CITY OF HAMILTON

COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT
Recreation Division

TO: Chair and Members
   Emergency & Community Services Committee

WARD(S) AFFECTED: City Wide

COMMITTEE DATE: September 22, 2010

SUBJECT/REPORT NO: Affordable Access to Recreation Strategy
(CS10047(a)) (City Wide)

SUBMITTED BY:
Joe-Anne Priel
General Manager,
Community Services Department

PREPARED BY:
Coralee Secore
905-546-2424 Ext. 4689

SIGNATURE:

RECOMMENDATION:

(a) That the Affordable Access to Recreation Strategy, attached as Appendix A to Report CS10047(a), be approved.

(b) That staff be directed to implement the Affordable Access to Recreation Strategy (attached as Appendix A to Report CS10047(a)) on January 1, 2011.

(c) That the contract for the Youth Service Agency Network GROW Program be extended to December 31, 2010.

(d) That staff be directed to discontinue the Letter of Agreement between the City of Hamilton and the YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington, for the GROW Program effective December 31, 2010.

(e) That Item “T”, respecting Affordable Access to Recreation Strategy, be identified as complete and removed from the Emergency & Community Services Committee’s Outstanding Business List.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Vision: To be the best place in Canada to raise a child, promote innovation, engage citizens and provide diverse economic opportunities.

Values: Honesty, Accountability, Innovation, Leadership, Respect, Excellence, Teamwork
The Recreation Division of the Community Services Department in Report ECS08011(b), November 12, 2009, “Access to Subsidized Recreation Programs at the City of Hamilton – Update”, committed to complete a review of program and service delivery options for allocating subsidized recreation in Hamilton and to report back to the Emergency and Community Services Committee regarding the development of a framework for affordable access to recreation for low-income families and children.

At the May 5, 2010 Emergency & Community Services Committee meeting, staff brought forward the Affordable Access to Recreation Strategy Report (CS10047), which presented a framework on the new delivery option for allocating subsidized recreation in Hamilton. At the Council meeting of May 12, 2010, Item 9 of the Emergency & Community Services Committee Report 10-007 (Report CS10047) was referred back to the Emergency & Community Services Committee for further discussion. The Affordable Access to Recreation Strategy Report (CS10047) was reviewed and brought forward to the May 19, 2010 Emergency and Community Services Committee and staff were directed to meet with the Youth Serving Agencies Network (YSAN) GROW program administrators, to develop a transition plan.

Affordable Access to recreation for low income families is an important social policy issue. Significant work is being done provincially to advocate to the Government of Ontario, as well as to municipalities that policy, funding and broader delivery approaches are necessary if access to recreation is to improve. The Affordable Access to Recreation for Ontarians Policy Framework¹, is intended to guide municipalities in development of policies to increase access to recreation for low-income families and children.

Staff reviewed the existing delivery methods (Bridges and GROW programs) and benchmarked best practices by other municipalities in order to bring forward a new framework for delivering subsidized recreation programs. This report recommends a comprehensive approach in the delivery of affordable recreation access, which will assist families to overcome financial barriers and enjoy greater access to recreation opportunities.

**The Affordable Access to Recreation Strategy**

The Affordable Access to Recreation Strategy (attached as Appendix A to Report CS10047(a)) was developed using the vision, objectives and strategic directions set out in the Ontario Policy framework and is aligned with what other municipalities are doing across the Province. The Strategy aims to create greater and easier access and assist families to overcome financial barriers in order to increase participation in recreation and sport activities and demonstrates leadership by developing a Strategy, which

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¹ Ontario Task Group on Access to Recreation for Low-Income Families, Affordable Access to Recreation for Ontarians Policy Framework: Every One Plays
http://lin.ca/access-to-recreation
incorporates a broad and logical approach to re-opening doors to community recreation and organized sports for low-income families and children to enjoy.

The Affordable Access to Recreation Strategy will offer a range of affordable opportunities for families and children. Programs and services will include a balance of no cost (free) core programs such as recreational swimming, skating and gym programs; low cost recreational/drop-in activities (e.g. loonie swims) and low cost fee based introductory drop-in programs (e.g. Swim to Survive Learn to Swim program); registered programs and organized sport opportunities; and a fee assistance approach to assist those who cannot afford the fees associated with registered recreation programs.

Finally to ensure programs, partnerships and financial assistance processes are realized, the Strategy identifies keys objectives that are required for the strategy to be effective: awareness (strategy promotion), collaboration (involving community partners, groups and organizations), internal processes (accountability), and training and performance measurements.

Staff are recommending that the Affordable Access to Recreation Strategy be delivered by the City of Hamilton and be launched January 1, 2011 to coincide with the conclusion of the agreement with the GROW program on December 31, 2010.

Alternatives for Consideration – See Page 10.

