



City of Richmond

Report to Committee

To: Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Committee **Date:** November 22, 2019

From: Kim Somerville, Director, Community Social Development **File:** 07-3190-01/2019-Vol 01

Re: Revised Recreation Fee Subsidy Program – Year One Participation Progress Report

Staff Recommendation

That the staff report titled “Revised Recreation Fee Subsidy Program – Year One Participation Progress Report,” dated November 22, 2019 from the Director, Community Social Development, be received for information.

Kim Somerville
Director, Community Social Development
(604-247-4671)

REPORT CONCURRENCE		
ROUTED TO:	CONCURRENCE	CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER
Finance Department	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Arts, Culture & Heritage	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Parks Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Recreation Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Richmond Olympic Oval	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
REVIEWED BY STAFF REPORT / AGENDA REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE	INITIALS: 	APPROVED BY CAO

Staff Report

Origin

On September 25, 2017, City Council adopted the revised Recreation Fee Subsidy Program (RFSP) and endorsed the following recommendation:

That staff bring forward a progress report to Council on Recreation Fee Subsidy Program participation after one year of implementation, and a final evaluation report after two years of implementation that includes any recommended adjustments to the program and a long-term funding strategy.

The purpose of this report is to update City Council on the revised Recreation Fee Subsidy Program participation during year one of program implementation (September 4, 2018 to August 31, 2019).

This report supports Council's Strategic Plan 2018–2022 Strategic Focus Area #4 – An Active and Thriving Richmond:

An active and thriving community characterized by diverse social and wellness programs, services and spaces that foster health and well-being for all.

This report supports the following actions in the Social Development Strategy 2013–2022:

Action 4—conduct a comprehensive review of the Recreation Fee Subsidy Program to ensure it continues to address priority needs, within the City's means, with consideration being given to:

- *4.1 – Exploring program expansion to assist more low-income residents (e.g. adults, older adults, people with disabilities);*
- *4.3 – Increasing available opportunities for resident participation in community recreation, arts, and cultural activities; and*
- *4.4 – Developing enhanced communication and marketing approaches to facilitate maximum uptake of the RFSP by eligible recipients.*

This report supports the Community Wellness Strategy Focus Area #1:

Foster healthy, active and involved lifestyles for all Richmond residents with an emphasis on physical activity, healthy eating and mental wellness.

This report also supports the Recreation and Sport Strategy (2019–2024) Focus Area #2 – Engaged Community:

Recreation and sport opportunities are accessible, inclusive and support the needs of a growing and diverse population in Richmond.

Analysis

Background

On September 25, 2017, City Council adopted the revised Recreation Fee Subsidy Program (RFSP) to expand eligibility and program choice for residents of all ages, specifically targeting those who are experiencing financial hardship that might prevent participation in Richmond's community centres, cultural and heritage facilities, parks, aquatic centres and arenas.

The revised RFSP came into effect for the Fall 2018 recreation registration season and provides residents who qualify based on their financial situation the following:

- Free admission for all ages to drop-in programs and services; and
- A 90% discount for registered programs:
 - Up to a maximum of \$300 per year in subsidy for children and youth; and
 - Up to a maximum of \$100 per year in subsidy for adults and seniors.

The RFSP is intended to support participation in “basic recreation” activities. Most drop-in activities and registered programs advertised in the Parks, Recreation and Culture Guide are eligible for subsidy, including free drop-in admissions to swimming, skating, pitch and putt, and one community centre of the participant's choice. Activities and programs such as private lessons, personal training, professional certification courses, birthday parties and court rentals are not eligible for subsidy.

Recreation Fee Subsidy Program Applications

The revised RFSP was implemented for the Fall 2018 recreation registration season and supported participation for both families and individuals from September 4, 2018 – August 31, 2019. The revised RFSP is widely promoted and shared with community stakeholders to reach the intended demographic in the community. Applications are centrally processed by staff and applications are screened for financial hardship by assessing either income reported on the applicant's Option C Proof of Income Statement or documentation from select government financial assistance programs. From July 1, 2018 – July 31, 2019¹, 778 applications were received for the 2018–2019 RFSP.

