

Subject: Township of North Kawartha - Access to Recreation

Issued: 2014-06-17	Revised:	Revision No.:	Policy #: 2014-56
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Policy Statement

The Township of North Kawartha believes that recreation is an essential service and recognizes the importance of resident participation in recreation activities. The Township is committed to supporting a broad range of recreation programs and services within budgetary limits, and where possible will develop and maintain recreation facilities, parks, trails, natural areas, heritage and cultural assets to ensure residents have access to recreational experiences. Programs, services and facilities will be planned, delivered and evaluated to ensure they are affordable, inclusive and responsive to community need as identified in the Township Strategic Plan 5.2.1.

Scope

This policy extends to programs, services and facilities directly delivered by the Township. In addition, the Township will work with individuals and organizations working in partnership with the Township.

Policy Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to reduce barriers and increase access to participation in recreation, ensuring that as many residents as possible of the Township of North Kawartha have access to recreation and cultural programs, parks and open spaces, and community facilities. The Township Strategic Plan identifies goals and objectives achievable through this Policy.

Objectives:

- 1) Deliver/facilitate affordable programs, services and facilities that are planned in ways that address local needs and issues.
- 2) Strive to provide a variety of core programs and/or facilities for children, youth, adults and families at a reasonable cost so that financial status of an individual is not a determining factor of ability to participate.
- 3) Work towards reducing physical barriers in Township operated facilities, parks and provide adaptive equipment for recreational programs where feasible.
- 4) Assist community partners, whenever possible, in the fulfillment of their mandates (resources, consultation, facilities and equipment, etc).
- 5) Advocate for persons with exceptionalities in the areas of policy development and program and service planning.
- 6) Ensure financial assistance information is available (e.g. JumpStart, Township Policy 21/12 – Public Request for Municipal Services and/or Facilities, Enhanced User Group Program, etc.).

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Guiding Principles

The following principles are fundamental in all Township decision making:

- a) Recreation is an essential service and is conducive to the well-being/quality of life in the community.
- b) Recreation is a wise financial investment and contributes to savings in health, social service and justice costs.
- c) A wide range of recreational and cultural opportunities, facilities and services foster a healthier community lifestyle.
- d) Community-minded citizens fulfill essential roles in advocacy, stewardship and service delivery and provide enriched opportunities for participation.
- e) Residents will be encouraged to participate regardless of age, ability, ethnic diversity or circumstance.
- f) Recreation is a key contributor to community economic development and community social development.

Definitions

- 1) **Facilities:** A physical entity that is built, installed or established to serve a particular use or purpose.
- 2) **Financial Assistance:** Refers to an approved reduction and/or subsidy to offset costs of participation in an activity or service through a process that is non-intrusive, eliminates stigma and respectful of a person's dignity and confidentiality.
- 3) **Parks/Trails:** Outdoor areas designated for recreational activities and/or to enhance the beauty of or preserve the natural features of the Township.
- 4) **Partnerships/Community Programs:** Formal agreements with community partners for the delivery of parks and recreation programs, services and facilities.
- 5) **Recreation Programs:** Voluntarily pursued activities of a recreation, sport, art or cultural nature that may be self-directed or instructional, providing skill development, social inclusion and/or increased physical health in a particular leisure pursuit. Programs may be introductory or specialty and are of an on-going nature. In some instances fees are charged to offset the costs associated with the provision of the activity.
- 6) **Services:** Recreational opportunities available to participants and general Township support for an initiative, program or event.
- 7) **User Fees:** Fees charged by the Township for access to or participation in programs and services and for the use of recreation and parks facilities.

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- 8) **User Group:** An organization or user group that makes use of a recreation or parks facility.

Procedures

Procedures and Practices may be amended or added to the Access to Recreation Policy as necessary and appropriate in order to ensure that it is current and applicable. Such amendments or additions shall be approved by Resolution of Council and be coordinated with, and form part of this Policy.

Appendix A outlines the procedures and practices to follow in the context of this policy statement.

Appendix A – Procedures

Programs

The Township may consider delivering programs and services and/or seek out and maintain partnerships with community agencies to deliver recreation opportunities for children, youth and families.

