
Subject: Books and Pajamas Event to Support Niagara Children and Youth

Report to: Public Health and Social Services Committee

Report date: Tuesday, February 19, 2019

Recommendations

That this report **BE RECEIVED** for information.

Key Facts

- The most recent Niagara Book Distribution event, held the week of November 7 to 9, 2018, saw the distribution of over 100,000 new, free books for infants and children up to 12 years of age.
- Since the first Niagara Book Distribution event in November 2016, there have been over 500,000 new, unused books, appropriate for different age groups, distributed to children across the region, with a total value of approximately \$5 million.
- The most recent event included the second annual “Pajama Party”, a social event that aims to collect donations of new warm pajamas and a book for children in need.
- Local community agencies across Niagara, gifted the new books and pajamas to 476 children and 40 young parents this past holiday season.
- The next “Pajama Party” will occur the first week of November 2019, again coinciding with the bi-annual Niagara Book Distribution event.

Financial Considerations

There are no financial implications associated with this report. Since the first Book Distribution event in 2016, 500,000 new donated books have been provided to children across the region, with a total value of \$5 million. Books and pajamas provided to families associated with this initiative, in 2018, were provided to families in need, free of charge.

Analysis

In November 2015, Niagara Region Children’s Services became a member of First Book Canada, a registered Canadian charity that acts as a clearinghouse for large-scale book donations from more than 90 publishing companies.

Since 2016, Niagara Region Children’s Services has been collaborating with First Book Canada to increase local membership from agencies in the region by hosting Book Distribution events. Due to the success of the first event in November 2016, where in excess of 40,000 new books were distributed, Niagara is now one of a number of

Canadian communities hosting regular book distribution events, with a further commitment from First Book Canada to host two events each year in Niagara.

The most recent Niagara Book Distribution event, held the week of November 7 to 9, 2018, saw the distribution of over 100,000 new books. Since the first Niagara Book Distribution event in November 2016, there have been over 500,000 new, unused books, appropriate for different age groups, from infants to children 12 years of age distributed to children across Niagara. The total value of this investment is approximately \$5 million.

This year's event included the second annual "Pajama Party" on November 8. The "Pajama Party" was a revival of a successful program which was created based on the vision that every child deserves a warm, safe place to sleep with their own pajamas and their own book. Given the goal of the Book Distribution events to support Niagara families and their children in creating home libraries, the pajama program seemed a natural fit.

Nearly 100 people attended the Pajama Party event, donating a total of 175 pairs of new pajamas. Generous support was also provided by local businesses such as the Seaway Mall, who provided the event venue and promotional support, Ye Olde Squire Restaurant who catered the event, and Rockway Vineyard who donated wine for free wine tastings. Students from Trillium College Massage Therapy and Niagara College Esthetics programs donated their time providing mini spa services for attendees and local vendors donated door prizes.

In addition to the pajamas collected at the event, donations of books and pajamas were received from Niagara Region staff, White Oaks Resort & Spa staff, St. David's Anglican Church members and the Niagara Chapter of Retired Women's Teachers. As well, for the second year, staff and students from A.K. Wigg Elementary School in Pelham, chose to collect books and pajamas for children in need as their community cause for the month of November, and, alone, donated approximately 200 pajamas and books.

Local community agencies across Niagara, gifted the new books and pajamas to 476 children and 40 young parents this past holiday season.

The next "Pajama Party" will occur the first week of November 2019, again coinciding with the biannual Niagara Book Distribution event, aimed to provide an additional 100,000 books to community agencies to share with Niagara's children and youth.

Alternatives Reviewed

This report is initiated by staff to provide Council with information related to a service enhancement.

Children's Services is investigating grant opportunities and seeking community partners to launch a local "book club" for children in receipt of fee subsidy, such that families could regularly receive a free, age appropriate book to create their own home library.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

The provision of accessible and quality early learning programs and services supports Council's focus on economic prosperity.

Other Pertinent Reports

COM 06-2018 Books and Pajamas Event to Support Niagara Children and Youth
COM 09-2017 First Book Canada Book Bank

Prepared by:

Karen Schmidt
Funding and Data Administration
Coordinator
Community Services

Recommended by:

Adrienne Jugley, BA, MSW, RSW, CHE
Commissioner, Community Services

Submitted by:

Ron Tripp, P.Eng.
Acting Chief Administrative Officer

This report was reviewed by Darlene Edgar, Director, Children's Services

Appendices

None