

# AFFORDABLE ACCESS TO RECREATION FOR ONTARIANS

POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE  
FOR COMMUNITIES



Prepared by The Ontario Task Group on Affordable Access to Recreation, supported by  
Parks and Recreation Ontario with funding from the Ontario Ministry of Health Promotion



# Acknowledgements

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The Ontario Task Group on Affordable Access to Recreation was established by Parks and Recreation Ontario in 2006. Its goal is to work collaboratively to influence policy development in Ontario to increase access to recreation for low-income Ontarians.

## Task Group Members

- Association of Municipalities of Ontario
- Canadian Tire Jumpstart
- Canadian Parks and Recreation Association
- Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction
- Ontario Municipal Social Services Association
- Ontario Public Health Association
- Parks and Recreation Ontario

**This Policy Framework that informed the creation of this Policy Development and Implementation Guide for Communities was developed by the Task Group in collaboration with:**

- The Ontario Ministry of Health Promotion
- The Heart and Stroke Foundation Ontario
- The Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services
- The Ontario Ministry of Education
- City of Mississauga
- City of Toronto
- Peel Region
- YMCA

Resources developed by the Task Group, including this Policy Development and Implementation Guide for Communities, are available online at the Lifestyle Information Network website, [lin.ca/access-to-recreation](http://lin.ca/access-to-recreation), and at the Parks and Recreation Ontario website, [www.prontario.org](http://www.prontario.org).

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The Ontario Task Group on Affordable Access to Recreation has invested three years in researching the best ways to improve access to recreation. It has created The Affordable Access to Recreation for Ontarians Policy Framework in order to galvanize action on this important issue at the federal, provincial and local level. This section highlights the objectives of this Implementation Guide, key themes in the Promising Practices Guide, current barriers to accessing recreation and the vision and objectives of the Policy Framework.

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It is important to have a solid foundation for the development of your own affordable access policy and Community Action Plan. The Implementation Guide provides a five step approach that any municipality or community group can use to initiate the process, write the policy and then monitor and evaluate the success of your Action Plan.

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Everyone has a stake in the success of your Community Action Plan and everyone will benefit from equitable and affordable access. There must be a concerted effort by all levels of government, stakeholder and allied organization and community members to achieve the vision of affordable access to recreation for all Ontarians.

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# Section A: Introduction

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Welcome to the Affordable Access to Recreation for Ontarians Policy Development and Implementation Guide for Communities. The primary goal of this Guide is to assist your municipality in developing a Community Action Plan for affordable access to recreation, which will encompass several steps, including research, collaboration, and establishing a council-approved Affordable Access Policy. It also provides strategies for implementing and sustaining the policy in your community.

Staff members working in municipalities across Ontario are at various stages of implementing an Affordable Access Policy. As a starting point, some have implemented programs and services that increase access to recreation through ad hoc initiatives, while others have created and implemented a formal Affordable Access Policy.

The guide will be beneficial for a variety of staff within your municipality, as well as affiliated organizations. You may be:

- A Program Manager, responsible for implementing a program/service to increase access to recreation, who would like to increase or enhance the existing programs/services
- An Administrative Manager who is responsible for overseeing the administration of the Affordable Access Policy
- A Director or Senior Manager who realizes the importance of the municipality providing increased access to recreation and wants to create an Affordable Access Policy
- A Financial staff person responsible for managing the budget who wants to generate more sustainable funding to offset program/policy subsidies
- A Policy Analyst responsible for writing a new Affordable Access policy for the organization who wants to access and utilize resources when writing the policy
- An Executive Director who would like to develop and implement an Affordable Access policy within their organization or in collaboration with a municipality
- A Social Services Director who would like to be part of a collaborative network in their community to develop and implement an Affordable Access policy

No matter what your title or department, by opening this Guide you are starting a process that will provide you with a plan to conduct the necessary research, collaborate with key organizations, develop the policy and evaluate your success. After all, a municipality or not-for-profit organization without an Affordable Access Policy is at risk of preventing children, youth, adults and older adults who face financial barriers from experiencing the benefits of recreation.

***“If no cost recreation was proactively arranged for a majority of Ontario Works families, significant savings would result from increased independence and exits from welfare rolls.”***

Dr. Mark Totten, The Health, Social and Economic Benefits of Increasing Access to Recreation for Low-Income Families: Research Summary Report, November 2007, citing Browne et al.

## Objectives of the Implementation Guide

This Implementation Guide draws on the policy directions outlined in the **Affordable Access to Recreation for Ontarians Policy Framework** ([www.prontario.org/index.php/ci\\_id/3681.htm](http://www.prontario.org/index.php/ci_id/3681.htm)) and was developed by the Ontario Task Group on Affordable Access to Recreation. The Policy Framework is built on a collaborative model and provides concrete steps that provincial and local governments, local authorities, community organizations and other stakeholders can take to achieve the vision of the framework.

Research conducted by the Task Group and the review of the promising practices have culminated in the Policy Framework which identifies two fundamental policy objectives which must be present in every community in Ontario if affordable access is to be improved for low-income Ontarians:

- An Affordable Access Policy, approved by the local government or authority, must be established. The Policy will incorporate a number of strategies in order to improve access to recreation services for Ontarians for whom fees are a barrier to participation.
- A core set of free programs must be made available to establish a degree of universality in each community.

Achieving these two fundamental policy directions, access policies and core set of free, universal programs will ensure systemic change occurs at the local level. However, establishing free, universal programs is, for many places in Ontario, a social policy change and will come at a cost. Given the current investment the provincial government continues to make in helping Ontarians lead healthy and active lives, their partnership is both strategic and necessary. The policy framework recommends the role the provincial government would need to play to help communities implement this fundamental policy direction.

The framework also contains three additional policy strategies that communities can implement to achieve the two fundamental policy objectives:

- Community Access to Community Space
- Partnership and Collaboration
- Targeted Community Outreach and Engagement

The Ontario Task Group recognizes that improving access to recreation requires local solutions since recreation is a locally mandated service. The Policy Framework also recognizes the role the province and other stakeholders must play if affordable access is to be achieved in an equitable manner across the province. As a result, the Framework is designed to galvanize communities, the private sector and all levels of government, based on a shared vision of affordable access. This Guide provides communities with more practical tools and resources to help them implement that vision locally.



The recreation sector in Ontario has come a long way in identifying the benefits of recreation, the barriers to access for low-income families, and creative solutions. Many promising policies and programs exist, but without a framework they tend to occur in a “patchwork” way. This limits opportunities to evaluate their effectiveness and maximize benefits across the province.

## Promising Practices

The significance of these two policy objectives and three policy strategies are further supported by the findings of the recently published Access to Recreation Promising Practices Guide. Funded by the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (CPRA) **Everybody gets to Play™** initiative, the Promising Practices Guide provides examples of progressive and innovative policies and practices that can enhance access to recreation for low-income families in Ontario. The Promising Practices Guide can be downloaded from the Parks and Recreation Ontario website at: [www.prontario.org/index.php/ci\\_id/3722.htm](http://www.prontario.org/index.php/ci_id/3722.htm)

The Promising Practices Guide revealed five common themes that significantly contributed the success of these initiatives. These themes are reflected throughout the Policy Framework and Community Guide:

- i. Where cost is a barrier, eliminating user fees and offsetting transportation and equipment costs enables low-income Ontarians to participate in recreational programs in a non-stigmatizing way. Fee assistance approaches which are not intrusive and which are simple for recipients to request and equally simple for an organization to administer have greater impact and minimize human resources.
- ii. A written access policy that is approved by a municipal council or authority formalizes the commitment of the organization and helps ensure the viability and long-term sustainability of the policy.
- iii. Community partnerships and inter-sectoral collaboration help ensure a holistic approach that maximizes resources and increases access to recreational, social and educational programming.
- iv. Funding partnerships are essential as many Promising Practices initiatives are dependent on additional funding. Long-term sustainability is difficult to achieve without the availability of ongoing base funding.
- v. Child and youth development programs foster leadership and self-esteem, enhance physical and emotional health and increase social skills, resulting in positive outcomes for those who participate. The many testimonials submitted by communities for the Promising Practices Guide validate the extensive research conducted on the benefits of participation in recreation, especially for low-income children, youth and families.

***“This summer program has been amazing. My three children attend regularly and always had a great time. The leaders were wonderful. I truly hope this will be an ongoing program offered yearly. It is needed for the children.”***

Parent of a child participating in the free summer Playground Program in the Town of Ajax

## Barriers to Affordable Recreation

The barriers to affordable recreation are evident from research and consultation done in Ontario and at the national level over the past several years. Barriers can be grouped into two broad categories:

1. Barriers faced by low-income Ontarians in gaining access to recreation programs and facilities (“demand side”).
2. Barriers faced by municipalities and local organizations in providing affordable access to recreation programs and facilities (“supply side”).

	<b>“DEMAND SIDE” Barriers Faced by Low-Income Ontarians</b>	<b>“SUPPLY SIDE” Barriers Faced by Municipal and Community Providers</b>
<b>PROGRAMS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low awareness of programs and the importance of recreation</li> <li>• Parental mistrust</li> <li>• Lack of structured, culturally-sensitive and accessible programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity to engage communities and create responsive programs</li> <li>• Shortage of support and training for quality coaches, mentors and volunteers</li> <li>• Lack of structured, culturally-sensitive and accessible programs</li> </ul>
<b>FACILITIES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of transportation and community-based infrastructure</li> <li>• Lack of places for both informal recreation and structured programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affordable access to community spaces</li> <li>• Maintaining infrastructure and facilities to meet current and future demands</li> </ul>
<b>AFFORDABILITY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• User fees</li> <li>• Stigma and complexity of fee subsidies</li> <li>• Transportation and equipment costs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need for sustainable funding</li> <li>• Cost pressures and competing priorities</li> </ul>
<b>CAPACITY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of voice for low-income Ontarians</li> <li>• Lack of program integration and coordination</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access policy expertise, coordination and frameworks</li> <li>• The will to take action</li> </ul>
<b>ACCOUNTABILITY</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ways to measure success</li> <li>• Incentives</li> </ul>

These barriers should be taken into consideration as you begin to develop your Affordable Access Policy and Community Action Plan. Developing a policy that includes fee assistance for your recreation programs is a good place to start, but that is only one step in removing barriers. If, for example, a family cannot afford transportation costs associated with attending the program or equipment costs necessary to take part in a program, fee assistance will not be as effective.

It is also important to take into consideration the stigma that families may feel when approaching any recreation provider for financial assistance. In a weak economic climate, you will have many more families who have never before had to ask for assistance – the alternative is to have them drop out of programs they previously attended if there is no fee assistance program. *As you work through this toolkit, always bear in mind how your policy statements and subsequent procedures should minimize any stigma attached to accessing assistance; rather, it should promote a feeling of inclusiveness for all of your participants.*

## Vision and Objectives of the Policy Framework

***“Our goal is simple. We want to ensure the healthy development of children, youth, individuals and families in Ontario, through play.”***

Howie Dayton, Task Group Chair

This Implementation Guide supports the following vision and objectives for affordable access to recreation as articulated in the Policy Framework. This vision is supported by the *Charter for Recreation and Parks in Ontario* (2009 – see Resources), which states that the fundamental Rights of Ontarians will include equitable access to parks and recreation in their communities.

### 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.**

### Objectives

<b>Affordability</b>	A range of affordable recreation programs will be in place in every community across the province. Where user fees exist, fee assistance will be provided for those facing financial barriers.
<b>Places to play</b>	Communities will have formal and informal spaces where people can participate in recreational activities. Rental fees will not be a barrier to community use of public spaces.
<b>Awareness</b>	Low-income Ontarians will be aware of the existence and importance of affordable recreation opportunities.
<b>Inclusion</b>	Affordable recreation programs will be responsive to Ontario’s cultural diversity, gender, and accessible to persons with disabilities.
<b>Capacity</b>	Municipalities and community providers will have sustainable funding, and the skills and tools they need to provide affordable recreation programs and facilities.
<b>Collaboration</b>	All stakeholders will work together to develop and implement access policies and to design and maintain affordable programs and spaces, drawing on the strengths of what already exists.
<b>Accountability</b>	A concerted effort will be made to implement the policy framework, monitor its implementation, and build on successes.

