

**Subject: Recreation Membership & Admission Fee Remodel**

**File Number: ACS2025-RCF-GEN-0007**

**Report to Community and Protective Services Committee on 27 May 2025**

**and Council 11 June 2025**

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**Ward: Citywide**

**Objet : Nouveau modèle d'abonnement récréatif et de droits d'entrée**

**Dossier : ACS2025-RCF-GEN-0007**

**Rapport au Comité des services communautaires et de protection**

**le 27 mai 2025**

**et au Conseil le 11 juin 2025**

**Soumis par Tracey McGarry, Direction générale des loisirs, de la culture et des installations**

**Personne ressource : Katie O'Sullivan, Coordinatrice du soutien stratégique, Direction Générale des loisirs, de la culture et des installations**

**Quartier : À l'échelle de la ville**

## **REPORT RECOMMENDATION(S)**

That Community Services Committee recommend Council to approve:

1. The revised membership pass and admission model and pricing structure; and
2. The phased-in implementation of fees as outlined in this report.

## **RECOMMANDATION(S) DU RAPPORT**

Que le Comité des services communautaires recommande au Conseil d'approuver ce qui suit :

1. Le modèle révisé d'abonnement et de droits d'entrée et la structure tarifaire;
2. La mise en œuvre graduelle des droits formulée dans le présent rapport.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The City provides access to its drop-in fitness and physical activity opportunities through a pay-as-you-go daily admission fee, or through pre-purchased membership pass. In response to the evolving needs of the community and the changing fitness landscape, the Recreation, Cultural and Facility Service department is revamping its admissions and membership structure. This initiative aims to better serve residents by ensuring affordable and fair access to core and more advanced services. These changes align with the Council approved City of Ottawa Strategic Plan 2023-2026 and the vision for a "healthy, sustainable, and equitable built environment". The proposed membership and admissions model simplifies the membership options, addresses current fee discrepancies, and maintains affordability. It will provide residents with a range of affordable options, enabling them to select the service level they desire and only pay for the services they require. The goal is to provide inclusive opportunities that cater to various ages and stages of life, meeting the needs and interests of our diverse communities.

The new model applies to both drop-in admissions and memberships, following the same streamlined, three-tiered structure. This ensures that residents are charged fairly and consistently based on the services they use, whether they are attending on a drop-in basis or purchasing a membership pass. It also ensures the most popular services, like public swimming and skating remain affordable and accessible in all communities.

For those who visit often, the annual membership pass is proposed to have a monthly fee priced at 4.2 times the cost of a single admission, making it a very cost-effective option for regular users. Residents who visit less frequently can continue to benefit from affordable drop-in admissions or multi-visit discount passes, ensuring flexibility in how they access services. This balance between membership pass and drop-in options ensures that all residents can choose the most affordable option based on their needs.

The proposed three membership categories are:

- **Category 1** – Core recreation activities (swimming, skating and gymnasium sports) that align with our basic recreation mandate for universal access.
- **Category 2** – Activities that require specialized spaces and equipment.
- **Category 3** – Activities that require a certified instructor, additional staff and/or specialized spaces and equipment.

This streamlined approach replaces the current, complex 14-category system, simplifying pricing and removing facility categories from the historical model (Class A, Class B, standard pools, leisure pools). By aligning both admissions and memberships into a unified structure, residents will be charged fairly for similar services, regardless of facility or service type, with incremental discounts applied when selecting multi-visit or membership options. Discounts for children, youth, seniors, students, and households will be standardized across all locations. The multi-visit pass and seasonal membership options will remain available, alongside continued access to the Hand in Hand fee assistance program, which provides up to \$185 per year for qualifying low-income residents.

The need for a simpler, more equitable structure was highlighted through a comprehensive internal review, frequently expressed in client feedback, and further discussed in public consultations which gathered over 2,000 responses. Extensive benchmarking with municipalities, as well as commercial fitness facilities, demonstrated that simplified pricing models may increase participation and access to services. The new model will be revenue neutral to the City by maintaining the same overall revenue expectation as the current system and aligns well with the Service Review Working Group's direction to better align fees with the cost of delivering services.

To ensure a smooth transition, fee increases will be phased in for those facing significant price changes. Communication will be clear and consistent, with staff available at each facility to help residents understand the new model and support them through the change.