FINANCIAL / STAFFING / LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial:
On April 9, 2010 Council approved a $400,000 operating enhancement as part of the 2010 City of Hamilton Budget process to support subsidized recreation. As well, the Recreation Division will continue to absorb approximately $275,000, which was the subsidy provided through the Bridges program.

It is recommended that the GROW program receive $290,000, from the $400,000 budget enhancement that was approved during the 2010 budget, to continue funding the program to December 31, 2010. The remaining $110,000 would support the Recreation Division’s Bridges program and the hiring of the Subsidy Co-ordinator in preparation for January 1, 2011 commencement of the Affordable Access to Recreation Strategy – Recreation Access Program.

Staffing:
A Subsidy Coordinator will be critical to the operation and implementation of the new Affordable Access to Recreation Strategy. The annual cost of this position will be approximately $62,300 (including all employee related costs) and will be funded through the budget enhancement. The FTE for this position was approved as part of the 2010 budget.
The Subsidy Coordinator will be responsible for the case management, interaction with families, communication plan, outreach, collaboration, partnerships, internal business implementation and the coordination of referrals with other Divisions (e.g. Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program) of the Affordable Access to Recreation Strategy.

Although not a direct staffing implication to the City, there are three full time and one part time staff employed by the YMCA delivering the GROW Program. The impact to these YMCA employees will be at the discretion of the YMCA as their employer.

Legal:
There are no legal implications associated with Report CS10047(a).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Recreation Division of the Community Services Department in Report ECS08011(a), November 18, 2008 “Youth Serving Agency Network (YSAN) GROW Program” and (b), November 12, 2009 “Access to Subsidized Recreation Programs at the City of Hamilton – Update” committed to complete a review of program and service delivery options for allocating subsidized recreation in Hamilton and to report back to the Emergency and Community Services Committee regarding the development of a framework for affordable access to recreation for low-income Hamiltonians.

The original Recreation Division “Community Access to Recreation for Everyone Policy” (C.A.R.E.) was developed in 2001. In 2002, the C.A.R.E. name was changed to the “Bridges” program. This program is open to families and children who are residents of the City of Hamilton with an income level below the Statistics Canada minimum income criteria referred to as “Low Income Cut-Offs” (LICO). The Recreation Division also offers a number of no cost recreational programs throughout the year (e.g. summer play lot “Supie” program, Family Day activities, neighbourhood outdoor rinks etc.).

The GROW Program was developed in 1999, at a time when no other subsidy programs existed. Four of the YSAN partners (YMCA, YWCA, Kiwanis Boys’ and Girls’ Club of Hamilton and Skills Through Activities and Recreation (STAR)) administered the program. Over time, YSAN partners have been less involved and now only the YMCA (lead agency) and YWCA deliver the GROW program. The program started out as an intensive case management approach with home visits and one-on-one ongoing support. Current practice provides one-on-one ongoing support primarily facilitated through phone calls and community referrals with little to no interaction through home visitation. City of Hamilton provides funding for this program. The program started out providing access to recreational opportunities based on client referrals through Ontario Works (OW) and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) and over time created limited opportunities for low income families not currently on social assistance.
At the May 5, 2010 Emergency & Community Services Committee meeting, staff brought forward the Affordable Access to Recreation Strategy Report (CS10047), which presented a framework on the new delivery option for allocating subsidized recreation in Hamilton. At this meeting, staff were directed to meet with the Youth Serving Agencies Network (YSAN) GROW program administrators to develop a transition plan to avoid a gap in services. Staff were to provide a plan that permits a satisfactory time period to discontinue the GROW program and bring a report back, at a later date.

**POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

There are no policy implications associated with Report CS10047(a).

**RELEVANT CONSULTATION**

Consultations took place with the following:

- GROW Program Administrators and representatives of YSAN reviewed the GROW Program and discussed the framework for the Affordable Access to Recreation Strategy.

- GROW Program Administrators discussed a transition plan to avoid a gap in services and to address any associated costs related to discontinuing the program.

- The Hamilton Minor Hockey Council and the Greater Hamilton Ice User Groups provided feedback on the Strategy being proposed.

- Social Development and Early Childhood Services discussed the current Letter of Agreement between the City of Hamilton and the YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington and current funding.

Further discussion will be co-ordinated as part of the communication plan, pending Council’s approval of the Affordable Access to Recreation Strategy.

**Municipal Consultation (Benchmarking)**

Seven municipalities in Ontario as well as Edmonton, Calgary and Vancouver were also contacted to identify best practices related to subsidized access to recreation. Key themes from the municipal benchmarking included:

- All have access policies or strategy for providing fee assistance for those in need.
- All have used the Affordable Access to Recreation for Ontarians Policy Framework: Every One Plays to develop their respective policies or strategy.
- All follow the income threshold established by Statistics Canada (Low Income Cut-Off levels (LICO) as the means test for receiving fee assistance.
• All but two of the municipalities provide a broader approach to access rather than solely providing just fee assistance (e.g. free and low cost programming).

