

# Policy

<b>Title: Fair Entry Policy</b>		<b>Number: 0161</b>
<b>Reference:</b> Administrative Committee - November 30, 2016 Administrative Committee - November 23, 2022 Administrative Committee - November 8, 2023	<b>Adopted by City Council:</b> December 4, 2023	
	City Clerk	City Manager
<b>Supersedes:</b> December 19, 2022		
<b>Prepared by:</b> PUBLIC SERVICES DIVISION		

## STATEMENT

The City acknowledges social wellness as a priority and that programs and services will be reasonably accessible to residents, regardless of their income status. This Policy commits to a single application process for low-income residents of Medicine Hat to receive subsidized access to specific municipal Programs and Services.

## PRINCIPLES

1. All Medicine Hat residents will have reasonable access to a range of Programs and Services, subject to Policy #0160 (Subsidy Levels and User Fees for Public Services).
2. A process will be available to provide assistance for low-income Medicine Hat residents to access specific Programs and Services – known as the Fair Entry Program.
3. The Fair Entry Program will be applied in a respectful and dignified manner for those Medicine Hat residents who qualify, providing User Fee or Charge assistance for the specific Programs and Services of: City of Medicine Hat recreation programs and admissions; Medicine Hat Transit monthly passes; Esplanade Arts & Heritage Centre Education Programs; and Utilities.
4. Annual limits to the amount of User Fee or Charge assistance may apply.
5. Applicants will be required to re-apply every 24 months to receive the User Fee or Charge assistance.
6. The current Statistics Canada Low Income Cut-Off schedule (LICO) will be the threshold for residents to qualify for the Fair Entry Program.

## ROLE OF COUNCIL

To receive, review and adopt this Policy and any recommended amendments thereto.

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## 1. DEFINITIONS

- 1.01 Application: The process to determine eligibility for a resident(s) to receive access to User Fee or Charge assistance. One eligible application provides such access to the Eligible Services.
- 1.02 Dignified Manner: The application process and/or mechanism of User Fee or Charge assistance will respect each resident's self-esteem, comparable to any user of City Services.
- 1.03 Eligible Services: Those specific Programs and Services for which this Policy provides a resident(s) with access to User Fee or Charge assistance. These services include City of Medicine Hat recreation programs and admissions, Medicine Hat Transit monthly passes, Esplanade Arts & Heritage Centre Education Programs and Utilities.
- 1.04 Low Income Cut-Off (LICO): A measure set by Statistics Canada that is updated annually, based upon the total household income.
- 1.05 Programs and Services: Those municipally provided programs and services where User Fee or Charge recovery of costs to provide the Programs and Services is deemed appropriate.
- 1.06 Resident: A person(s) who lives and holds a residence within the city of Medicine Hat. If a person has a Medicine Hat address on their driver's license, or on their tax return, or have their mail sent to an address in Medicine Hat, they are a resident.
- 1.07 User Fee and Charge: A payment made by an individual or group benefitting from a Program and Service which are collected to recuperate the cost of providing the Program and Service. User Fees and Charges are allocated to the sustainability of the Program and Service being provided.

## 2. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 2.01 City Council
  - (a) Determine that all residents are treated fairly with regard to accessing Programs and Services.
  - (b) Receive and review Policy evaluation data yearly and adopt any recommended amendments.
- 2.02 Administrative Committee
  - (a) Make recommendations to City Council regarding any amendments to this Policy.
  - (b) Adopt Procedures that are developed for the implementation of this Policy.

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### 2.03 City Manager

- (a) Ensure that the Policy is administered appropriately by the Public Services Division.

### 2.04 Managing Directors

- (a) Ensure that the Departments deploy appropriate application and user mechanism processes in accordance with the Policy and Procedures.

### 2.05 Directors

- (a) Ensure that authorized personnel are designated and educated regarding the Policy and Procedures.
- (b) Determine adequate application intake points and relevant trained personnel are available to support the Policy and Procedures.
- (c) Ensure that any/all applications are processed, evaluated, approved/not-approved and maintained in a confidential manner, in compliance with the City's privacy requirements.
- (d) Ensure that the mechanism for residents to utilize User Fee or Charge assistance is respectful and dignified, comparable to any user of City services.
- (e) Notify the Public Services Managing Director of any subsequent recommendations in relation to the Policy and/or Procedures.
- (f) Monitor and evaluate the Policy and/or Procedures and its implementation yearly; forward recommendations to the Administrative Committee.

### 2.06 Authorized Personnel

- (a) Adhere to the Policy and Procedures and ensure proper training is received, as applicable.
- (b) Seek direction related to implementation of the Policy and Procedures.
- (c) Conduct evaluations and provide reports relating to Policy and Procedures as directed by Supervisors and/or Managers.
- (d) Notify Management of any recommendations arising in relation to the Policy and Procedures.

## 3. PROCEDURES

3.01 Access: For residents of the city of Medicine Hat only. A single entry application, once approved, will provide access to Eligible Services at a specified percent reduction of the specific User Fee or Charge for the Program or Service, with the exception of Utilities, to which a flat rate rebate will be applied (see Attachment 4.01). Specific limits of User Fee or Charge assistance will apply.

3.02 Application: Application access, eligibility and process can be found at the City of Medicine Hat website, City Hall, Big Marble Go Centre, Crestwood Recreation Centre and the Esplanade (see Attachment 4.02).