This proposed model reflects the City's commitment to making recreation programs available to everyone, supporting community engagement, and enhancing overall quality of life for all residents.

## RÉSUMÉ

La Ville donne accès à ses installations de conditionnement physique et d'activités physiques à la carte par l'entremise d'un droit d'entrée journalier selon l'utilisation ou par l'entremise d'une carte de membre achetée à l'avance. En réponse à l'évolution des besoins de la collectivité et du paysage de la remise en forme, la Direction générale des loisirs, de la culture et des installations procède à la refonte de sa structure d'abonnement et de droits d'entrée. Cette initiative vise à mieux servir les résidents en leur assurant un accès juste et abordable aux services de base et aux services plus avancés. Ces modifications sont conformes au Plan stratégique 2023-2026 de la Ville d'Ottawa, approuvé par le Conseil municipal, et à la vision d'un « environnement bâti sain, durable et équitable ». Le modèle d'abonnement et de droits d'entrée proposé simplifie les options d'abonnement, résout les divergences actuelles en matière de tarifs et maintient l'abordabilité. Il offre aux résidents une gamme d'options abordables, leur permettant de choisir le niveau de service qu'ils souhaitent et de payer uniquement pour les services dont ils ont besoin. L'objectif consiste à offrir des possibilités inclusives qui s'adressent à différents groupes d'âge et étapes de l'existence, en répondant aux besoins et aux intérêts de nos diverses communautés.

Le nouveau modèle s'applique à la fois aux entrées libres et aux abonnements, selon la même structure simplifiée à trois niveaux. Ainsi, les résidents sont facturés de manière équitable et cohérente en fonction des services qu'ils utilisent, qu'il s'agisse d'un droit d'entrée à la carte ou d'un abonnement. Il garantit également que les services les plus populaires, comme les activités de natation et de patinage publiques, demeurent abordables et accessibles dans toutes les communautés.

Pour les visiteurs fréquents, le laissez-passer annuel est proposé à un prix mensuel 4,2 fois supérieur au coût d'une entrée simple, ce qui en fait une option très rentable pour les utilisateurs habituels. Les résidents dont les visites sont moins fréquentes peuvent continuer à bénéficier d'entrées abordables aux activités à la carte ou de laissez-passer pour séances multiples à tarif réduit, ce qui leur permet de bénéficier d'une certaine souplesse en matière d'accès aux services. Cet équilibre entre les abonnements et les entrées libres permet à tous les résidents de choisir l'option la plus abordable en fonction de leurs besoins.

Les trois catégories d'abonnement proposées sont les suivantes :

- **Catégorie 1** – Activités principales récréatives (natation, patinage et sports de gymnase) conformes à notre mandat de base en matière de loisirs pour un accès universel
- **Catégorie 2** – Activités nécessitant des espaces et de l'équipement spécialisés
- **Catégorie 3** – Activités nécessitant un instructeur certifié, du personnel supplémentaire ou des espaces et de l'équipement spécialisés

Cette approche rationalisée remplace le système actuel complexe à 14 catégories, en simplifiant la tarification et en supprimant les catégories d'installations du modèle historique (classe A, classe B, piscines de catégorie standard, piscines ludiques). En regroupant les droits d'entrée et les abonnements dans une structure unifiée, les résidents seront facturés équitablement pour des services similaires, quel que soit le type d'installation ou de service, et des réductions supplémentaires seront appliquées en cas d'options de séances multiples ou d'abonnement. Les réductions pour les enfants, les jeunes, les aînés, les étudiants et les ménages seront uniformisées dans l'ensemble des emplacements. Le laissez-passer pour séances multiples et l'abonnement saisonnier continueront d'être proposés, de même que le programme d'aide financière Main dans la main, qui offre jusqu'à 185 dollars par an aux résidents à faible revenu qui répondent aux conditions d'admission.