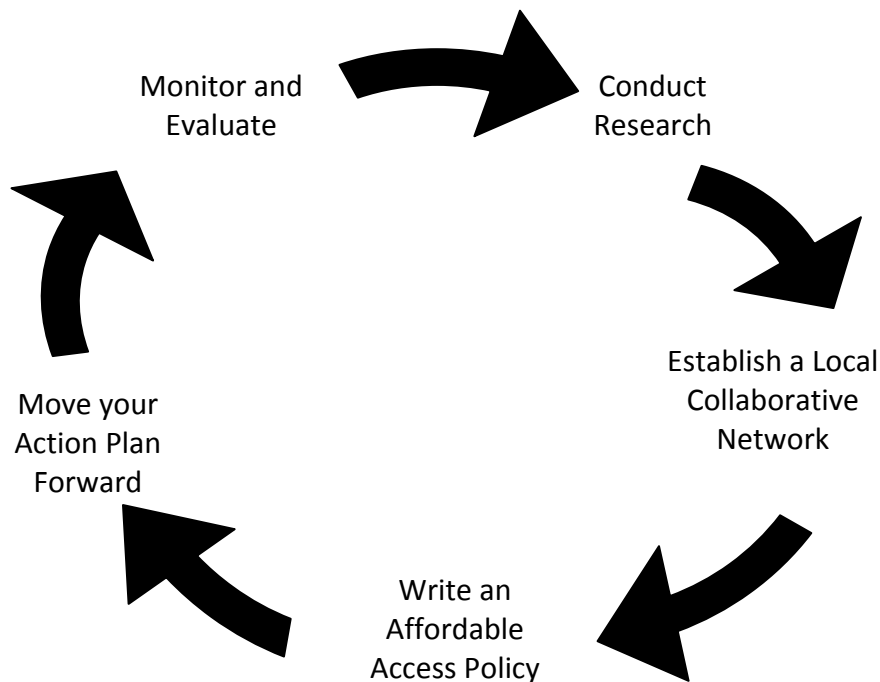
# Section B: Developing a Community Action Plan

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So, you have read the Policy Framework and are now convinced that your municipality should have an Affordable Access Policy. Where do you begin? It is important to develop a Community Action Plan that will map out the development of your Affordable Access Policy and the associated programs and initiatives that will be included in the policy. By following this Action Plan, you will develop a policy that reflects best practices, enhances communication with affiliated organizations, promotes the social and economic benefits to all residents of your community and provides opportunities to monitor and evaluate your access program.

Depending on the work you have previously done in terms of research and collaboration, you can expect to take a minimum of six months to work through the Community Action Plan. The five step process we have developed will ensure that you have a solid foundation for your Affordable Access Policy.

## Community Action Plan Cycle



You will see that is a cycle rather than a straight line. Policy development is an iterative process in which you are constantly researching, collaborating, and evaluating each step. This will ensure that your Community Action Plan will be flexible enough to respond to changing community needs and organizational priorities.

You will find that the process of developing your Community Action Plan will be as important as completion of your Affordable Access Policy and will bring a richness and strength to your final policy and related programs, partnerships and initiatives.

Your Action Plan should be developed in consultation with partners, stakeholders, and provincial representatives and should include specific timelines, costs, measures and accountability. Such a plan, having been endorsed by all stakeholders, will help a community achieve its goals, measure its successes and build credibility with the community and with funders.

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**Helpful Hint:**

An easy way to begin your dialogue on affordable access to recreation is to facilitate a SWOT analysis on your community's response to affordable recreation:

**Strengths** – What you are doing well? What collaboration, partnerships, programs and funding already exist to facilitate more affordable access?

**Weaknesses** – Where are the gaps? What could you be doing better?

**Opportunities** – Focus on the opportunities to work collaboratively

**Threats** – What is the potential issue for your community if affordable access is not available?

You should include other staff from your municipality, affiliated organizations and other major stakeholders to help undertake a SWOT analysis.

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Now that you have a preview of the five steps required to create a Community Action Plan, it's time to work through each step as it pertains to your municipality or community organization. The workbook format that follows walks you through each of the five steps by asking key questions that require your consideration when conducting research and establishing a collaborative network. Feel free to use the Implementation Guide to document your thoughts and discussions.

## Step 1 – Conduct Research

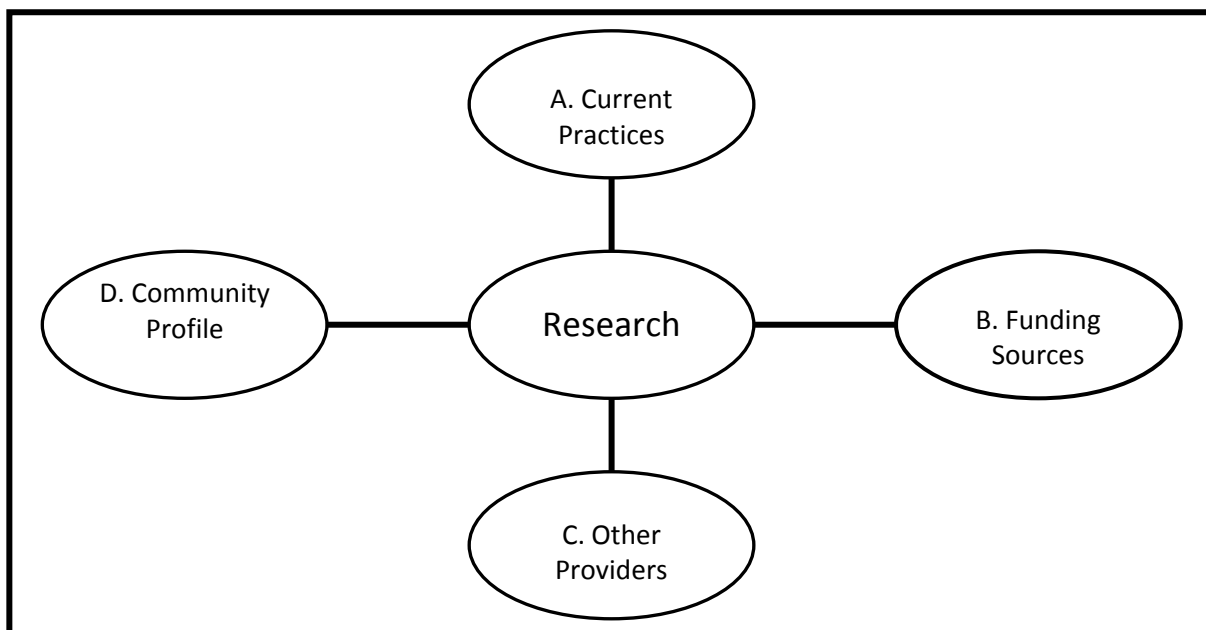
The first step in your Community Action Plan is to lay the foundation for an Affordable Access Policy that will respond to local need and align with the mission and vision of your municipality or organization. This allows you to “make the case” for an affordable Access Policy and Action Plan with decision makers. Allocate sufficient time to understand what programs and/or practices that remove barriers to participation are being implemented within your organization and in your community today. Don’t do this in isolation. Using existing and appropriate community networks, or creating your own Affordable Access Collaborative, is vital for building momentum and local support and also avoids duplication. A local network that mirrors the Ontario Task Group on Affordable Access to Recreation and includes social services, NGOs, funders, recreation, education, and community members will be effective. This is a perfect opportunity to engage your community. Find out what other organizations are doing and who might be new partners in developing your Affordable Access Policy.

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**Note:** When you are doing your research, keep in mind the barriers to affordable recreation as outlined in the Affordable Access to Recreation Framework. Although one of the most identified barriers is financial, there are also other barriers, including availability of public transportation, equipment costs, perceived stigma when asking for assistance, lack of awareness of the benefits of recreation, lack of affordable child care, and lack of awareness of low- and no-cost programs.

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Let’s see what research you might undertake before setting out to define your position on affordable recreation. The first step is to conduct an organizational audit to determine the current status of your involvement in affordable access to recreation:



**A. Current Practices**

- i. What current assistance programs/practices do you offer that remove barriers to recreation for individuals/families?

Name of Program or Practice	Description of Program/Practice (refer to barriers)	Notes (include special outreach, targeted neighbourhoods etc.)

**Comments:**

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- ii. What current free, universal recreation program(s) do you offer? (i.e. family swim, community cultural events, drop in program)

Name of Program	Description (annual, community-based events, physical activity)	Notes

**Comments:**

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- iii. What current assistance program/practices do you offer community groups wanting to use your facilities to enable them to provide low- or no-cost recreational opportunities?

Program or Practice	Description of Program/Practice (e.g. refer to barriers)	Restrictions

**Comments:**

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**B. Funding Sources**

- i. What external funding are you currently accessing to support fee assistance programs or other affordable access initiatives?

Funding Source	Type (i.e. on-going, annual, one-time/government, private sector)	Amount (if known)

**Comments:**

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- ii. What are the potential funding sources, both public and private, that you could access to support a new initiative or policy? (e.g. provincial government, Canadian Tire Jumpstart, foundations, United Way, Trillium, upper tier municipality etc.)

Company or Organization	Funding Guidelines	Notes

**Comments:**

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- iii. What other municipal or organizational policies or initiatives align with or support affordable access to recreation (e.g. grants to groups programs, youth engagement, reciprocal agreements, etc.)? Use this information to support the vision for your policy.

Policy or initiative	Connection to affordable recreation	Notes

**Comments:**

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**C. Other Providers and Networks**

- i. What affiliated or community organizations also provided recreational programs and services (either within your facilities or in other locations)? Briefly note their fee assistance policy, if applicable.

Organization	Programs and Services	Fee Assistance Available?

**Comments:**

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- ii. Briefly describe the current networks and alliances that exist to support access to recreation.

Network	Description of Activity	Notes

Comments:

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#### D. Community Profile

- i. What statistical data might you utilize to determine the scope of financial need within your community (e.g. Stats Canada, Local or regional planning, Public Health, GIS mapping etc.)?

Data Source/Type	Information Provided and Timing/Availability (i.e. how current is the information?)	Notes

Comments:

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Now you have a picture of what is currently being done in your community. You can look for opportunities to build on what is there and leverage existing resources. In the next section, you will review your local partnerships, and then identify gaps in service delivery and opportunities for further collaboration.

### **Activity Review**

Here are more examples of how to collect and use the information gathered in this section:

- Consult with stakeholders in your community to assess community need and establish partnerships where appropriate.
- Conduct research to align access initiatives with corporate strategic directions and community values to demonstrate the benefits and impact increasing access to recreation.
- Review provincial promising practices and other access policies and use research to create a business case to obtain support of the access policy.
- Analyze and document current subsidy levels within user fees.
- Determine fee assistance approaches and analyze operational and revenue implications for administering fee assistance and reducing fees.

### **Additional Notes:**

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## Step 2 – Establish a Local Collaborative Network

Partnerships will enhance and strengthen the capacity of your municipality or organization to provide recreation opportunities for families that are in need of assistance. A municipality may have partnerships with organizations that provide recreation programs and services as well as organizations that assist in funding and referring individuals and families. Most organizations struggle with the same issues. Much can be learned through ongoing dialogue and collaboration will enhance your ability to reach those in need through shared resources and referrals. For example, families accessing a variety of services will benefit from a coordinated approach.

A good starting place is to do an inventory of your current partnerships. These may range from colleagues you know and with whom you share information on an informal basis to formal partnerships with organizations and/or other levels of government that involve agreements and contracts.

Now it is time for you to utilize the workbook below to help you assess the status of your partnerships. Again, in doing so you may identify existing gaps in programs and services. This provides an opportunity not only to enhance existing partnerships to fill these gaps but also to engage new partners.

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**Note:** If you have a collaborative network in place, it is still a good idea to review what groups are part of your network and how effective your partnerships are.

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### A. Formal Partnerships

List organizations with which you have formal partnership agreements (e.g. joint use agreements, funding grants, rental agreements, etc.). These groups will form the core of your Collaborative Network.

Organization	Type of Agreement	Barriers These Address (cultural, transportation, cost)

Comments:

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### B. Informal Partnerships

Who are your current partners that will complement the municipality's role in providing recreation programs and services, provide fee assistance, act as a referral source etc. (e.g. Public Health, Social Services, United Way, John Howard Society, YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, School Boards, Canadian Tire Jumpstart, Kidsport, etc.?)

Organization	Current Partnership Relationship	Potential Role

Comments:

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**C. Enhanced or New Partnerships**

What organizations might you call upon to form a local or regional planning table for affordable recreation access (e.g. public health, YMCAs, not for profit organizations, sports groups, etc.)?

Organization	Contact Information	Notes

**Comments:**

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**D. Identification of Gaps**

Now is the time to review the information gathered on programs and partners in Steps 1 and 2 and develop an inventory of what the gaps and opportunities are for your Community Action Plan (e.g. providing free, universal programs, need for greater collaboration with other organizations, etc.).

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### **E. Long Range Vision**

What is the long range vision (2 – 3 years) for your community in regards to affordable access to recreation?

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#### **Congratulations!**

**You have now finished the research and collaboration part of this implementation guide. As noted above, because policy development is a cyclical process, you will likely spend more time researching and establishing partnerships to strengthen your Community Action Plan. In the next section, you will now begin to outline the contents of your Affordable Access Policy as you move forward.**



### **Step 3: Develop and Implement an Affordable Access Policy**

Now that you have completed the first two steps in the Community Action Plan, you will have the information at hand to begin to write your Affordable Access Policy. You may have identified current practices within your municipality or affiliated community groups that assist residents to take part in programs for a reduced fee, or that you have programs that are low- or no-cost to all community residents. You will also have established formal and informal partnerships and a local network which will provide input to and support for the Community Action Plan and Policy. Finally, you have begun to form a long-term vision to improve access to recreation in your community.