All programs and services will be developed and delivered in the context of:

- Meeting the Community Need: Annual service planning of programs and services to meet the community’s changing needs. Past program experience, attendance data and community feedback will form the basis of programming decisions to ensure relevancy to changes in the community.
- Partnerships: Community-based partnerships whenever possible to increase access to programs, services and facilities.
- Citizen Outreach and Engagement: Building awareness of the benefits of recreation programs and services and provide culturally responsive programs and opportunities for community engagement in program design and delivery.
- Training: Staff and volunteers will be knowledgeable of the provision of accessible programs and services and customer service policies as soon as practical after beginning their employment. Ongoing training will be provided related to changes in policy, practices and procedures as required.

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- Quality service: Quality service delivery standards and practices in all program, service and facility planning, policies and procedures and positive interactions with customers.

Facilities

The Township will build and maintain facilities that are available to a broad range of users in the context of:

- Community Access to Community Space: Affordable and accessible community space that will encourage formal and informal recreation activities.
- Quality Infrastructure: Indoor and outdoor facilities that meet the requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and other regulations and operated in an environmentally and cost effective manner.

Fees and Charges

The Township is committed to providing its residents directly or indirectly, with an affordable range of recreational opportunities to improve health and quality of life. Whenever reasonably possible, it is intended that users will pay all or a portion of the costs of programs, facilities and services. Fees will be established to reflect an appropriate cost recovery and rental, and consistent fees will be charged at all facilities/fields which provide the same or similar service. Fees will be approved through the Township's Fees and Charges Bylaw.

There are many different revenue streams that can be developed to provide programs, services and facilities (user fees, sponsors, donations, fund raising events, tax funding). Township recreation programs and services are and will continue to be funded through a combination of these revenue sources.

Fees will be determined using the following guidelines:

- Programs and services will be delivered that encourage maximum public participation.
- Program registrants will be responsible for contributing financially to recreation activities requiring a fee to participate.

Program and service fees will be established based on the following:

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- Direct program, a portion of service and facility costs and estimated revenue required to offset these costs will be used to establish base fee.
- A market fees and charges analysis. User fees are intended to recover the direct operating costs of a program or service, however may be set below the cost recovery threshold as deemed appropriate.
- Space, in-kind support, consultation and promotional resources may be made available, assessed on a case-by-case basis; to assist community organizations deliver recreation programs and services. Enhanced User Group Program and Township Policy 21/12 – Public Request for Municipal Services and/or Facilities are examples.

Financial Assistance

Financial assistance processes shall be non-intrusive, ease of access and respect the person making the request dignity and confidentiality. When appropriate, the Township will refer potential candidates to community agencies. Barriers to participation may include fees, equipment costs, transportation etc. The following general guidelines will be used in determining subsidy levels:

- To **not** discourage participation in recreational programs, where cost is a barrier, user fees and equipment costs may be reduced for qualified candidates where possible. Requests will be assessed on a case by case basis.
- Where applicants are experiencing difficulty paying the non-subsidized portion of the fee, options may be considered such as staggered/deferred payments and/or a referral to external agencies and organizations for consideration. Requests will be assessed on a case by case basis.
- Affordability:
 - In-kind Township support, consultation and promotional resources may be made available to assist community organizations deliver recreation programs and services.
 - Public ice skating times are available at a minimal cost and on occasion free, and are open to the public.
 - The Township provides a reduced ice rate to minor sport groups to promote affordability for youth sports.
 - Township Policy 21/12 - Public Request for Municipal Services and/or Facilities, provides access to Municipal Services and Facilities at a reduced rate or free of charge.

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Monitoring

- Township staff will continue to work with the community and its partners to monitor the accessibility of programs and facilities in order to meet the needs of the community and its residents.

Exemptions

- Contracted program agreements with individuals/organizations delivering programs in partnership or on behalf of the Township must make every effort to comply with this policy unless language related to ‘access to programs and services’ is incorporated into the Agreement.
- Programs and services where discounts and subsidies already exist.