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Item 3
Transportation Standing Committee
July 27, 2017

TO: Chair and Members of Transportation Standing Committee

SUBMITTED BY: ORIGINAL SIGNED

Dave Reage, MCIP, LPP, Director, Halifax Transit

DATE: June 23, 2017

SUBJECT: Facilitating Access to the Low Income Transit Pass Program

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

At the February 7, 2017 meeting of Regional Council, the following motion was put and passed:

That Halifax Regional Council request a staff report regarding the possible inclusion of the following in relation to the Low Income Transit Pass Pilot Program Extension and Expansion:

- Solicit the United Way to become one of the “community partners” referenced that helps citizen’s complete application;
- Consider a “Fair Entry Halifax” program, modeled on similar program in Calgary, so that applicants do not have to repeatedly demonstrate low income in order to qualify for municipally subsidized programs; and
- Consider including the Mobile Food Market as a drop location for Low Income Bus Pass applicants.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, R.S.N.S. 2008, subsection 59(3) states, “Council may adopt policies on any matter that the Council considers conducive to the effective management of the Municipality.”

BACKGROUND

In April 2014, Halifax Regional Council directed staff to develop a by-law for transit fares and implement the Low Income Transit Pass Pilot Program. On June 21, 2016 Halifax Regional Council adopted Schedule 1 of By-law U-100, enabling staff to initiate the Low Income Transit Pass Pilot Program. Through this program, qualified applicants could purchase monthly transit passes for 50% of the regular price for each month during the pilot. There was no obligation to purchase a pass for each month of the pilot.

The six-month pilot took place between September 2016 and February 2017. At the February 7, 2017

meeting of Regional Council, the Low Income Transit Pass Program was approved as a permanent program, with the new annual program to begin in July 2017. To ensure an uninterrupted transition between the pilot and permanent programs, the pilot program was extended until June 2017. Intake for the annual Low Income Transit Pass Program began on May 8, 2017 and will continue until all 1,000 spaces are filled.

The Low Income Transit Pass Program was amended at that time to reflect lessons from the pilot stage. This report includes information regarding additional proposed modifications that were brought forward through a motion of Council.

DISCUSSION

Solicit the United Way to become one of the “community partners”.

United Way Halifax funds nearly 80 community programs and partnerships local to Halifax. United Way works with local partners to “create vibrant and safe places to live and solving issues of homelessness, social isolation and food insecurity.”¹

Halifax Transit has approached United Way Halifax about becoming a community partner to help support the Low Income Pilot Pass Program. Their role would involve raising awareness about the program and assisting applicants to the program with completing the application form. United Way has indicated that they would be very interested in pursuing this partnership, and that they would work with Halifax Transit and other local agencies that they support to promote the program and offer support to applicants through the application process.

Halifax Transit has met with United Way Halifax and their partner organizations to promote the program and discuss the program application form. Contact information has been provided and groups have been instructed to contact the appropriate staff if any additional information is required when assisting community members with applications.

A “Fair Entry Halifax” program

The City of Calgary began offering a Fair Entry application process in May of 2015. The Calgary Fair Entry application provides low income applicants with one application form for a number of municipal services. These include: Calgary Transit Low Income monthly passes, recreation fee assistance², no cost spay & neuter program³, Seniors Home Maintenance⁴, and Property Tax Assistance Program⁵

Those applying to programs via the Fair Entry application are required to demonstrate their income once annually. The proof of income required may vary depending on the programs to which the applicant is applying. This approach has several benefits: firstly, applicants may discover program subsidies that they may not be aware of, and secondly, applicants are only required to disclose their financial situation once a year. Further, the streamlined process makes it more convenient to access more than one program.