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- 3.03 Application Receipt, Evaluation and Approval: Authorized personnel will evaluate applications, determine approved status and advise the applicant within two weeks of receiving the application. The criteria for application approval includes a confidential assessment of income (see Attachment 4.02).
- 3.04 Formal Notice: Approval to access Eligible Services will be confirmed in writing by authorized personnel, outlining the length of time the User Fee or Charge assistance is applicable (typically 24 months) and the Fair Entry mechanism for residents to indicate eligibility to access Eligible Services.
- 3.05 Fair Entry Mechanism: Residents will provide this mechanism (pass card, ticket, token, e-card) to authorized personnel as indication of Fair Entry eligibility. This mechanism may change from time to time, depending upon technology advancements available.
- 3.06 Use of Fair Entry: When presented with a Fair Entry mechanism, authorized personnel will apply the appropriate User Fee or Charge assistance for the resident(s), as per Attachment 4.01.
- 3.07 Record Keeping: Authorized personnel will record each Eligible Service use of a Fair Entry mechanism to the respective resident's account. Authorized personnel shall advise residents if/when the limit has been reached on their Fair Entry mechanism.
- 3.08 Reporting: Authorized personnel will provide regular reports of Fair Entry mechanism use to their Supervisor/Manager.

#### **4. ATTACHMENTS**

- 4.01 Eligible Services you can access
- 4.02 What income proof do you need?

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## **Eligible Services you can access:**

To be eligible for City of Medicine Hat User Fee or Charge assistance, applicants must be residents of Medicine Hat and have a household income that is below the Low Income Cut-Off (Statistics Canada). Eligibility for User Fee or Charge assistance is good for up to 24 months.

### **One Application – Multiple Services**

Based on your income and completed application, the City programs or services you may be eligible for are:

- 1. Recreation User Fee Assistance** – 75 per cent reduced rates for City of Medicine Hat regular-priced recreation programs and admissions at City-run swimming pools and leisure centres. The maximum User Fee or Charge assistance per eligible resident (adult or child) per eligible year is \$200.00. The customer pays the total balance over the yearly maximum.
- 2. Esplanade Arts & Heritage Centre Education Programs Assistance** – 75 per cent reduced rates for educational programs directly provided by staff of the Esplanade. The maximum User Fee or Charge assistance per eligible resident (adult or child) per eligible year is \$200.00. The customer pays the total balance over the yearly maximum.
- 3. Medicine Hat Transit Monthly Pass Assistance** – 75 per cent reduced rate for Medicine Hat Transit Services monthly passes. The maximum User Fee or Charge assistance per eligible resident (adult, senior, student, or youth) per eligible year is 12 monthly passes. The customer pays the total balance for any other transit fare.
- 4. Utilities Assistance** – A rebate credited to a Utility account as approved by City Council on a temporary or permanent basis. The customer pays the total balance for any Utility fees or charges over the rebate maximum.

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## **What income proof do you need?**

### **We ask for two items: Proof of Medicine Hat Address and Proof of Income**

1. Proof of Medicine Hat Address (P.O. Boxes or Rural Route Addresses are not accepted)
  - A copy of your Alberta Driver's License
  - A copy of your Alberta ID card
  - A copy of utility, telephone or cable bill dated within the last 30 days
  - A copy of a government document with your name and address dated within the last 30 days
  - Signed lease agreements
2. Proof(s) of Income - You can apply to Fair Entry with eight different proofs of income:

Please submit a copy of **ONE** of these documents with your application. Please check which document you are submitting. A copy of the document **MUST** accompany your application for each member of your household 18 years or older.

The total household income must be less than the Low Income Cut-Off (LICO) set by Statistics Canada and is updated annually.

- ☐ 1. Canada Revenue Agency: Notice of Assessment – You must present a current "Notice of Assessment" or "Notice of Reassessment" for each household member 18 years and over that lives with you at your Medicine Hat residential address. Total income before tax is shown on line 150 of your "Notice of Assessment" or "Notice of Reassessment". Household includes all members related by blood, marriage, common law relation or adoption. A tax return summary is not accepted. For more information on your Notice of Assessment you can contact Revenue Canada 1-800-959-8281
- ☐ 2. Assured Income for Severely Handicapped benefits (AISH) – A copy of your current Health Benefits Card (that has not expired)
- ☐ 3. Alberta Works: Income Subsidy/Support (Supports for Independence) – A copy of your current Health Benefits Card (that has not expired)
- ☐ 4. Alberta Works (Learners) – An approval letter (on letterhead) from Alberta Works – Learners that indicated eligibility period and the current Health Benefits Card
- ☐ 5. Alberta Works (Alberta Health Benefit) – An approval letter (on letterhead) from Alberta Works that indicates eligibility period and the current Health Benefits Card
- ☐ 6. Letter from a Registered Social Worker – Only when no other documents are available. A letter (on letterhead) dated within the previous 30 days from an Alberta Registered Social Worker with whom a current relationship exists. The letter should outline the length of the relationship, that a RSW is aware of the Low Income Eligibility, and that the household meets the eligibility requirements.
- ☐ 7. Resettlement Assistance Program form – A copy of the Start-Up & Monthly Allowance that confirms you are receiving support under the Resettlement Assistance Program
- ☐ 8. For independent youth: A letter from school principal or guidance counselor, or letter from Child and Youth Support Program of Alberta Children's Services