

THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF ELLIOT LAKE

***B*Y-LAW NO. 10-27**

Being a by-law to adopt a policy to provide affordable access for all residents to recreation, culture and transit services.

WHEREAS Section 394.(1)(a) of the Municipal Act authorizes a municipality to exempt in whole or in part, any class of persons from all or part of a fee or charge on the basis of inability to pay;

AND WHEREAS the Council of the Corporation of the City of Elliot Lake deems it desirable to establish a standardized and transparent procedure for the administration of financial assistance for recreational programs and transit services delivered by the City of Elliot Lake where user fees are unaffordable to a participant;

NOW THEREFORE, The Council of The Corporation of the City of Elliot Lake hereby **ENACTS AS FOLLOWS:**

1. **THAT** the Affordable Access to Recreation, Culture and Transit Policy attached hereto as Schedule "A" and forming part of this by-law shall be herein confirmed as policy for the City of Elliot Lake.
2. **THAT** this by-law shall come into force on April 1, 2010.

PASSED this 22nd day of March, 2010.

MAYOR

CITY CLERK

AFFORDABLE ACCESS TO RECREATION, CULTURE AND TRANSIT POLICY

1. POLICY STATEMENT

1.1 The City of Elliot Lake recognizes and promotes the full participation of all Elliot Lake residents in recreation and cultural programs and transit services regardless of financial circumstances. Programs and services will be planned, delivered and evaluated to ensure they are affordable, inclusive and responsive to need.

2. POLICY OBJECTIVE

2.1 Provide guidelines for the development of introductory, universal and more affordable programs and services.

2.2 Establish a standardized and transparent procedure for the administration of financial assistance for recreational programs and transit services delivered by the City of Elliot Lake, where user fees are unaffordable to a participant.

2.3 Establish criteria for the review and approval of requests for financial assistance for recreation programs and transit services and delegating such authority to Municipal staff.

2.4 Provide guidelines for the development of partnerships and agreements that provide affordable access to recreation and cultural programs and transit services for low income families and individuals.

2.5 Identify the training needs of staff to assist in their administration of the Affordable Access to Recreation, Culture and Transit Services Policy, and related procedures.

2.6 Document the approaches the City of Elliot Lake will take to enable community organizations using Municipal facilities to respond effectively to requests for financial assistance.

3. SCOPE

3.1 This policy extends to eligible programs and services directly delivered by the City of Elliot Lake. Program and service applicable eligibility under this policy will be determined by each Department on a case by case basis.

3.2 This policy excludes contracted program agreements with individuals/organizations delivering programs in partnership with, or on behalf of the City, unless language related to affordable access is incorporated into the Agreement. It also excludes programs and services where discounts and subsidies already exist.

3.3 Definitions:

3.3.1 *Recreation Program*: Activities of a recreation, sport, art or cultural nature that may be self directed or instructional, providing skill development in a particular leisure pursuit. Programs may be introductory or specialty and are of an on-going nature. User fees are often charged to offset the costs associated with the provision of the activity.

3.3.2 *Services*: Refers to recreational and membership services available through the purchase of memberships and pay-as-you-go activities including but not limited to Fitness, Arts and Culture, Aquatics, Skating and Transit.

3.3.3 *Universal Programs*: Activities and community events provided at no cost or minimal cost either directly by the City or through partnerships/service agreements with an agency/program provider.

3.3.4 *Financial Assistance*: Refers to an approved reduction in user fees charged by the City of Elliot Lake for participation in a program or service.

3.3.5 *Financial Assistance Programs*: Includes, but is not limited to Ontario Works, Child Care Fee Assistance and Ontario Disability Support Program, CPP Disability Support Program, Guaranteed Income Supplement, Workers Compensation Benefits, Employment Insurance.

3.3.6 *Targeted Outreach Programs*: Refers to specialized programs designed for a specific audience and/or geographic community in order to help engage residents or as a component of a broader community initiative.

3.3.7 *Low Income Cut Off (LICO)*: Refers to income thresholds (determined by analyzing family composition and expenditure data) below which families will devote a larger share of income to the necessities of food, shelter and clothing than the average family would. (Statistics Canada).