It has been determined that the following programs may be candidates to become part of a consolidated “Fair Entry Halifax” application:

¹ Source – United Way Halifax: <https://www.unitedwayhalifax.ca/community/community-goals.html>

² Source – Calgary Recreation: <http://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/Recreation/Pages/Fee-assistance/Home.aspx>

³ Source – Calgary Animal Services: <http://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/ABS/Pages/Animal-Services/No-cost-spay-neuter-program.aspx>

⁴ Source – Calgary Senior Programs: <http://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/CNS/Pages/Seniors/City-Links/Home-Maintenance-Services.aspx>

⁵ Source – Calgary Property Tax Assistance Program: <http://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/CNS/Pages/Seniors/City-Links/Home-Maintenance-Services.aspx>

- Low Income Transit Pass Program: This is an annual program, with applicants applying in May or June for a July 1-June 30 year. Candidates must prove that their household income is at or below the low-income threshold, that they are Halifax residents, and that they are not receiving a transportation subsidy from another government program. To date, the first annual Low Income Transit Pass Program has accepted over 800 applicants into the program year starting July 1, 2017.
- Subsidized Recreation Programming: HRM Recreation offers numerous free and subsidized programs through a variety of registration approaches in order to promote active lifestyles for Halifax residents. One example is subsidies for summer camp registration. For the 2017 summer camp season, summer camp fees have been subsidized for 336 campers from low income households (to date). In order to qualify for a subsidy, applicants must provide a Notice of Assessment, or alternately they may provide a letter from the Department of Community Services or from Immigration Services Association of Nova Scotia for newcomers, to demonstrate need.
- Partial Tax Exemption for Residential Taxation Program and the Tax Deferral Program: The Municipality currently assists low income residents with paying their property tax through a payment plan, a partial tax exemption, or deferral of property taxes (payment is put off to a later date). These programs are available to all homeowners with a combined annual household income of \$33,000 or less. Applications to this program are collected between June and December of the year for which the taxes will be levied. In 2016, there were approximately 2,150 annual applications to the program of which 2,090 were approved.

The other two programs offered provided by Fair Entry Calgary (No Cost Spay/Neuter, Seniors Home Maintenance) are not offered by HRM at the present time. Although HRM provides funding to community organizations which offer low cost/no cost spay and neuter and snow clearance for seniors, these services are not administered by HRM but through community organizations.

There are some challenges with creating a consolidated "Fair Entry Halifax" application process. The intake periods for the three existing candidate programs are different, the information required to apply for the programs varies, the eligibility requirements vary, and acceptance into one program does not ensure acceptance into all three of the candidate programs. Although there is some ability to streamline the requirements, variations will remain due to the nature of the programs. For example, the Residential Taxation Program requires information regarding the applicants dwelling, and signatures from all property owners, whereas the other programs do not. As a result, a consolidated application form will be longer and more complex, and will be available during multiple intake periods, which may lead to confusion for applicants.

However, because a consolidated application process has the benefit of potentially reducing the number of applications submitted by residents, and may create more awareness of the other programs that are available, work will be undertaken to consolidate application forms for the candidate programs, beginning with the 2018 intake periods. A key objective of this consolidation will be maintaining simplified and easily understood application forms/processes, and as a result, this consolidation will be phased and consider ongoing feedback from residents, and may not include all candidate programs at this time.

Consider including the Mobile Food Market as a drop location for Low Income Pass Program applications

Since the pilot began in 2016, the Mobile Food Market has provided improved access to high quality, affordable food to neighbourhoods with food access issues. Travelling to communities such as East Preston, North Preston, North End Halifax, and Fairview, the Mobile Food Market has acted as a temporary community gathering place for the duration of the market.

The Mobile Food Market is largely staffed by volunteers with oversight from HRM staff and employees of the Nova Scotia Health Authority. The municipality further provides the in-kind donation of a Halifax Transit bus or a fleet vehicle.

In discussion with the Mobile Food Market team, staff have determined that the Mobile Food Market is not a suitable location for allowing an onboard drop off location for Low Income Transit Pass Program applications. Applications contain significant personal information including financial information contained in a Notice of Assessment. Further, market days are extremely busy, and it is possible that completed applications may be misplaced.

In order to improve access to the program, Halifax Transit staff will provide Mobile Food Market staff with application forms to the Low Income Transit Pass Program to make available to patrons. Halifax Transit staff will also make themselves available to train Mobile Food Market staff to assist applicants in filling out the form.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

No financial implications were identified as part of this report.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

No community engagement was undertaken in preparation of this report.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Calgary Fair Entry - Fee Reduction Application Form

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.

