

## TOPIC: Aquatic Staff Shortages

### Trend / Issue

Shortages of qualified aquatic deck staff are continuous issues for many Operators of supervised swimming. Recently, the shortage has caused some communities to delay opening of facilities, alter hours of operation or reduce the size of their aquatic program because they cannot find qualified staff, resulting in a reduction of services and the opportunity to learn a skill that will last a lifetime.

### Background

Aquatic staffing shortages have been issues for aquatic professionals for at least 30 years. In the past there have been a number of initiatives to try to attract teens and adults to lifeguarding. Parks and Recreation Ontario (PRO) cosponsored a poster campaign in 2000 called, Guard Life: Lifeguard. The Lifesaving Society and the Red Cross have also done similar campaigns.

The issue has become even more pressing because of change in the education system whereby students attend high school for four years instead of five. The result is a one-year tender for most students as an Aquatic employee. As a result many families do not see the return on investment for their child to become a lifeguard. To become a certified lifeguard in the province it can cost approximately \$1000.00. With schoolwork and one year of employability as a legal lifeguard and the return on investment are limited.

At the 2003 PRO Aquatic Conference, members identified that addressing the Aquatic Staff Shortage issues is the top for PRO to address for the Aquatic Special Interest Area.

The Aquatic SIA has developed a marketing plan completed to the funding phase. The committee asked for reconfirmation of this issue at the 2004 Aquatic Conference, and will be surveying input regarding the plan in spring 2005.

### Links

Partners on this issue include, The Lifesaving Society Ontario Branch, Red Cross Ontario Zone, Sears I Can Swim, and The Ministry of Health.

### Impact / Implications

PRO, in partnership with the Lifesaving Society and Red Cross need to engage aquatic professional and possible marketing expertise in the development of a marketing plan that can be flexible and dynamic to use across the province. This project will require the human and financial resources to provide communication and administrative support.

The plan will be published on the Public Affairs Web site for further input.

### Possible Sector Position

Aquatic staff shortages are impacting the service delivery and swimming opportunities to Ontarians. PRO and partner agencies support the development of a marketing campaign focusing on the benefits of Aquatic Employment, targeted at parents of youth and youth themselves.

### Contact

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