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Item No. 15.1.9
Halifax Regional Council
August 20, 2024

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council
SUBMITTED BY: Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer
DATE: July 25, 2024
SUBJECT: Recreation Funding Access Application Process

ORIGIN

July 17th, 2021, Regional Council Motion (Item No:15.6.1) MOVED by Councillor Mancini, seconded by Councillor Outhit

THAT Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to provide a staff report regarding reducing barriers to recreation for vulnerable communities including barriers to using Recreation Funding Access Program from the Affordable Access Program.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report responds to the motion of Halifax Regional Council on July 17th, 2021, directing the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to provide a staff report on the reduction of barriers for vulnerable communities in accessing the Recreation Access Program under the Affordable Access Program.

An analysis on the historical use and development of the current Recreation Access Program was completed showing a clear pattern of growth in the program since inception in 2018, with a significant increase in approved applicants in the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 program years.

The identification of barriers was guided by a detailed review of the program in 2022-23, overview of 2023-24 data, feedback from community engagement and through a demographic analysis of the program participants. Staff identified potential program changes to address most of the identified barriers, these changes include:

- Changes to Administrative Order 2019-010-ADM
 - Elimination of requirement to produce the Canadian Child Benefit statement from families with children under 18 years old
 - Addition of a 25% discount for residents having an income that falls in the modified Low Income Cut Off table
- The feasibility of extending Recreation Access Program to multi-district facilities (MDFs)
- Establishment of program guidelines for use of the Recreation Access Program
- Further coordination with Halifax Transit and Property Tax Access Programs (AAP) to streamline the application process.

RECOMMENDATION ON PAGE 2

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council direct the CAO to direct staff to:

- 1) consult with and instruct multi-district facilities (MDFs) on the adoption of discounted user charges in accordance with the Recreation Access Program as part of their 2025/26 budget planning process;
- 2) obtain estimates from MDFs showing the budget impacts of adoption of discounted user charges under the Recreation Access Program as part of the 2025/26 budget planning process; and
- 3) negotiate arrangements with the MDFs to charge and collect discounted user charges in accordance with the Recreation Access Funding Program in the 2025/26 fiscal year, as permitted under and in accordance with HRM's agreements with the MDFs, subject to Council direction during the 2025/26 budget process.

BACKGROUND

The Recreation Access Program ([Funding Access | Financial Need Support | Halifax](#)) is a Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) funded initiative that provides recreation opportunities to children, youth and adults in financial need. Depending on the need, program registration fees and facility memberships are 50% or 100% covered for approved applicants. To qualify for the program, HRM residents must provide proof of financial need and a completed Affordable Access Application form. The Affordable Access Program (AAP) application form includes the Property Tax Exemption and Deferral Program and the Affordable Transit Pass Program.

A recent report from United Way indicated that one in ten people in HRM are living below the poverty line. This is the highest rate of poverty among urban centres ([Poverty-Report-Final-002.pdf \(unitedwayhalifax.ca\)](#)). The Recreation Access Program helps to address inequalities in access to recreation for residents of the municipality who are living below the poverty line.

Before 2018, HRM Recreation Programming operated 'HRM KIDS', which provided financial assistance to children under the age of 18 participating in recreation programs. The eligibility for the current Recreation Access Program has been expanded for any low-income resident of the municipality. Low income is determined by Statistic Canada based on the Low Income Cut Off (LICO) Chart. This is updated annually in January. See below for chart from 2023:

2023 Low Income Cut Off (LICO) Chart:

Number of people in household	Household income that qualifies for 100% discount	Household income that qualifies for 50% discount
1 person	26,000 and under	26,001-52,000
2 people	32,000 and under	32,001-64,000
3 people	39,000 and under	39,001-78,000
4 people	48,000 and under	48,001-96,000
5 people	54,000 and under	54,001-108,000
6 people	61,000 and under	61,001-122,000
7 people	67,000 and under	67,001-134,000

Recreation Access Program discounts are placed directly on the applicant's account within the HRM Recreation software and then are applied automatically when they register for a recreation service. The discounts are then separated into two categories:

- 1) Affordable Access Program discounts: Residents have submitted financial information from Canada Revenue Agency - Notice of Assessment (NOA) for all adults over the age of 18 and

Canadian Child Benefit (CCB) statement for all children under 18 years old; or letter of referral from a community clinician that works closely with the individual/family.

- 2) Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS) discounts: Welcomed in Halifax (WIH) card or letter of referral from ISANS.

Recreation Access Program discounts are available for HRM operated programs and in HRM operated Recreation Centres, including satellite locations. This does not include Multi-District Facilities (MDFs) where HRM owns the facility, however, they are operated in accordance with contracts between HRM and registered Societies governed by an independent, volunteer Board of Directors. Three of the MDF facilities have their own fee assistance program.

Current fee assistance programs in Multi-District Facilities (MDF)

Fee assistance programs in the MDFs cover memberships only and do not cover the full cost of the program (in some programs, applicants may receive membership discounts for programs registration and access to early membership registration). Each program operates on different fee assistance models. The table below summarizes each program and other free programs run by each facility:

Facility Name	Eligibility Documents	Discount	Other Free Programs Available	Cost Associated with Programs
Canada Games Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proof of residency • Proof of household income - uses LICO Table 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% of your annual membership fees will be covered for 12 months from the start date of an annual membership. • Pay for program using member rate. • Welcomed in Halifax (WIH) card was also used to access the facility 	<p>Free swims offered in June.</p> <p>Semi-annual teen swims.</p> <p>Free lessons to 150 ISANS clients per year</p>	<p>1,474 WIH Clients</p> <p>Total value discounted: \$79,467.00 (8,252 facility day passes)</p> <p>302 Clients had a Fee Assistance (FA) Membership represent 3.8% of total memberships</p>
Zatzmans Sportsplex	Letter of referral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual membership of pay what you can (PWYC) but cannot be of no cost. • Pay for program using member rate 	<p>Free access to walking/running track 3-days a week.</p> <p>Free youth swims once a week</p> <p>Free Youth Gym time</p> <p>Free community Zumba</p>	<p>206 clients had a PWYC Membership represents 5.8% of total membership</p> <p>10% of eligible clients used the discount for programming</p>
Cole Harbour Place	Letter of referral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3-month membership, • pay what you can (PWYC) but cannot be of no cost. • Able to re-apply as often as needed. 	<p>Senior Lounge drop-in</p> <p>Free Holiday Community Events</p>	<p>233 clients had a PWYC Membership represents 6.8% of total membership</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discounts for programs (10%-25% based on program) 		PWYC clients are offered at 10% and 25% off program
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Contractual Provisions Relevant to the Recommended Expansion of the Program to MDFs

Staff will seek advice from HRM Legal Services about those provisions in the MDF agreements that relate to the required adoption of discounted user charges from the Recreation Access Program. Any communication on this topic to staff, the CAO, or Regional Council is presumptively solicitor-client privileged.

Free recreation program opportunities offered by HRM

Offering free programming in which residents can attend without applying for an access discount is another way the Municipality has eliminated the barriers to participation. Some examples of these programs are below:

Recreation pass borrowing programs

Halifax Public Libraries (HPL), in partnership with HRM Recreation Programming and MDFs offer the public the ability to try out different recreation facilities, at no cost. Access passes for Sackville Sports Stadium and two Multi-District Facilities (Canada Games Centre and Cole Harbour Place) are available to be borrowed through the HPL that is closest to the recreation of interest.