**ANALYSIS / RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION**

Recreation Division staff committed to undertake a review of program and service delivery options for allocating subsidized recreation in Hamilton and to report back to the Emergency and Community Services Committee regarding the development of a framework for affordable access to recreation for low-income Hamiltonians.

Addressing the complex and multi-faceted barriers faced by low income families who would like to participate in community recreation requires a broad approach beyond providing fee support. Families often cite user fees as one of the systemic barriers to participation however, they also cite complex subsidy approaches, awareness of programs and services, and the stigma they may face when requesting support. The new Affordable Access to Recreation Strategy addresses these concerns and is an important step to improving access to recreation and organized sports in the City of Hamilton.

**Current Delivery of Subsidy Programs**

The City of Hamilton has a long standing approach to assisting low-income families and children requiring assistance with user fees however both programs (Recreation Division’s Bridges program and the GROW program) are solely fee assistance programs that have limited capacity in the numbers served, duplication in those being served and no sustainable funding. Detailed reviews of both programs are attached as Appendix B to Report CS10047(a). The Recreation Division also provides a number of programs and services which are free (e.g. summer play lot “Supie” programs, Family Day activities, neighbourhood outdoor rinks) or extremely low cost (e.g. School Professional Development (P.A.) Day activities) and are highly utilized by the broader community.

**Recommended Affordable Access to Recreation Strategy**

The recommended Strategy is a systematic plan that aims to create greater and easier access and assist families and children to overcome financial barriers in order to increase participation in recreation and sport activities in the City of Hamilton. It supports a broader delivery approach rather than solely being a fee assistance program.

The Affordable Access to Recreation Strategy (attached as Appendix A to Report CS10047(a)) includes:

1. Brief Statement of Intent – a Vision for the community
2. Belief Statements – the principles and values that define the Strategy

Vision: To be the best place in Canada to raise a child, promote innovation, engage citizens and provide diverse economic opportunities.

Values: Honest, Accountability, Innovation, Leadership, Respect, Excellence, Teamwork
3. Affordable Access Components – clearly outlines the position of the City on the service delivery. The Strategy considers a continuum of affordable opportunities for families and children (ages 18 years and under) that includes:

![Continuum of Opportunities](image)

This continuum of opportunities will be available to families and children to ensure the healthy development of individuals and to enhance the overall quality of life within the community.

4. Awareness – Strategy includes promotion and communication of activities to increase awareness of the program opportunities and ability to access these opportunities.

5. Collaboration – involving and creating partnerships with other community organizations to enhance programs delivered, leverage funding, collaborate on outreach and delivery e.g. staff are working in partnership with the Hamilton Association for Residential and Recreational Redevelopment Program (HARRRP) to provide a summer youth centre at Bennetto Recreation Centre.

6. Accountability (Internal Business Processes) – establishes a standardized and transparent procedure for the administration of financial assistance for recreation programs and services delivered.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation – The Strategy was designed as an outcomes-based plan that defines performance measures. Staff will report annually on the outcomes.

**Anticipated Benefits to Low Income Families and Children**

Benefits of this Strategy include:

- A program that creates one point of access for families who require financial assistance while improving and realigning the recreation fee assistance program.
• Enhance recreational opportunities by providing a balance of no cost recreational drop-in programs (swimming, gym and skating) in recreation facilities across the city which will be accessible to all Hamiltonians. Currently many of the recreational drop-in programs are not operating at capacity yet legislation and/or safety guidelines require a full staff compliment be scheduled. This increased activity will result in greater utilization of recreational programming at no additional cost to the taxpayer.

• The “Recreation Access Program” provides eligible low-income families with fee assistance for City of Hamilton programs. If the applicant is living below the Low Income Cut Off (LICO) levels, 100% subsidization will be provided to a maximum of $150.00 per child during a 12 month period. This fee assistance can be applied to registered programs such as swimming, skating, gym club, summer and holiday camp programs provided by the Recreation Division and will be in the form of a credit on the CLASS registration system. This will provide convenient access for low-come families. Families will be able to self serve by using all available registration options.

• Families may also apply for a maximum of a 50% subsidy of the registration fees to a maximum of $100.00 annually per child to help offset registration costs for minor sport affiliate organizations that use City of Hamilton Recreation facilities (e.g., hockey, baseball, basketball, soccer, lacrosse, football and figure skating).

If approved by Council, the Recreation Division is proposing to launch the new Affordable Access to Recreation Strategy on January 1, 2011 and will coincide with the discontinuation of the Letter of Agreement, between the City of Hamilton and the YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington, on December 31, 2010.

