

## Managers' Reports

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### Request for Recommendation

**Feel Free to Feel Fit/ À votre santé, sans rien dépenser!**

Presented To: Priorities Committee

Presented: Wednesday, Aug 12, 2009

Report Date: Wednesday, Jun 17, 2009

Type: Managers' Reports

### Recommendation

Whereas members of the May 20th, 2009 Priorities Committee recommended that the "Feel Free to Feel Fit/ À votre santé, sans rien dépenser!" initiative be brought forward for consideration with a September start date, thereby concluding in February 2010; and

Whereas members of the May 20th, 2009 Priorities Committee recommended that public transportation be considered as part of the initiative; and

Whereas funding continues to be available from the Social Services Division for free weekly swimming during a pilot period; and

Whereas the "Feel Free to Feel Fit/ À votre santé, sans rien dépenser!" pilot project supports local strategies as well as the efforts of the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association and Parks and Recreation Ontario to establish a National Policy on Access to Recreation for Low Income Families.

Therefore, be it resolved that the Community Development Department implements a "Feel Free to Feel Fit/ À votre santé, sans rien dépenser!" pilot program offering free weekly swimming at all five municipally owned pools starting Friday September 18th, 2009 for a 22 week pilot period ending Sunday February 14th, 2010; and

That Transit Services provide a "two ride" pass for the pilot period, enabling participants to ride the

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*Digitally Signed Aug 6, 09*

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bus home for free and return to the pool again the following week; and

That the success of the program be evaluated by the Healthy Community Cabinet Research Committee to determine the merits of continuing, expanding or terminating the program after the initial pilot phase; and

That the results of the evaluations be brought forward to Council for information.

## **Finance Implications**

There is no budget impact as incremental costs and lost revenues will be funded from the Social Assistance Restructuring Fund.

## **Policy Implications**

The "Feel Free to Feel Fit/ À votre santé, sans rien dépenser!" program will provide an opportunity for the Community Development Department to evaluate the need for expanded recreation activities that are offered at no cost. Increased physical activity promotes healthy living, personal growth and skill development. Likewise, free recreation opportunities which offer free transportation function to reduce inequality and isolation, encourage participation, improve self-esteem, instill a sense of belonging and eliminate embarrassment created by subsidy applications.

## **Background**

Part of the corporate mission of the City of Greater Sudbury is to "provide excellent access to quality municipal services". As a means of bringing families and friends together regardless of socioeconomic status, the Community Development Department is proposing to implement a "Feel Free to Feel Fit/ À votre santé, sans rien dépenser!" five month pilot project offering free weekly swimming and public transportation. The motivation for this policy is to provide individuals and families with an activity whereby no application, no means testing, and no proof of income are required.

Aside from supporting the *Human Services Strategy* and the *Community Strategy to Reduce Poverty*, which stress the importance of social inclusion and the determinants of health, the initiative also strengthens the Healthy Community Strategy by recognizing the Healthy Community Charter's pledge to create "a community that encourages individuals to take ownership of their health and well being; supports individual and family wellness and safety programs; and assigns appropriate resources to build capacity and equitable access for all".

The "Feel Free to Feel Fit/ À votre santé, sans rien dépenser!" initiative is also in keeping with the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (CPRA) and Parks and Recreation Ontario's (PRO) efforts to develop a national Policy on Access to Recreation for Low Income Families. PRO has developed a seven-point action plan, supported by a myriad of evidence, highlighting the health, social and economic benefits of inclusive recreation.

A 2007 survey\* completed for PRO and funded by the Ministry of Health Promotion revealed that:

- 35% of municipalities have a Council-approved and published policy dealing with equity of access to recreation for all residents or have one in development;
- 77% of municipalities reduce or remove fees for at least some recreation facilities or programs. This includes 91% of municipalities with an equity of access to recreation policy and 70% of those without such a policy; and
- a majority of municipalities identified limited transportation and equipment (62%) and the social stigma associated with asking for financial assistance (52%) as important non-financial barriers that limit the effectiveness of fee supports.

\*Every Child Plays: Access to Recreation for Low-Income Families in Ontario, Report Survey Findings, David Redmond and Associates, November 2007

Currently, the City of Greater Sudbury Leisure Services Division works with community agencies, such as the Sudbury Manitoulin Children's Foundation and the Human League to ensure that underprivileged children in the community have the opportunity to participate in municipal programs.