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FAIR ENTRY: FEE REDUCTION APPLICATION

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INFORMATION PAGE

Section 1: What is Fair Entry?

Fair Entry is an application process for City-subsidized programs and services. This process will assess your income eligibility for five City programs with one application.

What is a subsidy?

- A subsidy is a form of financial support that offers a fee reduction.

How does Fair Entry help?

- You may qualify for, and learn about, City of Calgary programs and services.
- You only have to demonstrate your income situation once annually.

Language line available at each site if English is not your first language

What are the Fair Entry programs?

Individual Programs	About the program	Other things I need to know
Recreation Fee Assistance	This program provides lower cost fees for City of Calgary Recreation facilities, golf courses, leisure centres, and access to partnering organizations.	There is a 4 week waiting period once applications are approved before you are able to access Recreation. A barcode will be sent either through mail or email with instructions on obtaining your card from a City of Calgary Recreation facility.
Calgary Transit Low Income Transit Pass Program	This program provides lower cost monthly passes for adults (18 and older), youth (6-17 years of age), and an annual pass for seniors (65+).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult and youth Transit pass pricing will be determined on a sliding scale (effective April 2017). • Photo ID will be required at the time of purchase. Please contact Calgary Transit at 403-262-1000 for more information.
Household Programs	About the program	Other things I need to know
Property Tax Assistance Program	This program provides a credit/grant of the increase in property taxes; anyone who is approved will receive an additional rebate from City Waste and Recycling Services.	Applications are accepted year-round. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applications are reviewed from June 1 to December 31 each year. • Applications received after December 31 will be reviewed in June of the following year. • The year in which you apply is the tax year that will be assessed. Secondary Criteria <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You must own the property for a minimum of one year from date of purchase. • You cannot own other property. • You must live in the home. • You must experience an increase in your property taxes from the previous year. • The homeowner must be the one paying the property taxes.

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<p>Seniors Services Home Maintenance program</p>	<p>This program is for low income seniors (65+) to help them live safely in their homes. Services provided in designated communities.</p>	<p>Services for renters and homeowners include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic yard care; • Snow removal; • House cleaning. <p>Upon program intake, homeowners may be eligible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Painting; • Minor repairs.
<p>No Cost Spay Neuter Program</p>	<p>This program provides free spay and neuter for pet cats and dogs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You must own the dog or cat at the time of application. • This program is not available for breeders. • You must be 18 or older to apply. • This program is offered by Calgary Community Standards.

Section 2: How do I qualify for Fair Entry?

If you are not sure if you qualify, go to a Fair Entry site, call 311, or email fairentry@calgary.ca about how you might apply or find other community supports.

We ask for three items depending on the program you are applying to:

1. Proof of Calgary 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 bank statement on letterhead with your name and address 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 of age (specifically for applicants to the Low income senior's annual transit pass program)
 - Birth Certificate
 - Driver's license
 - Alberta Government Identification Card
 - Alberta Health Care Card
 - Passport
 - Baptismal Certificate
3. Proof(s) of Income You can apply to Fair Entry with any one of these eight different proofs of income:

Proof of Income	Hints
<p>Assured Income for Severely Handicapped benefits (AISH) – A copy of your current Health Benefits Card (current month of application)</p>	<p>If you have documentation from any of these proofs, it is in your best interest to select this option.</p> <p>Note: See Table A in Section 4 for instructions when any household member is using one or more of these proofs.</p>
<p>Alberta Works: Income Subsidy/Support – A copy of your current Health Benefits Card (current month of application). Siksika Budget and Decision form is also accepted.</p>	
<p>Alberta Works (Learners) – An approval letter (on letterhead) from Alberta Works – Learners that indicates eligibility period and the current Health Benefits Card</p>	
<p>Alberta Works (Alberta Health Benefit) – An approval letter (on letterhead) from Alberta Works that indicates eligibility period and the current Health Benefits Card</p>	
<p>Resettlement Assistance Program form – A copy of the Start-Up & Monthly Allowance that confirms you are receiving support under the Resettlement Assistance Program</p>	



