

# Equivalency Review of the Canadian Red Cross Assistant Lifeguard and Lifeguard Training Programs

Report to the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care  
from the Lifesaving Society

March 22, 2010



**LIFESAVING SOCIETY**

*The Lifeguarding Experts*

## INTRODUCTION

The Lifesaving Society was asked by Mr. Tony Amalfa, Manager, Environmental Health of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to conduct an equivalency review of the Canadian Red Cross Assistant Lifeguard and pool Lifeguard programs (Appendix 1).

The Society was asked to compare the Red Cross programs with existing Lifesaving Society programs and the National Lifeguard Service and, where appropriate, identify issues of variance that may be of concern. The ministry provided Red Cross program materials to the Lifesaving Society (Appendix 2).

In preparing this report, the Society followed a three-step review process involving:

- Lifeguarding experts
- Municipal lifeguard employers
- NLS Advisory Committee

## CONCLUSION

Based on input from lifeguarding experts, Ontario's largest municipalities, and the NLS Advisory Committee, it is the conclusion of the Lifesaving Society that:

1. The Canadian Red Cross lifeguard programs are not equivalent to the National Lifeguard Service.
2. Significant variances exist in four major areas:
  - The Red Cross program certifies lifeguards at 15 years of age. The position of the International Life Saving Federation (135 member nations) and the Lifesaving Society Canada is that a minimum of 16 years of age is required before training and certification as a lifeguard. Supporting research indicates 16 years to be a minimum age to learn and assume these lifesaving responsibilities.
  - The Red Cross program lacks the situational-approach training necessary to develop judgment in lifeguards. Judgment is developed by allowing lifeguards to make choices in simulated rescue situations. Judgment is essential in a real emergency.
  - The Red Cross program skill and fitness items limit the lifeguard's ability and do not provide the essential skills for effective preventative lifeguarding, and rescue response.
  - The Red Cross program lacks the required depth of knowledge compared to NLS.
3. Ontario municipalities support a single lifeguard standard and strongly endorse NLS as that single lifeguard standard.

4. The NLS Advisory Committee unanimously supports a single lifeguard stand and the member agencies, with the exception of Red Cross, endorse NLS as that single standard.

## PROCESS

The Lifesaving Society's review process focused on gathering input from each of the three groups who have expertise in the subject area and who have a stake in the future of lifeguarding in Ontario: lifeguarding experts, municipal lifeguard employers, NLS Advisory Committee.

### 1. Review by the Expert Team

The Lifesaving Society convened a team of 17 lifeguarding experts (Appendix 3) on January 27, 2010 to review the Canadian Red Cross Society materials supplied by the Ministry of Health. These individuals were highly qualified lifeguard Instructors and Trainers from across Ontario selected for their knowledge of the NLS program and lifeguarding.

Based on their work, a detailed report was completed comparing the Canadian Red Cross Society assistant lifeguard program with the Lifesaving Society's prerequisites to NLS (Bronze Medallion, Bronze Cross, Standard First Aid); and comparing the Red Cross lifeguard program to the National Lifeguard Service program (Appendix 4 and Appendix 5).

### 2. Review by Municipal Lifeguard Employers

Employers need to be consulted before any consideration of change in Regulation. The Lifesaving Society invited representatives of Ontario's 14 largest municipalities to examine the Expert Team's findings and conclusions. These municipal lifeguard employers train 50% of Ontario's lifeguards and represent over 50% of the Ontario population.

The Society retained Mr. Robbie Giles to design the agenda (Appendix 6) and facilitate group participation and decision-making during the meeting on February 24, 2010. Participants were:

City of Toronto	Anne Jackson, Michael McGee
City of Ottawa	Julie Auchterlonie, Philippe Lemire, Christine Wagg
City of Mississauga	Melissa Rydahl
City of Hamilton	Jeff Martin
City of Brampton	Juniata Bueschleb, Marek Holke
City of London	Lynn Loubert
Town of Markham	Janice Carroll
City of Vaughan	Adam Mobbs
City of Windsor	Carrie-Belle Stollarchuk

City of Kitchener	Jennie Miller
Town of Oakville	Justin Cordivani
City of Burlington	Lynn Galioto
City of Oshawa	Jan McDonnell
Brock University	Margie Lizzotti
Lifesaving Society	Perry Smith, Michael Shane, Doug Ferguson
NLS Chair	Peter Mumford
Observers	Davi Grossi (Alberta), Carolyn Tyner (Ontario), Mike Maguire (Nova Scotia), Doug Trentowsky (New Brunswick), Shelby Rushton (Saskatchewan), Danny Brosseau (Quebec), Wendy Schultenkamper (British Columbia), Paul McCue (Ministry of Health)
Facilitator	Robbie Giles
Recorder	Ed Bean

Participants reviewed:

- the findings and conclusions of the expert team.
- the current single lifeguard standard versus multiple lifeguard standards.
- NLS as the single standard.

