




CITY OF HAMILTON
PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
TOURISM AND CULTURE

TO:	Mayor and Members General Issues Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	December 4, 2024
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Pilot Program, Partnership Between Hamilton Civic Museums and the Hamilton Public Library for Free Museum Admission (PED24223) (City Wide) (Outstanding Business List Item)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Debra Seabrook (905) 546-2424 Ext. 2521
SUBMITTED BY:	Lisa Abbott Acting Director, Tourism and Culture Planning and Economic Development Department
SIGNATURE:	

RECOMMENDATION

That the program allowing Hamilton Public Library (HPL) cardholders free general admission to any of the City of Hamilton's operated museums (Hamilton Civic Museums) be permanently adopted and removed from the outstanding business list.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since its launch on Family Day 2019, the Hamilton Civic Museums and the Hamilton Public Library have worked together to promote and provide free general museum admission to any resident of Hamilton in possession of a valid Hamilton Public Library card. Although hindered by the pandemic closings in 2020 to 2022, the program continues to be a success story creating barrier free, heritage-based opportunities for the residents of Hamilton.

In 2019, 2022 and 2023 residents have used their Hamilton Public Library cards to gain free general admittance to the Hamilton Civic Museums over 18,500 times and in 2023 the library card partnership was expanded to include HSR, offering free PRESTO cards to members 6 to 12 years of age. This inter-departmental campaign is a great way to

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engage residents across multiple city wards to register for both Hamilton Library and PRESTO cards and take the HSR bus to visit Hamilton Civic Museums across the City.

This partnership program continues to see minimal impact to museum admission revenue; in fact, admission revenue in 2023 increased 27% over 2019, pre-pandemic revenue. Museum visitation numbers and library card activations continue to grow. The program continues to garner significant positive local media and social media attention and public feedback has been favourable with strong support for continuing the program.

Alternatives for Consideration – Not Applicable

FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial: The permanency of the program is not expected to have a significant adverse effect on museum admission revenue.

Staffing: None

Legal: None

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

At the January 16, 2019, General Issues Committee meeting, it was resolved:

- (a) “That staff be directed to conduct a one-year pilot project that allows Hamilton library card holders free general admission (excluding paid special events, booked programs and workshops) to any of the City of Hamilton operated museums (Dundurn National Historic Site, Hamilton Military Museum, Fieldcote Memorial Park and Museum, Griffin House Museum, Whitehern Historic House and Garden, Hamilton Children’s Museum, Battlefield House Museum and Park and the Hamilton Museum of Steam and Technology); and,
- (b) That staff report back to the General Issues Committee after a period of one year with the outcomes of the pilot project that provides free museum visits with a Hamilton Public Library card.”

Staff reported back on April 8, 2020, deeming the one-year pilot project a success. From February 19, 2019 to January 31, 2020, local residents redeemed their library cards for free admittance to the Hamilton Civic Museums 12,292 times. The Hamilton Public Library recorded their best eight months for new library card registrations since

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2015, in the nine months following the launch of the program new card registrations were up 48.8%.

It was resolved at the General Issues Committee meeting (PED20069) (City Wide):

- (a) That the Committee approve a two-year extension, until March 25, 2022, of the program that allows Hamilton Public Library (HPL) cardholders free general admission to any of the City of Hamilton's operated museums;
- (b) That staff continue to monitor the impact of this program on Hamilton Civic Museums' revenue, attendance and visitor demographics and report back to the General Issues Committee.

Staff reported back on June 15, 2022 that the Hamilton Civic Museums have experienced minimal attendance owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. To properly assess the impact of this program on Hamilton Civic Museums' revenue, attendance and visitor demographics, a further two-year extension to March 25, 2024 was recommended.

It was resolved at the General Issues Committee meeting (PED20069(a)) (City Wide) (Item 10.1):

- (a) That staff be directed to extend the Pilot Program, Partnership Between Hamilton Civic Museums and the Hamilton Public Library for Free Museum Admission, for a period of two years, until March 25, 2024; and,
- (b) That staff be directed to continue to monitor the impact of this program on Hamilton Civic Museums' revenue, attendance and visitor demographics and report back to the General Issues Committee for direction.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

Not Applicable.

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

Internal

Director, Tourism & Culture Division, Planning & Economic Development Department

External

CEO and Chief Librarian, Hamilton Public Library
Manager, Communications, Hamilton Public Library

ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

This program benefits residents by removing financial barriers for access to museums and incentivizes registration for library cards. Just over 18,500 free museum admissions were redeemed by Hamilton residents in 2019, 2022 and 2023. In 2023, admission revenue increased by 27% over 2019, pre-pandemic revenue. Hamilton has shown leadership through this initiatives and other municipalities, such as, Kitchener Waterloo, Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver have adopted similar library card admission partnership programs.

Based on the data currently available on the profile of users of library cards and anecdotal visitor feedback, the program successfully increased access to museum visitors for whom the price might otherwise have been a barrier.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

Not Applicable.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Not Applicable.