The two-week pass can be used by a single user or in any combination of up to two adults with three to four children living in the same household. The facility passes include the use of aquatics centres, fitness centres open/family skating and drop-in group exercise classes. The Sackville Sports Stadium also offers indoor cycling classes that are very popular and have multi-week waitlists. If these passes had been purchased, the associated revenue would have been approximately \$40,000.

HRM free programming

There were 523 free programs offered by HRM operated recreation centres between March 2022 and April 2023 with over 6000 residents in attendance. These programs included:

- Youth Leadership
- Drop-in programs (children and adults)
- Preschool skating
- National Lifeguard courses
- Water Safety Instructor courses

If these had been paid programs, the associated revenue would have been \$746,435.

Free swim lessons at HRM beaches

There were 16 beaches that offered free swimming lessons in 2022/2023, with over a thousand residents served. As these lessons are offered in a wide range of locations, residents have typically chosen locations within their community. Rural communities are particularly well served by the free lessons. If there was a fee associated with these lessons the associated revenue would have been \$73,411.

Jurisdictional Scan

In 2018, a jurisdictional scan of recreation access discount programs across Canada and Nova Scotia was completed; this list was since updated in 2023. See Attachment 2. Takeaways from the jurisdictional scans are incorporated into this report.

DISCUSSION

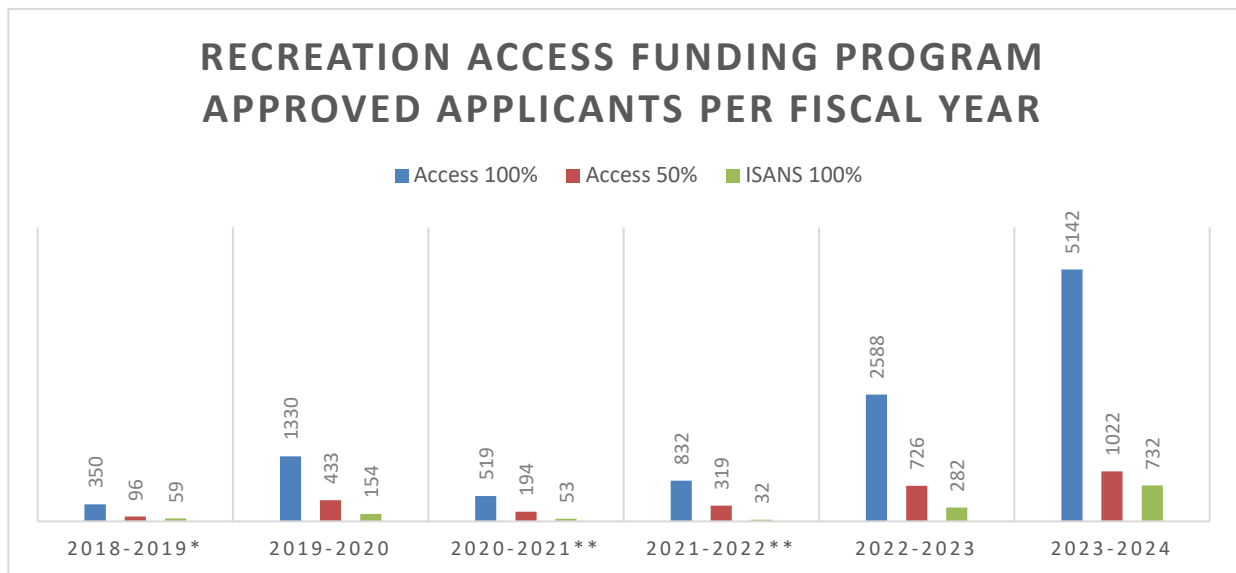
To identify barriers to using the recreation access program staff reviewed:

- The growth of the program
- Program data on the use of the program, including reasons applications were deemed ineligible
- Use of the program by geography
- Feedback from the community

Staff also reviewed program successes and what is working about the program.

Growth of the Recreation Access Program

Since the Recreation Access Program expanded in 2018, the program has grown year after year. The number of approved applicants in the program has almost tripled since the first full fiscal year (2019-2020). See table below for a breakdown of the number of applications and the discount received.



*Starts in August 2018 due to change over in recreation software

** COVID-19 restriction impacted applicant numbers

As the table above clearly demonstrates, of the three discount categories, the 100% access discount has had the most applications received and approved.

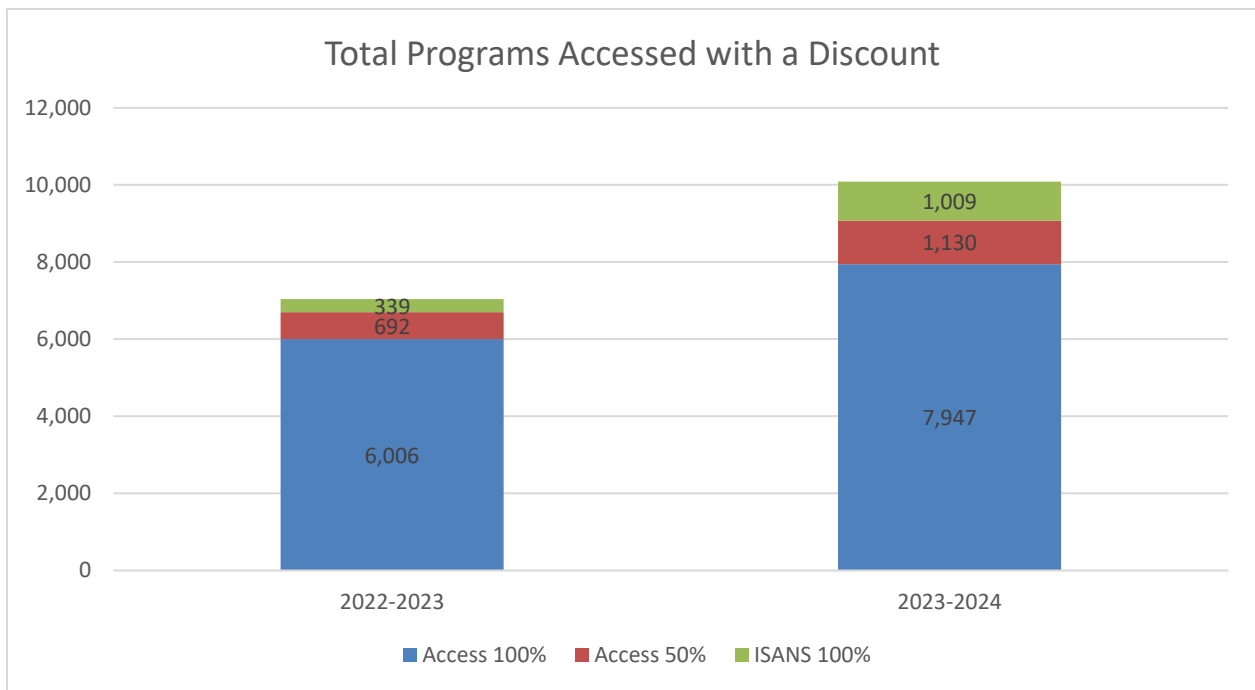
2023-2024 vs 2022-2023 Recreation Access Program data

This section compares the available data from 2023-2024 to the data collected in 2022-2023 as it relates to the Recreation Access Program:

	2022-2023	2023-2024
Number of discounts processed	3,596	6,896
Percentage of applications not approved	11%	19%
Percentage of applications that exceed the parameters of the program	0.07%	0.2%
Percentage of total registrations	11%	14%
Average # of programs accessed	5.8	4.7