A date of September 30, 2010 was originally proposed to discontinue the Letter of Agreement between the City of Hamilton and the YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington for the YSAN GROW program, but after reviewing, staff is recommending an extension to December 31, 2010. This will enable the YMCA to fulfil all its obligations associated with operating the program.

City Staff along with the YMCA has prepared a transition plan and joint communications to send to all current GROW recipient families highlighting the changes to the subsidy program.

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<th>ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION</th>
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<td>The following three options are included for consideration:</td>
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**Option 1**

The City can continue to fund the YSAN Grow program as the delivery agent for providing fee assistance in the City of Hamilton. Funding for this program was originally provided to the Youth Serving Agency Network (YSAN) to act as a third party broker of the GROW program which is currently administered by the YMCA. An evaluation of the
GROW program in Report ECS08011(b), November 12, 2009—Access to Subsidized Recreation Programs at the City of Hamilton identified that a significant number of registrations for children’s recreation activities were for memberships and programming at City of Hamilton recreation facilities.

This option allocates more than 50% of the $406,672 in City funding to administration costs annually. In addition, the GROW Program recorded as part of its 2009 budget $151,233 in fundraising of which approximately $89,700 comes from the Recreation Division in the form of leveraged subsidy. This means that for every city recreation program “purchased” through the GROW program, on behalf of their participants, GROW pays 25% of the original program cost while the balance of the program cost is absorbed by the Recreation Division.

**Financial:**
This will result in continuing to provide funding through the City’s Community Partnership Program.

**Staffing:**
There are no staffing implications associated with Option 1.

**Legal:**
There are no legal implications associated with Option 1.

**Option 2**
To develop a hybrid model that would include continuing to fund a portion of the GROW program as well as a portion of the Affordable Access to Recreation Strategy. The administration for both programs would have higher costs as both programs would require a program staff to administer the programs. There would be confusion for families on which program they should be accessing and there would be duplication around the application processes and requests for programs and services. This would result in an inequity in both programs. This option would have the highest cost and would require more than one access or mechanism to receive fee assistance. 56% of the families in the GROW program are participating in City of Hamilton recreation programs.

**Financial:**
The option is the most costly and would require funding for both programs. It is estimated that funding be in the amount of $700,000 would be required.

**Staffing:**
It would require one FTE to administer the Recreation Division’s Affordable Access to Recreation Strategy in the amount of $62,300.

**Legal:**
There are no legal implications associated with Option 2.

**Option 3**
Define a preferred model for the delivery of a subsidized recreation program and issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) to seek interested providers.

The Access to Recreation Strategy is a defined model for the delivery of a subsidized recreation program and evaluation of the GROW program identifies that a significant number of registrations for children’s recreation activities were for memberships and programming at City of Hamilton recreation facilities.

**Financial:**
The option will result in continuing to provide funding through the City’s Community Partnership Program.

**Staffing:**
There are no staffing implications associated with Option 3.

**Legal:**
There are no legal implications associated with Option 3.

### CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN

**Skilled, Innovative & Respectful Organization**
- A culture of excellence
- More innovation, greater teamwork, better client focus
- Council and SMT are recognized for their leadership and integrity
- An organization that incorporates a holistic approach – proactive, flexible, comprehensive and respectful
- Address diversity by training staff

**Financial Sustainability**
- A commitment by the City to support programs and services through tax levy dollars in order to ensure ongoing sustainability

**Intergovernmental Relationships**
- Influence federal and provincial policy development to benefit Hamilton
- Acquire greater share of Provincial and Federal grants (including those that meet specific needs)
- Maintain effective relationships with other public agencies
Growing Our Economy
- An improved customer service
- Greater access to recreation opportunities

Social Development
- Residents in need have access to adequate support services
- People participate in all aspects of community life without barriers or stigma

Healthy Community
- An engaged Citizenry
- Plan and manage the built environment
- Adequate access to food, water, shelter and income, safety work, recreation and support for all (Human Services)

APPENDICES / SCHEDULES

Appendix A to Report CS10047(a) – Affordable Access to Recreation Strategy
Appendix B to Report CS10047(a) – Review of Existing Subsidy Programs
Affordable Access to Recreation Strategy

Prepared by the City of Hamilton
Community Services Department, Recreation Division
Vision

Everyone has access to affordable recreation in their community in order to enjoy health and social benefits and to improve their prospects for a better future.

To be the best place in Canada to raise a child.

Mission

People – We provide recreational, leisure and sport programs and services that promote well being and create opportunities to enhance the quality of life in our community.

Places - We develop, manage and preserve recreational and sport facilities.

Strategy Belief Statement

1. Family-Based
Families have expressed their desire to participate in recreation opportunities, and recognize these opportunities as important attributes that contribute to the quality of life. The Community Services Department understands the benefits to individuals and families that are derived from recreational, sport and leisure activities.

