



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

SUBJECT: Government of Canada's New Horizons for Seniors Program
Community Participation and Leadership Funding
Grant Application for Computers for Seniors Program

RECOMMENDATION

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Government of Canada's, New Horizons for Seniors Program, Community Participation and Leadership Funding provides grant funding of up to \$25,000 for projects that encourage seniors to contribute to their communities by sharing their skills, wisdom and experience and helping to reduce isolation. These projects are initiated and led by seniors and benefit the communities where they live.
- In 2004, the Canadian Seniors Partnership made up of representatives from all levels of government and volunteer organizations initiated a pilot program in Brockville, Ontario which came to be known as Computers for Seniors (CFS).
- CFS program is designed to enhance seniors' access to government information/services, reduce isolation and re-connect them with their communities. This is done by the acquisition of free government surplus computers and software which is then coupled with internet services and local support and training through other seniors, volunteers and youth.
- The program enables seniors to interact electronically through e-mail and the internet and by so doing provides them with the means to share their considerable knowledge and life experience with others right from their homes.
- CFS is a program that can be run in any municipality by partnering and bringing together local resources, service clubs and groups. In Niagara, this partnership has taken place and a local committee has been established to apply for and pilot a program in Niagara Falls similar to that in Brockville. The local Niagara Falls committee has submitted an application to Human Resources and Social Development Canada for program funding and is now awaiting funding approval.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications directly associated with this report.

PURPOSE

This report has been prepared to provide Committee and Council with information regarding the CFS program and Niagara's efforts to receive approval to pilot this program in the City of Niagara Falls.

BACKGROUND

CFS is a program for seniors who do not have computers or who have very outdated computers and need new ones. The program provides:

- A free computer for a senior for their home with basic software;
- Training on how to use the computer, including basic computer skills, how to send and receive e-mail and internet use; and
- User support.

This helps seniors to:

- Develop and improve social participation, active living and life skills;
- Develop research and community skills;
- Meet other seniors in class;
- Become part of a peer support group;
- Meet and learn from youth in the community;
- Be able to communicate with family wherever they are in the world;
- Be able to access government, health and other information websites; and
- Join the local board and help run the program;
- Supports aging at home.

It helps the community by bringing:

- Community organizations together for a common goal;
- Youth and seniors together where high school students help seniors with training while acquiring their volunteer hours needed to graduate;
- Seniors together to plan and run activities in their community;

Partnerships are critical to the success of the program:

- Industry Canada will supply the computers and software;
- Human Resources and Social Development Canada will provide funding;
- Niagara Catholic District School Board will provide the training facilities and students/instructors for the training (e.g. students earn community hours required to graduate by providing training or computer set up for the seniors).
- Service clubs/organizations will provide the volunteer resources (e.g. application intake/review, user support, peer tutoring, program promotion/feedback, transportation for training, etc.);
- Regional/municipal staff will provide the resources required to complete the initial business case/application, ongoing administrative support, meeting rooms, preparation of instruction manual, etc.

The Brockville pilot has been highly successful to date and transitioned from the roll-out to maintenance phase in February 2007. Like Niagara Falls, there will be many municipalities across Ontario applying for program funding this year.

REPORT

It was in March of this year that Regional staff first learned about the CFS program. Regional Councillor Norm Puttick had met David LeSeuer, project lead for the City of Brockville pilot program, and brought back information for Regional staff to review and to determine community support for Niagara. On April 21, Regional staff held a lunch and learn in Council Chambers inviting local service clubs, organizations and community partners from the St. Catharines-Thorold and Niagara Falls area to determine support in these larger municipalities. Sensing overall support, it was decided that one municipality in Niagara, the City of Niagara Falls, be chosen as the pilot for the first year and then expand the program to other municipalities in upcoming years.

On May 26, a second meeting was held at the Coronation 50 Plus Recreation Centre in Niagara Falls inviting the local service clubs, groups and community partners from that municipality. Present at that meeting were representatives from the British Canadian Veterans Association, Alzheimer Society, Canadian Federation of University Women, Royal Canadian Legion Branches 51 and 479, Coronation 50 Plus Recreation Centre, Niagara Catholic District School Board as well as Regional Niagara staff from Corporate and Community Services. These representatives agreed to form the local committee required to pilot this program in Niagara Falls if there was support from their memberships/ organizations.

After receiving unanimous support, a third meeting was held on June 2 to review the grant application and to identify a service club to take the lead in completing and submitting the application. The British Canadian Veterans Association agreed to be the lead and to work with Regional staff and other members of the local committee to submit the application prior to the June 13 deadline. The local committee will continue to meet to discuss logistics of the Niagara Falls program pending funding approval.

Submitted by:

Approved by:

Brian Hutchings
Commissioner, Community Services

Mike Trojan
Chief Administration Officer

This report was prepared by Judy Sobchak, Facility and Administrative Coordinator, Operational Support Services and reviewed by Cathy Cousins, Director, Operational Support Services.