The purpose of your Affordable Access Policy is to capture your current practices, build on them where appropriate and set a long-range vision for your community. Such a vision or policy statement, if broad in scope, gives you the flexibility and opportunity to meet the changing needs of your community in a transparent and consistent way. By having this policy entrenched through Council approval, you will ensure that you have the support and the time to achieve this vision.

Once again, it should be noted that The Ontario Task Group recommends that Affordable Access Policies will include at a minimum a formal structure for fee assistance (where user fees exist) and the provision of free programs for the entire community (universal). However, the Task Group also recognizes that an incremental approach to the implementation of a community action plan and policy may be necessary. If the two policy objectives cannot be achieved in full, policy work should not be delayed. Policies can be amended or updated at any time. It is advisable that you include a broad vision for your policy, supported by a long-range plan to facilitate future enhancement.

**This section of the toolkit provides the format for writing your Affordable Access Policy that should include the following components:**

- A. Introduction or policy statement and objectives**
- B. Affordable access policy components**
- C. Administration of the policy**
- D. Financial implications**
- E. Partnerships and collaboration**
- F. Community use of space**

Each of the following sections provides a number of questions that will assist you while you develop your policy, as well as some sample statements from communities that currently have Affordable Access Policies. At the end of each section there is space to begin to draft your own statements on affordable access.

**To review a complete Affordable Access Policy from the Town of Ajax, please visit [www.prontario.org/index.php/ci\\_id/3723.htm](http://www.prontario.org/index.php/ci_id/3723.htm).**

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**Helpful Hint for Municipalities:** Your Municipal Clerk will be able to provide you with samples of other policies to show you the style and language used in municipal policies. These take a more formal style and include more “high-level” statements to clarify the principles and position of Council.

**Helpful Hint for Non-Profits:** In a non-profit organization, there may also be standard formats or templates for organizational policies. The steps below focus mainly on municipal policy, but the same language and components work equally well for all recreation providers.

In addition, it will be helpful for non-profit organizations to understand municipal policies. As discussed in previous sections, partnerships between government and non-profit organizations are key to the success of any Community Action Plan.

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Not included in the policy document, but equally as important, are the operational procedures important to staff for implementing the policy on a daily basis. Procedures may or may not have to be approved by Council or board, and it is also recommended that you or a staff team develop and document procedures for implementation once the policy is approved.

#### **A. Introduction to the Affordable Access Policy**

Many policies begin with a statement that briefly articulates the overall purpose of the policy, i.e. why the policy exists. The statement should include the intent and scope of your affordable access program as well as its objectives. It can also state a long-term vision for your community that is not tied to any immediate or specific action.

##### **i. Brief Statement of Intent**

What is the main purpose of the policy – why does it exist?

	<b>Sample Statements of Intent</b>
<b>Ajax</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ The Town of Ajax recognizes and promotes the full participation of all Ajax residents in recreational programs and services regardless of financial circumstances. Programs and services will be planned, delivered and evaluated to ensure they are affordable, inclusive and responsive to need.</li></ul>
<b>King</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ C.A.P. is a program created by the Township of King, designed to assist families in the community with their financial needs in regard to recreation programs.</li></ul>
<b>London</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ The Community Services Department would like to encourage all Londoners to enjoy the many benefits of recreational and leisure participation.</li></ul>
<b>Mississauga</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ The City of Mississauga’s Fee Assistance Program will enable many residents living in low-income households to register and participate in structured, quality recreation activities by offering user fee credit subsidies.</li></ul>

Your statement of intent:

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**ii. A general statement about the overall objectives of the policy**

Will the policy:

- Include fee assistance as a method of reducing barriers?
- Define free, core programs that will be available to everyone (universal) or at a low cost?
- Describe the need for targeted programming (i.e. culturally specific)?
- Describe outreach needed to reach targeted communities?
- Improve community access to community space?
- Identify partnerships with other organizations?
- Promote affordable access to recreation in other ways?
- Establish guidelines for the administration of the policy including measures and evaluation?

**Sample policy objectives (Ajax)**

1. Provide guidelines for the development of introductory, universal and more affordable programs and services.
2. Establish a standardized and transparent procedure for the administration of financial assistance for recreational programs and services delivered by the Town of Ajax where user fees are unaffordable to a participant.
3. Establish criteria for the review and approval of requests for financial assistance for recreation programs and services and delegating such authority to staff.
4. Provide guidelines for the development of partnerships and agreements that provide affordable access to recreation for low income families.
5. Identify the training needs of staff to assist in their administration of the Affordable Access to Recreation & Cultural Services Policy and related procedures.
6. Document the approaches the Town of Ajax will take to enable community organizations using municipal recreational facilities to respond effectively to requests for financial assistance.

Your policy objectives:

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**The Importance of a Name!**

The name of your policy does not have to be “Affordable Recreation Policy” – that is what it is, but you may want to select a name that might better reflect the intent of your access program. Things to consider:

- A name that is not stigmatizing
- A name that is catchy
- A name people can remember

Some samples:

City of Toronto – The Welcome Policy

King – C.A.P. (Community Assistance Program)

County of Brant and City of Brantford – Can We Help program

Town of Milton – Fee Access Policy

Port Hope – Access to Recreation

Mississauga – Active Assist

## B. Affordable Access Policy Components

The body of your policy document should clearly outline the position of the municipality or organization in regard to the policy objectives you have included.

### i. Fee Assistance

#### a. Who is eligible for financial assistance?

Each municipality will develop their own criteria for eliminating financial barriers to participation for community residents.

- Anyone living in the municipality who meets the financial criteria? Parents and children? Children only?
- Are certain categories of people ineligible, e.g. full-time post-secondary students or recipients of other subsidies (i.e. Ontario Works)?

	<b>Sample Text: Who is Eligible?</b>
<b>King</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The C.A.P. is a program design to offer assistance to children and families in need of financial subsidies.</li></ul>
<b>London</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Any London resident/taxpayer who considers him/herself (his/her family) to be unable to pay the full registration fee can apply for financial assistance (self-declaration).</li></ul>
<b>Peterborough</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Children under 19 years of age are eligible for subsidy assistance.</li></ul>

Your policy statement on eligibility for financial assistance:

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**b. How is financial need determined?**

- Proof that the individual receives a form of social assistance or disability support?
- Proof that family income is below the Statistics Canada low-income cut-off (LICO) or other income measure (LIM, Deprivation Index)?

	<b>Sample Text: Determinants of Financial Need</b>
<b>London</b>	A policy fee schedule based on Statistics Canada’s Low-Income Cut-off will be used by staff to determine the amount of financial assistance provided to individuals or families. This schedule will be used for all recreation programs offered by the Parks and Recreation Division. This policy fee schedule will be adjusted from time to time when new financial data becomes available from Statistics Canada.
<b>Mississauga</b>	To qualify for the program the applicant must be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a resident of Mississauga;</li> <li>• have a total net individual or combined family income below LICO;</li> <li>• be able to provide recent official documentation that shows total family net income, and proof that all dependants are the legal responsibility of the adult and reside in the adult’s household, using one or more of the following original statements/documents:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guaranteed Income Supplement;</li> <li>• Ontario Disabilities Support Program benefit;</li> <li>• Ontario Works;</li> <li>• CPP Disability Pension Statement; or</li> <li>• Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CRA) Notice of Assessment form (T451) showing net income/earnings for all adults less than the designated cut-offs</li> <li>• Canada Child Tax Benefit Notice;</li> <li>• Ontario Child Care Supplement for Working Families; and</li> <li>• Goods and Services Tax/Harmonized Sales Tax Credit.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Peterborough</b>	Eligibility requirements include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• applicant is not receiving assistance from another agency for the same program</li> <li>• the organization offering the program is based in the city of Peterborough</li> <li>• the organization offering the program is incorporated.</li> </ul>
	<b>Sample Text: Non-Eligible Persons</b>
<b>Mississauga</b>	Post-secondary students who are enrolled full-time in a college or university are not eligible, as these institutions provide affordable recreation options.

Your policy statement on how financial need is determined:

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**c. How much is the fee assistance?**

- Does the amount of the fee assistance vary depending on income?
- Is there a cap on the amount of the subsidy or the number of subsidized programs?
- Is there a minimum amount the subsidy recipient must pay?

	<b>Sample Text: Caps</b>
<b>London</b>	Financial assistance is limited to a maximum value of \$150 per Spectrum session per individual per year (\$300/year). Financial assistance is available to a maximum of \$150 per person for a 6-month program session. With the release of each Spectrum catalogue, new funds become available. Unused funds cannot be carried over to future sessions.
<b>Richmond Hill</b>	Adults are eligible for one program per session. Children are eligible for one general program per session; one aquatic program per session; one BASK/School holiday registration; two weeks of summer camp.
<b>Dovercourt (community association)</b>	Maximum annual subsidy based on \$175 per person in the family but the division of the total is up to the discretion of the family. Maximum program subsidy is 75% of the course fee. Size of family and family income before tax determines the maximum dollar amount of the annual subsidy per family. E.g. Family of 4 with \$42,000 income before tax gets \$700 max annual subsidy.
	<b>Sample Text: Maximum Payment</b>
<b>Ajax</b>	Town-approved financial assistance is to a maximum of 34% of a program's fee with the balance paid by the individual (exceptions are clients in receipt of financial assistance through Durham Region).
<b>Ajax</b>	Clients in receipt of financial assistance through Durham Region as defined in section 3.3.5 will not be subject to additional eligibility requirements. Town-approved financial assistance is to a maximum of 50% of a program fee with the balance paid by the individual.

Your policy statement on subsidy amounts and limits:

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**d. What programs and costs are covered?**

- Are all municipal recreation and cultural programs eligible?
- Are registration fees, program materials, supplies and equipment costs, assistive devices and related supports eligible?
- If community organizations offer programs in community spaces and have their own fee assistance programs, are participants eligible for support from the municipality as well?

	<b>Examples – What Municipal Programs and Costs are Covered?</b>
<b>Ajax</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This policy extends to eligible programs and services directly delivered by Recreation &amp; Culture.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Eligible full-fee introductory and specialty programs and services which are delivered directly will have financial assistance available on an as-requested basis.</li> </ul>
<b>London</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This policy provides financial assistance with the cost of registration fees, identified program materials, supplies and equipment costs, assistive devices and related supports. All City of London Parks and Recreation programs, memberships and pass plans offered through the Spectrum guide are eligible for support.</li> </ul>
<b>London</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial assistance is available for most recreation programs, activities or memberships provided by the City of London. Assistance is available for program registration and material fees, as well as admission packages for general participation activities such as swimming and skating.</li> </ul>
<b>Peterborough</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subsidy will be provided for recreation programs offered in the city of Peterborough.</li> </ul>
	<b>Sample Text: What is Excluded?</b>
<b>Ajax</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This policy excludes contracted program agreements with individuals/organizations delivering programs in partnership with or on behalf of the Town unless language related to affordable access is incorporated into the Agreement. It also excludes programs and services where discounts and subsidies already exist (students/seniors).</li> </ul>
<b>Peterborough</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual and family memberships may be considered under the subsidy program for the City’s Peterborough Sport and Wellness Centre. Subsidy for memberships for other facility providers will not be considered.</li> </ul>
<b>Dovercourt (community policy)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exclusions: fitness centre orientations, personal training, private lessons and supply fees associated with certain programs (for example: clay, manuals, and exam fees).</li> </ul>
	<b>Sample Text: Programs Offered by Other Recreation Providers</b>
<b>King</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• [The C.A.P. program is available for] all programs within the Township of King, not just Township specific programs. This could include minor sports registration, art programs or any registration for youth and children’s programs.</li> </ul>



Your policy statement on what programs and costs are covered:

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**ii. Free, Universal Programs**

Many municipalities already offer some free programming and free recreational events for the community. It is important to include these within your policy so that they are entrenched within service delivery.

- What specific programs or categories of programs will be offered without a fee?
- Will these programs be offered to all residents or will they be age specific?
- What programs currently operate below 100% cost recovery?

**The Policy Framework States:**

**Communities identify a core set of recreation programs that will be universally available to children, youth, individuals and families and offer these programs without a user fee.**

**Rationale**

Ideally, all types of recreation would be available to everyone at no cost. This is unrealistic today and the negative, unintentional consequence of rising user fees has been marginalization of those who cannot afford these fees. Evidence-based research provides a strong argument for the sector to reverse this trend. The goal is to identify those program opportunities which align with the social determinants of health and quality of life indicators, and those that support positive social and physical development and provincial policy priorities. These are the kinds of publicly-funded programs that constitute an essential, core activity and should be available to everyone to ensure the healthy development of individuals and to enhance the overall quality of life within the community. As an essential service, these programs must be funded 100% and offered at no cost so that financial status does not determine who does and who does not participate.