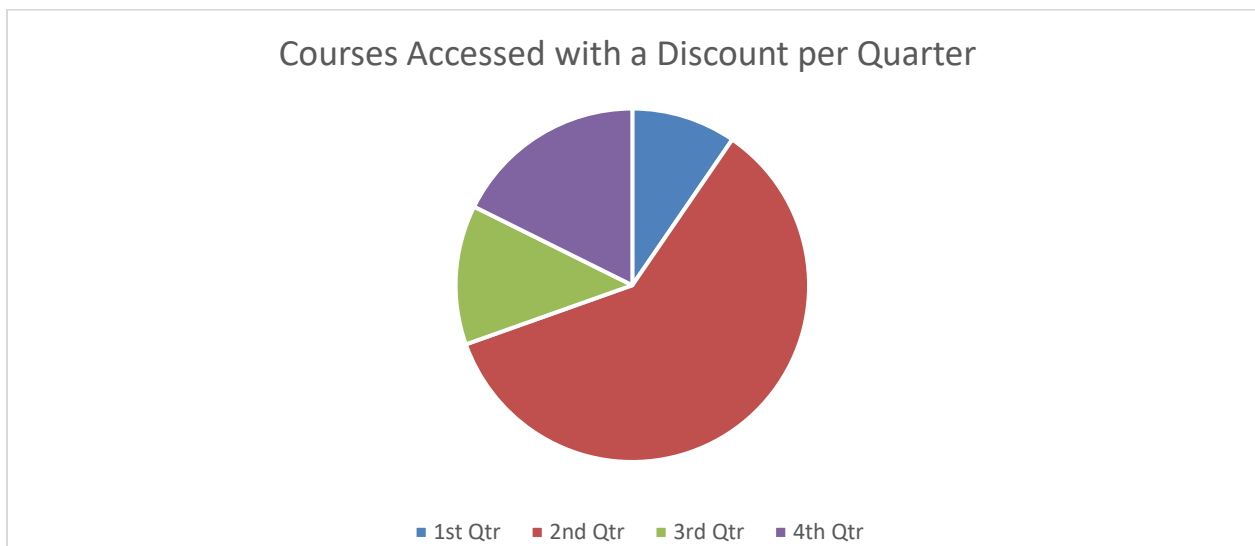
The table above shows the growth in the program almost doubling from one year to the next. Due to missing or incorrect paperwork, some applicants were not approved. Examples of applications that exceeded the parameters of the program include exceeding the low-income threshold, non- HRM resident, or a non-valid Welcome in Halifax card; these numbers have also increased from the previous year. The percentage of

total registrations signifies the percentage of registrations who used the Recreation Funding Program discount, as compared to the total number of program registrations in that fiscal year.



Data Analysis (2022/2023) of Recreation Access Program

This section will examine demographics and spending as it relates to the Recreation Access Program in the 2022-2023 fiscal year. Below is a chart representing quarterly program registrations that used a Recreation Access Discount:



Summer registration (second quarter) represented just over half of all registrations associated with the Recreation Access Program (55%); Summer camp program registration represented 47%. Swimming lesson registration was also high, with 15% of Recreation Access Program registrations being for this program. In general, swimming lessons and summer day camps signify some of the most popular programs

run by HRM, for all residents.

Geographical Access to Recreation Facilities

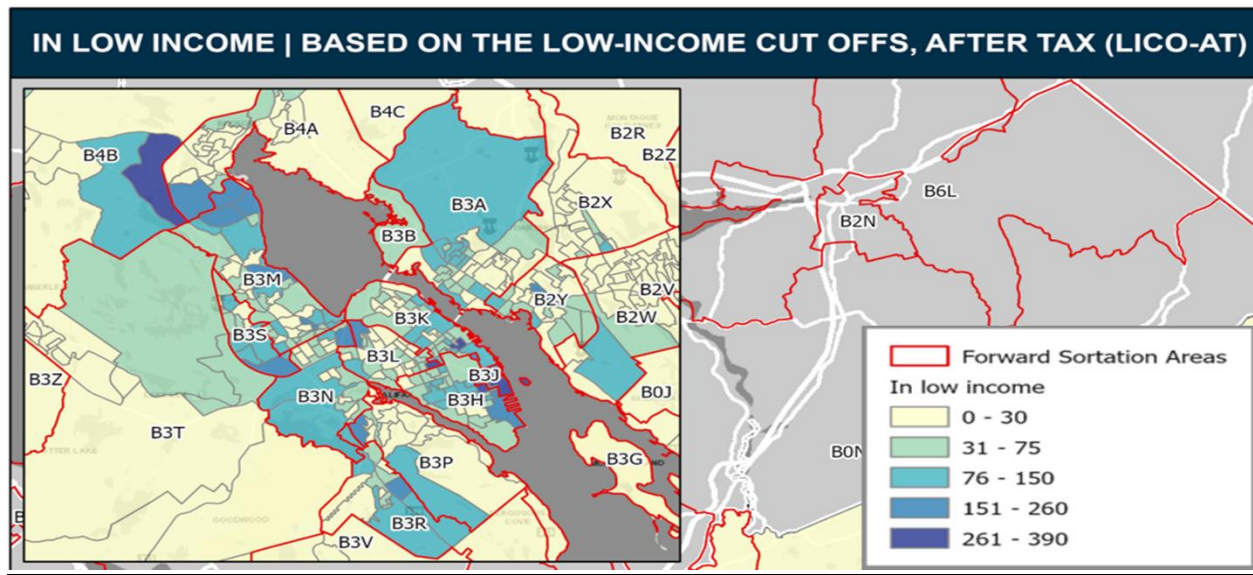
Below is an analysis on the number of registrations per program that used an access discount. Postal codes from individuals' recreation accounts were used to identify the area of residence. The top five areas of registration, using an access discount represented 50% of the total program use. The table below summarizes the information:

Community	Postal Code	Number of Registrations with a Discount	Percentage of Total Registration	HRM Rec Operated Facility in Area	Rec Centres where the Discounts were used
Clayton Park/West Fairview/Rockingham	B3M	1273	19%	No	LeBrun: 17% SSS: 16%
Fairview/West	B3L	635	9%	Yes - St. Andrews Centre	St. Andrews Centre: 48% Captain William Spry: 10%
Bayer's Lake Clayton Park West	B3S	555	8%	No	Captain William Spry: 17% St. Andrews Centre: 16%
North End Convoy Place	B3K	506	8%	Yes - Needham and George Dixon	Needham: 29% George Dixon: 28%
Dartmouth North Albro Lake MicMac Village	B3A	424	6%	Yes- Dartmouth North*	Findlay: 42% Dartmouth North: 38% George Dixon: 5%
*Dartmouth North Community Centre was closed in 22/23 using satellite locations for programming, which resulted in fewer programs					

Where there is not an HRM operated Recreation Centre in the area, Recreation Access Program participants travelled on average more than 5 kms to access programs. For example, this required residents in the B3M postal code area to register for programs outside their community. Whereas, when there is a HRM operated Recreation Centre in the community, such as in the B3L postal code area, the travel distance is typically much less, and the program registrations were much more concentrated. See Attachment 1 for a breakdown of registrations based on geographical area.

Low usages of the program in some areas of need

The dark blue areas in the below map are areas based on LICO stats where some residents are recognized as low income:



The B4B postal code (Glen Arbour, Harmony Park, Kearney Lake Uplands Park) represents a high number of people within the low-income category (between 151-390 private households). This area only represents 145 of the 3314 approved applicants to the Recreation Access Program. Additionally, B3R (Spryfield) has a high average of people in the low-income category (between 76-260 private households). This area only represents 114 of the 3314 approved application to the Recreation Access Program.

