



LIFESAVING SOCIETY®  
*The Lifeguarding Experts*

## “Canadian Swim-to-Survive Standard”

### A Lifesaving Society Position Statement

March 2001

#### Introduction

In pursuit of its mission to eliminate drowning and water-related injury in Canada, the Lifesaving Society articulates and promotes its official positions on issues to improve aquatic safety across the country. With this in mind on November 18, 2000, the Board of Directors adopted the following “*Canadian Swim-to-Survive Standard*” position statement -- A minimum national standard of swimming skill for all children.

#### Lifesaving Society Position

- ◇ Acquisition of basic swimming ability is a fundamental requirement in any meaningful attempt to eliminate drowning in Canada.
- ◇ All Canadian children deserve the chance to learn basic swim survival skills.
- ◇ The acquisition of basic swim survival skills by Canadian children is worthy of public and government support.
- ◇ Affordable training should be available for all children to the level of the *Canadian Swim-to-Survive Standard*.

#### Rationale

##### *High participation in swimming as a recreational activity*

- Among school-aged children between 5 and 12 years of age, swimming is the second most popular activity in Canada after bicycling.
- Among those over 18 years of age, swimming is the third most popular activity (after walking and gardening/yard work). Source: *1998 Physical Activity Monitor*, Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute.

##### *Drowning is a leading cause of death*

- Drowning is the second leading cause of accidental death (after motor vehicle accidents) in Canada for people 55 years of age and under.
- Year after year, the majority of people who drown have no intention of going into the water. Immersion is sudden and unexpected.

##### *Need for instruction*

- Swim skills need to be taught. Swim skills are not innate: they are acquired. Swim skills are very difficult to self-teach.
- During the 1990s, boards of education withdrew from providing basic swim instruction to elementary school children. This instruction needs to be replaced at the community level.

**For further information on the essential skills required to meet the “*Canadian Swim-to-Survive Standard*”, drowning research or the Lifesaving Society programs contact the National Office at 613-746-5694 or [experts@lifesaving.ca](mailto:experts@lifesaving.ca).**