## Program Description

The "Feel Free to Feel Fit/ À votre santé, sans rien dépenser!" initiative will include:

- A set schedule of free weekly swimming at all five municipally owned pools for a five month pilot period starting on September 18th, 2009 and finishing on February 14th, 2010.
- A free "two ride" pass, which provides participants a ride home from the pool and return transportation for the next visit.

### "Feel Free to Feel Fit/ À votre santé, sans rien dépenser!" Swim Schedule

Dow Pool	Sundays	2:30pm to 4:00pm
Gatchell Pool	Saturdays	3:00pm to 4:30pm
Howard Armstrong Centre	Fridays	6:00pm to 7:00pm
Nickel District Pool	Fridays	6:30pm to 8:00pm
Onaping Pool	Saturdays	1:00pm to 3:00pm

Swim times were scheduled based on availability and the people patterns experienced at each of the different facilities; the mix of dates and times provides participants flexibility.

### "Two Ride" Pass

Passes for patrons who require transportation in order to participate in the program will be provided with "two ride" passes. This option for participants will require that they make transportation arrangements for the first swim since vouchers will only be available at the pool sites on the dates and times of the free swim - this process ensures that participants will

use the passes for the program and not for alternate reasons. Once at the pool for the free swim, patrons will receive the transportation pass for the return trip home and a second ride back to the program the following week.

The "two ride" pass system has a serial number printed on each ticket; serial numbers can then be tracked and usage can be monitored and recorded. The "two ride" passes will be programmed to expire at the end of the pilot period.

The swimming and transit schedules were reviewed in order to ensure that public transportation is available during the dates and times of the "Feel Free to Feel Fit/ À votre santé, sans rien dépenser!" program.

### **Program Costs**

The total estimated program costs (comprised of estimated lost revenues associated with existing public swims, transit passes, promotion and the need for additional lifeguards) is \$25,000.

Program funding for this initiative will be provided by the Social Services Division through the Social Assistance Restructuring (SAR) fund, which was formerly known as the Ontario Child Benefit and the National Child Benefit. The SAR fund is provided by the Ministry of Community and Social Services on an annual basis.

The SAR reinvestment objectives include: helping to prevent and reduce the depth of child poverty; promoting attachment to the labour market; and reducing overlap and duplication of government programs. The SAR reinvestment is expected to enhance programs and benefits geared to low income families with children and create new programs or enhance existing programs that meet the SAR objectives, rather than replacing or offsetting current program spending.

Correspondence with the Ministry of Community and Social Services confirmed that this funding source is appropriate for the program.

### **Promotion**

The Corporate Communications and French-Language Services Section will be responsible for creating promotion material for the "Feel Free to Feel Fit/ À votre santé, sans rien dépenser!" initiative. All promotion material will be available in French and English. The start date of the pilot program was decided as mid-September to allow sufficient time for printing and distribution.

Details of the program will be advertised to the public in the following ways:

- posters will be placed at all 13 libraries, 5 community pools, 14 arenas, the Social Services office and the Citizen Services Centre at Tom Davies Square;
- information flyers will be mailed to Ontario Works recipients through the monthly cheque-stub mailout;
- Best Start Hubs will be given information sheets to distribute to parents and Best Start Hubs will also be asked to include the swim times and locations on their monthly activity calendars;
- daycare providers throughout the City of Greater Sudbury will also be given information sheets through the Supervisor's Network Meeting to distribute;

- advertisements will be posted on the City of Greater Sudbury website; and
- information postcards will be distributed to elementary school students through the individual School Boards.

## **Evaluation**

An evaluation tool to measure the success of the "Feel Free to Feel Fit/ À votre santé, sans rien dépenser!" program will be developed in consultation with the Healthy Community Cabinet Research Committee. Indicators will include the number of visits over the five month period, the effectiveness of the advertising campaign, the reasons for attending and satisfaction with the program. Evaluations will be conducted at three different intervals during the program (weeks 5, 11 and 22). Statistics will also be collected by Transit Services to determine usage over the course of the pilot period. Evaluations and data collection pertaining to the program will be summarized at the end of the pilot period to determine the feasibility of continuing, expanding or terminating the initiative.