Recreation Access Program successes

The Recreation Access Program has continued to grow every year since it started in 2018. Since its beginning, the program has offered flexible options for providing proof of financial need, making it easier for applicants to be approved. The option to accept a letter of referral in place of a Notice of Assessment or Canadian Child Benefit has allowed applicants to still apply if they do not have access to their tax information. Additionally, having two categories for discounts (100% and 50%) offers residents who do not meet the LICO threshold, the opportunity to participate in recreation programs and services with a 50% discount.

The jurisdictional scan confirmed that HRM is aligned with other municipalities across Canada requiring confirmation of financial need with a Notice of Assessment or other proof of financial status. HRM was the only Municipality that offered 100% discount on programs and access to recreation memberships without a limit. Other municipalities had a limit on the amount spent per year, per participant and/or a limit on the number of programs available. Additionally, all other access programs reviewed offered 50-90% discount on recreation program registration fees. Many of the municipalities offered Canadian Tire Jumpstart and/or KidSport. Further details on these programs and alternatives for offering internal recreation discount programs, can be found in Attachment 2.

Another success noted in the Recreation Access Program is the number of families using the program for HRM Recreation Summer Camp registration. Summer Camp registration represents the highest amount discounted in the 2022-23 Recreation Access Program:

- Summer registration represented 40% of the total amount discounted using a Recreation Access Program discount.
- There were 671 participants registered in Summer Camp Programs using an access discount. The average number of camps that participants were enrolled in was five.
- More than a third of all registrations for Summer Camp Programs used the Recreation Access Program to register.

Access to recreation programs during the summer season can be a barrier for many families, as programs can often be costly. The Recreation Access Program is helping families to eliminate some of these barriers through the discounts offered.

In reviewing the data and in conversation with community groups (*see community engagement section for details*), several themes have emerged regarding other perceived barriers to accessing the Recreation Access Program.

Knowledge of the program and application process

Many community groups that were contacted had never heard of the Recreation Access Program and/or were unaware community clinician referrals were accepted in place of financial confirmation. Community groups that were aware of the Recreation Access Program felt that the application form was too wordy and confusing, particularly for those community members whose first language is not English, or do not have efficient literacy skills. A combined application form for all three programs was created to decrease submission of multiple applications however, at times, this form can also cause confusion as people sometimes apply an incorrect program. This also causes a delay in processing the application, which can cause a delay in receiving the discount and may impact the ability to register for programs.

Access to financial paperwork

Applicants to the Recreation Access Program can be declined due to the inability to provide proof of financial status. In the 2023/24 fiscal year, 70% of the applications that were declined, were declined due to missing or incorrect financial paperwork (Notice of Assessment and Canadian Child Benefit Statement). Applicants have stated that the most significant barrier to accessing this information is that they have not filed their taxes and, therefore, have not received their Notice of Assessment.

Additionally, newcomers to Canada do not receive a Canadian Child Benefit statement until 18 months after they have arrived. In these cases, applicants are encouraged to contact a community organization or clinician who would be able to assess their financial situation and write a letter of referral on their behalf. Newcomers to Canada can also use other means as proof of financial status such as letters from ISANS, Welcomed in Halifax card, letter from a private sponsor of refugee or a community clinician letter of referral.

Registration/access to programs

Once the discount has been approved, one of the greatest barriers to accessing HRM Recreation Programs is the registration process; only 27% (1,847) of the Recreation Access Program registrants enrolled in programs in 2023-2024. Further work is required to explore why that number is so low.

Following the collection and analysis of the 2023 summer camp attendance data, it was found that popular programs fill up very quickly, but the programs may not be fully attended. When the program begins, as many as 8% of participants do not show up and do not contact the Recreation Centre to advise that they will not be attending. Staff then attempt to contact participants and then reach out to those on the waitlist to attempt to fill empty spaces; this is particularly relevant to the HRM's Summer camp programs. If a participant missed a full week of a summer camp program, it was twice as likely that they would be in the Recreation Access Program. If a participant pays in full and does not withdraw five days before the program begins, the terms and conditions of program registration states that they are not able to be reimbursed. Similar guidelines are not in currently place for the Recreation Access Program.

Findings: Recreation Access Programs areas of development

As noted in the analysis above, there are areas of the Recreation Access Program that could be developed to better serve a broader range of residents.

Based on the barriers listed above, the following changes to the Recreation Access Program are proposed. These changes are reflected in proposed changes to Bylaw 100 and Administrative Order 2019-010-ADM, before Council in a separate report.

Remove the requirement of the Canada Child Benefit (CCB) statement on applications for families with

children under 18 years old

The Recreation Access Program currently requires both Notice of Assessment and CCB statements for all applicants who have children under the age of 18 as a requirement to verify names of children listed on the application align with the children listed as being in the household. Missing a CCB statement is the most common reason for rejection. To align better with the property tax rebate and the Halifax Transit Discount Program, by only requiring a Notice of Assessment will remove barriers for some households. It would also decrease the processing time for applications.

Expand the categories of the Recreation Access Program to include a new category (25% discount for residents having an income that falls under the modified LICO table).

Recreation Access Program to be expanded to have a 25% discount. This would be available for families who do not currently qualify for the 50% discount. This would enable more families to access recreation programs by providing them with additional financial assistance. See table below for proposed changes.

Number of people in household	Household income that qualifies for 100% discount	Household income that qualifies for 50% discount	Household income that qualifies for 25% discount
1 person	26,000 and under	26,001-52,000	52,001-65,000
2 people	32,000 and under	32,001-64,000	64,001-80,000
3 people	39,000 and under	39,001-78,000	78,001-98,000
4 people	48,000 and under	48,001-96,000	96,001-120,000
5 people	54,000 and under	54,001-108,000	108,001-135,000
6 people	61,000 and under	61,001-122,000	122,001-153,000
7 people	67,000 and under	67,001-134,000	134,001-168,000

***Changes are highlighted in yellow**

To better understand what HRM's cost to offer the 25% discount would be, the yearly cost for offering the 50% discount was investigated. The data showed that 10% of the cost for the Recreation Access Program can be attributed to the 50% discount category in the 2022-23 fiscal year. It was assumed that the trend for the proposed 25% discount would be consistent with the 50% discount and would not have a significant impact on the overall financial implications of the program. There may be families who do not have the financial means to participate in HRM Recreation programs or services, therefore, providing this discount could be an opportunity for families that would not qualify under the current model to be able to participate.

Other barriers internally addressed by staff included:

Multi-District Facilities (MDFs) to offer Recreation Access Program

Staff consulted with HRM owned - board operated facilities (currently limited to multi-district facilities) on the process required to expand this program for citizens served by these facilities. The specific offerings require a staged approach for implementation. Boards would require notification by October 2024 of programming requirements as part of the 2025/26 budgeting process to incorporate into their business plans. Although some facilities provide pay what you can or fee assistance, there is currently no consistency, nor a single point of application for citizens to access these program offerings. That said, discussions are ongoing on the implementation requirement for this service, to ensure consequences to the membership-based model at some of the facilities are anticipated and mitigated where possible. Compared to HRM owned and operated facilities, many MDFs are membership-based facilities with a significant proportion of their offerings and consequently revenues being based on membership. Extending the Recreation Access Program to MDFs significantly expands the reach of the program to those interested in facility memberships. This has potential to increase capacity pressures and financial pressures at these sites. An estimate of the financial implications of extending the program to MDFs is included in the financial implications section of this report. Pending Council approval, staff will provide notice to MDF boards that, as permitted under the

existing contracts, they may be required to adopt the Recreation Access Program and will request more detailed estimates in order to inform a final decision during the 2025/26 budget process.

