
HALDIMAND COUNTY

Report CDP-04-2024 Introduction of a Recreation and Museums Programming Policy for Inclusion and Refunds

For Consideration by Council in Committee on May 21, 2024



OBJECTIVE:

To introduce a fair, clear and consistent policy to address inclusion and refunds in recreation and museums programming provided by the County.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT Report CDP-04-2024 Introduction of a Recreation and Museums Programming Policy for Inclusion and Refunds be received;
2. AND THAT the Recreation and Museums Programming Policy – Inclusion and Refunds, as attached to Report CDP-04-2024, be approved.

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Reviewed by: Katrina Schmitz, Manager, Community Development & Partnerships

Respectfully submitted: Mike Evers, MCIP, RPP, BES, General Manager of Community & Development Services

Approved: Cathy Case, Chief Administrative Officer

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Haldimand County has, for decades, developed and provided recreation and museums programming for all ages. This includes, but is not limited to, the following in Recreation: March Break and summer day camps, specialty day camps (arts, sports, leadership) and aquatics programs; and, in Museums: PA and summer day camp programs and workshops.

Registration for programs is completed online through software—currently ActiveNet—administered by staff in the Community Development & Partnerships (CDP) Division.

Currently, the CDP Division does not have a clearly-defined Inclusion or Refund policy for its Recreation and Museums programs. Recognizing the need to have a fair, clear and consistent approach for all participants and/or parents/guardians who are registering for Recreation or Museums programming offered by Haldimand County, staff are recommending approval of the proposed policy for implementation upon ratification by Council.

BACKGROUND:

Haldimand County is committed to providing a fair, clear and consistent approach to Recreation and Museums programming, including requests for Inclusion or Refunds. The proposed policy (Attachment 1) will assist in addressing the issues identified below.

Inclusion:

In the past few years, staff have seen a significant increase in the need for physical, emotional or behavioural supports for participants in programs, as identified by parents/guardian upon registration. Currently, Haldimand County offers limited inclusion opportunities at no extra cost to participants, based upon available staffing resources.

Each year, the County hires six inclusion counsellors who work in the six Camp HaldiFUN locations. (Camp HaldiFUN is the traditional weekly day camp for children aged 4 to 10 years.) The County does not have inclusion counsellors available for any of the other camps including museums, arts, sports and leadership. Typically, each inclusion counsellor works with one child per week of camp. Access to the inclusion counsellor is on a first-come, first-served basis (at registration). In situations where no County inclusion staff is available, parents/guardians are able to provide a support worker for their participant following an assessment by County staff. While these outside supports have been supported by staff, there is no policy in place to guide this practice.

In previous years, demand for inclusion support has exceeded staff availability each week of Camp HaldiFUN, with a waiting list of three to four additional participants per camp session. The County's museums, arts, sports and leadership camps have had to decline registrations due to a lack of County inclusion staff. In the case of most camps, these participants are also not able to secure non-County-staff support workers, resulting in the child not being able to participate in the camp.

Refunds:

There has been a dramatic increase in the need and demand for Recreation and Museums programming—especially in the summer—as parents/guardians look for reliable, engaging and affordable child care options and swimming programs. For 2024, the County is offering nine weeks of Camp HaldiFUN (the traditional weekly day camp for children ages four to ten years) at six locations as well as thirty individual week-long specialty camps (museums, arts, sports and leadership) throughout the summer at various locations. These camps are in addition to a variety of Swim for Life and Lifesaving Swim Programs offered.

In 2023, registration for all summer camps was at or close to 100% with only twenty (20) unregistered spaces at Camp HaldiFUN locations out of a total of 1,420 available spaces. A total of 140 participants remained on the waitlist for full weeks of camp. This year, registration for camps and aquatics opened May 1, 06:00 hours; by Monday, May 6, Camp HaldiFUN had 15 remaining spots throughout the summer at select locations, with 209 participants on the waitlist.

