

DATE OF MEETING March 18, 2020

AUTHORED BY RICHARD HARDING, GENERAL MANAGER, PARKS, RECREATION
AND CULTURE

SUBJECT LEISURE ECONOMIC ACCESS PROGRAM (LEAP) REVIEW

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To initiate a review and update of the Leisure Economic Access Policy (LEAP) to ensure the program is effectively meeting its goals of providing citizens with affordable access to public recreation services in today's community.

Recommendation

That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council:

1. approve a review and update of the LEAP program in 2020; and,
2. refer the review of the program to the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness to develop recommendations for changes for Council's consideration.

The Leisure Economic Access Policy (LEAP) program was established by the City of Nanaimo in 1993 to help provide citizens with affordable access to public recreation services (see Attachment A). LEAP has been reviewed and updated periodically to correspond with inflation and to accommodate family size but has not undergone a full review for some time.

The LEAP program provides access to the City of Nanaimo recreation facilities for families in financial need that are living in the City of Nanaimo, City of Lantzville and the surrounding area, including Electoral Area A (Cranberry, Cedar, South Wellington), Area B (Gabriola Island), and Area C (Extension, East Wellington).

Eligible LEAP cardholders are entitled to a 50 per cent course fee discount (to a maximum of \$40) for four courses per year. In addition, participants are issued a Swim/Skate/Gym Pass for 50 free admissions throughout the year (some programs may not qualify for the discount). The LEAP application details the eligibility requirements and benefits of the program (see Attachment B).

Although historically a popular program, LEAP participation rates have decreased over the years and, in particular, the number of children participating. A thorough review of the program to assess if it continues to meet the needs of the community would be timely. Further, the LEAP review would be a fitting project to include in the work plan of the recently formed Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness.

The review would include, but would not be limited to, the following:

- an update to the purpose of the program;
- financial criteria to access the program;
- barriers to participation;
- targeted populations;
- services included and not included; and,
- financial impact of any proposed changes.

The goal would be to commence the review of the LEAP program immediately and complete the update in 2020. Recommendations for changes along with their financial impacts to operating budgets would be presented to Council for consideration.

OPTIONS

1. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council:
 1. approve a review and update of the LEAP program in 2020; and,
 2. refer the review of the program to the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness to develop recommendations for changes for Council's consideration.
 - The advantages of this option: A thorough review of the LEAP program is overdue, and an update may help increase affordable access to public recreation services for children and adults in the community.
 - The disadvantages of this option: Staff and Committee resources would be required.
 - Financial Implications: Any changes to the program to increase accessibility will most likely have financial impacts on operating revenues.
2. That the Finance and Audit Committee not recommend a review of the LEAP program at this time.
 - The advantages of this option: Staff and Committee resources will not be impacted.
 - The disadvantages of this option: The LEAP program will continue unchanged without an assessment of whether it is continuing to meet the needs of the community.
 - Financial Implications: None
3. That the Finance and Audit Committee provide alternative direction.

SUMMARY POINTS

- A thorough review of the Leisure Economic Access Program (LEAP) program to assess if it is meeting current community needs is overdue.
- The LEAP program review would be a fitting project to refer to the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness.
- Recommendations for changes along with their financial impacts to operating budgets would be presented to Council for consideration in 2020.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A: Leisure Economic Access Policy (LEAP)
Attachment B: LEAP Application Form

Submitted by:

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Concurrence by:

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Director of Finance