



March 30, 2016

**TO:** Park Board Chair and Commissioners  
**FROM:** General Manager - Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation  
**SUBJECT:** Economic Access Policy & Leisure Access Program Update

---

## RECOMMENDATION

**THAT** the Vancouver Park Board approve the proposed updates to the Economic Access Policy, as outlined in Appendix C of this report, to align with the current practices of the Leisure Access Program.

## POLICY

In July 1992, the Vancouver Park Board approved the Economic Access Policy, which ensures Vancouver residents have access to the basic programs and services provided by the Vancouver Park Board, regardless of their ability to pay (Appendix A). This policy guides the Leisure Access Program.

In response to the Syrian refugee crisis, in December 2015 the Board unanimously approved a motion to work with city and community partners to [welcome and support refugees](#) living in Vancouver.

## BACKGROUND

Guided by the Economic Access Policy, the Leisure Access Program (LAP) provides Vancouver residents facing financial barriers with free or reduced cost access to programs and services offered at the Park Board's pools, rinks, participating fitness centres and community centres. LAP ensures all residents, regardless of income, can participate and lead healthier lifestyles through physical activity, social engagement, and lifelong learning opportunities.

In recognition of the importance of connecting refugees to their new communities, the Leisure Access Program also aims to reduce accessibility barriers for immigrants, refugees, and the undocumented.

In 2015, LAP staff participated in a year long process improvement review to simplify applications and further reduce participation barriers. Focus was on providing same day processing at community recreation facilities, shortening application processing times at the LAP office, and allowing accredited external partners (Appendix B) to directly refer individuals or families to their local Vancouver recreation facility for Leisure Access. In addition to updating printed and online materials, staff introduced streamlined application processes for eligible applicants.

### **Fast Track Application (same day service):**

Individuals who receive low income benefits such as the BC Bus Pass (Red Compass Card), Income Assistance, Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) or Shelter Aid for Elderly Residents (SAFER) can apply at their local recreation facility and receive a pass the same day.

Individuals and families can also be directly referred via accredited external partners (Appendix B) using the new Third Party Referral form. This expedited referral process improves access to vulnerable residents, including the homeless, victims of violence, undocumented individuals and refugees, as well as to those in the Trans\* and Gender Variant community where their government ID may not match their gender identity.

**Self-Referred Application** (two week processing):

Individuals and families can still self-refer either online or via their local recreation facility if they qualify as low income but do not receive income or social assistance. With the introduction of the Fast Track Application options and improved application forms, processing time for self-referred applications was reduced from 8 weeks in 2014 to just 2 weeks in 2016.

**DISCUSSION**

Through the LAP review, staff identified aspects of the Economic Access Policy that no longer aligned with the intent of the policy or reflected the current income or social assistance services offered. Additionally, over the years there have been changes in the services and programs offered by the Park Board.

To ensure that the Leisure Access Program is aligned to the policy that guides it, staff propose it be amended to reflect the following changes:

- (a) replace “citizens” with “residents” - resident is a more inclusive term that covers legal citizens as well as refugees, permanent residents, homeless persons without identification or address, and individuals for whom their government issued ID does not reflect their gender identity;
- (b) update the references to services and programs offered through the Leisure Access Program to reflect current practices;
- (c) update the list of income and social assistance services that are used to establish eligibility.

A proposed amended Economic Access Policy that reflects the above changes is included as Appendix C.

**SUMMARY**

Staff recommend the Vancouver Park Board approves the amended Economic Access Policy as proposed in Appendix C. These changes support the current services and practices of the Leisure Access Program, as well as the direction provided by the Board to ensure that all residents of the City of Vancouver have the opportunity to lead healthier lifestyles and build community connections through access to recreation services and programs.

General Manager's Office  
Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation  
Vancouver, BC

Prepared by: Access and Volunteer Services  
PC/clc

**ECONOMIC ACCESS POLICY - BOARD APPROVED 1992**

---

**GOAL**

To ensure that all residents of Vancouver have access to basic programs and services provided by the Board of Parks and Recreation.

**POLICY STATEMENTS**

All citizens of Vancouver shall have access to basic services provided by the Board of Parks and Recreation regardless of ability to pay.

**OBJECTIVES**

- (a) Special programs will be targeted to groups in communities statistically in need.
- (b) Each rink and indoor pool will schedule at least four hours of free public sessions each week
- (c) A Leisure Access card will allow a 50% price reduction in basic services to persons meeting the eligibility criteria
- (d) Further reductions will be made for persons needing a greater than 50% reduction.

**ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

- (a) Any person who receives any of the following forms of income assistance:
  - Guaranteed Available Income in Need (GAIN);
  - GAIN for handicapped allowance;
  - Short-term refugee assistance program.
- (b) Any person dependent upon a limited income who cannot participate in Board programs or services.