La nécessité d'une structure simplifiée et équitable a été mise en évidence dans le cadre d'un examen interne exhaustif, fréquemment exprimée dans les commentaires des clients et discutée dans le cadre de consultations publiques qui ont recueilli plus de 2 000 réponses. Une analyse comparative approfondie avec des municipalités et des installations commerciales de remise en forme a démontré que des modèles de tarification simplifiés pouvaient accroître la participation et l'accès aux services. Le nouveau modèle n'aura pas d'incidence sur les recettes de la Ville, puisqu'il maintiendra les mêmes attentes en matière de recettes globales que le système actuel. De plus, il est conforme à l'orientation du Groupe de travail sur l'examen des services, qui vise à mieux harmoniser les droits avec le coût de la prestation des services.

Pour assurer une transition en douceur, les augmentations des frais seront introduites progressivement pour les personnes confrontées à des changements de prix importants. La communication sera claire et cohérente, et du personnel sera présent dans chaque établissement pour aider les résidents à comprendre le nouveau modèle et les soutenir pendant cette période de changement.

Le modèle proposé reflète l'engagement de la Ville à offrir des programmes récréatifs accessibles à tous, à soutenir l'engagement communautaire et à améliorer la qualité de vie globale de tous les résidents.

## **BACKGROUND**

The current admissions and membership model was approved by City Council as part of the 2004 budget. It was the new City's post-amalgamation initiative to harmonize the various legacy membership and admission structures and fees. It outlined recommendations for standardizing fees for fitness memberships and one-time admissions. The report introduced Class A and B facility classifications, along with four new types of membership passes: All-inclusive, One-option fitness, One-option aqua fitness, and combined aqua fitness and swimming. Since then, only minor changes have been made to the membership and fee structure. The model recommended in this report is a complete overhaul of the 2004 model to address the evolution of the service and the cost structures that support each type of activity supported by admission and membership fees.

The existing fitness facility categorization of Class A and Class B was intended to differentiate between locations offering a full range of fitness amenities and those with fewer choices. The concept was to implement a higher fee for memberships and admissions at locations with a wider range of services. Though this approach has its merits, it has led to discrepancies and inequities in its practical application that the recommended new structure proposes to rectify. Discrepancies include:

- Class A and B facilities charge different fees for membership passes, but the same fee for daily admissions. This reflects the reality that the service offered, and the cost to the City to deliver the service, are the same at A and B facilities.
- For pools, membership fees are the same at all pools, but single admissions fees are higher at leisure pools than at standard pools for the same service.
- Recreation Complexes can have either a standard or leisure pool housed within a Class A or Class B fitness facility. While the pool may meet the definition for one class of facility, the fitness amenities offered within the same building may be categorized as the other class – creating an inconsistency in classification within the same facility.

- Class A membership clients pay more for group fitness classes than Class B membership clients, even though the classes are the same and often taught by the same instructors. The same can be said for most other activities – the quality and experience is comparable, but the fee charged to clients differs based on facility type.

In recent years, Council approved the [City of Ottawa Strategic Plan 2023-2026](#) and the [Official Plan \(2021\)](#). The new membership and admission model has been developed to align with the vision for a "healthy, sustainable, and equitable built environment", the Service Review Framework (2023) to optimize service delivery and ensure corporate alignment, and to reflect the post-pandemic client demand and preferences for aquatic and fitness services.

## **DISCUSSION**

### Proposed model for membership passes and admissions

The new membership and admission model has been designed to achieve the following key objectives:

- Simplify the drop-in admissions and membership pass structures that offer a range of service options from basic to all-inclusive.
- Establish a new fee structure for admissions and memberships that are congruent with each other, with incremental discounts based on upfront commitment to longer terms of use.
- Properly align the fees with the incremental cost of providing services that require more equipment, staffing and other incremental costs to the City.
- Remain revenue neutral towards achieving the Department's annual revenue targets for admissions and memberships.
- Create a consistent, inclusive, and value-based experience that it provides good value in the local market.

The proposed membership and admission model has three categories for clients to choose from, ranging from basic to all-inclusive:

- **Category 1:** Activities that offer self-directed access to the facility without a requirement for significant equipment or staff instruction.

- **Category 2:** Activities that require specialized space and equipment and/or additional staff.
- **Category 3:** Activities that require a certified instructor, additional staff and/or specialized spaces and equipment.

