



CITY OF HAMILTON
COMMUNITY AND EMERGENCY SERVICES DEPARTMENT
Recreation Division

TO:	Chair and Members Emergency & Community Services Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	January 18, 2016
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Fee Waiver/Reduction Policy Amendment (CES14001(b)) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Laura Kerr (905) 546-2424 ext. 5015
SUBMITTED BY:	Joe-Anne Priel General Manager Community and Emergency Services Department
SIGNATURE:	

RECOMMENDATION

- (a) That the "Fee Waiver/Reduction Policy" attached as Appendix A to Report CES14001(b) be amended to expand the Divisional Director of Recreation's authority to approve all fee waiver/reduction applications for recreation facility rental fees that will result in a community partnership; and,
- (b) That all non-profit groups with existing arrangements to deliver programs in recreation facilities at a reduced rental rate be given until December 31, 2016 to complete the amended fee waiver/reduction application.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Currently there are 50 non-profit groups accessing free/low cost space in recreation facilities city wide to facilitate recreation and leisure activities as listed in Appendix B to Report CES14001(b). Traditionally, the arrangements for space have been informal in nature and not always governed by a formal agreement or policy. The effort to harmonize rental fees highlighted the need to establish a more precise authority to allow staff to reduce or waive rental fees.

The existing Fee Waiver/Reduction Policy only allows staff to waive or reduce fees for one-time events where financial hardship can be demonstrated. Staff is recommending that the existing policy be amended to provide the Divisional Director of Recreation authority to also approve fee waiver/reduction requests for ongoing use of space for programs and services, up to a maximum of \$10,000.00 per request. The policy has been amended to define eligible activities and groups.

Eligible groups include non-profit community groups that operate for the betterment of the community, such as service clubs, neighbourhood associations, seniors and youth groups. Groups would have to demonstrate that the waiving or reduction of a fee would result in direct benefits or enhanced service for a community.

Non-profit groups with a long standing relationship using facility space were consulted on the proposed recommendations. They are supportive of the Fee Waiver/Reduction process and are willing to provide information as per the requirements of the amended policy. Councillors who have affected groups in their ward, including those who are no longer eligible for a fee reduction under the new policy, have also been consulted.

If approved, staff will adopt a phased approach to implement the new policy. All existing groups with historical arrangements will be given until December 31, 2016 to complete the fee waiver/reduction application form. New groups requesting a partnership to access space at reduced rates will be directed to the new fee waiver/reduction process when the request is received.

It is anticipated that, as of January 1, 2017, there will no longer be any groups using space at reduced fees that are not approved pursuant to an existing policy or Council authority (i.e. new Fee Waiver/Reduction Policy, Council motion or space provided pursuant to a lease/license agreement).

Alternatives for Consideration – Not Applicable

FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial: Fee Waiver requests are anticipated to be revenue neutral as grandfathered groups will be eligible to maintain existing arrangements under the new policy.

Staffing: There are no staffing implications associated with Report CES14001(b).

Legal: There are no legal implications associated with Report CES14001(b).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Recreation Division has a long history of supporting community organizations, not-for-profit groups, and neighbourhood associations in delivering recreation services, programs, and events. Stakeholder groups have communicated that this support is essential to assist with the local delivery of alternative recreation options for residents.

On November 20, 2013, the General Issues Committee approved Report CS13029, "Recreation Facility Rental Fee Consolidation". The approved recommendations combined the then existing 129 recreation room rental fees into 24 new fees. These new fees were developed to distinguish group types (e.g. community groups or commercial groups) and the types of space rented (e.g. gyms or meeting rooms).

Part of the effort to harmonize recreation rental fees involved completing an inventory of all groups using space in recreation facilities to deliver their programs or services so they could be notified of the new fee structure. This inventory identified 52 groups accessing space in recreational facilities for free or at a reduced cost. A total of 50 of these groups operate in a non-profit structure. It was also determined that, across the City, 13 out of 15 Wards had groups with historical arrangements for free space or space at reduced rental rates.