**Examples of Free Programs**

- Free universal summer playground programs
- Free sport development introductory programs at community schools
- Cultural programs in targeted communities, offered at no cost
- Youth drop-in programs
- Community events, concerts and festivals
- Family fitness classes

Your policy statement on free, universal programs:

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**Helpful Hint:**

Establishing and entrenching universal programming can be a challenge when resources are limited. While the Policy Framework recommends free and universal programs be part of a formal access policy, it is recognized that this may not be possible in all communities at this time. However, including universal programs in a long-range vision or as a later step in your Community Action Plan will provide a goal for the future.

If ongoing, universal programming is not possible, try to seek funding for pilot projects that may develop into sustainable programs. Look for delivery partners in the community and be creative!

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### C. Administering Fee Assistance

One key goal of the Ontario Task Group is to eliminate any type of stigma for people in need of assistance. Keep this in mind when working through this section.

#### i. How do people apply for financial assistance?

- Can people apply on-line, by phone, fax or mail? Is there a waiting list? Can applicants appeal a decision?
- Is there a mechanism for community workers (teachers, social workers, religious leaders) to refer families?
- How and when do recipients of fee assistance register for programs?

	<b>Examples: How to apply</b>
<b>King</b>	Requests for C.A.P. will be accepted by the Township on an individual basis. All requests must be accompanied by a letter stating the reasons for the required subsidy. All requests for subsidies will be received and considered individually, and may be subject to further approval.
<b>London</b>	<p>Apply prior to the time you register for a recreation activity or program. No appointment is necessary. Apply in person at one of 6 customer service locations listed below. When you request financial assistance, please provide records of income from all of your family's sources of funding. Examples can include but are not limited to pay stubs, cheque stubs from government assistance, Child Tax Credits, child &amp; spousal support payments, insurance benefits, current income tax returns, OSAP documents, bank statements. Assistance is based on the income of <b>all</b> members of your family, as well as the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the number of people in your family</li> <li>• whether financial assistance funds are still available for this session.</li> </ul>
<b>Richmond Hill</b>	<p>If the family indicates on the form that they are working with one of the following social service organizations or programs, the Town will contact them directly for a family reference and the applicant does not have to provide proof of total family income.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Assistance (Ontario Works)</li> <li>• Family and Children's Services</li> <li>• Ontario Disability Support Pension</li> <li>• Worker's Compensation Benefits</li> <li>• Welfare</li> <li>• CPP Disability Pension</li> </ul>
<b>Dovercourt (Community Association)</b>	Social service workers and teachers refer economically disadvantaged families. Applicants show proof of annual income and letter from a credible reference to verify their needs (e.g. teacher, religious leader, social worker). First come, first serve.

Your policy statement on applying for financial assistance:

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**ii. How is the process administered?**

- Who is responsible for administering subsidies and making decisions? How much discretion exists for individual cases?
- What kind of staff training and support will be available?
- What will be done to make the process simple, respectful, confidential and non-stigmatizing?

	<b>Sample text: Role of staff</b>
<b>Ajax</b>	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.
	Staff will receive comprehensive training on the administration of financial assistance.
	Recreation & Culture 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; Town of Ajax Financial Assistance Procedure; Engaging Youth-at-Risk; Provincial Access to Recreation for Low-Income Families Toolkit and Customer Service.
<b>Mississauga</b>	<p><u>Role of Customer Service Centre Staff</u></p> <p>CSC staff authorized by the CSC Manager to approve fee assistance applications will confirm that the stated net income meets the current LICO figures, that all areas of the application are complete, and that the applicant(s) are not currently benefiting from the Jerry Love Fund. CSC staff will then contact the FAP applicant and confirm whether or not they have been approved for the program.</p> <p>Applicants who have been declined will be advised of the reason(s) and, if applicable, any steps they can take to make a successful application. A user account will be set up in CLASS for successful applicants, if none exists, and the credit subsidy will be applied. Staff will provide information and instruction to applicants on how to register for the programs of their choice, and advise them that credit will be drawn from the account as payment.</p>
<b>Peterborough</b>	When a request for subsidy is received, the Recreation Secretary will schedule a meeting and complete a subsidy application form with the applicant’s parent or guardian. The Recreation Secretary will review the subsidy information file to determine whether other subsidy sources are available.

	<b>Sample Text: Sensitivity and Lack of Stigma</b>
<b>Ajax</b>	The process of obtaining financial assistance will be non-intrusive, eliminate stigma and respect a person’s dignity and confidentiality.
	The philosophy of affordable services without stigma remains a core component of our service delivery model.
	Recognizing the necessity of user fees, the attached Policy establishes a fair and standardized process for staff to follow in their administration of fee assistance. Our approach respects an individual’s dignity and confidentiality and is fair and equitable in its design. Retaining flexibility where appropriate also allows staff the capacity to address special circumstances on a case-by-case basis.
<b>London</b>	Guiding Principles direct that such subsidy “shall be administered in a fair and sensitive manner” (London: Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan, page 20).
	<b>Sample Text: Confidentiality</b>
<b>King</b>	Information collected will be used solely for the purpose of this application, in accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information & Protection of Privacy Act.
<b>London</b>	After data entry, all documentation will be kept confidential and stored in a locked file cabinet in the Customer Service area.

<b>Mississauga</b>	Documents will not be photocopied and all originals will be returned to the applicant. Applicants will be required to sign a declaration that the information provided is factual and agree, if requested by the City, to provide originals for auditing purposes at any time during the coverage period.
	All applications, both approved and declined, will be filed in a secure, confidential location at the CSC, where they are available only to staff who need to have access to the information.
	The Recreation Secretary will retain a confidential subsidy file indicating all requests and all approvals.

Your policy statement on how the program is administered:

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## D. Financial Implications

Perhaps one of the most critical decisions to make in regard to your policy is how the program will be funded. In these unsure economic times, it is important to include accurate information as to how your policy and its programs will be funded. Municipal Councillors or Boards will be particularly interested in the impact on the bottom line for the municipal operating budget.

### i. How will any financial impact on the municipality be funded?

- Will subsidies be funded through the tax base?
- Will unused/unregistered spaces in programs be offered free to eligible participants?
- Will revenue be generated from special fundraising events? Will a fund be established yearly?
- Will discretionary funds be available? Will loss of revenue be incorporated into the annual operating budget?

	<b>Sample Text: Funding the Subsidies</b>
<b>Ajax</b>	The loss of revenue associated with financial assistance is incorporated into the department's annual operating budget. The financial assistance levels will be reviewed annually to ensure they remain sustainable.
<b>King</b>	CAP will take revenue generated from local special events hosted by the Township of King, such as the Haunted House, Much Music Dances and Youth Tournaments to be used in the funding of subsidies.
<b>London</b>	<p>Each year the City of London will establish a fund which will be used exclusively for the purpose of providing financial assistance to low-income Londoners who want access to recreation program activities offered by the Department.</p> <p>The amount of the fund will vary yearly as determined by the Department's budgeting process.</p> <p>The fund can be accessed prior to the start of each session on a "first-come, first-served basis" until it is exhausted. Once the fund is exhausted, applicants will have to wait until the next session and reapply at that time.</p> <p>Demand for the fund and other indicators will be tracked and used for future forecasting of funding needs for financial assistance.</p>
<b>Peterborough</b>	The Division will have access to discretionary funds to assist needy families who are in a low-income situation and/or on Ontario Works (OW) or the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP).

Your policy statement on how your program will be funded:

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## E. Partnership and Collaboration with Other Organizations

Creating partnerships and collaborations with other organizations was mentioned in the second step of this toolkit. Once your partnerships have been established, it is important to identify them in either your policy or the accompanying report. Doing so reassures decision makers (Council, Boards) that there are other stakeholders who share the vision of your policy and support the work you are doing.

### i. Who will be a partner with the municipality in efforts to ensure affordable access to recreation?

- Regional municipality? (e.g. to streamline processes, increase access to funding, avoid duplication, referrals from social services agencies)
- Non-profit community recreation providers? (e.g. to enhance affordable access policies for programs delivered in municipal or community spaces, leverage funding, collaborate on outreach and delivery)
- Community sport and cultural groups?
- Other levels of government?
- Does the joint-use agreement in place with the local school boards support the policy?

#### **Sample Text: Partnership with Upper and Lower Tier Municipalities (Ajax Council policy report)**

The attached Policy identifies Durham Region Social Services as a key partner. In 2007 Recreation & Culture began discussions with the Region regarding opportunities to streamline processes and develop new partnerships in order to support Ajax residents in receipt of financial assistance to access Recreational programs and services.

The result has informed the attached Policy by eliminating, for example, any duplication of eligibility requirements and improving opportunities for individuals to access regional funding for recreation programs.

Specifically, the Council approved Purchase of Service Agreement for Child Care Fee Assistance and cumulative funding of \$7000.00 in gift cards made available to clients receiving Ontario Works will support new families who otherwise may not have afforded user fees for a recreation program or services.

We will continue to develop a strong relationship with Durham Region in the future.

**Sample Text: Partnerships for Universal Recreation (Ajax)**

Within the Policy: The Town 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 and families.

Within the Council Report: Since 2007, Recreation & Culture has established a number of partnerships which have resulted in improved access to community programming at no additional cost to the taxpayer or to participants. Examples including the installation of the Ontario Early Years Centre at Ajax Community Centre, the Indoor Park program at McLean Community Centre, Swim To Survive programs with School Boards, Tim Horton swim and skates and the Grade 5 Action Pass, have all been well received by residents. (policy report)

Your policy statement on partnership and collaboration (remember to include well-established and new partnerships):

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**F. Community Use of Space**

One of the policy strategies in the Affordable Access Framework is the importance of making community space more affordable for community groups and residents. Doing so reduces the cost of the services and programs that these groups deliver and helps increase the reach and impact of your policy. See Section 3 for further information about community use of space.

- What strategies will exist to maximize affordable access to community spaces (including schools) for formal and informal recreation activities?
- Will community groups who rent space at a reduced rate be required to have their own affordable access program/policy (formal or informal)?



**Maximize affordable access to community space that can be used for formal and informal recreation activities.**

**Description**

Every community has a variety of public spaces that can be used for recreation. It matters little to the participant who owns the building or park. It just needs to be affordable, accessible and functional to its intended users.

In order to maximize affordable access to community space and increase participation, agreements need to be established among schools, local recreation providers, grassroots organizations, municipalities and the private sector. Generally, publicly-funded spaces (i.e. municipally-owned facilities and parks and schools) will be the primary locations for community activities, but non-profit and private sector locations may also be tremendous assets. Municipal recreation departments will often be the community facilitator to coordinate access to such public spaces. Agreements will come in many forms (shared-use agreements, reduced fee agreements), but the aim will be to reduce or remove rental fees to broaden the use of all recreational spaces.

In addition, community space (basketball courts, baseball diamonds, indoor and outdoor facilities etc.) needs to be planned in a way that maximizes opportunity. A well-designed plan will ensure that space is accessible by public transit or within walking distance of high-need or priority communities (i.e. walkable).

**Sample Text: Community Organizations Using Municipal Space (Ajax)**

[An objective of the policy is to] document the approaches the Town of Ajax will take to enable community organizations using municipal recreational facilities to respond effectively to requests for financial assistance.

The Policy also addresses community organizations delivering programs in municipal facilities. Staff will continue to support and encourage groups to have in place fee assistance approaches where required and will review the Town space allocation policies to determine how they might incorporate such language in the future.

Affordable access to municipal recreation space will continue to be managed through the Council-approved Community Group Affiliation Policy.

Recreation & Culture will provide support to assist community organizations to develop approaches and to respond to requests for subsidized access to the sport and recreation programs they deliver.

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

Your policy statement on community use of community space:

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## Step 4: Moving Your Affordable Access Policy Forward

In the previous steps of the Implementation Guide, you began the process of creating your Community Action Plan by:

- Conducting your own SWOT analysis for affordable access to recreation;
- Assessing community need;
- Identifying partnerships and collaborations;
- Identifying and shaping the components of your policy;
- Creating a long-range vision for affordable access in your community.

This research, collaboration and policy preparation forms the backbone of your Community Action Plan. However, your plan must also include strategies that you will use to ensure that you have:

- Council Support
- Staff Support
- Community Support
- Stakeholder Support
- Financial Sustainability

These are essential for moving your Community Action Plan forward.

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In Section D of this Implementation Guide, you will find a section of the Ontario Policy Framework that outlines critical roles for different levels of government and other groups with a stake in improving access to recreation. You should review these roles and ensure that you are aware of what others can do to help you move your action plan forward. For example, the Framework suggests that municipal governments and organizations should advocate for sustainable funding from the provincial government for access programs. As one strategy, you might draft a motion for your Council or Board to pass that calls on the provincial government to increase funding for such programs. While we cannot address all of the possible actions that you might take to gain support for affordable access in your community, we have provided some ideas and activities for you to consider.

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## A. Champion Affordable Access and Build Local Support

Municipal leaders and the community at large will be more receptive to an Affordable Access Policy if they are aware of the benefits that equitable access to recreation will bring, both socially and financially. The Ontario Task Group on Affordable Access to Recreation has created tools that you can use, including evidence-based studies, which will build your case for support.

