

ISSUES & ANALYSIS

The proposed fee adjustments account for rising operating costs, yet the City's rates continue to be among the lowest in the region. A detailed comparison of current regional recreation fees is provided in Appendix 2 of this report.

The proposed fee increases consider the following:

- The Consumer Price Index for Victoria increased by 3.4% between August 2022 and August 2023, and the average for the year to August 2023 is 4.23%.
- The cost of operating recreation facilities is affected by building maintenance expenses. Notably, at Crystal Pool and Royal Athletic Park, the City's two largest and oldest recreation facilities, the building maintenance budgets have seen a 19% increase over the past two years.

To address potential financial barriers residents may face in accessing recreation programs, the City continues to administer the Leisure Involvement for Everyone (L.I.F.E.) Program. This regional program offers funding support for eligible individuals and families. The Draft 2024 Financial Plan includes approximately \$100,000 in subsidy for the L.I.F.E. program, which covers registration in recreation programs offered through City-operated facilities and neighbourhood-based community and senior centres. Over 3,000 patrons access services at the Crystal Pool and Fitness Centre through the L.I.F.E. program annually. In addition, staff continue to seek private and government funding opportunities to further reduce financial barriers. In 2023, \$57,000 in grant funding was secured to support no-cost programs, including support for recreation programs and outreach for children and seniors.

OPTIONS & IMPACTS

Option 1 - That Council direct staff to amend the Recreation Fees Bylaw to reflect a 5% increase. (Recommended)

The proposed fee increase for this option has been included in the 2024 Draft Financial Plan and is projected to result in \$68,000 of new revenue annually. Should Council approve this option the fee increase would come into effect in February 2024.

Option 2 - That Council provide instructions to staff to adjust the fees by an alternate amount.

Should Council direct staff to adjust the fees by an alternate amount, these changes would be incorporated into the 2024 Draft Financial Plan and would take effect once the appropriate notice has been issued to users.

Accessibility Impact Statement

The proposed changes in fees are not anticipated to impact accessibility. To assist patrons facing financial barriers, residents can access the L.I.F.E. program. As outlined above, this program is designed to provide no-cost and low-cost recreation opportunities for individuals and families with limited incomes.

2023 – 2026 Strategic Plan

This report relates to the 2023 -2026 Strategic Plan Priorities (Community Well-being and Safety, Arts, Culture, Music, Sport and Entertainment).

Impacts to Financial Plan

The proposed recreation fee increases would result in approximately \$68,000 in new revenue towards increased operating costs. Staff have included the projected revenues in the Draft 2024 Financial Plan.

CONCLUSION

Subject to Council approval, staff will commence the communication process to advise residents and community groups about the forthcoming changes that will take effect in February 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeff Brehaut
Manager,
Recreation Services

Derrick Newman
Acting Director,
Parks, Recreation & Facilities

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager.

List of Attachments

Appendix 1 – Proposed Recreation Fee Schedule Amendments
Appendix 2 – Regional Comparison Recreation Fees Bylaw