



CITY OF
ST. CATHARINES

Corporate Report

Report from Recreation & Community Services, Enterprise Services

Date of Report: November 1, 2012 **Date of Meeting:** November 26, 2012

Report Number: RCS-650-2012 **File:** 68.32.1

Subject: Revisions to Fee Assistance in Recreation Policy

Recommendation

That Council approve the proposed revisions to the Fee Assistance in Recreation Policy outlined in this report; and

That Council direct Staff to update the new rate schedule annually with the most current Low-Income Cut-offs issued by Statistics Canada. FORTHWITH

Summary

The Fee Assistance in Recreation program provides financial assistance to families living below the Low-Income Cut-offs before tax. The report contains recommended revisions to the policy that provide flexibility to families accessing the programs and adjustments to the rate schedule.

Background

In May 1997, Council approved the Fee Assistance in Recreation (FAIR) Policy in response to a recommendation in the Recreation Facilities Master Plan. The FAIR program allows the city to provide subsidies to the economically disadvantaged to enable them to participate in municipal leisure programs and activities.

The report recommended that staff report back to council in future to review the implications and cost impact of the subsidy program.

Report

Update from previous report

Statistics Canada, Census Tract data from 2006 indicates that 10.7% of families living in St. Catharines fall below the Low-Income Cut-offs (LICO) before taxes. In the past two years, there were approximately 45 participants per year accessing the FAIR program. This represents approximately 24 families in St. Catharines requesting assistance for programs. The value of discounts issued were approximately \$550 in 2011. To date, there has been approximately \$1860 in discounts issued for 2012.

Low Income Cut-offs updated annually

Staff require Council's approval to update the LICO annually using Statistics Canada data in the revised policy (Appendix "1"). This change will allow staff to accommodate families requiring assistance at the most current LICO within the FAIR program.

Flexibility in recreation opportunities

The current policy outlines that a family is eligible to select one program, per person, per session, up to four programs per year. The policy also outlines that a discount may be applied to programs or a membership pass to attend city run facilities.

The revised policy would eliminate the requirement of qualified participants to select one program per session. Families will still be offered four programs per person per year but they are not limited to one program per session.

The revised policy would also eliminate the choice of a discounted program or a discounted pass. Staff recommends encouraging families to purchase programs and passes at a discounted rate, if financially feasible, to promote family participation in recreation opportunities.

Staff recommends that the policy continue to be offered to all family members residing within the family household regardless of age.

Financial Implications

Two thousand dollars were allocated in the 2012 RCS operating budget to cover current requirements of subsidy funding for the Fee Assistance in Recreation Policy. Two thousand dollars is also proposed for the 2013 operating budget. There are no additional financial implications at this time.

Conclusion

The Fee Assistance in Recreation (FAIR) policy proposed revisions will continue to offer recreation opportunities for participation for St. Catharines families in need of assistance.

Submitted by:

Trish Cardwell,
Manager, Enterprise Services

Approved by:

Rick Lane R.D.M.R.
Director, Recreation and Community Services



CITY OF
ST. CATHARINES

RECREATION & COMMUNITY SERVICES ENTERPRISE SERVICES

CATEGORY:		POLICY #:	
SUBJECT:	Fee Assistance In Recreation (F.A.I.R.) Program		
ISSUE DATE:	1997-05-05	REVISION DATE:	2012 DRAFT

Purpose:

Municipal recreation opportunities should be available to all residents. St. Catharines residents experiencing financial difficulty because of low income may request fee assistance.


To standardize the fee assistance process so that all residents requesting assistance are treated in a consistent, confidential and dignified manner.

Conditions:

1. Any St. Catharines resident who considers him/herself (his/her family) to be unable to pay the full registration fee can apply for subsidy.
2. Assistance is available for all recreation programs and memberships offered by the City of St. Catharines Recreation and Community Services Department.
3. Fifty percent (50%) discount on an individual pass for each member of the household or a family pass for up to one year.
4. Fifty percent (50%) discount on City of St. Catharines recreation programs for each family member to a maximum of four programs per person in the household in the calendar year.
5. The Rate Schedule outlining Low-income before tax cut-offs by Statistics Canada will be used to determine the eligibility for subsidy. The chart will be updated when Statistics Canada releases new Low-Income cut-off information.

Family Size	Before-tax Low – Income Cut-offs (LICOs), 2010
1	\$19,496
2	\$24,269
3	\$29,839
4	\$36,226
5	\$41,086
6	\$46,339
7+	\$51,591

Source: Statistics Canada Website at
<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75f0002m/2011002/tbl/tbl02-eng.htm>

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	ENTERPRISE SERVICES		
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Process:

1. A fee assistance application form must be completed annually to determine eligibility.
2. Proof of residence in St. Catharines must be included such as copy of property tax bill, driver's license, or utility bill.
3. Applicants must also include a copy of most recent Notice of Assessment from the Canada Revenue Agency or proof of receipt of Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support Program. Confidentiality will be maintained.
4. Assistance should be requested and approved prior to the program start date. After program commencement, admission will only be permitted if openings are available and the addition does not disrupt the session.
5. Applications will be reviewed and approved by Manager of Enterprise Services or his/her designate.
6. A letter of notification will be sent to the family once approved.
7. The family's account will be updated in the program registration software granting them a fifty percent discount for the calendar year allowing them to register online or in person.
8. The family must reapply for the F.A.I.R. program after the approved twelve (12) month period has expired.

Public Awareness:

Information about the existence of the Fee Assistance in Recreation Program will be printed in the bi annual Leisure Guide and posted on the city's website. Application forms will be available online or at various recreation customer service centres.