Of the 778 applications received, 629 applications representing 1,367 individuals were approved for the program. Majority of these applications (428 or 68 per cent) submitted documentation from a select government financial assistance program to verify eligibility for the program (e.g. Youth Agreement, Rental Assistance Program and Guaranteed Income Supplement). The high percentage of applications utilizing this streamlined process indicates that the RFSP is reaching members of the community who face barriers to participation and is consistent with other government programs that provide subsidy. In addition, the revised RFSP application was reformatted for ease of use for participants.

There were 149 of the 778 applications that were not approved due to not meeting one or more financial thresholds for the program, incomplete paperwork or other program requirements.

¹ Applications received after July 31, 2019 were applied to the 2019–2020 RFSP.

Overall in year one of the revised RFSP implementation, 80 per cent of all applications were accepted.

Recreation Fee Subsidy Program Participants

By expanding program eligibility, the revised RFSP is able to support more members of the community and increase participation in programs and services while potentially improving health outcomes in the community. In the first year of the revised program (2018–2019), 1,367 individuals participated from all age groups compared to 187 participants (primarily children and youth) in the year prior to the program update (2017–2018); this reflects a 631 per cent growth in the number of people served by the RFSP. Due to the expanded eligibility of the revised RFSP, 883 of these participants were adults and seniors as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: RFSP Participation by Age Group*

Child (0-12)	Youth (13-17)	Adult (18-54)	Senior (55+)	Total**
390	94	508	375	1,367

*September 4, 2018–August 31, 2019

** Participation numbers also reflect number of Active Passes issued

During the first year of implementation, the revised program experienced significant growth throughout the year with steady intake over the 12 months.

Recreation Fee Subsidy Program Drop-in Participation

The revised RFSP expands options for participants by providing free admission (an Active Pass) to most drop-in activities at arenas, aquatic centres, parks (West Richmond Pitch and Putt Golf Course) and one community centre of the participant's choice. Each RFSP participant received an Active Pass to allow for drop-in to an activity or program by scanning their Active Passes. The total number of scans for the first year of implementation was 28,255. Aquatics/fitness drop-ins accounted for 21,570 or 76 per cent of all RFSP participant pass scans. Seniors were the largest users of this benefit with 17,351 Active Pass scans as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2: RFSP Drop-in Active Pass Scans by Age Group and Program Area*

	Child (0-12)	Youth (13-17)	Adult (18-54)	Senior (55+)	Total Passes/ Scans by Area
Aquatics	2,253	451	3,900	14,966	21,570 (scans)
Arenas	376	38	159	26	599 (scans)
Community Centres	289	494	2,915	2,253	5,951 (scans)
Parks	5	1	23	106	135 (scans)
Total	2,923	984	6,997	17,351	28,255 (scans)

*September 4, 2018–August 31, 2019

Recreation Fee Subsidy Program – Registered Program Participation

In year one of the revised RFSP program, there were 1,139 program registrations by RFSP participants, compared to 732 registrations (primarily children and youth) in the final year of the previous RFSP. Children (0–12 years) were the largest users of this benefit, registering 891 times as indicated in Table 3.

Table 3: RFSP Program Registrations by Age Group and Program Area*

	Child (0-12)	Youth (13-17)	Adult (18-54)	Senior (55+)	Total # of RFSP Registrations by Area
Aquatics	327	12	8	0	347
Arenas	80	0	6	0	86
Community Recreation	430	54	81	70	635
Arts, Fitness (City-wide)	45	3	7	3	58
Heritage, Parks	9	0	0	4	13
Total # of RFSP Registrations	891	69	102	77	1,139

*September 4, 2018–August 31, 2019

There is an emerging trend that adults and seniors tend to utilize their Active Pass to drop-in to activities over applying their allocated subsidy to registered programs.

Recreation Fee Subsidy Program Subsidy Usage

Each RFSP participant is approved for a subsidy amount to be utilized for registered programs (\$300 per year in subsidy for children and youth and \$100 per year for adults and seniors). For the first year of program implementation, \$233,500 was approved as outlined in Table 4.

