



THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF ELLIOT LAKE

AFFORDABLE ACCESS TO RECREATION, CULTURE AND TRANSIT POLICY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The City of Elliot Lake recognizes and promotes the full participation of all Elliot Lake residents in recreation 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.

2.0 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.

3.0 SCOPE

- 3.1 This policy extends to eligible programs and services directly delivered by the City of Elliot Lake. Eligibility of each program and service for this policy will be determined by the Department providing the program or service.
- 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.

4.0 DEFINITIONS

- 4.1 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.

- 4.2 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.
- 4.3 Recreation for All: 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.
- 4.4 Financial Assistance: Refers to an approved reduction in user fees charged by the City of Elliot Lake for participation in a program or service.
- 4.5 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.
- 4.6 Low Income Cut Off (LICO): Refers to income thresholds (determined by analyzing family composition, location 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).

5.0 USER FEES

- 5.1 Recreation programs and transit services will be priced according to the Council approved “User Fee Bylaw” 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.
- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 Affordable access to Municipal recreation space will continue to be managed through the Council approved “City of Elliot Lake Grants / Subsidy Policy “.

6.0 FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

- 6.1 The availability of financial assistance to Elliot Lake residents will be communicated via the City website and / or other additional methods of available communication.
- 6.2 The Affordable Access Administrator has the authority to review, approve and decline requests.
- 6.3 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.
- 6.4 City approved financial assistance is a reduction to the City of Elliot Lake’s regular schedule of fees, on a sliding scale according to the ability to pay, using the LICO threshold:

<u>Household income</u>	
between 75 - 100% of the LICO threshold	50% reduction (Level 1)
between 50 - 74% of the LICO threshold	75% reduction (Level 2)
less than 50% of the LICO threshold	90% reduction (Level 3)

The remaining percentage of the fee will be the responsibility of the individual.

- 6.5 Applications for Level 2 or 3 of the Affordable Access Program card require the previous year’s Notice of Assessment (Income Tax Return). Applications for a Level 1 Affordable Access Program card may accept other forms of statement of income.
- 6.6 The City will coordinate with social and financial assistance agencies to ensure the application process respects the applicant’s confidentiality and dignity and that duplication of effort is avoided.

6.7 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).

7.0 APPLICATION AND UTILIZATION PROCESS

- 7.1 Appointments to apply for an Affordable Access Card will be made through the Affordable Access Administrator. Appointments will be booked within three weeks of a request.
- 7.2 The process of obtaining financial assistance will be non-intrusive, eliminate stigma and respect a person’s dignity and confidentiality.
- 7.3 The Affordable Access Card is valid for 12 months, and must be renewed annually.
- 7.4 Affordable Access Card holders must present their Affordable Access Card and once piece of photo identification for each applicant (e.g. spouse, child) for each program or service at the time of purchase. Accepted forms of photo ID include driver’s license, Ontario Health Card, passport, City of Elliot Lake bus pass and Ontario ID card.

Affordable Access purchases will be registered to ensure authorized use of the card, to provide statistics for the annual review of the Policy and to City departments for budget purposes. Personal information provided during the application process or collected during program and service purchases will not be shared with any other City staff, department or outside agency.

8.0 GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING UNIVERSAL AND PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMMING

- 8.1 The City of Elliot Lake will continually engage partners and seek out funding for the delivery of affordable recreation programming.
- 8.2 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, through the Council approved “City of Elliot Lake Grants / Subsidy Policy “.

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 annually 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.

Short Title			
SMT Approval Date		Council Approval Date	
Originating Department			
Revisions			