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<p>Canada Revenue Agency: Notice of Assessment – A current “Notice of Assessment” or “Notice of Reassessment” for each household* member 18 years and over that lives with you. Total income before tax is shown on line 150 of your “Notice of Assessment” or “Notice of Reassessment”. Tax return summaries are not accepted. If you have questions on your Notice of Assessment, you can call Revenue Canada at 1-800-959-8281.</p>	<p>If you apply with this proof, your household income will be assessed before you qualify for any program.</p> <p>Note: See Table B in Section 4 for what to consider when applying with your Notice of Assessment</p>
<p>Independent Youth Letter - A letter from school principal or guidance counselor, or letter from Child and Youth Support Program of Alberta Children’s Services</p>	<p>This will be accepted as proof of income one time only, and only when no other proofs of income can be obtained.</p>
<p>Letter from a Registered Social Worker (RSW) What needs to be included in the letter?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A list of all members of the household and their dates of birth; • The RSW is aware of the Low Income Cut Off and Fair Entry eligibility and the household meets the eligibility; • The RSW registration number; • The RSW contact information; • Letter should be on letterhead; • Confirmation household lives in Calgary. 	<p>Note: See Table A in Section 4 for instructions when using this proof of income.</p>

For low income seniors transit pass customers who were enrolled in Calgary Transit’s Senior Citizen Bus Pass program prior to January 2017, some exceptions may apply. Please contact 311 or email fairentree@calgary.ca for more information.

Section 3: How do I give you my application?

Can I mail in my application?

Yes, you can mail your application to:
The City of Calgary
Fair Entry #8113
P.O. Box 2100, Station M
Calgary, AB T2P 2M5

Can I fax in my application?

Yes, you can fax your application to: 403-268-2596

Can I apply online?

Yes, you can apply online at Calgary.ca/fairentree

Can I apply in person and talk to someone about my application?

Yes, you can apply in person at the locations on the next page:

Location	Address	Hours
Municipal Building	Main Floor Atrium 800 MacLeod Trail S.E.	Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Village Square Branch Calgary Public Library	2623 56 Street N.E.	Monday - Thursday 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

If English is not your first language, a language translation line is available at both Fair entry sites.



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Can I leave my application at other locations?

Yes, you can leave your application at any of the locations below. Place your application in an envelope with "Fair Entry" on the front and it will be sent to the Fair Entry office for review.

North West		
Foothills Aquatic Centre 2915 24 Ave. N.W.	Shouldice Aquatic Centre 5303 Bowness Rd. N.W.	Sir Winston Churchill Aquatic & Recreation Centre 1520 Northmount Dr. N.W.
Thornhill Aquatic & Recreation Centre 6715 Centre St. N.		
South West		
Beltline Aquatic & Fitness Centre 221 12 Ave. S.W. (not wheelchair accessible)	Canyon Meadows Aquatic & Fitness Centre 89 Canova Rd. S.W.	Glenmore Aquatic Centre 5330 19 St. S.W.
Killarney Aquatic & Recreation Centre 1919 29 St. S.W.	Southland Leisure Centre 2000 Southland Dr. S.W.	
North East		
Renfrew Aquatic & Recreation Centre 810 13 Ave. N.E.	Seniors Services Home Maintenance North Office 6617 Centre Street N.E.	Village Square Leisure Centre 2623 56 St. N.E.
South East		
Acadia Aquatic & Fitness Centre 9009 Fairmount Dr. S.E.	Animal Services Centre 2201 Portland St. S.E.	Bob Bahan Aquatic & Fitness Centre 4812 14 Ave. S.E.
Inglewood Aquatic Centre 1527 17 Ave. S.E.	Municipal Building Main Floor Atrium 800 MacLeod Trail S.E.	Seniors Services Home Maintenance South and City-Wide Office 311-34 Ave. S.E.

Section 4: How do I Apply?