Establishing program guidelines for use of the Recreation Access Program

Currently the Recreation Access Program does not have a limit on the number of programs/memberships, or the amount of money allocated for each applicant. The current Administrative Order 2019-010-ADM allows for the Executive Director to limit the amount of recreation services allowed for each person. Internal guidelines will be created to ensure that staff are able to address the situation of participants not attending the programs that they registered for and/or registering for multiple programs during the same time. Consultation has been completed with staff to confirm that the Recreation Access Program is able to be implemented with the new recreation software. The new registration software is expected to commence in 2025 and will allow for more checks and balances internally within the program. Staff do not intend to cap the program.

Coordinate with Halifax Transit and Property Tax Access Programs (AAP) to streamline the application process

Staff will continue to coordinate and review the current application process through a collaboration with Halifax Transit and the Property Tax Access Program. As the application process has been identified as a barrier, applications will be reviewed and simplified where possible. Additionally, community information sessions will be planned to assist community members with the application process. It has been identified that despite confidentiality of applicants being a top priority, not all community members feel comfortable dropping off application forms to Recreation Centres, particularly in smaller, tight knit communities. Offering information sessions with staff from outside the community will reduce this barrier. Communities with high needs and low Recreation Access Program applications will be targeted.

HRM Finance had been investigating a potential partnership with CRA to assist with accessing up-to-date financial information for applicants in all Affordable Access Programs (Property Taxes, Transit, and Recreation). This partnership is not going forward at this time.

Along with following these recommendations, a greater connection to communities is needed. A community consultation plan will be developed to ensure that information about the Recreation Access Program will reach as many residents as possible.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The impact to HRM facilities/revenue are discussed in the separate report, titled By-law and Administrative Order Amendments – Recreation User Fees.

An estimate of the cost implications (revenue loss) of extending the program to MDFs is approximately \$700,000. The financial implications were developed using assumptions based on applying the rates of usage of the Recreation Access Program seen in HRM operated facilities to similar MDF offerings. If the reduction in revenue results in MDFs incurring a deficit, the corresponding cost would need to be budgeted for and funded by a property tax increase.

Should Council wish to extend the program to MDFs, staff recommend that MDFs provide budget estimates during the budget planning process.

RISK CONSIDERATION

There is a likelihood of increased usage to the MDFs should the program be extended to MDFs. This may impact overall access to the facility for current users. There is a low service delivery risk with the addition of the MDFs to the approval of the applications for the Recreation Access Discount Program. There could be an increase in applications, which could impact the timeliness of the applications being processed.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Informal community engagement sessions were conducted with the following community organizations: Halifax Regional Centre of Education Centre, SchoolsPlus, staff/school Social Workers, Prescott Group (community organization for individuals with intellectual disabilities), and staff from ISANS. Staff also had individual conversations with community service providers regarding the Recreation Access Program.

In August 2023, staff presented the Recreation Access Program to the Accessibility Advisory Committee and the Woman's Advisory Committee in September 2023. Feedback received from both presentations/discussions have been incorporated into this report.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

No environmental implications were identified

ALTERNATIVES

Regional Council could choose to:

- 1) Provide direction to the CAO to explore other options or approaches to address barriers to the Recreation Access Program application process.
- 2) Not direct the CAO to notify MDFs of the expectation to provide estimates of budget impacts of adoption of the Recreation Access Program as part of the 2025/26 budget planning process.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) Charter, R.S.N.S., 2008, c. 39

Section 59 (3)

In addition to matters specified in this Act or another Act of the Legislature, the Council may adopt policies on any matter that the Council considers conducive to the effective management of the Municipality.

Section 102

Subject to the approval of the Board for those services that are subject to the Public Utilities Act, the Council may, by by-law, prescribe charges for the provision of services for persons who use or benefit from the service, on a basis to be set out in the by-law

Halifax Regional Municipality By-law U-100, The User Charges By-law

Schedule 3

Affordable Access

8. A person who meets the eligibility requirements of the Recreation Access Program as adopted by Council by Administrative Order 2019-010-ADM may apply to the program.

10. Affordable Access discounts may be applied to eligible user charges set out in this Schedule in accordance with the criteria established in Administrative Order 2019-010-ADM.

Halifax Regional Municipality Administrative Order 2019-010-ADM, Respecting Recreation User Charges
PART III- Recreation Access Program

Proof of Financial Need

44. Where an applicant for an Access Discount is the parent or guardian of a minor child, proof of financial need shall include the applicant's most recent Canada Child Benefit Notice from Canada Revenue Agency.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Geographic data related to HRM's Recreation Access Discount

Attachment 2: Jurisdictional Scan of Recreation Access Discounts

A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

Report Prepared by: Cassady Yochoff, Accessibility Specialist, Parks and Recreation (902) 717-0218

Geographic data related to HRM's Recreation Funding Access Discount

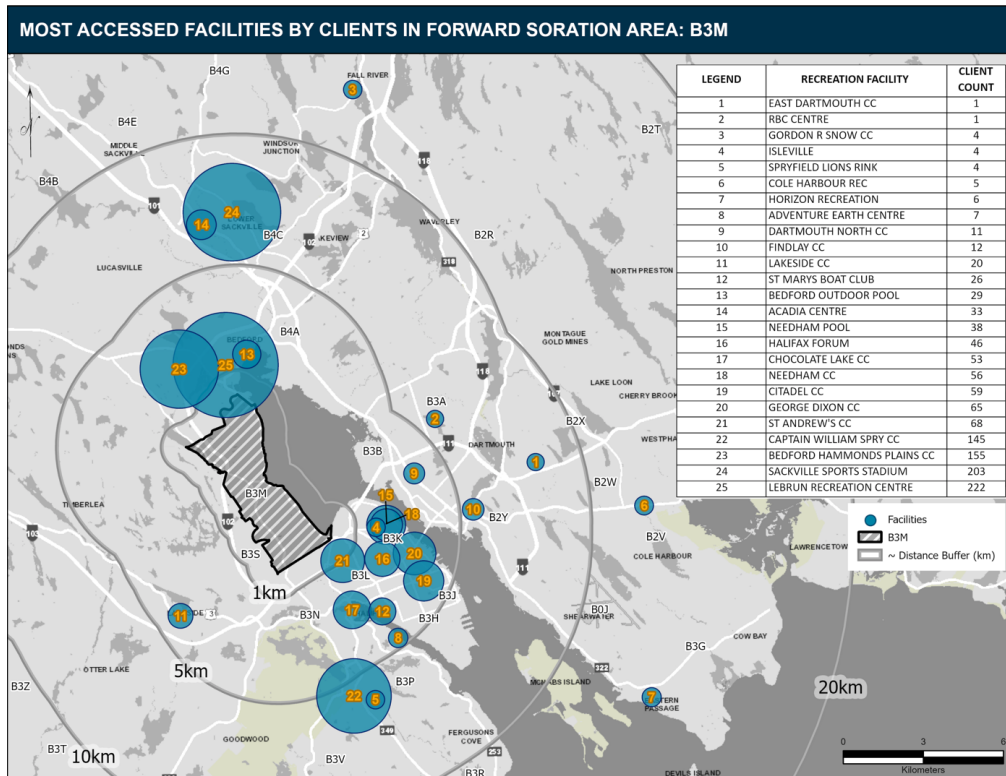
The information in this attachment highlights which neighbourhoods participants who used the Recreation Access Discount for program enrolment lived in and which recreation centre they used for programs.

Participant postal codes were collected from information on their Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) Recreation accounts. The information was pulled from the data associated with the 2022-2023 fiscal year.