A summary report was prepared (Appendix 7). The meeting addressed the following motions:

- MOTION # 1: That the Ontario Lifeguard Employer Meeting supports the findings of the Equivalency Review.  
Moved by City Brampton / Seconded by Town of Markham  
Yea – 14      Nay – 0      Carried Unanimously
- MOTION # 2: That the Ontario Lifeguard Employer Meeting supports the conclusions of the Equivalency Review.  
Moved by Brock University / Seconded by City of Windsor  
Yea – 14      Nay – 0      Carried Unanimously
- MOTION # 3: That the Ontario Lifeguard Employer Meeting supports a single lifeguard standard for Canada.  
Moved by Brock University / Seconded by Town of Markham  
Yea – 14      Nay – 0      Carried Unanimously

MOTION # 4: That the Ontario Lifeguard Employer Meeting supports NLS as that single lifeguard standard.

Moved by Brock University / Seconded by City of Vaughan  
Yea – 14      Nay – 0      Carried Unanimously

### 3. Review by the NLS Advisory Committee

Since it assumed responsibility for the NLS program, it has been Lifesaving Society practice to convene the NLS Advisory Committee to deal with revisions to the program and other issues. The role of the NLS Advisory Committee is to:

- Advise the Lifesaving Society by providing input and recommendations on the prerequisites and content (performance requirements, performance criteria) of the National Lifeguard Program.
- Support and promote NLS as the single national standard for lifeguarding in Canada.
- Provide advice to governments on issues related to lifeguarding standards.

Agencies that endorse a single lifeguard standard need to be consulted before any consideration of change in Regulation.

The Society convened a meeting of the NLS Advisory Committee on March 4, 2010 and retained Mr. Robbie Giles to design the agenda (Appendix 8) and facilitate group participation and decision-making. Participants were:

YMCA	Carolyn Tyner
Canadian Forces	Brenda Cavanagh
Ontario Physical and Health Education Association (Ophea)	Nancy Schad
Canadian Red Cross Society	Ron Kelusky, Lorraine Davies, Gail Botten
Parks and Recreation Ontario	Lynn Loubert
Lifesaving Society	Julie Twaddle, Doug Ferguson
Ontario Camping Association	Catrina Knapp
Observers	Paul McCue (Ministry of Health) Peter Mumford (NLS Chair)
Presenters	Perry Smith, Michael Shane
Facilitator	Robbie Giles
Recorder	Ed Bean

Mr. Perry Smith reported to the NLS Advisory Committee Meeting on the Expert Team's review, findings and conclusions. Mr. Michael Shane reported on the lifeguard employer meeting discussion and motions.

The NLS Advisory Committee discussed the results of both meetings and voted on four motions:

- MOTION # 1: That the NLS Advisory Committee supports the finding of the Equivalency Review.  
Moved by Tyner / Seconded by Twaddle  
Yea – 6      Nay – 1      Carried
- MOTION # 2: That the NLS Advisory Committee supports the conclusions of the Equivalency Review.  
Moved by Tyner / Seconded by Twaddle  
Yea – 5      Nay – 1      Abstain – 1      Carried
- MOTION # 3: That the NLS Advisory Committee supports a single lifeguard standard for Canada.  
Moved by Knapp / Seconded by Loubert  
Yea – 7      Nay – 0      Carried unanimously
- MOTION # 4: That the NLS Advisory Committee supports NLS as that single lifeguard standard.  
Moved by Twaddle / Seconded by Schad  
Yea – 5      Nay – 1      Abstain 1      Carried

Two further motions were proposed and voted on:

- MOTION # 5: That the NLS Advisory Committee recommends that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care strike an independent committee to review the current lifeguard certification standard.  
Moved by Kelusky / Seconded by Tyner  
Yea – 5      Nay – 2      Carried
- MOTION # 6: That the NLS Advisory Committee recommends that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care strike an independent committee to develop a process for determining equivalency.  
Moved by Kelusky / Seconded by Ferguson  
Yea – 1      Nay – 5      Abstain – 1      Defeated

A report of the NLS Advisory Committee meeting was prepared (Appendix 9).