How you fill out the application depends on what proof of income you choose to use. (If you require assistance, please visit one of our in person locations listed in Section 3.)

If anyone in the household is applying with the following proofs of income, list this person as the primary applicant. See Table A:

- AISH
- Alberta Works
- Resettlement Assistance Program form
- Letter for Independent Youth
- Letter from a Registered Social Worker

If you are applying with your Notice of Assessment (or Reassessment), you and all the adult family members of your household will need to provide proofs of income. See Table B.



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Table A

What do I need to know when I apply with AISH, Alberta Works, Resettlement Assistance Program form, Letter for Independent Youth, or a Letter from a Registered Social Worker?

Depending on the program you would like to apply for, different pieces of information will be required. See the chart below to determine what category you fit into.

Individual Programs	For Who?	What Do I Need to Provide?
Only Recreation Fee Assistance or Transit Low-Income Adult, Youth and Senior Pass.	Just myself.	Your AISH, Alberta Works, Resettlement Assistance Program, Independent Youth Letter or a Registered Social Worker letter.
Only Recreation Fee Assistance or Transit Low-Income Adult, Youth and Senior Pass.	Myself <i>and/or</i> family members in my household who have coverage from AISH, Alberta Works, the Resettlement Assistance Program, Independent Youth Letter or a Registered Social Worker letter.	You <i>and/or</i> family members in your household that want access to Transit or Recreation that have documents from AISH, Alberta Works, the Resettlement Assistance Program, Independent Youth Letter or a Registered Social Worker letter.
Household Programs	For Who?	What Do I Need to Provide?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Property Tax Assistance Program (if you own your home) <i>or</i> No-Cost Spay or Neuter program <i>or</i> Seniors Services Home Maintenance Program (if you are 65+) 	<p>These programs benefit the entire household therefore we require information from all of your family members living in your household.</p> <p>You can still apply for Recreation and Transit as an individual or household by checking the box in Section 6.</p>	<p>The family members in your household are required to include documents from AISH, Alberta Works, Resettlement Assistance Program, Independent Youth Letter or a Registered Social Worker letter. For any adult family household members that do not have these documents, they are required to provide their Notice of Assessment.</p>

For low income seniors transit pass customers who were enrolled in Calgary Transit's Senior Citizen Bus Pass program prior to January 2017, some exceptions may apply. Please contact 311 or email fairentry@calgary.ca for more information.

Table B

What do I need to know when I apply with a Notice of Assessment?

A current "Notice of Assessment" or "Notice of Reassessment" for each household member 18 years and over that lives with you. Total income before tax is shown on line 150 of your "Notice of Assessment" or "Notice of Reassessment". **Tax return summaries are not accepted.** If you have questions about your Notice of Assessment you can call Revenue Canada at 1-800-959-8281.

Your Total Household Income should be less than the Low-Income Cut Off (LICO) rate to qualify for Fair Entry.



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What is a household?

*Connected to page 3 under Notice of Assessment where it mentions household.

A household is all family members living in the same home related by blood, marriage, common-law or adoption (including children).

What is a household income?

Your household income is the total income of all family members 18 years or older living in the same home related by blood, marriage, common-law or adoption (including the person applying).

StatsCan LICO rates

Size of family	Total before tax (gross)
1 person	\$24,949.00
2 persons	\$31,061.00
3 persons	\$38,185.00
4 persons	\$46,362.00
5 persons	\$52,583.00
6 persons	\$59,304.00
7 or more	\$66,027.00

Section 5: I think I'm ready to apply. How can I be sure I've done everything?

Before you fax, mail, drop-off or bring in your application, make sure you include these documents:

- Fair Entry: Fee Reduction Application – Signed and completed.
- Proof(s) of Income – See Section 2.
- Proof of age (specifically for applicants to the Low income senior's transit pass program)
 - Birth Certificate
 - Driver's license
 - Alberta Government Identification Card
 - Alberta Health Care Card
 - Passport
 - Baptismal Certificate
- Proof of Calgary Address – Examples of proofs of current Calgary residential address:
 - a copy of your Alberta Driver's License or Alberta Government Identification Card
 - a copy of utility, telephone or cable bill dated within the last 30 days
 - a copy of a bank statement on letterhead with your name and address dated within the last 30 days
 - a copy of any government document with your name and current address dated within the last 30 days
 - a copy of signed lease agreements

Note: We do not accept P.O. Box or Rural Route Addresses as valid proof of residence.