4. USER FEES

4.1 Recreation programs and transit services will be priced according to the Council approved "Annual Review of User Fees and Charges" policy which requires a market rate analysis to help determine fees. User fees are intended to recover the direct operating costs of a program/service. Program fees may however be established below the cost recovery threshold where the program is deemed to provide significant community benefit.

4.2 Programs offered at a subsidized fee or at no cost to participate are traditionally recreational/drop-in pay-as-you-go, universal or in some cases targeted outreach.

4.3 The City will directly deliver programs and seek out and maintain partnerships with community agencies to deliver partnership programs in order to retain and enhance universal recreational opportunities primarily for children, youth, families and older adults.

4.4 Eligible full fee introductory and specialty programs and services which are delivered directly will have financial assistance available on an as requested basis.

4.5 Affordable access to Municipal recreation space will continue to be managed through the Council approved "City of Elliot Lake Grants / Subsidy Policy".

5.0 FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

5.1 The availability of financial assistance to Elliot Lake residents will be communicated via the City website and / or other additional methods of available communication.

5.2 The process of obtaining financial assistance will be non-intrusive, eliminate stigma and respect a person's dignity and confidentiality. A Financial Assistance procedure developed for staff, sets out the process residents and staff will follow to request, review, approve or decline a request for financial assistance, in a manner which is fair and equitable.

5.3 Staff will receive comprehensive training on the administration of financial assistance.

5.4 The Director of Parks and Recreation and/or designate has the authority to review, approve and decline requests in accordance with the Financial Assistance Procedure.

5.5 Approval for financial assistance is based on an income threshold below which financial assistance will be considered. The threshold will be established annually using the Statistics Canada's LICO for small urban regions.

5.6 City approved financial assistance is on a sliding scale according to the ability to pay. Persons with a family income between 80 – 100 % of the LICO threshold will receive a 33 % reduction. Persons with a family income between 65 - 79 % of the LICO threshold, will receive a 66 % reduction, and persons with a family income earning less than 64 %, of the LICO threshold, will receive a 90 % reduction of program / service fees. The remaining percentage of the fee will be the responsibility of the individual.

5.7 Staff will discuss options with any individual experiencing difficulty paying the non-subsidized portion of the user fee. Options may include staggered payments and/or a referral to external agencies (e.g. Canadian Tire Jumpstart).

5.8 Staff will measure the utilization of financial assistance rates annually to assist with revenue forecasting. Subsidy levels will be reviewed annually and will be established based upon the City of Elliot Lake operating budget capacity.

6.0 GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING UNIVERSAL AND PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMMING

6.1 The City of Elliot Lake will continually engage partners and seek out funding for the delivery of affordable recreation programming.

6.2 Space, in-kind support and/or promotional resources will be made available, wherever feasible, to support agencies and partnerships delivering recreation based services and programs, providing such support minimizes costs to the user and builds awareness of opportunities to the broader community.

7.0 STAFF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

7.1 The City of Elliot Lake will provide the necessary training and tools to assist staff in the development of programs as set out by this policy. Training will include, but not be limited to Community Demographics; Program Development; Social Service Programs; City of Elliot Lake Financial Assistance Procedure; Engaging Youth-at-Risk; Provincial Access to Recreation for Low Income Families Toolkit and Customer Service.

7.2 The City of Elliot Lake Senior Management will continually monitor and review utilization rates to inform annual budget planning with respect to subsidy costs.

8.0 COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS UTILIZING CITY OF ELLIOT LAKE FACILITIES

8.1 The City of Elliot Lake will provide support to assist community organizations to develop approaches to respond to requests for subsidized access to sport and recreation programs they deliver.

8.2 Referrals to other sources of funds (e.g. Canadian Tire Jumpstart, ADSAB and Salvation Army) will be utilized wherever possible to support families and community organizations.

9.0 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

9.1 The City of Elliot Lake will undertake an evaluation of the Affordable Access to Recreation / Culture and Transit Services Policy within one year after it is fully implemented to assess its effectiveness and to identify amendments if required.

9.2 Any proposed substantive amendments will be submitted to Council for consideration and approval.

9.3 The City will regularly monitor the effectiveness of the Policy.