This section is mainly for those developing a Municipal Policy. However, other organizations involved should be active partners with the Municipality.

### Suggested Activities

- Share the Provincial Policy Framework with public, local government and stakeholders. Identify the approach your community will take with respect to developing a local Action Plan.
- Raise awareness about the need for and benefits of affordable access to recreation with provincial government representatives for your area.
- Attend local Council meetings to raise awareness of the need for and benefits of affordable and equitable access to recreation.
- Keep the Ontario Task Group on Affordable Access to Recreation informed of your progress so that they can share your successes with others. This will help build a provincial case for support.
- Each community needs a champion(s) to take a public leadership role. They become the local expert who will build consensus, momentum and excitement at the community level and with the decision makers. While you and your staff may be the subject matter experts, consider cultivating one Councillor or other public figure to be your champion with elected officials.
- Test draft policies with members of Council and other stakeholders.
- Hold public consultations to gather community input on draft policy.
- Ask your collaborative networks (formal and informal) to write letters of support to Council and Senior Municipal Leaders.
- Create a presentation that can be used for Council or other stakeholders.
- Seek project funding for programs and initiatives. Gather the evidence of the success of these pilot projects to support the need for ongoing and sustained programs.
- Write a strategic and factual Cover Report for Council and other stakeholders (see below).

Perhaps the most important component in your Community Action Plan is the need to advocate for approval of your Affordable Access Policy with senior management and municipal councillors. Your strategy to advocate for an Affordable Access Policy begins when you first start your research and continues as you develop your collaborative partners. If you wait to involve senior management and municipal council until after you have written the policy, you have missed out on opportunities to engage the people who will ultimately move your policy through Management Committee and Municipal Council.

List some possible champions in your community and briefly describe how you will engage them.

Champion	Role/Engagement

**B. Communicate the policy throughout your community**

Some municipalities have created flyers, brochures and other communication vehicles to get the word out. You may choose to formalize part of your communications plan within your policy or council report as shown below.

	Sample Text: Communicating the Policy
Ajax	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The availability of financial assistance will be communicated to residents via the Community Recreation &amp; Parks Guide and the Town’s website.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Once approved, staff will be informed of new processes respecting the administration of financial assistance as will the appropriate partners. The Policy will be shared with the Ontario Access to Recreation for Low-Income Families Task Group as a promising practice. Finally, information respecting the availability of financial assistance will be included in future Community, Recreation &amp; Parks Guides and on the Town’s website. (report)</li> </ul>
London	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information about the existence of the policy and how to access it will be developed and updated as necessary for distribution to community agencies and other stakeholders that serve low-income Londoners.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[Consultation indicated that] some elements of the current policy may not be well-known in the community. For example, it may be beneficial to promote that financial assistance dollars can be applied toward the cost of registration fees, identified program materials, supplies and equipment costs, assistive devices and related supports; and that customers can have their eligibility for financial assistance assessed at any time of the year (i.e. they do not need to wait for a registration period to begin to have their eligibility assessed). (policy review)</li> </ul>
Mississauga	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Region of Peel will collaborate with Community Services staff by promoting the FAP to residents who have been identified as low-income. Information will also be available to residents of Mississauga in a variety of Recreation and Parks marketing material.</li> </ul>

Your plan for communicating the policy:

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### **C. Writing a Cover Report for Your Affordable Access Policy**

You may be required to submit a report to council with your Policy. Councillors need to understand the benefits of recreation as it relates to the quality of life of residents of your municipality. Include a statement regarding the purpose of the policy. The report can also be used with other stakeholders to enhance their understanding of the Policy and Community Action Plan.

Suggested contents of a report to council:

#### **1. Introduction**

- a. Purpose of report, i.e. to approve new or amend an affordable access policy
- b. Brief description of the proposed policy or amendments

#### **2. Rationale**

- c. How is the recommended policy supported by research?
- d. How does it complement the other policies, priorities, strategic plan, by-laws, etc.?
- e. What benefits will the policy provide for families and communities?

#### **3. Components of the policy**

- f. What does the new or amended policy entail?

#### **4. Issues**

- g. How will it be funded? How will other issues or challenges be addressed?

#### **5. Process**

- h. What process was used to develop the policy? Who was consulted?
- i. How will the new or amended policy be communicated?

#### Additional Information for Council Report

- Your municipal report should include research such as the Access to Recreation for Low-Income Families Report – Promising Practices Guide [www.prontario.org/index.php/ci\\_id/3722.htm](http://www.prontario.org/index.php/ci_id/3722.htm). This guide provides information on current practices in over twenty Ontario Municipalities and provides an excellent framework for developing your programs and policy.
- A sample Report to Council, from the City of Ajax, can be found at: [www.prontario.org/index.php/ci\\_id/3724.htm](http://www.prontario.org/index.php/ci_id/3724.htm).
- Include any other information, other policies, or pertinent legislation that supports your recommendation.
- Include in the background information about the current census of your community. You can compare your community to the income threshold established by Statistics Canada ([www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/prof/92-591/index.cfm?Lang=E](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/prof/92-591/index.cfm?Lang=E)).
- Include examples of current partnerships that have helped to improve access to community residents and/or supplied funding that allows for low- or no-cost programming. What is the current partnership with Social Services Department in harmonizing practices and procedures? Include the names of organizations that were consulted during the development of the policy.
- If you use specific terminology throughout the report, you may want a glossary of terms to enhance understanding for the reader.

## Step 5: Monitor and Evaluate

Each Community Action Plan and Policy will require evaluation in order to measure the impact and justify expenditures. While each policy is unique, below are some measures that you might use to evaluate your policy and its impact on the community.

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Evaluation should include quantitative financial reporting on the cost of the program and people utilizing the program. It could also include qualitative statements by the participants on the impact of the program on their lives.

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- How will the policy be evaluated? Will there be quarterly/annual reviews?
- What will be evaluated? Financial evaluation? Processes? Outcomes?
- What statistics, input and criteria will be assessed to evaluate the programs and inform future adjustments?
- Will you report to Council regularly on these measures?

	<b>Sample Text: Implementation and Monitoring</b>
<b>London</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff from the Parks and Recreation and Community Programs and Strategies Divisions of the Department of Community Services will continue to work with the community to monitor the accessibility of recreation and leisure opportunities for low-income Londoners.</li> </ul>
<b>Mississauga</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tracking of FAP will take the form of a separate cost element in SAP, the City’s finance software system. The following monitoring and reporting practices will ensure proper management and oversight of the program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reports by session to the Director of Recreation and Parks (the Director) itemizing the number of unique FAP customers, the total unrealized revenue of FAP credit spending on registrations and memberships, and ratio of paying customers to FAP customers by product line (i.e. aquatics, skating, camps, etc.) and by facility, with such information available for audit;</li> <li>• An annual statistics report analyzing program trends and costs;</li> <li>• A full description of all internal program registration fees charged or credited to the FAP cost centre budget. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All FAP customers in the additional class if capacity is added in any program that includes FAP registrants;</li> <li>• FAP registrations for services that operate in partnership with the City, such as tennis or rowing lessons. (To avoid any negative impact to the provider all FAP participants are charged back.) Partnership programs are administered in the same manner as those run by the City in regard to cancellations, class sizes, etc.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The number of units and corresponding unrealized revenue associated with issuing complementary family swim and skate passes will be recorded and monitored in quarterly reports to the Director;</li> <li>• Overall demand for assistance will be tracked and used for future forecasting of need for financial assistance.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Peterborough</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following each subsidy appointment, the Recreation Secretary will complete the Excel spreadsheet to maintain control of available funds. The Recreation Secretary will advise the Division Manager of the status of the subsidy account monthly and when it is within \$500.00 of the spending limit.</li> </ul>



**Sample text: Planning and Evaluation (Ajax)**

Service Planning: All programs and services will meet community need. Annual service planning will incorporate census data relevant to a changing and diversifying community. Information will assist staff in the development and delivery of programs and services, community development strategies and agency/funding partnerships. Staff will evaluate the development and continuation of programs and services using the following criteria:

- historical utilization
- customer feedback
- responsiveness to identified populations (low-income, children, youth, seniors, inactive)
- responsiveness to strategic priorities
- affordability and market trends

Recreation & Culture will undertake an evaluation of the Affordable Access to Recreation & Cultural Services Policy within one year after it is fully implemented to assess its effectiveness and to identify amendments if required.

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

The Town will regularly monitor the effectiveness of the Policy.

**Other Policy Indicators of Success:**

- Policy is passed by council, reviewed annually and endorsed by community leaders.
- Core recreation programs are offered on a free and universal basis.
- Fee subsidy program is in place.
- A funding strategy is in place.
- Public support is high.

Your policy statement on monitoring, evaluating and reporting:

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**Congratulations!**

**You are well on your way to creating a strong and sustainable Community Action Plan that will improve access to recreation. The next section will provide more information on supporting strategies within the Community Action Plan.**

# Section C: Policy Strategies

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In addition to the two fundamental policy objectives (fee assistance and universal programming), the Provincial Policy Framework on Affordable Access to Recreation includes three additional strategies that will enhance your Community Action Plan:

- Community Access to Community Space
- Partnerships and Collaboration
- Targeted Community Outreach and Engagement

As already stated, each of these strategies will be assessed based on local need, infrastructure, capacity and circumstance and consultation with stakeholders will help determine how you approach each strategy.

These strategies may be embedded within your policy (as seen in Section B) or they may be part of your overall Community Action Plan.

## Community Access to Community Space

*You have already reviewed your organization's practices around rental of community space (i.e. schools, municipally-owned recreation facilities) in the research portion of this Implementation Guide. In this section, you'll learn more about why community access to community space is important. You'll also discover more tips and issues to consider that will improve access to facilities.*

### Strategy #1

**Maximize affordable access to community space that can be used for formal and informal recreation activities.**

#### Description

Every community has a variety of public spaces that can be used for recreation. It matters little to the participant who owns the building or park. It just needs to be affordable, accessible and functional to its intended users.

In order to maximize affordable access to community space and increase participation, agreements need to be established among schools, local recreation providers, grassroots organizations, municipalities and the private sector. Generally, publicly-funded spaces (i.e. municipally-owned facilities and parks and schools) will be the primary locations for community activities, but non-profit and private sector locations may also be tremendous assets. Municipal recreation departments will often be the community facilitator to coordinate access to such public spaces. Agreements will come in many forms (shared-use agreements, reduced-fee agreements), but the aim will be to reduce or remove rental fees to broaden the use of all recreational spaces.

In addition, community space (basketball courts, baseball diamonds, indoor and outdoor facilities etc.) needs to be planned in a way that maximizes opportunity. A well-designed plan will ensure that space is accessible by public transit or within walking distance of high-need or priority communities.

### **Rationale**

Indoor and outdoor space for recreation is a valuable community asset and should be available equitably to all. However, cost and availability at appropriate times are often barriers. In order to maximize opportunities for participation, it is important to see how existing community spaces, such as schools, can be made available for recreational activities, especially for grassroots organizations, after school hours and on weekends. This is especially important in rural and remote areas. It is also important to consider access and affordability when new construction and development projects are planned. Master Plans are one effective way of assessing the need for infrastructure (outdoor and indoor). Master Planning consultants need to consider socio-economics and other related demographic data when recommending where and what kinds of municipal facilities are required and to identify partnership opportunities with other agencies and school boards (YMCAs, Boys & Girls Clubs, 4-H etc.) to help municipalities deliver targeted services. Where infrastructure exists, opportunities to expand their uses may require collaborative partnerships and reciprocal agreements. These can be complex to strike but are necessary and beneficial to all partners if rental fees and access planning increase affordable partnership opportunities for organizations who work with at-risk/high-need population, youth, etc. Exploring non-traditional venues (i.e. storefronts, industrial units) and school space after hours for community use must be considered especially where municipal venues are oversubscribed.

The activities below will supplement the research that you have already done in section B of this implementation guide.

**Community Access to Community Space – Activities**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Status (Yes, No, In Progress)</b>	<b>Logistics (Who , When, How, Additional Information)</b>	<b>Notes/Next Steps</b>
Establish joint use agreement with the local school boards for reciprocal opportunities for the joint use of school and recreational space.			
Work with other agencies to streamline rental process to ensure easy access for the community to all public spaces (e.g. one-stop shopping).			
Ensure municipal master-planning process takes into account affordable access to community space.			
Ensure local partners develop ways to maximize recreational opportunities when new schools and other community facilities are built.			
Ensure your municipality requires new and revitalized land use plans to include open space and recreation facilities.			

