

DATE OF MEETING JULY 29, 2020

AUTHORED BY LYNN WARK, DIRECTOR OF RECREATION & CULTURE

SUBJECT LEAP PROGRAM REVIEW

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To present a proposed review plan for the Leisure Economic Access Policy (LEAP) program.

Recommendation

That the Advisory Committee for Accessibility and Inclusiveness approves of and conducts the review process for the Leisure Economic Access Policy (LEAP) program.

BACKGROUND

At their meeting held 2020-MAR-18, Council approved a motion to approve a review and update of the Leisure Economic Access Policy (LEAP) program in 2020; and refer the review of the program to the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness to develop recommendations for changes for Council's consideration.

DISCUSSION

The LEAP program was initiated in 1993 with the purpose that *"all citizens of Nanaimo shall have access to programs and services provided by the Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture regardless of the ability to pay."*

The objectives of the program were:

- to target groups and individuals in economic need by offering free community programs (i.e. floor hockey);
- to offer a 50% reduction in program fees and a "children's rate" for swim, fitness centre and skate; and
- to offer 50 free swim or skate sessions to children in families that qualified for LEAP.

Since 1993, there have been various changes made to the program but a full review has never been completed. A copy of the current LEAP Information Sheet and Application Form is included as Attachment A.

Currently, the program policy remains essentially the same. In recent years, there has been a dramatic decrease in the number of people accessing the LEAP program. This could be attributed to a number of variables including, but not limited to, changing demographics, increased program requirements, different opportunities available in the community, other barriers in accessing recreation services, etc. In order to fully understand these changes, and to determine if the program is still meeting the needs of the community, it is recommended that a review of the program be conducted.

The proposed review process is structured as follows:

Stage 1 – Information gathering

- Connect with key stakeholders (i.e. current and former LEAP passholders, Ministry of Family & Child Development, etc.).
- Gather information/feedback about financial assistance programs in other communities (ex: comparator communities, other Island municipalities).
- Conduct City-wide inventory of free/low cost program options.
- Access the Reimagine Nanaimo engagement results.

Stage 2 – Information review

- To understand why program participation has declined in recent years.
- To analyze best practices from communities with successful financial assistance programs.
- To identify current needs for Nanaimo residents living in poverty.
- To include a holistic look at other barriers to participation in recreation.

Stage 3 – Revised program proposal

- Create a new framework for a financial assistance program which will meet the needs of the community (may include other forms of service delivery such as community based programming).

Stage 4 – Revised program implementation

- Recommend revised program to Council for implementation by March 2021, to coincide with the spring/summer season.

OPTIONS

1. That the Advisory Committee for Accessibility and Inclusion approves of and conducts the review process for the Leisure Economic Access Policy (LEAP) program.
 - The advantages of this option: This review provides the Committee with an item to begin working on from their workplan, and will allow work to commence immediately toward the development of a new program.
 - The disadvantages of this option: None
 - Financial Implications: None.
2. That the Advisory Committee for Accessibility and Inclusion provides an alternate option to consider for the review process for the Leisure Economic Access Policy (LEAP) program. |
 - The advantages of this option: Provides the opportunity for an alternate idea.
 - The disadvantages of this option: Might delay the review process.
 - Financial Implications: None.

SUMMARY POINTS

- A review of the Leisure Economic Access Policy (LEAP) program was recommended by Council in March 2020.
- The recently formed Advisory Committee for Accessibility and Inclusion added the Leisure Economic Access Policy (LEAP) program review to their 2020 work plan.
- A review process of the LEAP program has been developed for consideration by the ACAI Committee.

ATTACHMENTS:

ATTACHMENT A: LEAP Information Sheet & Application Form

ATTACHMENT B: LEAP Powerpoint Presentation

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Concurrence by:

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