The Department also recognizes, however, that the ability to participate in these opportunities can be difficult, or limited, for persons with low-income.

The Affordable Access to Recreation Strategy for Low-Income Families outlines a comprehensive approach to reduce barriers, provide opportunities, and improve supports to increase participation in recreation and organized sport programs and services.

At the same time, the Strategy will ensure that the
information to citizens is clear, easily understandable, and motivational – promoting participation in activities for creative expression, and mental, spiritual, physical benefits.

2. Values-Based
The foundation for the strategy is based on “community values” as expressed in the Affordable Access to Recreation for Ontarians Policy Framework:

Dignity – Families are respected

Opportunity – all children and families regardless of economic circumstances should have the opportunity to participate.

Social Inclusion – help alleviate the effects and generational nature of poverty and the dependence on social assistance programs, resulting in improved outcomes at home and at school.

Quality Experiences - quality of life is enhanced for children, families and communities through an engaged and active population.

3. Community-Based
Building on these values, the Access to Recreation Strategy will create an environment of cooperation, collaboration and warmth to help create the best possible results for children and families at every experience.

The Community Services Department recognizes the important role of community-based agencies and organizations and other government departments and entities, to develop easy ways for low-income families to access recreation and organized sport programs. The strategy will outline collaborative approaches to streamline processes and make the most effective use of collective resources.

Objectives

In developing the strategy, the Recreation Division reviewed the current Bridges program, the Youth Serving Agency Network (YSAN) GROW program, current sport organizations subsidy programs and
consulted with other Community Services staff to help determine the critical success factors necessary for the strategy. Key factors have been identified both from the families’ perspective and from the Division/service providers’ perspective.

Families will experience:

1. **Respect and dignity** – Feeling valued and respected, with the right to participate in activities regardless of means or ability.

2. **Easy access** - Being supported in addressing barriers, such as cost, location, equipment and related costs, and accessibility to participation.

3. **Freedom of choice** – Trying a variety of recreation, leisure or organized sport activities and programs that allow participants to develop skills, experience new opportunities and have fun.

4. **Inclusion** – Feeling welcomed and encouraged, and able to participate within an atmosphere of friendship and community.

5. **Ease of participation** – Accessing recreation opportunities through a simple process or application that is coordinated among partners to avoid any unnecessary duplication.

6. **Discretion** – Maintaining confidentiality and discretion in all interactions related to accessing recreation opportunities.

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**Guiding Principles**

The Recreation Division will strive to provide recreation opportunities that are:

1. **Available and diverse** – Creating opportunities based in local neighbourhoods, offering a variety of activities and programs that reflect diverse backgrounds and interests.

2. **Easily communicated and understood** – Making information easy to understand and available through a variety of means, and
helping families make appropriate choices based on a good understanding of the activities and programs.

3. **Achieved through partnerships** – Establishing links and partnerships with government departments, agencies and organizations to streamline processes, improve communication and make best use of collective resources.

4. **Operationally Sustainable** – Enhancing staff awareness and sensitivity, providing appropriate training, and extending customer service concepts throughout all programs, activities and interactions with customers.

5. **Financially sustainable** - Ensuring recreation opportunities are supported through tax-levy funding, with financial supports from other partners whenever possible.

The Access to Recreation Strategy for Low-Income families was developed through an outcome-based logic model that defines inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, indicators of success (performance measures) and measurement tools. The information above describes the approach the Affordable Access to Recreation for Low-Income Families Strategy will use to address this need, the belief statements and the key objectives required for the Strategy to be effective. The information below describes the details of the Strategy. The Strategy will be realized through the delivery of four key objectives:

**Main Objectives**

1. **“Affordability” - Continuum of Opportunities**

The Strategy provides a continuum of opportunities that includes programs available to all citizens at *no cost* recreational drop-in programs (e.g., swimming, gym and skating) across the City.

The Recreation Division also provides a number of “targeted initiatives” or *low-cost* opportunities based on community need (e.g., low-cost registered programs in targeted neighbourhoods, loonie swims and other focused programs.

Within the Strategy is the "Recreation Access Program Policy" (replacing the Bridges & YSAN GROW Subsidy Programs) providing financial assistance for:

- Families living below the Statistics Canada Low-Income Cut Off (LICO)
The *Recreation Access Program Policy* offers opportunities in terms of admissions, registration fees and organized affiliate sport activities that include:

- Free Family Pass to the Recreation Centre of choice.
- Fee assistance based on the City of Hamilton recreation programs: Families living below the Low-Income Cut Off level will be eligible for up to 100% subsidization to a maximum of $150.00 per child during a 12 month period for activities such as swimming, skating, gym, club and summer and holiday camps provided by the Recreation Division.
- Families may also apply for a maximum of 50% subsidy to a maximum of $100.00 annually per child to help offset costs for registration fees for minor sport affiliate organizations that use City of Hamilton Recreation facilities (e.g., hockey, baseball, basketball, soccer, lacrosse, football and figure skating).