### Indicators of success

- Reciprocal agreements are established with local school boards and, as a result, municipalities and grassroots organizations can access schools for recreation programs at affordable rates and at appropriate times. In return, school groups can access municipal recreation facilities for physical health programming at affordable rates and also at appropriate times.
- Agreements will also streamline the duplication of infrastructure development and enhance the quality of existing spaces in a community through joint capital and operating arrangements.
- Community Group rental rates for all facilities will be reduced so that fees are not a barrier to programming and participation.
- Availability of passive and open spaces will increase.
- Communities have formal partnerships with a variety of stakeholders that facilitate affordable access to spaces and recreation programming.
- Evaluation models are in place to measure community use and ensure ongoing sustainability.

## Partnership and Collaboration

In the Action Plan Cycle, you will already have established a collaborative network. The network will:

- Provide feedback on your policy and action plan
- Be a partner in improving access in the community
- Provide ongoing support for your Action Plan

Below is a longer description of why partnerships are important and a checklist to make sure that you have the partnerships and collaborative network in place that you need to make your Community Action Plan a success.

### Strategy #2

**Establish community-based partnerships that will determine how to make affordable access to recreation a reality in communities.**

### Description

Community-based partnerships comprised of all stakeholders (e.g. municipalities, recreation service providers, community organizations, education, families, funders and private sector etc.) will be established in each community to plan, monitor, evaluate and update the community's action plan for increased affordable access. The group will ensure the plan is improving access to recreation and remains relevant as demographics change within the community. The municipality will act as the convener.

## Rationale

Working in isolation often leads to duplication and ineffective approaches to community issues. Improving access to recreation requires a collaborative model not unlike the provincial Task Group in Ontario. A collaborative planning table will be effective in generating creative ideas, making effective use of existing resources, and building credibility in the community, helping to leverage support and funding. A collaborative approach also ensures that the expertise and resources of public health, recreation, education and other social services organizations will be used effectively.

## Partnership and Collaboration – Checklist

Activity	Status (Yes, No, In Progress)	Notes
Have you researched other local planning models?		
Have you engaged all stakeholders in some part of the process?		
Have you determined mandate and terms of reference for a formal network/collaborative?		
Do you facilitate regular meetings and discussions?		
Do you undertake larger community consultations as required?		
Have you shared the collaborative approach with Council, local authority and partner Boards of Directors as well as the local media in order to build momentum?		
Have you shared the local action plan with provincial organizations and identified support required to implement the plan (funding, legislative barriers) which are outside the jurisdiction and capacity of the local municipality?		
Are you monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness?		

## Indicators of Success

- Collaborative partnerships support the implementation of access policies at the local level and lead to increased participation by families facing income barriers.
- Partnerships lead to increased opportunities for access to recreation that meet community needs.
- Partnerships involve broad representation of community partners (private sector, citizens, not for profit foundations etc.).
- Collaborative partnerships lead to sustainable funding program and increased resources for the local community.

## Targeted Community Outreach and Engagement

*A great deal of the success of your Community Action Plan rests with the ability to ensure that those who face barriers to participation are aware of the programs that you offer and feel they will benefit from participating.*

*You may have addressed some outreach strategies in your policy, but there is always more that can be done to ensure that community members are engaged and involved! Below is more information on outreach and additional activities that you can undertake.*

### **Strategy #3**

**Build awareness among marginalized populations (i.e. youth, seniors, persons with disabilities, immigrant, low-income families and Aboriginal) of the benefits of recreation and affordable programs, and provide opportunities for community engagement in program design and delivery.**

### **Description**

Outreach strategies will be created to build awareness among marginalized populations of the importance of recreation and the availability of affordable recreation programs. These community members will also have opportunities to be involved in planning the programs in order to meet their needs (i.e. youth leadership development, cultural sensitivity). Specific outreach would be conducted to reach youth, seniors, immigrant, those with disabilities, low-income individuals and families and Aboriginal communities as required.

**Rationale**

Marginalized populations are unlikely to participate in community recreation, even if it is low-cost or free, unless they are aware of these opportunities and understand the benefits of participating. This is not a case of “build it and they will come.” Individuals and families need to feel welcome. They need to know how they can take advantage of fee assistance programs. These programs must be non-stigmatizing and simple for the client to navigate, as intrusive eligibility assessments and complex forms are likely to deter take-up. Input from families and community organizations into the kinds of outreach approaches, fee assistance processes and program opportunities available is necessary to building an inclusive system of services and supports.

**Targeted Community Outreach and Engagement Activities**

Activity	Status (Yes, No, In Progress)	Logistics (Who , When, How, Additional Information)	Notes/Next Steps
Conduct research to determine high-need areas or groups in the community (e.g. census data for low-income demographics by age, region/traditionally under-represented groups, and align with social planning councils to help identify other hard-to-serve or at-risk populations).			
Examine other outreach strategies to reach target groups, lessons learned and other best practices (Promising Practices toolkit).			
Use a community development approach throughout this strategy to ensure outreach initiatives are not “top down.”			
Build awareness and support with Council and local MPPs and MPs.			



Activity	Status (Yes, No, In Progress)	Logistics (Who , When, How, Additional Information)	Notes/Next Steps
Conduct targeted community outreach to engage identified priority groups (e.g. consider involving these groups in identifying local barriers and in program design and planning and using focus group or other non-stigmatizing methods of engagement).			
Build strategic partnerships with referral agencies and other levels of government for coordinated services.			
Consider including culturally specific and culturally sensitive planning and programming to build capacity and participation in diverse populations. (e.g. women’s-only swim; sports from different cultures).			
Provide staff and volunteers with training and tools to increase their ability to reach target groups (e.g. cultural sensitivity training).			

### Indicators of Success

- The input of community advocates, citizens, under-represented, low-income Ontarians is considered when designing or modifying recreation programs, spaces and outreach strategies.
- Participation in recreational activities increases in priority neighbourhoods or for targeted populations.
- Asset-based youth engagement strategies have been established and have resulted in increased youth participation in recreation activities and leadership programs.
- Reach and diversity of program participants increases.

# Section D: Roles Critical to Moving Your Community Action Plan Forward

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The success of the Policy Framework lies in the degree to which its strategic directions are implemented to achieve the vision. The success of your Community Action Plan lies in the degree to which everyone embraces and supports your Affordable Access policy. Everyone has a stake in the success of your Community Action Plan and everyone will benefit from equitable and affordable access. To measurably increase affordable access to recreation in Ontario, there must be systemic change at the community level. For that change to happen there must be a concerted effort by all levels of government, stakeholder and allied organization, and community members to achieve the vision of affordable access to recreation for all Ontarians. Key roles for each of these stakeholders are identified below.

## Municipal Government

- Implement and sustain council-approved access policies.
- Act as the convener and engage community partners.
- Work closely with social services and public health to maximize “wrap around” services.
- Measure impact on quality of life when affordable access to recreation is improved.
- Provide stable and core funding for affordable recreation programs.
- Support community organizations through affordable space.
- Engage stakeholders and citizens in planning and evaluation.
- Build on existing funding models to create sustainable and ongoing access programs and initiatives.
- Advocate provincially for sustained funding for access programs.
- Use quality standards such as HIGH FIVE<sup>®</sup> to ensure program excellence.

## Provincial Government

- Establish a joint sector/Ministry task group to fully develop these and other recommendations, estimate provincial budget allocations required and define measures of success.
- Be an active partner for change across the province. Through policies and programs, the provincial government will ensure that communities have the funding and resources necessary to implement the fundamental policy objectives that will increase access.

- Build on existing funding models to create ongoing and sustainable financial resources to support affordable access initiatives (free, universal programs and fee assistance programs), especially where such initiatives support provincial strategies and policies.
- Implement and expand the After School program funding as a first step in addressing the recreational needs of low-income children and youth in all communities.
- Expand Community Use of Schools program to other community spaces and require Boards of Education to report on the impact Community Use of School funding is having.
- Provide additional, targeted recreation infrastructure funding for priority communities.
- Implement policy, legislative and regulatory options that enable improved access to recreation, i.e. Ontario Works benefits extended to include participation in recreation for children and youth; MPMP measures which examine the correlation between universal programming and increased access/participant hours; provincial funding, similar to Community Use of Schools, that would allow for greater access to recreational spaces.
- Strengthen the role of the Ministry of Health Promotion to engage other ministries to provide support.

## **Federal Government**

- Balance tax credits (which benefit middle-income families) with funding that will support provincial and local affordable access to recreation policies and programs.
- Align affordable access to recreation with other national sport and physical health policy objectives.
- Ministries such as Health and Sport will work with the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association to create a national strategy to engage low-income Canadians in sport and recreation in every community.
- Provide additional, targeted recreation infrastructure funding for underserved and high-risk communities.

## **Public Health and Social Services**

- Engage with recreation providers to ensure the coordination of services.
- Participate in local networks to avoid duplication and maximize resources.
- Integrate programs where possible (i.e. chronic disease prevention; after-school care etc.)
- Provincial social services and health organizations will continue to support local access policies and initiatives through advocacy and education.

## **Education Sector**

- Provide affordable access to school facilities in partnership with community.
- Participate in local collaborative partnerships and develop comprehensive reciprocal agreements.
- Partner with local community organizations to provide specialized and targeted programming especially in at risk communities.

## **Community Organizations**

- Participate in local networks and be an active partner with municipal recreation, social services and public health.
- Provide expertise on reaching diverse constituencies within the community.
- Be inclusive in service delivery and consider quality standards and systems.
- Create partnerships to increase access.
- Seek funding (in partnership where appropriate) for ongoing programming that increases access.

## **Foundations and Funders (NGO)**

- Fund research, service delivery and evaluation in support of increased affordable access.
- Advocate for longer term sustainable approaches.
- Participate in part of the planning process.
- Support capacity-building partnerships and encourage collaboration.

## **Private Sector**

- Invest as corporate citizens.
- Invest in community initiatives that increase access to recreation.
- Participate in collaborative partnerships.

## **Citizens**

- Become engaged in the planning process.
- Advocate for change locally.
- Participate in the programs.

## Ontario Task Group on Access to Recreation

- Endorse framework and action plan.
- Create tools to support action plan.
- Communicate and disseminate action plan through local networks.
- Lead mobilization and advocacy efforts.
- Advocate for provincial support.

The case for support for affordable recreation and the long-term benefits of participation has been made. It is time to put that research into action and mobilize change in every community. The Policy Framework envisions an Ontario where everyone gets to play, where a citizen's financial means do not result in marginalization, where children and youth start out life feeling included and have the opportunity for self-expression, physical activity, learning life skills and do not feel marginalized and excluded.

Few communities in Ontario have taken the time to have meaningful discussion on Affordable Access to Recreation. It is sometimes an overwhelming task but, for the first time, the Policy Framework and Policy Development and Implementation Guide provide Ontario communities with the tools, steps and supporting research to affect meaningful change. All it takes now is the local will to move it forward. The result will be positive and far-reaching for the health of participants and for the community as a whole. Creating systemic change in recreation will take a collective of dedicated champions and it is this sector that has the dedicated and community-minded professionals to succeed.

It was Margaret Mead who said it best: "Never doubt that a small group of committed people can change the world. In fact, it is the only thing that ever has." Let's re-open the doors to community recreation, together, everywhere in Ontario.

## Section E: Resources

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### Publications by the Ontario Task Group on Affordable Access to Recreation

This policy framework and the following materials are available online at the Lifestyle Information Network at [lin.ca/access-to-recreation](http://lin.ca/access-to-recreation) and at the Parks and Recreation Ontario website at [www.prontario.org](http://www.prontario.org)

Parks and Recreation Ontario, *Affordable Access to Parks and Recreation Services: Positioning Statement* (April 2000)

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Leitch, K. Kellie, *Reaching for the Top: A Report by the Advisor on Healthy Children & Youth*, Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, represented by the Minister of Health Canada (2007)  
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*Charter for Recreation and Parks in Ontario (2009)*  
[www.prontario.org/index.php/ci\\_id/3677.htm](http://www.prontario.org/index.php/ci_id/3677.htm)

# Section F: Appendix

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This appendix contains more information about the development of the Ontario Framework for Affordable Access to Recreation and some examples of current policies and procedures in Ontario municipalities.

## Contents

1. Chronology of Affordable Access Advocacy in Ontario
2. Association of Municipalities of Ontario Support for the Framework
3. Municipal policies featured in Promising Practices
4. 2005 City of London Municipal Access Policy Scan
5. City of Waterloo Fee Assistance Application Form
6. City of Cambridge/Cambridge YMCA Joint Application
7. City of Mississauga Active Assist Program Description



## 1. Chronology of Affordable Access Advocacy in Ontario

The following is a brief chronology of events leading up to the Ontario Policy Framework on Access to Recreation for Low-Income Families and its implementation.