**BASIC SERVICES**

Basic services are defined as:

- public swim and swim lessons;
- public skate and skate lessons (including rentals);
- fitness centres and racquet courts;
- pitch & putt courses (including rentals);
- admission to VanDusen Gardens, Bloedel Conservatory, Miniature Railway, Children’s Zoo.

**EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 1993**

<b>ISSUED BY:</b> Recreation Services	<b>APPROVED BY:</b> Park Board	<b>DATE:</b> July 6, 1992
---------------------------------------	--------------------------------	---------------------------

**LAP 3<sup>RD</sup> PARTY REFERRALS - ACCREDITED EXTERNAL PARTNERS**

---

The following agencies are approved for third party referrals to the Leisure Access Program:

- AIDS - Vancouver
- BC - Borstal Association
- Bloom Group - Community Services Society
- Cedar Cottage Neighbourhood House
- Circle of Eagles - Anderson Lodge
- Circle of Eagles - Lodge Society
- Developmental Disabilities Association (DDA)
- Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House
- Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia (ISSBC)
- John Howard Society of Lower Mainland of BC
- Kiwassa Neighbourhood House
- Ministry Of Children And Family Development (MCFD)
  - MCFD - 1177 West Broadway
  - MCFD - 2411 East Pender
  - MCFD - 3488 Victoria Dr.
  - MCFD - 3665 Kingsway
  - MCFD - 5050 Joyce St
  - MCFD - 550 Cambie St
  - MCFD - 5550 Fraser St
  - MCFD - Youth Services
- MOSAIC
- MPA Society
- Providence Health Care (PHC)
- Rain City Housing - First ACT Team
- Salvation Army - Belkin House
- Salvation Army - Harbour Light
- SUCCESS
- Vancouver Coastal Health Authority (VCHA)
  - VCHA - 1669 East Broadway
  - VCHA - Assertive Community Treatment Team
  - VCHA - Clinic for Alzheimer's and related Disorders
  - VCHA - Community Living - 529 Powell
  - VCHA - Community Living Society
  - VCHA - Kitsilano Fairview Mental Health Team
  - VCHA - Northeast Team
  - VCHA - Raven song Mental Health and Addictions
  - VCHA - Strathcona Mental Health Team
  - VCHA - Three Bridges Community Health Centre
- Vancouver School Board (VSB)

**ECONOMIC ACCESS POLICY - PROPOSED 2016**

---

**PURPOSE**

To ensure that all residents of Vancouver shall have access to basic programs and services provided by the Board of Parks and Recreation regardless of ability to pay.

**SCOPE**

All City of Vancouver residents.

**POLICY STATEMENTS**

Through the Leisure Access Program, Vancouver residents facing financial barriers are provided free or reduced cost access to basic Park Board programs and services offered at its pools, rinks, participating fitness centres and community centres. The Leisure Access Program supports individuals, families, groups and communities in need.

Services available through the Leisure Access Program shall include:

- (a) Free access to public swim and skate sessions (includes rentals);
- (b) A 50% price reduction in basic programs and services (defined below);
- (c) Further reductions for persons needing more than a 50% reduction;
- (d) Admission discounts offered by participating external organizations (e.g. Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden, HR MacMillan Space Centre, Museum of Vancouver, Stanley Park Horse-Drawn Tours, Vancouver Aquarium, Vancouver Maritime Museum).

**ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

The Leisure Access Program is available to City of Vancouver low-income residents who may receive or qualify for Federal and/or Provincial income or social assistance, such as:

- Income Assistance or have an assigned a Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation (MSDI) worker;
- Translink Red Compass Card (subsidized bus pass);
- Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS);
- Shelter Aid for Elderly Residents (SAFER);
- Support from a Vancouver based social services agency or organization;
- Support through the Government of Canada Resettlement Assistance Program (includes both government and privately sponsored refugees).

**DEFINITIONS**

The basic programs and services offered through the Leisure Access Program include:

- public swims and lessons;

- public skates and lessons (including rentals);
- community centre programs (one program per person per season at participating centres);
- fitness centre admissions;
- racquet/squash court admissions;
- pitch & putt golf course admissions (including rentals);
- admission to Park Board attractions, such as Bloedel Conservatory, Stanley Park Miniature Train, VanDusen Botanical Gardens, and other locations and activities as they develop.

**EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 1993**

**APPROVAL HISTORY**

<b>ISSUED BY:</b> Recreation Services	<b>APPROVED BY:</b> Park Board	<b>DATE:</b> July 6, 1992
<b>AMENDED BY:</b> Access & Volunteer Services	<b>APPROVED BY:</b>	<b>DATE:</b>