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Section 6: Programs I am interested in (*Indicates a mandatory field)

Let us know which program(s) you are interested in by checking the box of the program(s) below*.

- Recreation Fee Assistance
- Calgary Transit Low Income Monthly Transit Pass (Adult or Youth)
- Calgary Transit Low Income Annual Transit Pass (Senior)
- Seniors Services Home Maintenance for those 65 and older
- No Cost Spay or Neuter Program for your dog or cat
- Property Tax Assistance Program for homeowners

SAMS ID Number

Section 7: Primary Applicant Information (*Indicates a mandatory field)

Do you live in Calgary?

- Yes No (You must live in Calgary to receive these benefits. If you do not live within Calgary City limits, please call 211 to find out what services are available to you in your location).

First Name*		Middle Initial	Last Name*	
Gender e.g. female	Date of Birth* (YYYY-MM-DD)			
Personal Address	Address* (Unit #, Street #, Street Name, City)		Postal Code*	
Mailing Address (If different from above)	Address* (Unit #, Street #, Street Name, City)		Postal Code*	
Are you a homeowner? (required if you wish to apply to the Property Tax Assistance program) <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		Phone Number*	Alternate Phone Number	
Email Address (please print clearly)				
What is the best way to contact you? <input type="checkbox"/> Phone <input type="checkbox"/> Email <input type="checkbox"/> Mail				

Section 8: Household (Family) Information

	First Name	Middle Initial	Last Name	Relationship to Applicant	Date of Birth (YYYY-MM-DD)	Gender (e.g. female)
1.	Applicant	Applicant	Applicant	Applicant	Applicant	Applicant
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						
6.						



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Section 9: What if I need help communicating with you?

Alternate Contact(s) if English is not your first language

You can provide an alternate contact and we can communicate with them if you would prefer.

First Name	Last Name	E-mail Address	Day Phone Number	Relationship to Applicant
			()	
			()	
			()	

Section 10: Calgary Transit Customers Only

Access Calgary Number (if applicable)

Approved Pick-ups

Only you or those listed below can pick up your Transit pass. They must present valid ID to buy a Transit pass for you.

First Name	Last Name	Agency Name (if applicable)	Day Phone Number
			()
			()
			()

Section 11: Consent and Statement

I _____ declare that:
Applicant Name (please print)

- I am the main applicant and it is my responsibility to inform all members of my household about the program and conditions of use.
- I give The City of Calgary my permission to check the information within this application.
- I provide The City of Calgary permission to share information within this application between The City of Calgary subsidy programs for the purpose of assessing my application.
- The City of Calgary may contact me in matters pertaining to this application.
- The information I have provided for this application is true.
- If I or anyone in my household, has a change in circumstances (i.e. change of address, new job etc.) I will notify Fair Entry immediately. I can do so by calling 311 or visiting the locations in person (See Section 3). I understand that changes may impact program eligibility.
- Misuse of program privileges or misinformation provided on this application may result in a loss of privileges or penalty.

Date (YYYY-MM-DD)

Signature of Applicant (or Legal Guardian/Trustee)

The Information collected on this form is in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, Section 33 (c). The information will be used to determine eligibility for City of Calgary Subsidy programs/services; update current personal information within the programs for which you have applied; provide follow up information for City staff, if required, to access programs/services; to collect statistical information and to support reporting of aggregate data of program subsidy program participation. The Recreation Fee Assistance Program shares information with an outside funder; however, such information will only be shared when accessing Recreation Fee Assistance programs. Information may be shared across subsidy programs for the purposes of program/service access. If you have questions on the Fair Entry Application process or Program, call 311 or email fairentry@calgary.ca.