**Table 1: the proposed membership and admission model**

The table below outlines the activities included in each category for both memberships and drop-in admissions under the proposed model.

|  | <b>Category 1</b> | <b>Category 2</b> | <b>Category 3</b> |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Swimming (lane swims, public swims, preschool swims) | ✓                 | ✓                 | ✓                 |
| Skating  | ✓                 | ✓                 | ✓                 |
| Gymnasium sports                                     | ✓                 | ✓                 | ✓                 |
| Weight and cardio rooms                              |                   | ✓                 | ✓                 |
| Specialized skating                                  |                   | ✓                 | ✓                 |
| Squash and racquetball                               |                   | ✓                 | ✓                 |
| Group fitness classes                                |                   |                   | ✓                 |
| Aqua fitness   |                   |                   | ✓                 |
| Wave swim  |                   |                   | ✓                 |
| Rock wall climbing                                   |                   |                   | ✓                 |

An overview of the membership pass and admissions pricing for each age group is provided in [Appendix A](#), which includes the full detailed fee schedule aligned with the tiered model.

To maintain a simple and equitable admissions and membership system, activities are categorized based on city resources required to deliver them. The movement of services between categories can result in significant price increases for residents. For example, if weight and cardio were moved from Category 2 to Category 1, the overall price for Category 1 activities would increase by about 26% to offset revenue lost from the shift. As a result, some of the categories could become more expensive, particularly for residents using basic services. The recommended blend of services in each

category was carefully considered to provide good value to clients in a fiscally responsible manner.

The proposed model will apply to both memberships and drop-in admissions, offering access to 58 city facilities citywide. With baseline activities like swimming, skating and gym sports included in all membership types and drop-in admission services, there will be activity options for everyone, regardless of the facility they visit.

Residents will have the option to purchase membership passes for one, three, six, or 12 months, with the latter option offering the best value for access to recreational facilities and the activities covered by their membership. The model also provides flexibility by allowing members to opt out of their membership pass and receive a pro-rated refund at any time, and generous provisions to place memberships on hold.

The model standardizes the monthly cost of a yearly membership pass to be 4.2 times the cost of a single admission. Therefore, residents visiting once a week or more, within a one-month period, will see value in buying a membership pass. Clients who visit less than four times a month may find it more advantageous to pay for drop-in admissions or to buy a multi-visit pass. This formula makes the decision point for buying a membership pass easy for clients.

The new model also reduces barriers for residents by simplifying access to services, making it clear which activities are available with each membership pass and drop-in admissions. It offers flexibility by ensuring that both membership holders and drop-in users can access all 58 city locations, with activities categorized consistently across all facilities, as listed in [Appendix B](#).

Affordable and accessible recreation is a pivotal part of the Recreation, Cultural and Facility Service Mandate. Category 1 is designed to provide low-cost access to core recreation activities. Efforts have been made to keep its cost low by only including the most popular activities that have traditionally been the focus of universal access. This budget-friendly option provides activities that appeal to a wide range of users and that generally do not require a high level of skill or instruction to enjoy. Fees for Category 1, depending on the age, range from \$12.70 to \$21.17 per month for a membership pass, and \$3.02 to \$5.04 for a one-time admission.

Activities that require a higher level of skill, the need for instruction or coaching, additional equipment and that are associated with higher operating costs are placed in

categories 2 and 3 but remain very affordable in the local market. Membership pass fees for Categories 2 and 3, depending on age group, range from \$22.38 to \$44.31 per month. Extensive benchmarking with other municipalities and commercial fitness facilities reveals that the pricing structure of this simplified membership and admission model allows residents to access more amenities than most offerings while remaining highly competitive in the market. This approach aligns with industry standards and ensures that fitness and recreational opportunities remain accessible and affordable for residents.

To support exiting membership pass holders through the shift to the new model, a transition plan is recommended. As part of this plan, limits on fee increases each year are proposed when increases exceed a threshold amount. This approach will help minimize disruption and give residents time to adapt to the new pricing structure. Staff will be trained to assist residents with any questions, and clear, consistent communication will be provided throughout the process to ensure clients are well-informed.

The new system proposes to maintain the 20 per cent discount on one-year membership pass for those who qualify for a group discount under the City's corporate membership program which is available to:

- Ottawa Public Library card holders (with a free library card)
- Corporations with at least 10 staff members (minimum of 10 membership pass holders)
- Groups of 10 or more people.