2000	Parks and Recreation Ontario issued a positioning statement on affordable access to parks and recreation services. The statement emphasized the need to put access policies in place and to consider carefully the impact of user fees.
2005	Canadian Parks and Recreation Association issued a national policy on access to recreation for low-income families. This policy articulated the benefits of affordable access, identified barriers, and encouraged provincial and territorial partners to formally adopt similar policies.
2006	Parks and Recreation Ontario passed a resolution endorsing the national policy and adopting an action plan. In the action plan, PRO agreed to create a multi-sector task group to lead the policy discussion, conduct outcome-based research, convene an access summit, and position the sector with tools to increase access for marginalized groups.
2006	The Task Group on Access to Recreation for Low-Income Families was established. The Task Group is a volunteer coalition of provincial, municipal, non-profit, corporate, and advocacy partners. Its goal is to work collaboratively to influence policy development in Ontario to increase access to recreation for low-income children, youth and families.
2007	The Task Group commissioned surveys about policies and practices on access to recreation for low-income children and youth, conducted by David Redmond and Associates. It also commissioned a report to summarize research on the social, economic and health benefits realized when children and youth have access to recreation, prepared by Dr. Mark Totten of the Youth Services Bureau of Ottawa.
2007	The Task Group hosted a policy planning symposium in Toronto to identify barriers and solutions and to establish critical steps to increasing access to recreation for low-income children, youth and families. One hundred academics, researchers, senior municipal leaders and advocates, representing over 80 organizations, attended the session.
2008	The Task Group convened a policy workshop at which twenty participants discussed ideas for inclusion in a policy framework on access to recreation by low-income families, drawing on all the work done to date. Based on that input, the Task Group prepared an Ontario Policy Framework on Access to Recreation for Low-Income Families which was further refined by workshop participants and other stakeholders.
2009	The Task Group prepared a draft Action Plan containing initial strategies for implementing the policy directions in the Policy Framework.
2010	The Task Group completes Community Implementation Guide and holds workshops across Ontario to introduce communities to the Framework and its principles.

## 2. Association of Municipalities of Ontario Support for the Framework



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### MEMBER COMMUNICATION

ALERT N°: 09/083

*To the attention of the Clerk and Council*  
December 1, 2009

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:  
Petra Wolfbeiss, AMO Senior Policy Advisor  
(416) 971-9856 ext 329

ALERT

### AMO Recognizes the Need for Affordable Access to Recreation for Ontarians

**Issue:**

At their recent meeting, the AMO Board of Directors supported the recommendations of the [Policy Framework for Affordable Access to Recreation for Ontarians](#). AMO will now seek commitment from the provincial and federal governments to move this important policy ahead.

**Background:**

AMO is supporting what many Ontarians identify as one of the highest valued services delivered by municipalities – recreation.

Building on research demonstrating the benefits of recreation for low income families, the Ontario Task Group on Access to Recreation developed a policy framework and approach to creating local access policies that reflect both community need and capacity.

The Task Group, comprised of numerous stakeholder groups and government representatives, developed a vision supported by policy objectives and strategic considerations to guide decision makers in creating and promoting local access policies that promote the understanding that everyone should have access to affordable recreation in their community in order to enjoy the health and social benefits, and to improve their prospects for a better future.

Municipal engagement in providing access to recreation for low income families can also benefit the taxpayer. Research clearly demonstrates that recreation improves the prospects of a person's mental and physical health, which leads to greater financial independence and benefits to the taxpayer. Local communities are encouraged to implement access policies in a manner that responds to both local needs and capacities.

But municipalities cannot go it alone in providing this important service. AMO's advocacy goal is for the provincial and federal governments to assist communities and citizens through formal policies and funding.

**Action:** AMO will advise the provincial government of its support for affordable access policies and seek provincial support and commitment to moving forward on this policy. AMO will also request a commitment from the federal government to increase access to recreation for Ontarians.

*This information is available in the Policy Issues section of the AMO website at [www.amo.on.ca](http://www.amo.on.ca).*

### **3. Municipal Policies Featured in the Promising Practices Guide**

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#### **City of Oshawa – Services Rendered Voucher**

Purpose: To provide City of Oshawa residents with fixed or low incomes, including members of the working poor, a 75% fee subsidy on City of Oshawa recreation and culture programs in order to increase participation.

The Services Rendered Voucher is a co-operative agreement between the Regional Municipality of Durham Social Services Department and the City of Oshawa. It provides subsidization of recreation and culture services to Oshawa residents who are on fixed and/or low incomes, including members of the working poor.

#### **City of Toronto – Welcome Policy**

The Welcome Policy was established to remove financial barriers for City of Toronto residents to ensure increased participation in recreation programs and services.

To apply for the WP a client must visit a local community or civic centre, fill out a WP application form and provide supporting documentation (e.g. identification for all family members, proof of address, proof of total family income). Parks, Forestry and Recreation community centre staff review and assess eligibility using Statistics Canada Low-Income Cut-Offs (LICO).

While waiting for approval, or if ineligible for WP, clients have the option of registering for recreation programs at Priority Centres, which offer a diversity of no-fee programs. Priority Centres make up 21 of the 141 community centres in the City of Toronto. Priority Centres are located in high need communities, where greater than 38% of families are living below LICO.

Information about the WP and the benefits of recreation is available in 13 languages on the City of Toronto website ([http://www.toronto.ca/parks/welcome\\_policy.htm](http://www.toronto.ca/parks/welcome_policy.htm)). In addition, interpretation services are available for clients when calling in to register for recreation programs through Language Line Services.

### **City of Waterloo – Payment Assistance Program**

The program provides an opportunity for residents of Waterloo to participate in City of Waterloo recreation, leisure and affiliated minor sport programs by offering a deferred payment option and/or a partial subsidy to the total cost of registration fees. The program is open to eligible adults and/or children for one program per person, per season. Eligibility is based on the low-income cutoffs for Waterloo Region based on Canada Census data.

Families register for the program/sport of their choice and identify on the application that the method of payment is the Payment Assistance Program with the City of Waterloo. They are not required to pay at time of registration. The family contacts the Payment Assistance office within one week of registration. Registrations are confirmed after a Payment Assistance phone interview has been completed and eligibility determined. Information about the family and program/sport is documented.

### **County of Brant and City of Brantford – Can We Help program**

Purpose: To ensure that all children and youth have the opportunity to access recreation and leisure services and enjoy the many benefits of recreation.

The Can We Help Program subsidizes recreation programs for children and youth up to age 18 in the County of Brant and City of Brantford. Any City of Brantford or County of Brant resident who feels that they are unable to pay the full registration fee for a recreation program is eligible to apply for funding. Subsidies are limited to two activities or programs per participant per session, depending on funding availability. Eligibility for assistance is based on the number of people in a family household, whether other assistance has already been provided for the current registration period and whether subsidy funds are still available for this session. Those requesting assistance must set up a time with Parks & Recreation staff to determine eligibility.

Ontario Works and Ontario Disability recipients automatically receive 100% funding.

### **Town of Milton – Fee Access Policy**

Purpose: To provide fee assistance to Town of Milton residents for registration in Town-operated recreation programs.

In order to maintain confidentiality, the Town of Milton has designated one staff person to administer the fee assistance program for all recreation programs. The fee assistance policy and procedures are advertised. Residents must complete and provide the following information:

- Registration form for the program they wish to attend;
- Fee assistance application form; and
- Proof of income

## 4. 2005 City of London Municipal Access Policy Scan

- In Toronto, participation is limited to 25 of the City's 130 recreation centres located in low-income neighbourhoods.
- Hamilton, York Region and Mississauga subsidize children and youth programs only.
- With the exception of Ottawa where participants are given discretion as to how and when they apply their financial assistance entitlement, all of the municipalities surveyed placed some limitations on participants' access of financial assistance. In most cases, the number of subsidized courses permitted per session are restricted.
- The vast majority of municipalities, including London, used Statistics Canada's Low-Income Cut-Offs (LICOs) and/or reliance on income supports such as Ontario Works, Child Care or subsidized housing to determine eligibility for recreation financial assistance. Eligibility testing is conducted by staff in all municipalities except Ottawa.

	<b>What is Covered (London Review 2005)</b>
<b>London</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited to 2 City-run programs/session (4 sessions/yr) or \$150/session/person</li> </ul>
<b>Ottawa</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants have discretion as to how and when they apply fee assistance; encouraged to pay a % of the registration cost, where feasible, to build commitment to the program.</li> </ul>
<b>Kitchener</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leisure Access Card - 1 use per season (4 seasons) up to max of \$75/session - covers registration fee only, not related materials</li> </ul>
<b>Toronto</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free programs offered in 25 of the City's 130 rec centres, located throughout the city - limited to 3 programs for children and youth/session (4 sessions) or a 1-year pass (i.e. aquatics, fitness); 1 year pass (i.e. aquatics, fitness) or other flexible options (i.e. punch card) per adult per session.</li> </ul>
<b>Hamilton</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free sport and recreation programs for children 0 - 19 (lead agency is YMCA); limited to 1 program/session (4 sessions)</li> </ul>
<b>Mississauga</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jerry Love fund for children aged 15 and under - subsidy for 1 program or 1 session of camp per calendar year; additional costs (i.e. supplies) not covered.</li> </ul>
<b>York</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free summer camp (30 days) for up to 300 children aged 6 - 12 and pilot youth camp (1 week) for up to 20 youth aged 13 - 16 living in social housing</li> </ul>

	<b>% Covered (London Review 2005)</b>
<b>London</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most 100%, can range from 25 to 75% dependant on household income</li> </ul>
<b>Ottawa</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 70-100% - participants</li> </ul>
<b>Kitchener</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50% to 100%</li> </ul>
<b>Toronto</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100% - fee assistance policy; 50% discount for seniors on all adult programs</li> </ul>
<b>Hamilton</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most range from 25 -100% (most, 75%)</li> </ul>
<b>Mississauga</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents pay the difference for any program exceeding the \$128 maximum.</li> </ul>
<b>York</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100% camp costs</li> </ul>

	<b>Financial Determinants (London Review 2005)</b>
<b>London</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LICOs - Staff conducts needs test</li> </ul>
<b>Ottawa</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individuals can be self-referred or referred by an agency. Eligible if receive GST credit or child care subsidy. City staff do not conduct needs test.</li> </ul>
<b>Kitchener</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LICOs - staff conducts needs test annually</li> </ul>
<b>Toronto</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LICOs, receiving social assistance or similar benefits, i.e. EI, Worker's Comp, CPP, GAINS, etc., or referral from outside agency; Staff conducts needs test.</li> </ul>
<b>Hamilton</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Families on social assistance - needs test conducted by staff</li> </ul>
<b>Mississauga</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children aged 15 and under whose families are on social assistance or face financial constraints - can be referred from CAS or social services</li> </ul>
<b>York</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children whose families are on social assistance, subsidized housing or attend target schools</li> </ul>

	<b>Funding of Subsidies (London Review 2005)</b>
<b>Ottawa, Hamilton, York Region</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ottawa, Hamilton and York Region access National Child Benefit funding in full or in part to support their recreation subsidy programs. Mississauga covers the administration costs for the allocation of funds raised by donations from the private and not-for-profit sector and individuals.</li> </ul>
<b>Mississauga</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funds raised through individual, business, service club, community groups &amp; other funding bodies donations - administered by Mississauga Recreation &amp; Parks who cover administration costs.</li> </ul>
<b>York</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2002 budget (NCB funds) - \$200,000 - 270 children</li> </ul>

## 5. City of Waterloo Fee Assistance Application Form

List all family income received on a yearly basis.  
**PROOF OF ALL GROSS INCOME** (before taxes) **FOR EACH ADULT MUST BE ATTACHED, SHOWING YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS** (copies only, no originals)

TOTAL ANNUAL FAMILY INCOME	AMOUNT
Employment Income (before deductions)	\$ _____
Social Assistance (Ontario Works)	\$ _____
Disability Benefits (O.D.S.P.)	\$ _____
Old Age Security (O.A.S.)	\$ _____
Canada Pension Plan (C.P.P.)	\$ _____
Employment Insurance (E.I./M.S.I.B.)	\$ _____
Other (e.g. support payments)	\$ _____
<b>Total GROSS yearly income for households</b>	_____

Is this your first time applying for Fee Assistance? Yes  No

The Fee Assistance Program receives additional funding to help financially support children in recreational programs.

In order for the City of Waterloo to receive the funding, staff must submit the eligible child's name, gender, age, and activity. Funding providers include Canadian Tire Foundation for Families Jumpstart Program, and the Region of Waterloo's Outreach Support Program.

To the extent that the foregoing information constitutes personal information as defined in the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.O. 1990, chapter M.56 as amended, the information is subject to provisions of that Act and will be used for the purposes indicated or implied by this form. Questions about the collection of personal information should be directed to the City Clerk, Waterloo City Centre, 100 Regina Street South, Waterloo, Ontario, N2J 4A8, telephone (519) 886-1550.