With that demand and limited availability, staff have identified an increase in parents/guardians overbooking early in the season to ensure summer care for their children. Overbooking often results in:

- Impacts to the fair and timely access of programs for all participants;
- Multiple changes and/or cancellations throughout the summer, which is administratively time-consuming;
- Financial impacts since many cancellations are last-minute and those spaces cannot be easily filled.

Given these challenges, a clear policy is necessary to help address overbooking and lack of fairness in the registration system.

ANALYSIS:

Haldimand County is committed to providing a fair and transparent approach for all parents/guardians who want to register a participant for Recreation or Museums programming, including access to inclusion resources and managing refunds.

Inclusion:

Although it is understood that the current level of service is not meeting community needs and demand, at this time and given County resources, staff recommend incorporating the established inclusion practices (outlined above under Background) within the new policy.

Refunds:

Staff considered the internal trends and demands (noted above) and completed an environmental scan of the surrounding municipalities, including: Norfolk County, Brant County, City of Brantford, Six Nations of the Grand River, Pelham, Town of Lincoln, City of Hamilton and City of Kitchener. While processes vary across these municipalities, the following approaches were identified:

- Refunds were provided at the request of patrons within identified timeframes;
- On average, refunds were granted within seven (7) business days of the start of program minus an administrative fee;
- Administrative fees are, on average, 15% of programming costs or a flat fee of \$15.00.

Haldimand County's programming fees (Attachment 2) are considered affordable when compared to the fees of other non-municipal, for-profit, private and surrounding municipal providers with similar program offerings. Based on the County's fees, staff recommend the following approach to refunds:

- There will be no refunds or make-up classes for absences due to minor illness, vacation, weather, emergencies or maintenance closings (i.e. pool fouling);
- Withdrawals from program registration will be permitted up to ten (10) business days before the program begins (i.e. program begins June 15, 2024; last day for written request for refund is June 3, 2024). In such cases, an administrative fee of 20% of the program cost per participant will be deducted prior to sending refund to the original payer through the registration system;
- Refunds will not be granted for withdrawals requested less than ten (10) days before the program begins;
- Full refunds will only be issued if Haldimand County cancels a program or if a participant is medically unable to participate, in which case medical documentation will be required.

This provides a fair, clear and consistent policy for anyone registering for a Recreation or Museums program with Haldimand County. The key benefits of the above changes will be a reduction in over-bookings and registration changes and the associated administrative impacts, and fewer negative impacts to revenues.

Future Review of Summer Camp Programs:

Staff are aware that a review of the County's summer programming service levels is needed based on registration trends, feedback from users and community growth projections, especially since the pandemic. This review and associated recommendations will be undertaken prior to the development of the 2025 Operating Budget.

FINANCIAL/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

By formalizing the Recreation and Museums Programming Policy for Inclusion and Refunds and introducing an administrative fee for Refunds, Haldimand County hopes to limit overbooking practices that impact access to programs by other families/participants and can result in lost revenues when participants withdraw from programs at the last minute.

Following approval of the policy, an administrative fee of 20% of program cost will be applied for Refunds which are requested in writing ten (10) business days' prior to the start of the Program. All

requests within ten (10) business days' of the start of a program will not be eligible for refund without medical documentation.

Attachment #2 outlines the anticipated 20% for each relevant fee on User Fee Schedule J. There is no amendment required to this schedule; it is shown in the attachment one-time for information purposes only.

STAKEHOLDER IMPACTS:

Not applicable.

REPORT IMPACTS:

Agreement: No

By-law: No

Budget Amendment: Yes

Policy: Yes

REFERENCES:

1. [Haldimand County User Fee Schedule J - Programs, Heritage & Culture](#)

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Attachment 1 – Proposed Recreation and Museums Programming Policy – Inclusion and Refunds.
2. Attachment 2 – Haldimand County User Fee Schedule J with Proposed Refund Calculations.