



LIFESAVING SOCIETY

The Lifeguarding Experts

New Canadians encouraged to *STARTboating* this summer *Lifesaving Society launches multi-language, online boating safety program*

Toronto, ON – July 20, 2017 – The Lifesaving Society, Canada’s leading organization responsible for drowning prevention, has launched an online boating safety program targeted to new boaters, particularly new Canadians who may be experiencing recreational boating for the first time. *STARTboating* is a comprehensive program designed to teach basic boating and water safety skills. The program will launch today in English, French, Mandarin, and Cantonese; followed by Hindi and Tagalog at the beginning of August.

STARTboating consists of a series of online, interactive videos, which guide the user through the basic skills needed to safely enjoy a day on the water. While suitable for all boaters, the program was developed with Canada’s growing immigrant population, especially newcomer families, in mind.

A record number of immigrants (320,032) arrived in Canada between July 2015 and July 2016,¹ and a recent study conducted by Statistics Canada estimates that nearly one in two Canadians could be either an immigrant, or the child of an immigrant by 2036.²

“Many new Canadians come from countries where they don’t participate in activities like swimming and boating for recreation, says Barbara Byers, Public Education Director for the Lifesaving Society. “When they come to Canada, where water-based activities are extremely popular, they want to participate, but don’t always have the knowledge or skills they need to be safe. We created this program in multiple languages because we want to reach out to make sure they are prepared before they set out on the water.”

This is particularly important as research conducted by the Lifesaving Society has found that while the majority plan to spend time in and around water, new Canadians living in Canada for five years or less, are four times more likely to be unable to swim than those born in Canada.³ This suggests they are at greater risk for drowning.

Recreational boating is part of the Canadian experience

Boating is a very popular recreational activity in Canada. Research indicates that 46% of Canadian adults participate in recreational boating activities.⁴ A study commissioned by the Lifesaving Society found that 31% of new Canadians planned to participate in boating activities during the summer months.³

While developing the program, the Lifesaving Society conducted focus groups of new Canadians representing communities whose first languages are Mandarin, Cantonese, Hindi, Tagalog and French. Feedback from the groups confirmed that new Canadians want to embrace activities like boating, which they consider part of the Canadian experience.

“... when you live in Canada, you would like to do things that you didn’t do back home and you want to do what Canadians are doing too.”

- Tagalog Focus Group Participant

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STARTboating allows users to choose from one of four vessel types – canoe, kayak, stand-up paddleboard (SUP) and small outboard motor boat. Many of these vessels represent entry-level craft, those most likely to be operated by those new to boating.

The most recent comprehensive study on drowning in Canada, the Canadian Drowning Report⁵, found that together, canoes and powerboats under 5.5 metres, account for 46% of all boating-related deaths in Canada.

The introductory video begins with a family planning to spend a day on the water, and as the family continues on their journey, the user can click on additional videos that demonstrate:

- what to wear and what to pack;
- how to understand right of way, mapping, markers and areas to avoid;
- how to call for help in an emergency;
- how to use safety equipment including how to fit a personal flotation device.
- important skills like paddling, launching their boat and righting and re-entering from the water.

After viewing the videos, focus group participants commented that they saw boating as an activity they would like to participate in with their family. They also noted that the program helped them to understand that there was much more to boating than just renting or purchasing a boat and getting onto the water. After watching the videos they reported feeling safer and more prepared.

“ This video has greatly increased my interest in kayaking and made me more confident in participation ”

- Mandarin Focus Group Participant

The program is available at www.startboating.ca and will also be linkable through a variety of partner websites including Canadian Safe Boating Council, PaddleSmart, AdventureSmart.ca and Smartboater.ca.

Reducing the risk of drowning and Search and Rescue (SAR) incidents

In addition to drowning prevention, one of the main goals of the program is to reduce the number and severity of marine search and rescue (SAR) incidents. While boating-related drownings have remained consistent over the past several years, SAR incidents continue to rise.

The Lifesaving Society hopes that education programs like *STARTboating* will help to prevent SAR incidents and create safe and responsible new boaters, who know how to call for help if it is needed and how to survive while they wait for help to arrive.

Contribution funding for the *STARTboating* program was provided by the National Search and Rescue Secretariat, part of Public Safety of Canada

About the Lifesaving Society

The Lifesaving Society is a full-service provider of programs, products and services designed to prevent drowning. We save lives and prevent water-related injury through our training programs, Water Smart® public education, drowning prevention research, aquatic safety management and lifesaving sport. Each year, more than 1,000,000 Canadians participate in the Society's swimming, lifesaving, lifeguarding and leadership programs. For more information, please visit www.lifesavingsociety.com

About the Canadian Safe Boating Council (CSBC)

CSBC is in the business of promoting safe and responsible boating throughout Canada. It is **an alliance of members committed to preventing boating injuries and drownings and works to achieve its mission by** providing common core education messages and resource materials that members can use in their education efforts with boaters. For more information please visit www.csbc.ca

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3. Lifesaving Society. 2010. The Influence of Ethnicity on Aquatic Participation and Drowning.
4. CSBC. 2015 Safe Boating Awareness Week Tracking Study.
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