth and joy.

Camp Access was delivered through a successful interdepartmental partnership with Barrie Transit, which played a key role in ensuring accessibility and transportation support for participating families.

Camp Access

Our goal is to engage at-risk youth in summer camps by removing barriers to participation. Supports include coverage of camp registration fees, transportation, nutritious food/snacks, and resources tailored to their needs—all designed to help campers participate fully and feel included.

We're committed to creating a space where every youth can grow, learn, and thrive in a safe, supportive environment.

Camper Selection

Parents, guardians, schools, and community organizations were invited to submit applications to support campers for this year's program. The application process followed a similar structure to our RecAccess model, ensuring consistency and accessibility.

Applicants were asked to provide:

- Proof of financial barriers
- Preferred weeks of camp
- A brief explanation of why attending camp was meaningful for the child

To be eligible, campers needed to be between the ages of 6 and 12, with all programming taking place at one location: Base Camp – Barrie Community Sports Complex.

This process helped us identify and support children who would benefit most from the camp experience, ensuring equitable access and meaningful participation.

Budget Considerations

Camp access was made possible through generous support; \$35,000 from the Council Strategic Priorities Account. This funding allowed us to remove financial barriers and provide meaningful camp experiences for children who may not otherwise have had the opportunity.

Program Impact & Statistics

Camp Access ran for six weeks this summer, delivering meaningful outcomes for participating families:

- 120 unique campers attended Base Camp at the Barrie Community Sports Complex
- Balanced participation across both Jr and Sr camp weeks
- 114 Camper lunches provided, with additional snacks offered as needed
- 99 campers utilized transportation through a partnership with Barrie Transit
- 206+ applications received, reflecting strong community interest
- 95% weekly attendance rate, indicating high engagement and satisfaction
- 1:1 supports was provided for 4 campers with specialized needs
- A noticeable increase in RecAccess applications (May – August) suggest growing awareness and demand for subsidized camp opportunities, driven by the success of Camp Access.

Testimonials:

Real Stories, Real Impact: Voices from Camp Access Families

The heart of Camp Access lies in the stories of the families it serves. From newcomers finding connection, to children with disabilities gaining confidence, and parents receiving much needed support – these testimonials reflect the transformative power of inclusive recreation. The program didn't just offer a week of camp; it offered a sense of belonging.

“My son really needs this camp experience. It will help him make new friends, improve his social skills and enjoy fun activities in a safe place. As a parent, I also need a little break during the summer to rest and focus on my responsibilities. This camp will benefit both of us”

“We came to Canada from Ukraine through the CUAET program, hoping to find a safety and stability for our children. This camp is not just about activities – it’s about joy, support and a sense of normalcy during a difficult time. It would help our children feel that even in hard moments, there are still bright and hopeful experiences.”

“I am a single mom and without these kids of assistances I’m not sure my son would get the chances to be a part of a “normal” summer activity all children should get to enjoy.”

“I would like to sincerely thank you for the wonderful experience my son had at the camp this past week. It was his very first time, and he truly enjoyed every activity and all that you offered. The staff were extremely respectful, kind and attentive, which made the experience even more special. As a mother, I deeply appreciate the time, effort and warmth you showed. Thank you again for making his first camp experience such a joyful one”

“It was lovely my kids enjoyed every minute of it. Thank you. They got to experience things that they never experienced before and they made new friends. They made memories that will last forever.”

“I would like to share how sincerely grateful our family is to have had this opportunity. We chose one of the first weeks for camp and they absolutely loved it! Thank you for making the application process so simple and easy to navigate”

Next Steps

Camp Access has proven to be a valuable program for our community. To continue this program in 2026, staff is suggesting that the \$35,000 originally funded from Council Strategic Priorities be funded from the unbudgeted increase in non-resident user fee revenue. This recommendation will form part of the 2026 Budget staff report.

When the Resident Priority Registration staff report came forward a motion was subsequently tabled that resulted in the non-resident user fees increasing from 15% to 25% (this was not part of the original staff report). Therefore, there is a 10% delta that will result in higher non-resident user fee revenue in 2026 that was not accounted for in the budget because the motion to increase came after budget was submitted. This amounts to an estimated \$35,000.

Conclusion

Camp Access is a vital resource for families in need. The program’s impact is evident in the personal growth of campers and the relief it provides to caregivers. Ongoing feedback and review will guide future improvements and ensure continued success.

Appendix:

Memo Author:

Jessica Wolfe-Gourlie, Bright Futures Barrie Program Lead, Recreation and Culture Services

File #:

Pending #:

Not Applicable