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# HALDIMAND COUNTY

## Report PED-COM-02-2018 Non-Resident Pool Admissions

For Consideration by Council in Committee on February 27, 2018

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### OBJECTIVE:

To obtain Council approval to charge a non-resident fee for daily pool admission at the Caledonia Lions Pool.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT Report PED-COM-02-2018 Non-Resident Pool Admissions be received;
2. AND THAT staff be directed to implement the proposed non-resident daily admission fee at the Caledonia Lions Pool starting in the summer of 2018 set out in PED-COM-02-2018 Non-Resident Pool Admissions;
3. AND THAT the revenue generation and any on-going operating costs from the non-resident daily admission fee be monitored and included in the 2019 Operating Budget as a Council Approved Initiative;
4. AND THAT staff be directed to draft the required amendments to the User Fees and Service Charges By-law.

**Respectfully submitted:** Craig Manley, MCIP, RPP, General Manager of Planning and Economic Development

**Approved:** Donald G. Boyle, Chief Administrative Officer

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In 2012, Council approved providing public swims and public skating with free admission. As a result, the attendance at public swims increased significantly, roughly four times as many people than prior to the change. In 2013, the redesigned Caledonia Kinsmen Park, Lions Pool and Splash Pad was opened attracting significant use. During the summer of 2016 and 2017, total pool capacity at the Caledonia pool was reached once, necessitating the implementation of a 'one in one out' procedure. The overall higher volumes of use have resulted in local residents raising concerns regarding the quality of experience due to the volume of people at the pool and the large number of non-residents using the facility who are not contributing to the costs of operations through fees or taxation. Council requested Staff review the situation and provide options to manage the volume of use.

During 2017, Staff tried to quantify the number of residents versus non-residents using the facility and also sought legal advice in terms of potential options to offer the service to local residents first. The following report recommends the implementation of a non-resident use fee for public swims.

### BACKGROUND:

In 2012 in order to increase the use of recreational facilities, encourage health and wellness and support community vibrancy, Council removed entrance fees for public swims and public skates at all County

facilities (see Report PED-COM-01-2012). Between 2012 and 2017 public swim use at all pools has increased from 8,800 users annually to over 34,000.

At the same time in 2012/13 a substantial financial donation was provided by a local family that enabled the redevelopment of the Caledonia Kinsmen Park and resulted in an obsolete pool and wading pool being removed and replaced with a contemporary splash pad, beach entry leisure pool and diving tank. Additionally within the wider Kinsmen Park, a number of other amenities were either updated or added that included a new gazebo, improvements to the ball diamond and the addition of outdoor fitness equipment. As a result of the new construction, Caledonia Kinsmen Park has become a regional park attracting users from a wide area and the weekend use volume has increased considerably including the pool and splash pad. With the significant expected growth of the Caledonia community, it is anticipated that this facility will face regular capacity issues – especially on weekends. To date, this is the only pool facility in the County with this issue.

## **ANALYSIS:**

### **Current Situation**

As a result of the volumes of use at the Caledonia Kinsmen Park and Lions Pool, local perceptions and complaints have been received that the Caledonia pool is too busy. As per the Ontario Public Pool Regulations, Haldimand Norfolk Health Department has indicated that the pool and deck capacity is 305 people within the pool fencing. Although the maximum bather load was only reached once per summer during 2016 and 2017 for an hour each time, the current perception and concern is that when these thresholds are being reached the quality of experience is diminished. The average per day weekend capacity of the public swims is 287 persons. When the capacity of 305 users is reached, staff encourage use of the splash pad as an alternative option and implement a 'one in one out' process which is posted outside the building.

To also assist with volume capacity issues during public swims, staff asked summer camps from out of Haldimand that had used the Caledonia pool to use either Hagersville or Dunnville pools where there are no capacity issues. Camps offered by the County and Haldimand based local community groups were encouraged to swim during County camp swims rather than open public swims. These initiatives were successful in lowering capacity during Caledonia afternoon public swims during the week. The capacity issue is more pronounced, however, on weekends when the park is being heavily used by families.

The public have raised concerns regarding the high non-resident use of the Caledonia pool. The concerns relate to quality of experience due to the volume of users in the pool including a significant component of users who are not contributing to the costs of operations through fees or taxation. In 2017, staff polled public swim users regarding their residency. The results were: on the weekends 67% of the pool users were non-residents, and from Monday to Friday, non-resident users accounted for 23% of the public participants. The analysis supports the community perception that weekend usage volumes are largely a result of users from outside the County.

### **Research**

Staff have conducted research and requested information from Parks and Recreation Ontario regarding how other municipalities address capacities in pools. The general practice is the 'one in one out' process to allow entrance when one bather leaves the pool facility. The issue of significant non-resident usage and management of this use does not appear to be widespread. Staff could not find precedent in this regard.