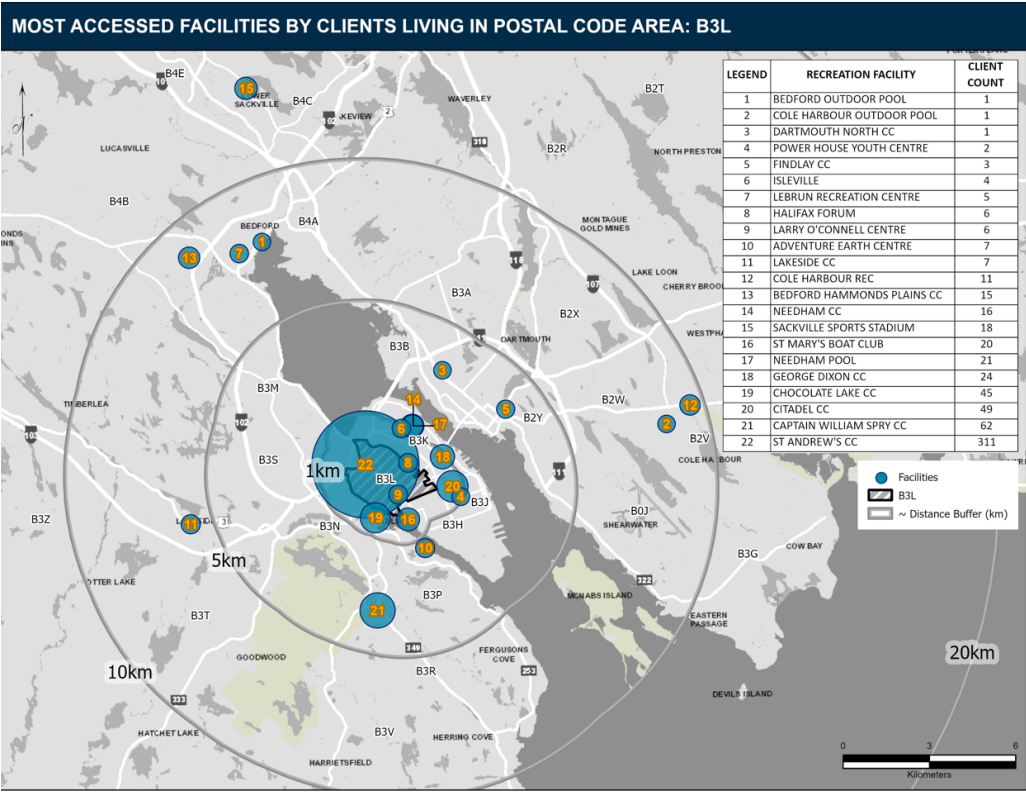
The tables below demonstrate the top 15 postal codes where Recreation Access Discount Programs were enrolled:

AAP Enrolments by Postal Code			
Postal Code	# of Enrollments	% of Total Enrolments	Neighbourhoods
B3M	1273	19.0%	Bedford, Clayton Park, Clayton Park West, Fairview, Millview, Rockingham
B3L	635	9.5%	Fairview, West End
B3S	555	8.3%	Bayer's Lake, Bayers Lake, Clayton Park West
B3K	506	7.6%	Convoy Place, North End
B3A	424	6.3%	Albro Lake, Brightwood, Crichton Park, Dartmouth, Harbourview, Micmac Village, Tufts Cove
B2W	379	5.7%	Dartmouth, Forest Hills, Russell Lake West, Sunset Acres, Woodlawn, Woodside
B4B	353	5.3%	Glen Arbour, Harmony Park, Kearney Lake, Uplands Park
B3R	324	4.8%	Spryfield
B3N	239	3.6%	Armdale, Fairview
B4C	232	3.5%	Sackville
B0J	226	3.4%	Hartlin Settlement, Hubbards, Musquodoboit Harbour, Oyster Pond, Sheet Harbour, West Petpeswick
B3G	221	3.3%	Eastern Passage, South East Passage
B3H	206	3.1%	South End, Waterfront, West End
B4A	198	3.0%	Bedford, Bedford Common, Glen Moir, Millview, Oakmount
B3P	183	2.7%	Armdale, Spryfield

The top five highest areas of enrolment using the Recreation Access Discount were examined to determine which recreation centres were used for program registration. As the map demonstrates, if there is a recreation centre in their neighbourhood (as classified by their postal code), participants of the Recreation Access Discount Program are less likely to have to travel to access programs.

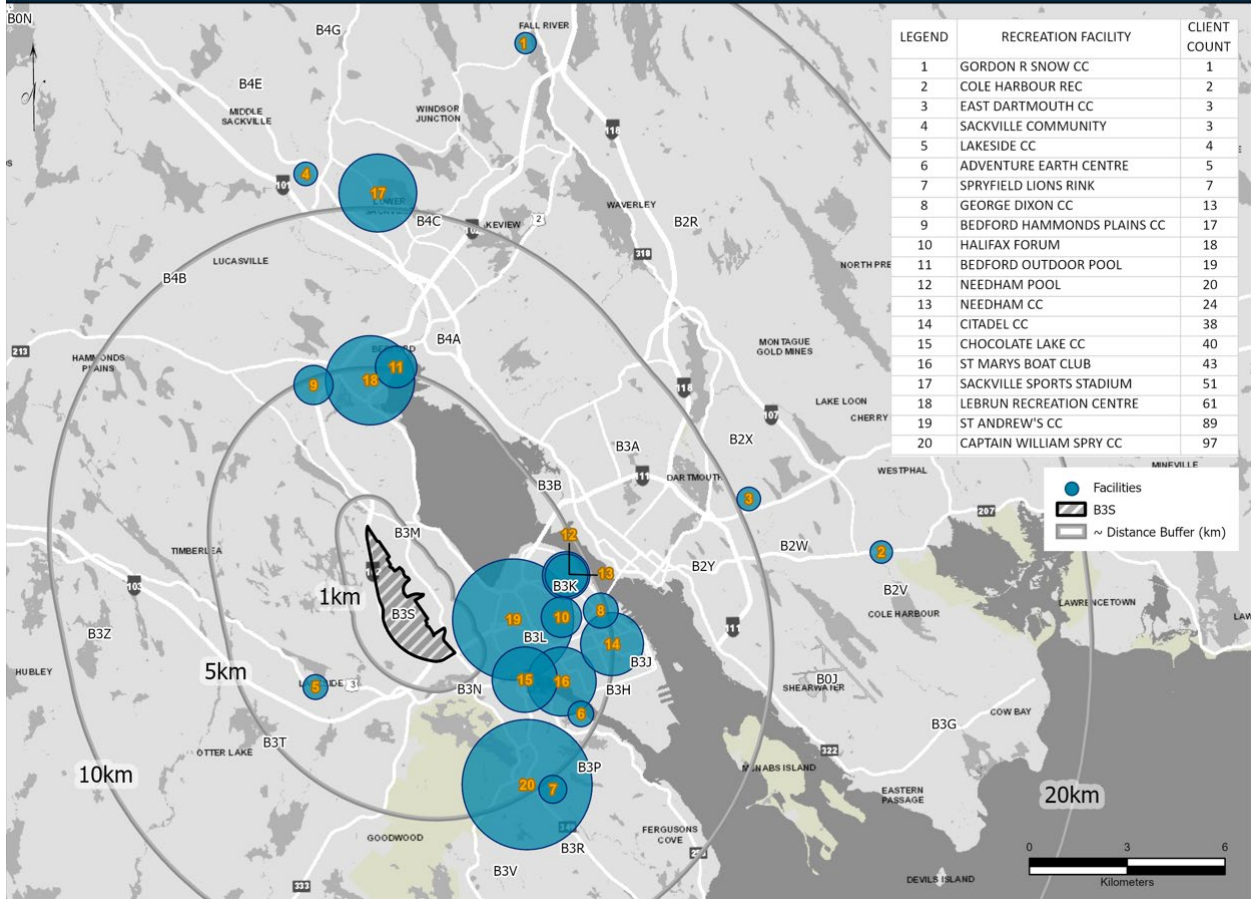


There were 1273 (19%) of total enrollments from the B3M area (Clayton Park, Clayton Park West, Fairview, Rockingham). There are no HRM operated recreation facilities in this area. As a result, the participants in the Recreation Access Discount Program travel on average 5km and could travel 10km+ to access programs with a recreation access discount.

