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Aquatics 2025 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

On April 10th 2026, the Town of Newmarket Aquatics team accepted the Burlington Cup Award from the Ontario Lifesaving Society for the 10th time since 2014. This report will provide Council with a clear overview of Aquatic division's 2025 achievements and 2026 priorities.

Background

The Aquatics team delivers year-round programming for residents of all ages and abilities, including learn to swim lessons; leadership certifications (Bronze courses that build toward National Lifeguard and Swim Instructor); adapted aquatics for swimmers with disabilities or unique needs; and a wide range of drop in opportunities (public, lane, and family swims). These services are delivered by a parttime workforce of more than 130 aquatic staff who receive ongoing training and mentorship.

Guiding our work are internal service pillars — culture, safety, growth, quality, and community — which frame how we build positive environments for staff and participants, uphold vigilance and preparedness, create leadership pathways, maintain high program standards, and foster inclusion through partnerships and outreach.

Discussion

Service Delivery & Community Impact

The Aquatic Division serves thousands of residents annually through engaging programming that meets the needs of our diverse users and fosters a healthy, active community.

2025 Program highlights:

- 97,185 drop-in program visits (lane, public, family swims)
- 7,937 swim lesson registrations with an average fill rate of 92%
- 1,551 advanced leadership course registrations

Signature accomplishments from 2025:

- Burlington Cup (Lifesaving Society): recognition for the largest municipal program in our population category, underscoring Newmarket's leadership in training and developing the next generation of instructors and lifeguards.
- Provincial pilot site for new Lifesaving Society programs, including the National Lifeguard re-examination pilot, allowing Newmarket to trial revised recertification processes, support consistency in guard competency, and directly influence future program standards across Ontario.
- Swim to Survive and Swim to Survive+: 533 Grade 3 and 7 students participated in 2025, with 811 students projected for 2026
- Multilingual Swim to Survive programs offered for the 4th consecutive year
- Strengthened program variety through interdivisional partnerships (Fitness, Seniors, Camps, Inclusion). Some highlights include the introduction of Sensory Swims, First Aid courses offered to seniors, leadership training offered through the Camp CIT program

Community partnerships strengthened this year include:

- Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA): gender-affirming clinic swims.
- Central York Fire Services: firefighter swim testing and training opportunities.
- York Regional Police Marine unit: training opportunities with specialized equipment
- Dwarfism Ontario: supported access for adapted swim programming.
- Local High schools: hosting Huron Heights, Sacred Heart, Newmarket High, Sir William Mulock high for swim team practices and required field trip swim testing
- Pickering College: custom swim lessons for JK–Grade 2 students.
- Local camps: NACCA, Rock & Chalk, York Child Development & Family Services, Royal City Soccer, Newmarket Skating Club.

These partnerships broaden access, strengthen community relationships, and expand the role of Aquatics as a community hub.

Client Testimonials

“Coach Kaitlyn was phenomenal! Our son had some reservations about swimming; however, by the end of the session, he felt so much more comfortable. His coach had

amazing patience and was very kind and encouraging.” – Parent from private swim lesson

“The deck supervisor at Ray Twinney was incredible. She went above and beyond to ensure my son felt comfortable in the pool and with his instructors. She didn’t hesitate to come over and assist any time she saw him having a hard time. She was kind, gentle and funny and he just adored her.” – Parent from a preschool lesson

“I am so happy to live in Newmarket because of the quality and availability of recreation services we have. Registration is easy and available, locations are close to home, and staff are great. Thank you.” – Leadership candidate

Community Safety and Risk Management

Safety remains the foundation of the Aquatics Division and continues to guide all program design, facility operations, and staff development. Over the past year, the team advanced several initiatives that strengthen vigilance, reduce risk, and ensure compliance with industry standards while fostering a culture of preparedness and professionalism.

Key achievements include:

1. 170 recorded incidents/first aid responses, ranging from minor scrapes to more complex first aid emergencies, all managed in accordance with established protocols.
2. Implementation of key safety improvements identified through the 2024 Lifesaving Society Comprehensive Audit, including enhanced guard rotations and upgraded equipment and storage systems
3. Continued legislative compliance and skill development through a revised annual training plan that reinforces rescue readiness, policy alignment, and consistent application of safety procedures across all facilities, for all positions
4. Active engagement in regional and provincial aquatic networks, including the York Region Aquatic Council, Lifesaving Society committees, and York Region Public Health ensuring Newmarket remains aligned with sector best practices and collaborates closely with neighboring municipalities.

Together, these initiatives demonstrate strong risk mitigation, proactive safety leadership, and a continued commitment to maintaining high quality, safe aquatic environments for all participants.

Financial Stewardship

The Aquatics Division continues to demonstrate strong financial stewardship through responsible budget management, efficient resource planning, and strategic reinvestments that support safe, high quality program delivery. Despite operating in a complex, multifacility environment with significant staffing and equipment requirements, the division has successfully balanced cost controls with program expansion and service innovation.

Financial indicators:

5. Drop in Program revenue: \$105,712.33, representing steady demand for lane swims, public swims, and specialized drop in offerings (does not include membership revenue).
6. Registered Program revenue: \$1,258,701.68, driven by high participation in learn to swim programs, advanced leadership certifications, and adapted aquatics.
7. Rental revenue: \$224,872.30, reflecting strong partnerships with local schools, community organizations, sports groups, and external agencies that utilize aquatic spaces for instruction, testing, and community events.