In order to understand what legal parameters apply to the ability to offer the service to local residents first, a legal opinion obtained from the County's lawyer Sullivan and Mahoney was obtained (Attachment 1). This opinion indicates that the County can not restrict access to its pools to residents only. The County may however, charge a fee or different fee to non-residents for pool access. The fee to be charged has to be reasonable and cannot explicitly be used as a deterrent to access the pool. Charging a fee will address some of the concerns that non-resident users are benefitting from the service, but are not contributing to the operating costs of providing it. At this point in time, the only location for this approach would be at the Caledonia Lions pool.

Staff have undertaken an analysis of what would be required to implement a non-resident entrance fee and to develop the cost of such fee. The key components of the fee would be:

1. A basic entrance fee that is comparable to what non-residents would pay to swim in the surrounding municipalities;

The following chart identifies pool entrance fees for surrounding municipalities.

	Youth	Adult	Senior	Family
<b>Hamilton</b>	\$3.30	\$4.95	\$3.30	\$9.80
<b>Brantford</b>	\$2.50	\$5.25	\$3.50	\$9.75
<b>YMCA</b>	Child \$3.00 Student (13 & over) \$3.25	\$4.50		\$9.25
<b>Byng Island Conservation Area</b>	Park entry \$3.00 plus \$1.00 to use pool	Park entry \$7.00 plus \$1.00 to use pool	Park entry \$5.50 plus \$1.00 to use pool	
<b>Welland</b>	All free outdoor pools			

2. The additional cost to institute an administrative process to collect fees from non-residents (including capital equipment, staff time, transaction costs and indirect costs). To adhere to proper cash handling practices only electronic payment will be accepted necessitating the acquisition of a point of sale debit/credit machine at the pool. The per use fee generated by this analysis is approximately \$3 per person.
3. A subsidy off-set charge to ensure that the entrance fee represents 100% of the cost of pool operations incurred. County policy currently provides a 45% subsidy for pool use fees in recognition of the benefit to the overall community.

Overall the inclusion of these components results in a non-resident pool entry fee of \$10 per child and \$15 per adult.

## Implementation

In order to implement a fee for non-residents who wish to use the Caledonia Lions pool, staff are proposing the following:

- That all residents of the County will continue to be able to access any pool in the County for free public swims. Residents will be identified by a unique wristband that can be picked up at any County office in advance or directly at the Caledonia Kinsmen Pool when proof of residency is provided (the cost of producing these wristbands is included in the proposed non-resident fee);

- Wristbands will allow any individual/family and their guests in at no charge;
- A promotional plan be put into place to educate residents of the need to obtain the wristbands and distribution can also occur during summer program promotions in the schools and at all County customer service desks;
- Signage and a promotional plan will be implemented to educate/promote to non-residents that an entry fee is required per person per daily swim or they may use the splash pad at no charge;
- For ease of payment and redemption, an electronic payment method will be set up at the Caledonia pool (the cost of which has been incorporated in the non-resident fee calculation). No cash handling will be accepted;
- No entry fees for non-residents will be charged for use of the splash pad at the Caledonia Kinsmen Park or for use of any other aquatic facility (splash pad, pool or wading pool) elsewhere. In Caledonia the splash pad is separate from the pool and is not supervised.

The proposed non-resident entrance fee for public swims is only proposed for the Caledonia pool at this time. Staff will monitor attendance at the Hagersville and Dunnville pools should any location shifts occur in public swim participants.

## **FINANCIAL/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:**

The County as a whole is moving away from accepting cash at remote locations whenever possible, and instead directing customers to another method of payment. To implement the proposal a point of sale machine is required. The proposed fee structure includes this equipment as well as transaction fees, staff time, overhead and pool operation costs without subsidy. The proposed fees in Staff opinion are consistent with the legal parameters provided by the County Solicitor.

All fees and charges included in this report were developed in coordination with the County's Finance Division and will be incorporated into the County's User Fee and Service Charges By-law. Costs are calculated utilizing the approved methodology within Schedule R in the Council approved User Fees and Service Charges By-law.

At this time, it is very difficult for staff to estimate the potential revenue resulting from this non-resident fee. Staff are recommending that any revenue generated from the non-resident pool admission fee (and any ongoing operating costs) be monitored and included in the 2019 Tax Supported Operating Budget as a Council Approved Initiative.

## **STAKEHOLDER IMPACTS:**

Community Development & Partnerships – developing and implementing a promotional/educational plan.

## **REPORT IMPACTS:**

Agreement: No

By-law: Yes

Budget Amendment: Yes

Policy: No

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Letter of Opinion-Sullivan Mahoney LLP.