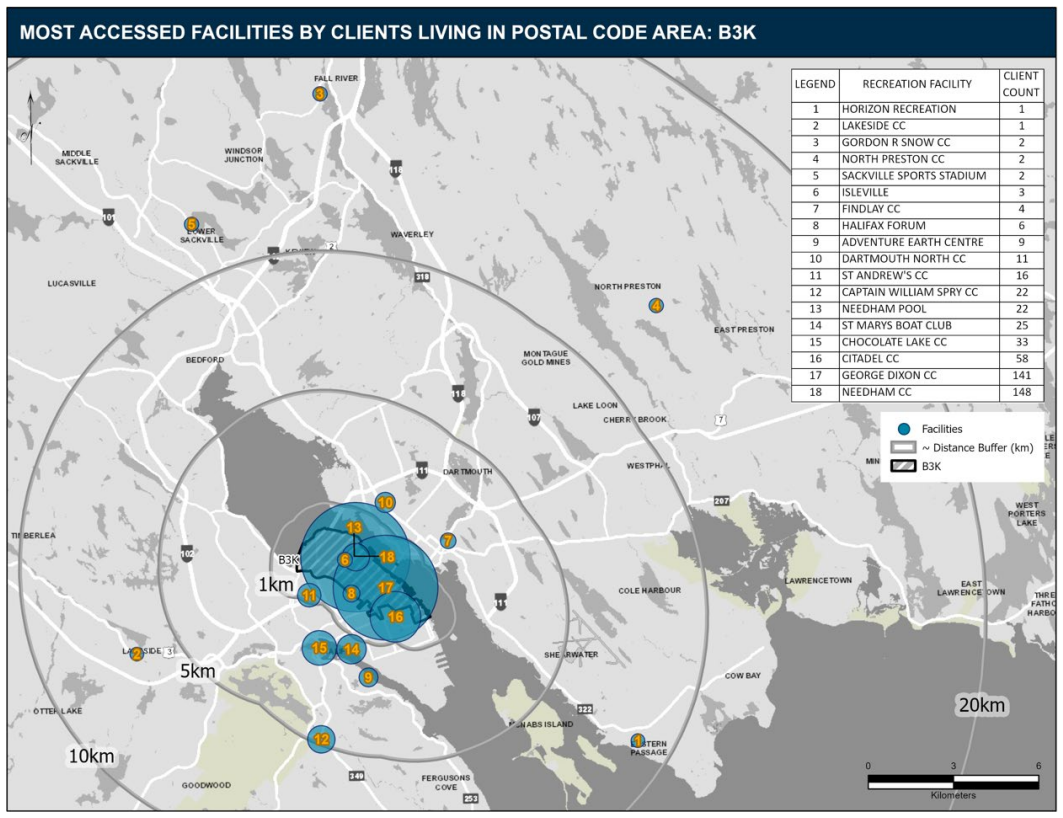


There were 635 (9%) of total enrollments from the B3L area (Fairview/West End). 48% of the program enrolments using a Recreation Access Discount were at the St. Andrews Community Centre, which is in this postal code. The distance travelled by participants in the Recreation Access Discount Program in this area was on average less than 5 km.

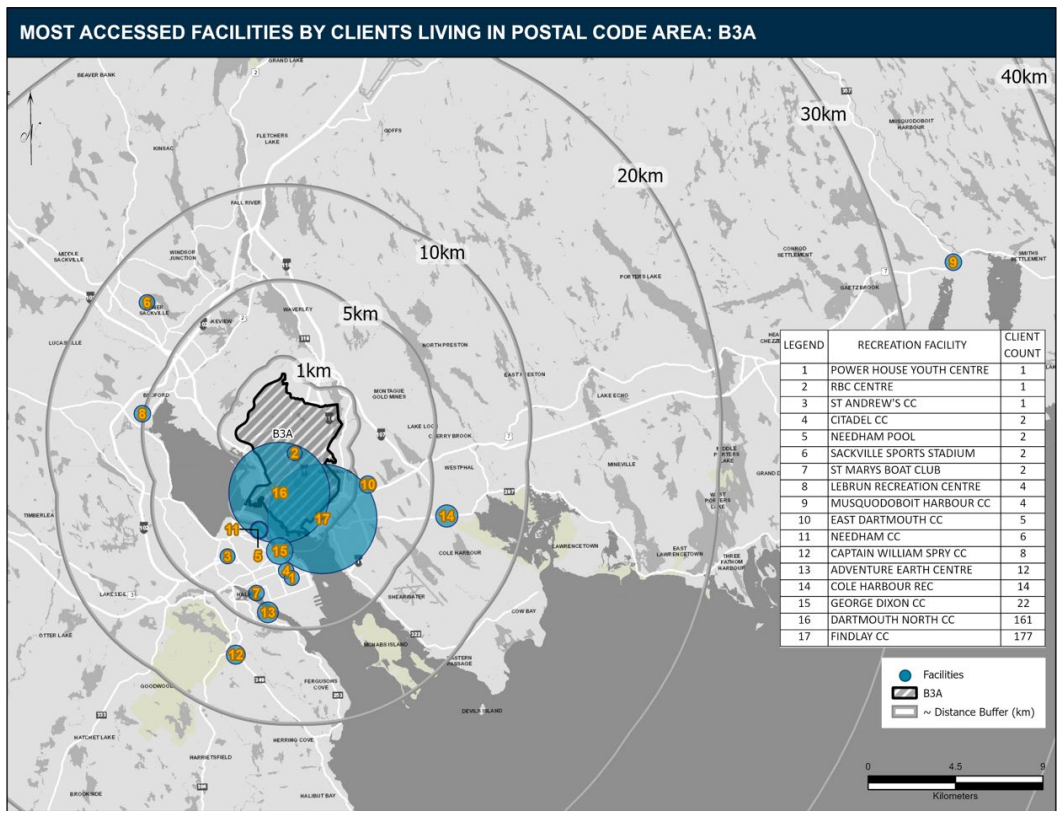
MOST ACCESSED FACILITIES BY CLIENTS LIVING IN POSTAL CODE AREA: B3S



There were 555 (8%) of total enrollments from the B3S area (Bayer’s Lake, Clayton Park West). There is no HRM operated recreation facility in this area. Canada Games Centre is in this postal code, but is not a part of the discount program reviewed. As a result, the participants in the Recreation Access Discount Program travel on average 5km or more and as far could travel 10km+ to access programs with a Recreation Access Discount.



There were 506 (8%) of total enrollments from the B3K area (North End / Convoy Place). 57% of the program enrolment using a Recreation Access Discount were at community centres located in this postal code (29% at the Needham Community Centre and 28% at George Dixon Community Centre). The distance travelled by participants that registered using a Recreation Access Discount in this area was on average less than 5 km.