The historical arrangements described above have traditionally been informal in nature and not always governed by any formal agreement or policy. The effort to harmonize rental fees highlighted the need to establish a more precise authority and criteria to waive or reduce rental fees for ongoing use of space for community led programs. The existing Fee Waiver/Reduction Policy does not allow staff to waive or reduce fees for anything more than one-time events where financial hardship can be demonstrated. Since implementation of the new fees, historical groups have had their reduced fees grandfathered pending the Fee Waiver/Reduction Policy revisions.

The policy was last amended on May 14, 2014 to clarify the Divisional Director's authority to waive fees for one time events. Staff is recommending that the policy be amended to also allow the Divisional Director of Recreation to approve requests in instances where it can be demonstrated that *"...the waiving of a fee would result in a partnership with direct benefits or enhanced service for a community."* This would provide Recreation staff with the discretion and appropriate authority to offer fee waivers/reductions to facilitate program partnerships in recreation facilities with eligible groups.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

Not applicable

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

Over the past year, staff followed up with the majority of the existing groups who have an informal fee arrangement for the use of ongoing space. The requirement to pay full rental fees would, in most cases, result in the community programs or services being cancelled or requiring higher user fees from participants. Examples of groups consulted included:

- Scouts Canada – Winona
- Ontario Early Years Centres
- HARRRP – Senior's Fitness Programs
- North Hamilton Community Health Centre – Programs for Persons with Diabetes
- Children's Aid Society – Homework Help Club
- Fit, Active, Beautiful (FAB) – Girl's running club
- Mountain Friendship Club

- Boys and Girls Club – summer camp
- Challenger Baseball/Sports Programs
- Neighbourhood association groups

Groups consulted have indicated a willingness to complete the fee waiver/reduction application process so that they can continue to operate their programs and services as per their existing arrangements with the Recreation Division. They have also indicated that they would also be willing to share information about their programs/services with the Recreation Division as required, including community evaluation results and participant information (i.e. postal codes, ages, attendance).

Recreation operations staff were also consulted to confirm that the groups currently utilizing space in recreation facilities are, in fact, delivering programs and services that are still of benefit to their community (i.e. meet neighbourhood action plan priorities, are attended by the community, are operating with low user fees).

Councillors with groups affected by the policy amendments have also been consulted.

ANALYSIS AND RATIONAL FOR RECOMMENDATION

In total, 50 non-profit groups that currently use free space or space at reduced rates in recreational facilities have demonstrated that their activities add value and benefit to the community and are operating in a non-profit model. There are two groups which are operating on a for-profit basis who will no longer be eligible for a fee reduction as of January 1, 2017.

The recommended amendments will provide a policy framework and authority for staff to consider fee waivers and reductions for use of ongoing space in recreational facilities by current and future community groups. This will assist staff in their efforts to work with groups to maintain the sustainability of their programs as well as provide greater transparency and consistency in the fee waiver/reduction decision making process.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

None

ALIGNMENT TO THE 2012 – 2015 STRATEGIC PLAN

Strategic Priority #1

A Prosperous & Healthy Community

WE enhance our image, economy and well-being by demonstrating that Hamilton is a great place to live, work, play and learn.

Strategic Objective

- 1.5 Support the development and implementation of neighbourhood and City wide strategies that will improve the health and well-being of residents.
- 1.6 Enhance Overall Sustainability (financial, economic, social and environmental).

Strategic Priority #2

Valued & Sustainable Services

WE deliver high quality services that meet citizen needs and expectations, in a cost effective and responsible manner.

Strategic Objective

- 2.2 Improve the City's approach to engaging and informing citizens and stakeholders.
- 2.3 Enhance customer service satisfaction.

Strategic Priority #3

Leadership & Governance

WE work together to ensure we are a government that is respectful towards each other and that the community has confidence and trust in.

Strategic Objective

- 3.1 Engage in a range of inter-governmental relations (IGR) work that will advance partnerships and projects that benefit the City of Hamilton.
- 3.4 Enhance opportunities for administrative and operational efficiencies.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix A to Report CES14001(b): Fee Waiver/Reduction Policy

Appendix B to Report CES14001(b): Listing of Existing Groups Receiving Fee
Reductions/ Fee Waivers for Ongoing Use of
Space