2. **“Awareness” – Strategy Promotion**
   The communication activities will increase the awareness of opportunities and the ability to access these opportunities. The information will be presented in formats that are easy to understand, comprehensive and address our diverse community. Communication on the benefits of recreation and recreation opportunities will be integrated into publications, stand alone documents and advertising opportunities. All communications will be visible in public places. Outreach will be provided by divisional staff members who will visit community agencies to inform agency staff and client families about the Strategy.

3. **“Collaboration” - Involving Community Partners**
   Access to variety of opportunities will be enhanced through comprehensive collaboration of recreation opportunities by a variety of partners. The collaboration activities include engaging not-for-profit, minor sport affiliate organizations, other orders of government, and umbrella groups to share information, opportunities and coordinate processes that will help to realize the key factors of the Strategy.

4. **“Accountability” - Internal Business Processes**
   Internal business processes will support the delivery of the Strategy by ensuring clarity of roles and responsibilities. The Recreation Access Strategy will be administered through the Subsidy Coordinator. The administration of the strategy includes one point of access, family engagement, coordinated delivery and staff training to achieve the key factors.
Resource Links

Informed by the Ontario Task Group to Recreation for Low-Income Families, *Affordable Access to Recreation for Ontarians Policy Framework: Every One Plays*
## Performance Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inputs</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Short and Intermediate Outcomes</th>
<th>Long-Term Outcomes</th>
<th>Performance Measures</th>
<th>Measurement Tools</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| Financial Resources | **Continuum of Opportunities**  
- Recreation Access Program  
- Targeted initiatives  
  - Structured programs  
  - Drop-in  
- No cost opportunities (e.g. access to drop-in gym, swimming & skating programs)  
- Organized sport activities | # of family passes issued  
# of fee subsidy requests for registered programs  
# of neighbourhood recreation programs that are free and low cost  
# participants in free and low cost programs  
# of fee subsidy requests for organized sport activities | **Low-income families have increased access to recreation and organized sport opportunities**  
**Low-income families have increased participation in recreation and organized sport opportunities**  
**Children have increased personal health and wellness**  
**Families feel respected and welcome**  
**Children have increased personal capacity (increased knowledge and skills)** | **All children/families have an opportunity to participate**  
**Accessible Services, programs, facilities and organized sport activities**  
**Children/families live a better life**  
**Children/families enjoy participating in city services, programs, events and organized sport activities**  
**Low-income families are respected** | • % # of family pass visits  
• % of registered for programs  
• % in neighbourhood recreation programs that are free and low cost  
• % in organized sport activities  
• Participants (low-income) accessing opportunities report:  
  o % reporting increasing children/families capacity (awareness, knowledge, skills)  
  o % report improved children/family health and wellness as a result of the program, activity or service*  
  o % report feeling respected and welcome | CLASS Reports  
subsidy redemptions for programs  
Reports for request for organized sport subsidy  
Marketing Surveys  
(general surveys that collect outcomes with a target for low-income families) |
| Human Resources | **Communication Activities**  
- Communication that reaches people living below low-income  
- Information and messages that are easy to understand, available through a variety of means, and meaningful to people living in below income (language, literacy, access barriers are addressed) and includes benefits of recreation  
- Current tools include: Brochures – Priceless Fun, Fee Reduction, Summer, Low-Cost Program Information (targeted), Website | # of communication tools used (e.g., Priceless Fun, brochures)  
# of types of presentations | **Families have increased awareness to access recreation and organized sport information and opportunities**  
**Families have increased awareness and knowledge about the benefits of recreation** | **Low-income families are respected** | Low-income family report:  
• % of awareness of program information, opportunities  
• % of awareness of organized sport opportunities  
• % of awareness of the benefits of recreation  
• communication is easy to understand and accessible | Marketing Surveys |
| Financial Resources | **Collaboration Activities**  
- Community-based organizations who work with low-income families  
- Collaborative with similar mandates (e.g., Wesley urban Ministries, HARRP, McQueston)  
- Not-for-profit organizations  
- Minor sport affiliate organization  
- Other orders of Government (Federal, Provincial, School Boards, etc.)  
- Corporate Sponsorship  
- Communities to reach businesses employing low income citizens | | **Improved coordination increases access to recreation opportunities**  
**Increased number of recreation and organized sport opportunities to low-income families**  
**Increased ability and willingness of community to provide recreation and organized sport opportunities (accessibility to low income children/families)** | | Community partners report:  
• Understanding of the Strategy  
• Ability to share information with target groups  
• Recreation and organized sport opportunities for children and families | Community partner survey |