Budget-conscious initiatives:

8. Applied for, and received \$9,468.16 in grant funding to offer the Swim to Survive Program at no cost to local students
9. Conducting a comprehensive inventory audit across all aquatic facilities, resulting in more accurate tracking, improved organization, and better alignment of equipment purchases with operational needs.
10. Reducing duplication and unnecessary spending through life-cycle planning and strategic, targeted procurement, including leadership mannequins, tot dock replacements, and new teaching tools that directly support lesson quality and safety.
11. Improving storage systems and equipment management, which reduces loss and prolongs the lifespan of existing assets required to run high quality programs.
12. Leveraging partnerships and community collaborations to maximize facility use and offset operational costs through rental revenue.
13. Ensuring all program expansions, such as sensory swims, adapted aquatics enhancements, and Swim to Survive growth—were implemented within existing budgets by optimizing scheduling, staffing, and program design.

These efforts reflect a proactive approach to financial management, ensuring the Aquatics Division remains fiscally responsible while maintaining the highest possible standards of safety, service, and community impact.

Workforce Development & Staff Culture

With a large team staff working across multiple facilities year-round, continued investment in staff development, training, and workplace culture remains essential to sustaining high quality aquatic services. This year, the Aquatics Division strengthened its internal capacity by expanding leadership pathways, enhancing training systems, and creating a more connected and supportive environment for staff at all stages of their development.

Key highlights:

- 64 hours of training delivered, providing staff with timely and relevant skill development aligned with legislation, industry best practices, and identified training needs.

- A 43% increase in staff complement compared to the previous year as a result of increased programming (previously 77 staff)
- A 93% staff retention rate from Summer 2025 into Fall 2025, demonstrating strong staff satisfaction and the success of ongoing engagement efforts.
- Enhancement of the Instructor/Lifeguard pathway, including updated training and clear expectations for Assistant Instructor and Deck Attendants to support succession planning and reduce the risk of future staffing shortages.
- Launch of a comprehensive annual training plan, informed by staff feedback, provincial updates, and sector trends, ensuring consistent, progressive learning opportunities for both instructors and lifeguards.
- Renovation of the aquatic leadership room, creating a more functional and dedicated learning environment for leadership programs, recertification courses, and mentorship activities.
- Introduction of a Leadership & Swim Camp Coordinator role, strengthening summer operations by supporting high quality delivery of Swim Camp, Junior Lifeguard programs, and CIT development during peak demand.
- Implementation of cultural initiatives such as staff recognition, improved communication practices, social committee engagement, and ongoing check ins—all contributing to a positive, inclusive, and supportive work environment.

Together, these initiatives reinforce a strong culture of growth, recognition, and professionalism. They enhance staff satisfaction, strengthen retention, and support the consistent delivery of safe, high quality aquatic programs for the community.

Staff Testimonials

"I feel so privileged to have the opportunity to work as a Lifeguard and Swim Instructor for the Town of Newmarket. Teaching swim lessons has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. There is no better feeling than seeing someone achieve their goals in the pool. All of my co-workers and supervisors are exceptionally welcoming and foster a positive environment every shift. Through this role, I have learned so much about myself and the person I aspire to become. Working in aquatics allows for meaningful connections with co-workers, patrons, and the wider community. I wouldn't trade this job for the world".

– Caitlyn R. (Swim Instructor & Lifeguard)

"I have truly had an amazing experience over the past two years working as a lifeguard and swim instructor with the Town of Newmarket's Aquatics department. With ongoing support and training, I was encouraged from the start to explore different areas within Aquatics, which inspired me to become an Aquatics Leadership examiner and a Standard First Aid instructor/examiner. Throughout every step of the process, I received continual support and guidance from my colleagues, and I couldn't ask for a better team. These experiences have highlighted to me the town's commitment to high standards, professional development, and supporting the personal growth of every team member.

The Aquatics department has always been consistently welcoming and supportive!”
– Cathryn B. (Swim Instructor & Lifeguard)

Future Plans

Looking ahead, the Aquatics Division is committed to elevating community engagement in water safety and strengthening Newmarket’s role as a leader in drowning prevention education. Building on the Town’s longstanding commitment to safety, the Division plans to expand its presence during National Drowning Prevention Week (NDPW) with enhanced public education campaigns, interactive community events, and partnerships that bring residents of all ages into conversations about safe aquatic behaviours. These efforts will be complemented by expanded Lifeguard Day celebrations, recognizing the essential role aquatic staff play in community safety while providing opportunities for residents to learn directly from trained professionals through demonstrations, activities, and advocacy.

The Division also looks forward to expanding opportunities for residents to develop swimming as a fundamental life skill through the Swim to Survive program. As one of the largest municipal Swim to Survive programs in the province, Newmarket continues to demonstrate leadership, innovation, and a strong commitment to water safety by ensuring broad access to this critical program for children and families in the community.

Together, these initiatives reflect a proactive, community focused approach that elevates public awareness, strengthens education, and reinforces Newmarket’s commitment to building a safer, more informed aquatic culture for all residents.

Consultation

Not applicable

Conclusion

The Aquatics Division continues to deliver high quality, safe, and inclusive aquatic programs that align with Council priorities and support the wellbeing of the Newmarket community. Strengthened by strategic partnerships, a dedicated workforce, and clear long-term vision, the program remains well positioned to meet community needs and advance leadership within the provincial aquatics sector.

Council Priority Association

This report aligns with the following Council Priority: The achievements of the Aquatics Division directly support Council’s strategic priorities by advancing a more diverse, inclusive, and welcoming community through inclusive programming and expanded drowning prevention initiatives such as Swim to Survive. Through a strong focus on staff development, modernized systems, and efficient operational practices, the Aquatic team continues to ensure ensuring residents of all ages have access to safe, engaging, and high quality aquatic experiences that foster health, confidence, and connection.

Human Resource Considerations

Not applicable

Budget Impact

Not applicable

Attachments

Attachment 1 – None

Approval for Distribution

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Jeff Payne, Commissioner – Community Services

Report Contact

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