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Youth are real winners with sport program

BY CHRIS TRABER
Staff Writer

For those who relish the sight of a politician sweating under pressure and being brought to his knees, a dust-up at the John Fitzpatrick Steelworkers Housing Cooperative in Richmond Hill was a three-for-one free-for-all.

Ontario Health Promotion Minister Jim Watson, Thornhill MPP Mario Racco and York Regional Chairperson and CEO Bill Fisch were no worse for wear after a friendly, albeit, rough and tumble outdoor game of handball against enthusiastic youngsters who will benefit from a new \$150,000 physical activities project launched by the trio Thursday.

The 18-month program, funded by the province and the region, offers free sport, recreation and physical activity programs for 600 York Region children from low income homes at six social housing communities across the region.

The on-site program includes summer sports clubs, after school and family wellness activities and clinics where participants can sample everything from karate to hip hop dancing.

Supported by \$90,000 from the Ministry's Communities in Action Fund and \$60,000 from the York Region Community Development Investment Fund, the project will benefit more than 400 families, Mr. Fisch said.

"This project successfully



STAFF PHOTO/CHRIS TRABER

York Region chairperson Bill Fisch (left) gets ready to play handball with children at John Fitzpatrick Steelworkers Housing Cooperative in Richmond Hill Thursday.

eliminates barriers such as fees and transportation and gives children, youth and families an opportunity to participate in sport and recreation programming," he said. "By working together, the province, York Region and the community are providing physical activities and wellness programs to those who would not otherwise have an opportunity to participate."

The provincial program has committed \$3.2 million to 158 local organizations in Ontario this

year, Mr. Watson said.

"This project is an excellent example of programs that build and enhance Ontarians' opportunities to lead healthy and active lives," the Minister said.

The six sites, two each in Newmarket, Aurora and Richmond Hill, were selected on a needs assessment, available indoor and outdoor programming space and the community leadership necessary to deliver the project.

The YMCA of Greater Toronto will manage the project.

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