There were 424 (6%) of total enrollments from the B3A area (Dartmouth North, Albro Lake, MicMac Village). This is the area in which Zatzman Sportsplex, Findlay Community Centre & Dartmouth North Community Centre are located. Zatzman Sportsplex is not referenced in this map/table as it is not part of the discount program reviewed. Findlay Community Centre had the highest number of program enrolments using a Recreation Access Discount (42%). Dartmouth North Community Centre had the second highest (38%). It is important to note that the building that houses the Dartmouth North Community Centre was closed in 2022-2023 and satellite locations were used for programming. This resulted in fewer programs offered. The distance travelled by participants that registered using a Recreation Access Discount in this area was on average less than 5 km.

Jurisdiction Scan of Recreation Access Discounts

Explanation of External Recreation Funders

Canadian Tire Jumpstart

Many municipalities across Canada direct families to apply to the Jumpstart program as a means of financial support to access their programs. Founded In 2005, Jumpstart helps children overcome financial and accessibility barriers to sport and recreation in an effort to provide inclusive play for children of all abilities ([About | Jumpstart \(canadiantire.ca\)](#)). The Individual Child Grant Program (for children aged 4-18) has quarterly application deadlines. They accept the Canada Child Benefit statement as proof of financial status (which would include the household income). The annual maximum amount a child is eligible to receive is up to \$600.

KidSport

KidSport support children who need financial assistance with sport registration and equipment costs ([What we do | KidSport Canada](#)). [Families can apply to offset the cost of team registration and equipment purchases for up to \\$500 annually. The program will accept Notice of Assessments from Canada Revenue Agency, a Social Assistance statement, a letter from the Department of Community Service or/and a letter from Indigenous Social Development as proof of financial status.](#)

Jurisdictional Scan of Municipalities

Below is a sample of recreation access discounts in cities or municipalities throughout Canada. This is not an exhaustive list. If a City or Municipality uses Canadian Tire Jumpstart or a similar external funding partner program as a primary funding source, they would not be listed.

Canada Wide:

City/Program name	Eligibility Documents	Discount
YMCA of Greater Halifax/Dartmouth	Assessment completed by YMCA staff	Pay what you can Many free programs available with membership Partnership with Halifax Public Libraries in the works to be added to Recreation Access Pass lending program
Queens County Nova Scotia- Recreation for All	Letter of referral	Approved applicants receive a 3-month membership at QPEC, access to RQM Aquatic Facilities or RQM programs, activities, or training at a reduced cost. Participants contribute 10% of the total cost and the program covers the remaining 90%. Applicants shall not be funded more than once a year until all other applications have been exhausted and then only if funds allow.

<p>East Hants Nova Scotia- Recreation Access</p>	<p>Proof of residency Proof of income Or New immigrants and refugees</p>	<p>Each member of the qualified applicant's household will be eligible for a 75% discount on up to four registered recreation programs per year and 10 single entry passes to the East Hants Aquatic Centre.</p>
<p>Brampton, Ontario: Active Assist Population (2021): 656,480</p>	<p>Proof of residency Proof of family Income Proof of legal responsibility of children Uses Statistics Canada Low Income Cutoff Table for the current tax year</p>	<p>Credit on account \$275/person for a 12-month period (no cash value) valid for 2 years (an approved family of four would get \$1,100)</p>
<p>Mississauga, Ontario Population (2021): 717,961</p>	<p>Proof of income Proof of legal responsibility of children) or *Newcomers with Refugee Status only (must provide Confirmation of permanent residency within 1yr or provide a copy of Refugee Protection Claimant Document. Uses both LICO/Canada Tax Credit</p>	<p>Credit on account \$275/person for 12-month period (no cash value)</p>
<p>Windsor, Ontario Population (2021):229.660</p>	<p>Several programs available: Uses Canadian Child Benefit for pathway to potential proof of enrollment in Ontario Disability/Ontario Works/Social Assistance programs</p>	<p>10% discount for seniors or persons with disabilities (does not have qualifiers) Family Discount of 10% when three or more people from the same family register for the same program at the same time/session</p> <p>25% discount for anyone part of the following programs Ontario Disability, Ontario Works, or Social Assistance</p> <p>Pathway to Potential: children up to 17 can receive 10% off program fee one program per child (need CCB/uses LICO)</p>
<p>Toronto, Ontario – Welcome Policy Population (2021): 2,794,356</p>	<p>Identification for each family member Proof of family income or Signed letter from a representative of a social agency or religious institution Proof of address Uses LICO Table</p>	<p>Credits of \$622 for children and youth (up to 24 years) annually</p> <p>Credits of \$287 for adults and seniors Valid for 12 months</p>

<p>Edmonton, Alberta – Leisure Access Program Population (2021): 1,010,899</p>	<p><u>1-year term</u> Annual Household Income (Notice of Assessment, higher cut off amount) Income support (health benefit statement) Disability Benefits/ CPP Permeant Residency Documents or Landed Papers or Refugee Claimants Doc (1yr) Children under government care EI/CRB recipients</p> <p><u>2-year term</u> Annual Household Income (NOA, LICO)</p> <p><u>5-year term</u> Assured Income for Severely Disabled (Health Benefit Statement)</p>	<p>Annual pass Unlimited, free admission to participating facilities</p> <p>75% discount for seniors for registered program (3 per year)</p> <p>75% discount for each child for registered programs (4 per year) Monthly pass</p> <p>Discounted monthly admission:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual: \$20/month • Family: \$70/month
<p>Calgary, Alberta – Fee Assistance Program for Low Income Residence Population (2021): 1,306,784</p>	<p>Proof of household Income: Assured Income for Severely Handicapped benefits (AISH) Alberta Works: Income subsidy/support Alberta Works: Learners Alberta Works: Alberta Health Benefit Resettlement Assistance Program Independent youth letter (a letter from school Principal, Guidance Counsellor, or Child and Youth Support Program of Alberta Children’s Services) Letter from a Registered Social Worker (RSW)</p>	<p>Children and youth 17yrs and under:</p> <p>Receive 90% off the cost of a program up to a maximum of \$100 per program</p> <p>Maximum of four programs per year at a value of \$250 Not for pre/post care or extra fees (late for pickup)</p> <p>Adults 18yrs and older receive 90% off to a max of \$50 per program</p> <p>Good only for one program per year City Aquatics and Fitness Centre/Leisure Centres</p> <p>75% on general admission drop in rates, 10X punch cards or 1 month/12 month term passes</p>
<p>City of Regina – Affordable Access Program Population (2021): 226,404</p>	<p>Proof of Income Or Letter from a Social Worker Or Confirmation of permanent residence (arrival dates within one year)</p>	<p>Single Admission (50% discount) Leisure Passes (80%) Program registration (80% off up to a maximum of \$160 off per family member).</p>

<p>Vernon, British Columbia – Affordable Access Program Population (2021): 67,086</p>	<p>Proof of income Or Physician note</p>	<p>25% off programs for Persons with a Disability (Physician must complete a form) 25% off selected programs for seniors over 65 (no Aquafit Programs included) 75% off selected programs for low income families – NOA required. (Weight room/public swim/skating)</p>
<p>Vancouver, BC – Leisure Access Program Population (2021): 662,248</p>	<p>Proof of Income Assistance Referral from Non-Profit or government agency Child Disability Benefits Statement Proof of income</p>	<p>100% admission discount to: Ice rinks (50% for lessons) Indoor pool Outdoor pools 50% admission discount to: Fitness Centres Community Centre association: 50% discount for one program each season per facility</p>
<p>St. John's NFLD- the REAL program Population (2021): 110,525</p>	<p>Proof of Income Proof of Residency</p>	<p>Applies to one activity of interest Apply seasonally</p>