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*Marketing Surveys (general surveys that collect outcomes with a target for low-income families)*
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<tr>
<th>Human Resources</th>
<th><strong>Internal Processes</strong> that support the development, implementation and evaluation of the Strategy</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Clear roles and responsibilities</td>
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<td>Promote Learning and Growth</td>
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<td>• Training on roles, responsibilities, and Framework</td>
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<td>• Leisure Education package developed that can be customized and used with low-income families, organizations and other orders of government that work with the target population</td>
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<td>Budgeted financial resources</td>
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<td># of staff trained</td>
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<td>Report key indicators of success for the Recreation Division</td>
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<td>Increased understanding of staff roles and responsibilities for the Strategy</td>
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<td>Increase efficiency in the delivery system for the Recreation Access Program</td>
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<td>Strategy is operationally and financially sustainable</td>
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<td>Staff report:</td>
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<td>• Understanding of the Strategy</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• Understanding of their roles and responsibilities</td>
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<td>• Effectiveness in the delivery of the Strategy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Staff survey</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Human Resources</th>
<th>Financial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of staff trained</td>
<td>Report key indicators of success for the Recreation Division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased understanding of staff roles and responsibilities for the Strategy</td>
<td>Increase efficiency in the delivery system for the Recreation Access Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy is operationally and financially sustainable</td>
<td>Staff report:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff survey</td>
<td>Staff survey</td>
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Recreation Access Program Policy

Policy Statement
The City of Hamilton will provide financial assistance to families and children in order for them to have equal opportunity to participate in recreation programs and organized sport activities.

Purpose
The purpose of the Recreation Access Program Policy is to provide fee assistance that is fair, equitable, and easy to access for low-income children and families.

The Community Services Department understands the benefits to children and families that are derived from recreational and sport opportunities. The Department also recognizes the ability to participate in registered program or organized sport opportunities can be difficult, or limited for families with low-income.

The foundation for the program is based on the values of dignity and respect, health and wellness, social inclusion and quality of life. Building on these values, the “Recreation Access Strategy” will create an environment of cooperation and inclusiveness to help create recreation opportunities for families and children at every experience.

The Recreation Access Program Policy will provide opportunities and improve supports to increase participation in recreation and organized sport. As the same time, the Program will ensure the information is clear and easily understood.

Goals
The goals of the Recreation Access Program Policy are as follows:
1. To provide a simple application process for families requesting fee assistance.
2. To allow options for the utilization of assistance.

Definitions
The definitions pertaining to this program are as follows:

Low Income Cut Off (LICO)
Low Income Cut Off’s, based on Urban Area population over 500,000 are cross referenced with the total number of persons in a household. LICO’s are set by Statistics Canada to indicate where families spend 20% or more of their income than the Canadian average on food, shelter and clothing.
Low Income Cut Off (after tax) for Urban Area population of greater than 500,000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number in Household</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Household Income</td>
<td>$18,373</td>
<td>$22,361</td>
<td>$27,844</td>
<td>$34,738</td>
<td>$39,556</td>
<td>$43,869</td>
<td>$48,181</td>
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</table>

Eligibility
To be eligible for fee assistance families must:

1. Be in receipt of Ontario Works and have a photo copy of a monthly Drug Benefit card
or

2. Provide proof of City of Hamilton residency by attaching a copy of a property tax bill, utility bill, driver’s license or similar documentation with the applicant’s address on it.

3. Reapply annually.

What does the Recreation Access Program Policy provide?
Fee assistance for children and families with income below Low Income Cut Off (LICO) levels based on the following credits per child per year:

- Free Family Pass to the local Recreation Centre.
- 100% subsidy to a maximum of $150.00 per child per year for City operated recreation programs.
- 50% off the registration fee to an upset limit of $100.00 per children towards the registration costs for a minor affiliate sport organization that use City of Hamilton facilities (e.g. minor hockey, baseball, soccer, basketball, lacrosse, football and figure skating). The sport organization must be an approved minor sport affiliate based on the City of Hamilton Affiliation Policy.
- Access for one year (after family pass expires, families will be required to re-apply to the Recreation Access Program Policy).

Process
1. Everyone must complete an application.
2. Applications are available at:
   - Any City of Hamilton Recreation Centre
   - On-line at www.hamilton.ca/rec
   - or can be mailed by calling 905.546.3747
3. All applications dropped off at recreation centres will be forwarded through inter-office mail in a CONFIDENTIAL envelope to the Subsidy Coordinator.
4. Applicants will be informed if information is missing.
5. Using the LICO formula, staff will assess eligibility.
6. A letter of correspondence will be prepared and mailed to the family informing them of the fee assistance approval, their CLASS registration information along with their family pass.
7. Families wishing to participate in an organized sport activity will need to contact the Subsidy Coordinator to complete the application process.

