

**TOWN OF INGERSOLL  
PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT  
Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre  
Review of Age Requirement policy**

*Report No. R-087/08  
Approval Date: June 9, 2008*

**Mayor Holbrough and Members of Council:**

**Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to respond to community inquiries for the extension of our age requirement policy before 12 years of age and after 17 years of age. This report will look at our age limit policies and recommendations for Town Council.

**Background**

On March 26, 2008 at the Showcase Youth Ingersoll event, a question was raised by a parent whether her daughter who has an intellectual disability will be able to attend the Fusion Youth Centre after her 19<sup>th</sup> birthday even though she will still be in school at IDCI until she is 21 as Section 118 of the Education Act allows. Others at this event also asked about current policies regarding the age requirements of 12 to participate in our facility and its programs.

It was tasked for the Fusion Manager to research this question as well as allowing youth under the age of 12 and up with a recommendation for Town Council.

Our current age requirement policy states the following:

1. The Youth Centre will work collaboratively with Program Staff at the Victoria Park Community Centre to offer integrated, transition programming for youth ages 10 and 11 years of age.
2. The Youth Centre drop-in programs and all other activities will be available to youth 12 – 17 years of age inclusively.
3. The Youth Centre may offer special events programming to include ages under or over the drop-in program limit. In such cases, advertising will specify the ages for which the program will include.
4. Programs will be offered for youth 18 years old and older to continue involvement as trained volunteers and/or peer mentors.

A few websites were viewed to find evidence, suggestions, ideas or other models, as well as looking at any legal issues that may arise.

Websites included the Thames Valley District School Board, The Ontario Association for Community Living, Inclusive Education Ontario, The Ontarians with a Disability Act and the Ontario Human Rights Code as well as other provincial government websites for reference.

In summary, it appears that the education sector and other government agencies and community organizations (including social services and recreation) are making opportunities available for special needs students / youth to succeed. This means making allowances where appropriate and as needed. A student / youth who has been identified as 'exceptional' may stay in secondary school until their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. The legal age for a regular student is 18 years.

Websites reviewed for background purposes.

<http://www.inclusive-education.ca/>

<http://www.communitylivingontario.ca/schools/schools.html>

<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en>

<http://www.tvdsb.on.ca/>

<http://www.odacommittee.net/#ODA#ODA>

## **Report**

A variety of research shows and phone calls to principals at elementary schools, social workers and recreational leaders lean towards not lowering the age below 12. This is in terms of maturity, levels of personal growth and development, age appropriate peers, and not to compete with current programs offered at VPCC to the under 12 ages but rather work in partnership to integrate them into our programs as they become age ready for our programs and facility as our current policy states. The exception may be if programs and services are developed and focused on that specific age group that would operate outside our regular Youth Centre hours (i.e. 8 to 11 type programs – summer camps and LITs etc). With the research done in this area it is recommended that the current policy of being 12 years old to access our facility is something that in the best interest of the Fusion Youth Centre and our participants should stay enforced.

For the last year we have been operating with a maximum age limit of 18 (on their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday) and made this change when the Thames Valley District School board changed their maximum age for students. Our current policy states that our age limit will be from 12-17 and we are asking that Council formally approve for us to change our policy to 18 (on their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday). Offering our programs to the age 19 has worked successfully over the past year and would like to have our policy reflect the age change.

In terms of extending the age from 19 to 21 with youth with intellectual disabilities, it is recommended that this be done on an individual basis in coordination with youth centre Program Manager, parents and school. That a plan be developed with appropriate support (similar to a school EA) as needed. This will allow for the school and the youth centre to work in partnership for the success of the youth. This individual approach would look at setting up a process which is inclusive and would allow youth with an intellectual disability to succeed in our youth centre while allowing other participants to be part of a wraparound approach. It would also be established in this process whether a youth with a disability needs one-on-one support while in our facility and if so outside supports would need to be established for this kind of care. At the current time Fusion Youth Centre does not have the staffing support available to support individuals who need one-on-one care.

Youth that are 19 years or older not facing a disability are encouraged to take part in training to become a volunteer as per the volunteer management plan. This allows those youth who wish not to loose a connection with our programs are able to volunteer and be part of a volunteer leadership component in our programs and throughout our facility.

If the FYATC is working in partnership with the schools and other community agencies and organizations, then it would be appropriate for us to move forward with the same procedure or guidelines. This would be demonstrating the willingness for a seamless transition from school to community and a wraparound approach of youth with disabilities and would be consistent with youth centre values, vision and guiding principles.

### **Recommendation**

**THAT** Town Council keeps the Fusion Youth Centre's current policy for our age requirement to a minimum of 12 years of age and secondly extend our current policy for the youth maximum age limit from 17 to their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday to become a member. Furthermore that Town Council would adapt a policy that would allow Management to approve and develop a plan on an individual basis for youth over the age of 18 that are faced with a disability to gain access to our facility.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonnie Ward, Director  
Parks and Recreation Department