I hereby agree that the information I have provided in this application is complete, true and correct.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return completed form with attached proof of ALL GROSS INCOME to either:

- Any City of Waterloo Community Centre
- By mail or in person to:
  - Albert McCormick Community Centre
  - 500 Parkside Drive
  - Waterloo ON N2L 5J4
  - Attn: Lynn Dicks-Egley



### The City of Waterloo **FEE ASSISTANCE LEISURE ACCESS PROGRAM**

#### IT'S EASY TO APPLY

- Complete the fee assistance application form
- Attach copies of your total household income (i.e. social assistance statement; pay stub; income tax return; insurance benefits, etc.)
- Bring all forms to any City of Waterloo Community Centre, or you can mail them to:  
 Albert McCormick Community Centre  
 500 Parkside Drive  
 Waterloo ON N2L 5J4  
 Attn: Lynn Dicks-Egley

If you have any questions about the Fee Assistance Leisure Access Program, or require assistance in completing the application, please contact the Fee Assistance Coordinator at (519) 885-1220 x244.



### THE CITY OF **Waterloo** **FEE ASSISTANCE LEISURE ACCESS PROGRAM**



The City of Waterloo wishes to acknowledge the contributions of Canadian Tire Foundation for Families Jumpstart Program and Region of Waterloo.

## FEE ASSISTANCE LEISURE ACCESS PROGRAM Information

**GENERAL INFO:** Fee Assistance is a program of financial support, for residents with low income living in Waterloo, that helps individuals participate in City of Waterloo recreational and affiliated minor sports and arts programs. The assistance is given in the form of a credit to eligible individuals.

**APPLICATION PROCESS:** If your application is approved, you will receive a confirming letter and Leisure Access Card in the mail (please allow 2 weeks for processing). You may receive a maximum credit of \$300/person/year depending on budget availability. The credit is not transferrable or refundable. Leisure Access Cards must be renewed annually.

In order to access your credit, you must present your Leisure Access Card at the time of registration. If you have any questions or require assistance in completing the application, please contact the Fee Assistance Coordinator at (519) 885-1220 x244.

**ELIGIBILITY:** The Fee Assistance program is for Waterloo residents only. Eligibility is based on total household income. The gross income levels below determine eligibility. Proof of eligibility is required.

### BEFORE TAX LOW INCOME CUTOFFS (LICO) FOR WATERLOO REGION

FAMILY SIZE	ANNUAL INCOME
1	\$19,094
2	\$23,769
3	\$29,222
4	\$35,480
5	\$40,239
6	\$45,385
7+	\$50,529

Based on 2008 census data.

### INELIGIBLE PROGRAMS AND

**CHARGES:** Fee assistance cannot be used to pay for rep fees, membership fees, dues, admission or ticket costs, or program materials and supplies.

## THE CITY OF Waterloo Fee Assistance Leisure Access Card APPLICATION

### A SERVICE FOR WATERLOO RESIDENTS ONLY

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ APT./UNIT: \_\_\_\_\_  
 STREET: \_\_\_\_\_ HOME PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_  
 POSTAL CODE: \_\_\_\_\_ CELL PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

I have no telephone; leave a message at: \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

How many adults (18 & older) are living at home? \_\_\_\_\_

How many children (ages 0-17) are living at home? \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE PRINT names of person(s) in the family who need a card.

NAME	DATE OF BIRTH	GENDER	Office Use Only CARD NUMBER
First	Last	M/F	
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Please be sure to fill out BOTH SIDES of this form!



## 6. City of Cambridge/Cambridge YMCA Joint Application

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### Activities For Less

The City of Cambridge believes that all citizens of Cambridge have access to enjoy the many recreational programs offered at our Centres, even when a person's personal or financial circumstances may keep them from participating. For that reason, the City is committed to providing assistance to those individuals and families with low incomes by subsidizing all or part of the costs of memberships or programs directly run by the Community Services Department. This assistance is based on the 'Statistics Canada Low Income Level Indicators.

#### **The Activities For Less card can ONLY be used at the following locations**

Allan Reuter Centre	John Dolson Centre
Centre for the Arts	Duncan McIntosh Skateboard Park*
David Durward Centre	W. G. Johnson Centre
G. E. (Ted) Wake Lounge	

#### **For ONE of the following up to four times per calendar year per person:**

- Swimming Lessons
- One Month Activity Pass (Youth, Adult, Senior)
- One 10 Visit Activity Pass (Youth, Adult, Senior)
- Annual Cambridge 50+ Recreation Centre Membership
- Registered Program
- Summer Swim Pass (**restrictions apply**)
- Arts Centre Membership (Child, Student, Adult, Senior)
- Pipes and Rails Membership \*

#### **The Activities For Less card CANNOT be used for:**

- Private or semi-private lessons
- Manuals, exam fees or administrative fees for programs
- Supply costs for programs i.e. art supplies
- Programs offered by Neighbourhood Associations/Playground Committees

#### **General Information**

1. For Cambridge residents **ONLY**.
2. Incomplete applications will be returned by mail.
3. The Activities For Less card does not allow you to pre-register before the session registration date.
4. Only the person named on the card can use the card.
5. Fee assistance applies to the course/membership/pass fee only. It does not include manuals, exam fees or items needed for courses.
6. All cards will expire on December 31, 2010.
7. You must apply at least three (3) weeks prior to registration if you wish to receive fee assistance. You will be able to apply for the 2010 Activities For Less card, beginning early November 2009 and throughout the 2010 calendar year.

**Application Process**  
**Fill in all the blanks on the form**

**STEP 1**

Contact Information.

**STEP 2**

List the name of **each family member** who wishes to have a card. Birth date (month/day/year) and gender (male or female) are required.

**STEP 3**

**List all sources of household income stating separate incomes for all adults. You must include all income for 2009.** You must provide proof of income as requested. Attach copies of **ALL** income including social assistance statement, pay stub from place of employment, insurance benefits, income tax statement (not income tax summary), etc. Name must be on copy provided. **(If all documents are not attached, the application package will be returned to the applicant by mail.)**

**STEP 4**

Sign and date application form.

**THEN WHAT HAPPENS**

1. *Mail or drop off* the application form and **all attachments** to:
  - **W. G. Johnson Centre, 31 Kribs Street, Cambridge, N3C 2L3**  
(allow 15 business days to process)

*OR drop off* at any one of the following locations (allow 20 business days to process):  
**Allan Reuter Centre, 507 King Street**  
**Centre for the Arts, 60 Dickson Street**  
**Cambridge City Hall, 50 Dickson Street**  
**David Durward Centre, 62 Dickson Street**  
**G. E. (Ted) Wake Lounge, 31 Kribs Street**  
**John Dolson Centre, 212 South Street**
2. If you qualify, an Activities For Less card will be mailed to you (allow 15 working days for processing).
3. The card is valid for **one registered program OR membership OR one eligible activity pass per session per person** up to a maximum value of \$75 per program, membership OR pass.
4. If you have any questions or require assistance in completing the application, please contact Nancy H. at the Community Services Department at 519.740.4681, ext 4458.

***City of Cambridge Privacy Policy***

*Personal information contained on this form is collected pursuant to Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and will be used for the purpose of determining eligibility for C.A.R.E. and for program/membership registration. Questions about the collection of personal information should be directed to the City's Freedom of Information and Privacy Co-ordinator in the Public Access and Council Services Department at 519.740.4680 ext. 4079.*



## Activities For Less

The Family YMCA of Cambridge is a charitable organization committed to helping people grow in spirit, mind and body. We believe that our programs and services should be accessible to everyone regardless of age, background, ability or socio-economic status. That's why the YMCA makes sponsored memberships available.

A YMCA sponsored membership offers the same facilities, programs and services as our YMCA general membership but at a reduced monthly rate. No membership is free. Every member is asked to pay some portion of the cost of their membership on a monthly basis. Those who are approved for a sponsored membership are asked to commit to utilizing the facility a minimum of two times per week.

### General Information

1. For Cambridge residents **ONLY**
2. Incomplete applications will be returned
3. Please attach or bring a void cheque with the completed application.
4. Only the person named on the YMCA membership card can use the card.
5. Fee assistance applies to the membership fee only. It does not include manuals, exam or course fees or items needed for the course.

### THEN WHAT HAPPENS

1. Mail or drop off application in person to:
  - Chaplin Family YMCA of Cambridge, 250 Hespeler Road, Cambridge, N1R 3H3
2. If mailed in, once your application is processed a YMCA staff person will contact you.
3. An appointment to process your application is **not** required between the hours of 9am and 5pm, Monday through Friday. Outside of these hours please phone ahead for an appointment.
4. Once approved a YMCA membership will be set up for a period of one year or less.
5. The responsibility is on the individual to complete a new application before the membership expires.

#### *YMCA Privacy Policy*

*The YMCA of Cambridge is committed to protecting personal information by following responsible information handling practices, in keeping with privacy laws. We collect and use personal data in order to better meet your service needs, to ensure a safe environment while members are visiting our centres, for statistical purposes, to inform you about the YMCA program or service in which you are registered, to complete payment transactions and to satisfy regulatory obligations. You may also hear from us periodically about other YMCA programs, services and opportunities that may interest and benefit you. Contact 519-621-3250 ext 244 for more information.*

# Activities For Less 2010

Please detach and return completed application form with proof of **2009** income (before deductions).  
**ATTACH PROOF OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME (before deductions), SHOWING NAME, TO YOUR APPLICATION.**

## Step 1

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate: \_\_\_\_\_

Street: \_\_\_\_\_ Apt./Unit#: \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

I have no telephone:

How many adults (18 and older) are in your household? \_\_\_\_\_

How many students (ages 15- 17) are in your household? \_\_\_\_\_

How many children (ages 0- 14) are in your household? \_\_\_\_\_

Is there a disability in your household that has a **significant financial impact on your family annual income?** (Please state the disability and dollar amount) \_\_\_\_\_

*Necessary information may be obtained through the Inclusion Services section of the City of Cambridge, Community Services Department.*

## Step 2

List everybody in the family unit (**Cambridge residents only**) who wish to have *Activities For Less*.  
**(PLEASE PRINT)**

First Name	NAME Last Name	DATE OF BIRTH M/D/Y	GENDER M/F	
_____	_____	_____	_____	<b>OFFICE USE ONLY</b> Card Number _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
_____	_____	_____	_____	
_____	_____	_____	_____	
_____	_____	_____	_____	
_____	_____	_____	_____	
_____	_____	_____	_____	
_____	_____	_____	_____	
_____	_____	_____	_____	

### Step 3

List **all household 2009 income (before deductions) received during the year** (proof of income for the entire year must be attached) e.g. income tax return (not income tax summary), pay stub showing year to date earned and current date, cheque stub from Ontario Works, insurance benefits, etc. **Photocopies ONLY, no originals.** Name must be on proof of income provided. Bank statements cannot be accepted.

<b>ANNUAL INCOME (before deductions)</b>	<b>Adult 1</b>	<b>Adult 2</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Employment Income	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Social Assistance (Ontario Works)	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Disability Benefits	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Old Age Security	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Canada Pension Plan	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Employment Insurance <small>(statement is required indicating weekly payment and # of weeks entitlement for Employment Insurance)</small>	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (e.g. support payment, RIF, etc.)	_____	_____

### Step 4

Your application cannot be processed without proof of income as requested in STEP 3. Please include all attachments as requested. The information that you provide is confidential and will not be released. **Everyone receiving *Activities For Less* must be a resident of the City of Cambridge.**

I hereby attest that the information I provide in this application is complete, true and accurate.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

#### *Statistics Canada Low Income Level Indicators*

Family Size	100,000-499,999 City population
1	\$19,094
2	\$23,769
3	\$29,222
4	\$35,480
5	\$40,239
6	\$45,385
7 +	\$50,529

This table indicates 100% subsidy. There are also subsidies of 75%, 50% and 25%.

**I wish to apply for *Activities For Less* at:**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>City of Cambridge</b><br>mail to: W. G. Johnson Centre<br>31 Kribs Street<br>Cambridge, ON N3C 2L3 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>YMCA of Cambridge</b><br>250 Hespeler Road<br>Cambridge, ON N1R 3H3 |
|--|---|

## 7. City of Mississauga ActiveAssist Program Description

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### **Communities in Action - Mississauga's New "ActiveAssist" Program**

Many communities across Ontario are implementing innovative and effective programs and policies that increase access to recreation for low-income families.

The City of Mississauga launched a new fee assistance program called ActiveAssist on May 4, 2009. The benefits of publicly supported recreation and active living programs are essential to improving and maintaining personal health, community, neighbourhood development and to the overall quality of life enjoyed by citizens of Mississauga.

ActiveAssist is a fee assistance program designed to help Mississauga residents in low-income households register and participate in Recreation and Parks programs. This assistance is given as a credit to a Recreation and Parks account for \$275 per person, per year. The credit can be applied to activities such as swimming, skating, fitness and summer camps. The ActiveAssist fee assistance program is an innovative, cost-effective approach to ensure that every resident, regardless of financial circumstances, experiences play without barriers, engages in positive and high-quality leisure activities and enjoys good health through participation in recreation.

Eligibility for the ActiveAssist program is based on economic need – individuals and families whose financial circumstances make them unable to pay for recreation programs and services offered by the City. Eligibility is based on Low-Income Cut Offs (LICO) established by Statistics Canada. To find out more about Mississauga's program, you can visit the City website at [www.mississauga.ca/activeassist](http://www.mississauga.ca/activeassist).