Table 4: RFSP Subsidy Approvals and Usage by Age Group*

RFSP Participant Age Groups	Child (0-12)	Youth (13-17)	Adult (18-54)	Senior (55+)	Total
RFSP Subsidy Approved	\$117,000	\$28,200	\$50,800	\$37,500	\$233,500
RFSP Subsidy Used**	\$50,880	\$4,235	\$5,190	\$3,585	\$63,890
Total Unused Subsidy**	\$66,120	\$23,965	\$45,610	\$33,915	\$169,610

*September 4, 2018–August 31, 2019

**Numbers have been rounded

In the first year of the revised RFSP implementation, the overall subsidy used for program registrations was \$63,890. This equates to 27 per cent of the total amount of subsidy approved for RFSP participants in 2018–2019. Of the \$63,890 used RFSP subsidy, \$24,005 was used for program registrations at City operations (Arts Centre, Aquatics and City-wide Fitness) and \$39,885 for program registrations at Community Association and Society operations. Any unused subsidy remaining at the end of the program year (August 31, 2019) does not carryover to future years and all participants must reapply to the program to receive benefits in the next program year. As RFSP participation and awareness in the community continues to grow, it is anticipated that in the future participants will apply earlier in the year and potentially utilize more approved subsidy.

As implementation of the Central Fund² has been deferred, funds to support subsidized registrations in programs offered by Community Associations and Societies were drawn from the City's Community Services operating budget. On October 15, 2019, Council approved the allocation of \$25,000 from the RFSP contingency fund of \$50,000 to support subsidized RFSP registrations in programs offered by Community Association and Societies from September 1–December 31, 2019. Furthermore, Council approved an additional level of \$82,000 be submitted for consideration in the 2020 budget process to ensure RFSP is able to continue.

Richmond Olympic Oval

The Richmond Olympic Oval (Oval) is also participating in the revised RFSP. RFSP participants receive free admission (including helmet and skate rentals) to Oval community events that are held throughout the year. Select children and youth registered programs are also available at a 90 per

² Community Associations and Societies contribute a percentage of gross revenues (less grants, donations, sponsorships and interest) to a Central Fund to support RFSP subsidized registrations in programs offered by Community Association and Societies.

cent subsidized rate. In the first year of the revised RFSP, five RFSP participants used their subsidy towards an Oval program. City and Oval staff continue to work together to support RFSP participation at the Oval as they are a valued partner in the program.

Participant Feedback

Overall, the revised RFSP has been positively received by participants and their feedback to staff has highlighted the impact the program has had on both them and their families. Examples of the feedback received are below:

“I am currently residing at the Richmond House Emergency Shelter. Daily spiritual practice and regular exercise have both been helping me keep my head above water during this challenging time. I am thankful there is a program in place for folks who are facing financial struggles and appreciate you considering me for RFSP.”

“This program sounds great! Our family will really appreciate being able to swim and skate and exercise at a community center gym!!”

“She told me “climbing is fun!” I never expected her to say that. It looks that she had a super fun day! I believe that she would have a great time at Dance and Cheer camp and Get Skills camp there.”

Revised Recreation Fee Subsidy Program Year Two – September 1, 2019 – Aug 31, 2020

Commencing Winter 2020, the RFSP registration process will be streamlined with the new program registration system, PerfectMind. RFSP participants will have direct access to their subsidy allocations on their accounts and be able to apply subsidy as a payment method when registering online. This streamlined registration process will provide enhanced customer service and is also anticipated to support increased use of subsidy allocation by RFSP participants in 2020.

Staff will continue to review the program throughout year two of implementation for opportunities to enhance customer service, streamline administrative processes and increase targeted program promotion to stakeholders in the community. After year two of the revised RFSP implementation is complete, staff will respond to the second part of the staff referral and bring forward a final RFSP evaluation report in Quarter 4, 2020. The report will include recommended adjustments to the program and a long-term funding strategy that will take into consideration the impact of the Community Services pricing policy that is currently under development.

Financial Impact

None.

Conclusion

The revised Recreation Fee Subsidy Program experienced tremendous growth in its first year of implementation with 1,367 participants in the program. By revising the RFSP to expand eligibility to all ages as well as program choice for residents living on low income, the City, and Community Associations and Societies have reduced barriers to participation and increased access to programs and services at Richmond’s community centres, cultural and heritage

facilities, parks, aquatic centres and arenas. Staff anticipate participation in the revised RFSP will continue to grow throughout the second year of program implementation. A final RFSP evaluation report will be brought forward to Council in Quarter 4, 2020 that will include overall recommended adjustments to the program as well as a long-term funding strategy.



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