**Associate Policies and Procedures**
This program is not meant to negate any other divisional policy or procedures.
The Recreation Access Program is compatible with the CLASS Registration procedures.
REVIEW OF EXISTING SUBSIDY PROGRAMS

The City of Hamilton has demonstrated its commitment to subsidized recreation for families for which affordability constitutes a barrier. Currently the City supports two fee assistance programs: the City’s internal Bridges program which offers subsidized rates for recreation programs at City of Hamilton facilities and recreation centres and the Youth Serving Agencies Network (YSAN) GROW Program of which the YMCA is the lead agency and the third party provider.

Staff committed to complete a review of program and service delivery options for allocating subsidized recreation. The following highlights the review:

Recreation Division, Bridges Program

The original Culture & Recreation User Fees Report (CS01041), Community Access to Recreation to Everyone Policy - C.A.R.E (Appendix D) was developed in 2001. In 2002 the C.A.R.E. name was changed to the “Bridges Program”. This program is open to families and children who are residents of the City of Hamilton with an income level below the Statistics Canada minimum income criteria referred to as low income cut-offs (LICO). The Bridges Program is comprised of two components: all individuals/families receiving a fee reduction must pay a minimum of 25% of the program fees and eligible participants are entitled to reduction for a recreation centre participation pass and a maximum of four programs per year (one per session).

The Recreation Division absorbs fees as an operating budget revenue shortfall of $271,919 annually. This program is well utilized serving 4,278 individuals participating in 6,008 recreation activities.

Administration of the program and eligibility approval is completed at city-operated recreation centres which keeps overall administration costs very low due to the availability of staff and the number of existing city recreation facilities whereby the public can access the service. Awareness of the program is currently communicated through general inquiries and word of mouth.

In addition, over the last 18 months, the Recreation Division has further expanded access and greater participation through free or low cost options which include Family Day activities and after school programs. These are in addition to the already free programs e.g. summer play lot “Supie” program and the neighbourhood outdoor rinks.

The City of Hamilton also provides a 50% subsidy rate for minor youth sport organizations renting ice, sport fields and gymnasiums to assist in keeping registration fees affordable for families (e.g. $4,784,215 is the total subsidy for ice based on the 2008/2009 ice season).
YSAN - GROW Program

The GROW Program was developed in 1999 at a time when no other subsidy programs existed. Four of the YSAN partners (YMCA, YWCA, Kiwanis Boys’ and Girls’ Club of Hamilton and Skills Through Activities and Recreation (STAR)) administered the program. Over time, YSAN partners have been less involved and now only the YMCA (lead agency) and YWCA administer the GROW program. The program started out as an intensive case management approach with home visits and one-on-one ongoing support. Current practice provides one-on-one ongoing support primarily facilitated through phone calls and community referrals with little to no interaction through home visitation. Since the inception of the GROW Program, many of the YSAN partner agencies have created their own internal subsidized programs or currently provide affordable recreation opportunities for children and families which has reduced the need for a third party to solicit these opportunities on behalf of clients.

City of Hamilton provides funding for this program through the Social Development and Early Childhood Services Division within Community Services. The program started out providing access to recreational opportunities based on client referrals through Ontario Works (OW) and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) and over time has created limited opportunities for low income families not currently on social assistance.

The program served 1,992 children in 2009. Of the 1,992 GROW users, an estimated 57% use City of Hamilton Recreation Division programs and 19% participate in community affiliated sport organizations.

In 2009, the City provided funding in the amount of $406,672 for the period January 1, 2009 to April 30, 2010. GROW administration costs are approximately $232,474 which includes three full time and one part time staff, supplies and utilities. Fee assistance for children totaled $169,335 with more than 50% of the $406,672 in City funding allocated to administration costs annually.

In addition, the GROW Program recorded as part of its 2009 budget $151,233 in fundraising of which a large portion comes from the Recreation Division in the form of leveraged subsidy. When the GROW program pays the registration fee for a child, they receive a discount under the Bridges Program as their client meets the LICO criteria. In this manner, for a $50 program, GROW would pay $12.50 to the Recreation Division for their client and the recreation facility where the program is offered would absorb a variance of $37.50 operationally. GROW then records the $37.50 as “fundraising” on their part for soliciting discounts for their users. Using their accounting methods, the City of Hamilton actually contributes approximately $89,000 in additional funds to this program.


Conclusion

While both the GROW Program and the Bridges Program have their benefits, each is limited in scope and accessibility. Simply they are only fee assistance programs with no sustainable funding, limited capacity and do not address the fundamental objectives of greater access and opportunities. The broader approach of the Affordable Access to Recreation Strategy will not only ensure modest administration costs it will also provide access to the entire Hamilton community. The proposed strategy provides greater access made possible through the development of no cost and low cost recreation opportunities while providing fee assistance through an equitable process recognizing the importance of dignity, freedom of choice, confidentiality and opportunity.