

DATE OF MEETING FEBRUARY 28, 2022

AUTHORED BY LYNN WARK, DIRECTOR, RECREATION AND CULTURE  
KAREN ROBERTSON, DEPUTY CITY CLERK

**SUBJECT LEISURE ECONOMIC ACCESS POLICY (LEAP)**

## **OVERVIEW**

### **Purpose of Report**

To introduce an updated Council Policy for the Leisure Economic Access Policy (LEAP) Program delivered by Parks, Recreation and Culture department.

### **Recommendation**

That Council endorse Council Policy COU-227 - Leisure Economic Access Policy (LEAP) as attached to the 2022-FEB-28 report by the Director of Recreation and Culture and Deputy City Clerk.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Leisure Economic Access Program and Policy (LEAP) was developed in 1993 and endorsed by the Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission on 1993-MAY-31 (see Attachment B). The program's purpose was to ensure 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."*

Since the program's inception, it has been reviewed and updated periodically to correspond with inflation but had not undergone a full review for some time.

At the 2020-MAR-18 Council meeting, the General Manager, Parks, Recreation and Culture conveyed that in December, 2019, Council expressed a desire to have the Leisure Economic Access Program reviewed. During the discussion, Council asked that the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness be given an opportunity to provide feedback and passed the following motion:

*"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 (ACAI) to develop recommendations for changes for Council's consideration."*

On 2021-MAY-26, staff provided a report to the ACAI which included the results of a Phase 3 review of the LEAP. Several recommendations came out of that meeting and were compiled

into a report and presented to the Finance and Audit Committee on 2021-JUN-16 for consideration (see Attachment C). Council endorsed the recommendations at its 2021-JUN-21 meeting.

Many of those recommendations supported by Council are directives to staff which will be incorporated into Administrative policies and procedures; however, the overarching Council policy that establishes the manner in which the LEAP initiative and activities will be carried out needs to be formally endorsed by Council.

## **DISCUSSION**

Following the extensive 2021 review of the LEAP Program, changes to the program have now been implemented but the updated LEAP Council policy needs to be endorsed by Council. As noted in the background section of the report, the LEAP Council policy (see Attachment A) is the “outward facing” statement document that sets the guidelines for the manner in which City’s LEAP initiatives and activities will be carried out.

The direction “internally” into how staff carry out those initiatives and activities identified in the Council policy will be addressed within specific Administrative Policies (signed off by the CAO) and internal staff procedures (signed off by the General Manager of Parks, Recreation & Culture).

The policy before Council would replace the 1993 policy endorsed by the Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission and streamlines the process for program eligibility, qualification criteria, the application process, and program benefits.

What is no longer referenced in the Council policy is a specific listing of the higher level government agencies that can refer low income approvals in lieu of the application process. Some of the agencies that supported the program in the past are no longer in existence and the method for approvals was not always consistent. As such, the practice dropped off. Once staff has the opportunity to confirm which of the agencies are still in existence, are able to confirm whether they have the capacity to support the program, and are willing to participate in a consistent practice for approvals, the results will be presented to the ACAI for feedback. Staff anticipate to have this process implemented by the end of 2022 or early 2023.

Also excluded is the notation that aides be admitted at no charge as this is addressed within the Parks, Recreation & Culture fees and charges.

### **Next Steps:**

Consideration of this policy is timely as staff will be bringing forward other administrative amendments associated with the Parks, Recreation & Culture Bylaw to address its structure (as part of the Bylaw and Policy Renewal Project). Prior to doing so, the LEAP policy needed to be formally endorsed as the bylaw directly references the LEAP policy and the substance of the LEAP program has already been considered by the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness, and supported by Council.

Once the LEAP policy has been endorsed, staff will be bringing forward a report to the March 7, 2022 Council meeting to address the following as it relates to the Parks, Recreation & Culture Bylaw:

- Updating outdated regulatory provisions;
- Parsing out the various Council and Administrative policies from within the bylaw so that the policies become stand alone documents;
- Transfer the delegated authorities from within the Bylaw to the “Officers Appointment and Delegation Bylaw”; and
- Transfer the fees and charges to the “Fees and Charges Bylaw”.

The above are housekeeping amendments which, once adopted, will make it easier for Council to have future targeted discussions on any proposed changes to the fees and charges associated with the Parks, Recreation and Culture function, or to a specific Parks, Recreation and Culture Council policy.

### **OPTIONS**

1. That Council endorse Council Policy COU-227 - Leisure Economic Access (LEAP) as attached to the 2022-FEB-28 report by the Director of Recreation and Culture and Deputy City Clerk.

The advantages of this option include:

- The updated Council policy aligns with the Policy Review process that has been conducted.
- The new policy will replace the outdated 1993 policy.
- The policy gives Council, staff and the public more clarity around how to qualify and apply for the program; and outlines the process for application and review.
- The qualifications criteria is tied to the Statistics Canada Low Income Cut-Off Thresholds vs. outlining the specific amounts which may change over time.

There are no disadvantages to this option.

2. That Council endorse the Leisure Economic Access (LEAP) policy as attached to the 2022-FEB-28 report by the Director of Recreation and Culture and Deputy City Clerk, with the following recommended changes (insert proposed changes here).
- Should Council wish to make any changes to the policy, Council direction would be sought.
  - The disadvantage to this option is that any changes requested may require additional research and lead to a delay in updating the policy.

### **SUMMARY POINTS**

- The Leisure Economic Access Policy (LEAP) Program is a financial assistance program provided to residents of the City of Nanaimo to have access to programs and services offered by Parks, Recreation and Culture regardless of the ability to pay.
- The policy dated May 31, 1993, requires updating to better reflect the current program parameters.

- Policy directives have been reviewed by the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness and endorsed by Council.
- Specific directives to staff derived from the Council policy will be administered through Administrative policies and procedures.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment A – COU-227 – LEAP Policy

Attachment B – 1993 MAY-31 – PRCC - LEAP Policy

Attachment C – RPT\_FA210616\_LEAP Program Recommendations

Attachment D – District 68 Sports Field & Recreation Services Agreement

**Submitted by:**

Lynn Wark  
Director, Recreation and Culture

Karen Robertson  
Deputy City Clerk

**Concurrence by:**

Richard Harding  
General Manager, Parks, Recreation and Culture

Sheila Gurrie  
Director of Legislative Services