In addition, the City's recreation fee assistance program, Hand in Hand, can be used to subsidize membership pass fees for residents who qualify because of income.

### [Market analysis and benchmarking](#)

Over the past two decades, the fitness industry has undergone significant transformations. The pandemic resulted in the closure of several commercial fitness facilities. This brought about a new interest in virtual fitness options for some time, followed by hybrid on-site and virtual models. More recently, a full return to on-site fitness options has grown rapidly returning to, and in some cases exceeding, pre-

pandemic levels as part of an increased awareness of the benefits of physical activity and a healthy lifestyle.

To ensure that the changes recommended in this report reflect industry best practices and meet current community needs, a comprehensive benchmarking review of 89 municipal membership and admission models was completed. Useful findings that informed the proposed Ottawa model include:

- A simplified membership and admissions model and fee structure increased overall client satisfaction and membership and admission purchases in Calgary, Mississauga, Toronto, and Halifax.
- Offering packaged membership levels is a better approach than the “Build A Pass” approach where clients can pick a basket of preferred activities as part of their package. This approach proved to be difficult to manage at the operational level, cost prohibitive to mix basic services with more advanced options, and generally led to lower client satisfaction.

### Potential Impacts to current members

An analysis of 2024 membership pass data suggests the potential impact of the new membership structure on the 17,834 pass holders in the system if they purchase an option that best aligns with their current pass. Information is provided based on impact to monthly fees since most membership clients choose a monthly automatic payment plan.

- 46% of members (8,153 people) are expected to see a decrease in monthly costs.
- 16% (2,850 people) are expected to see an increase of less than \$5 per month.
- 33% (5,814 people) are expected to see an increase of more than \$5 but less than \$10 per month.
- 6% (1,017 people) are expected to see increases of more than \$10 a month.

While the new structure is designed to be revenue neutral to the City and achieve the same budgeted revenue targets, some residents will experience price increases that reflect the true cost to offer the services they are receiving. To support these residents while adjusting fees to reflect true cost of providing services, and to foster a smooth transition, a transition plan is proposed. The plan acknowledges that many membership

pass holders pay for their membership pass through monthly pre-approved payments and that keeping increases to these monthly charges reasonable is key. This includes a phased-in approach for existing clients who may see increases exceeding certain threshold monthly increases, specifically:

- An increase greater than \$5 per month for individual memberships
- An increase greater than \$10 per month for household memberships

The transition plan will gradually increase membership fees for existing clients to minimize the impact of the new model on existing clients. Fee increases will be capped at \$5 per month for individual memberships and \$10 per month for household memberships until the final membership fee is reached. This phased approach provides members with the time to adjust to the new structure, ensuring a smooth transition without sudden fee hikes.

While most residents will transition fully within the first year, others may take up to four years, ensuring ample time for adjustment. These gradual increases will help ease the financial adjustment for those most impacted. To qualify for the transition discount, individuals must have held a membership for at least six months (or 180 days) within a 12-month period, from May 1, 2024, to May 1, 2025. This discount will apply only to those transitioning to an annual membership under the new model. Members may accumulate the six-month total requirement by combining multiple separate memberships (e.g., six 1-month memberships).

### **Class B impacts**

- Class B and household membership passes have historically been priced low and did not reflect the true cost of delivering services. Clients who benefited from these two membership offerings will see the highest price impacts when transitioning to the new model. There are currently 1,474 membership pass holders at Class B facilities, accounting for 8% of all membership pass holders. Class B membership passes are only valid at six facilities.
- About 865 Class B membership pass holders (5% of total) will see an increase of more than \$10 per month. The impacts are fairly balanced between adults and seniors, with 45 youth and students also impacted.

- Class B one-option membership passes are currently priced very low. For example, an annual pass costs \$13.17 per month for seniors, youth, or students. If membership holders attend twice a week, they are effectively paying \$1.65 per instructed class, which is significantly below the cost of offering the service and the one-time admission prices. For comparison, the one-time drop-in fee for a group fitness is currently \$7.86
- In the new model, a category 3 yearly membership pass would cost \$33.23 per month for a senior. This rate can be further discounted by 20% (to \$26.58) by presenting a free Ottawa Public Library card. If they attend twice a week, their cost per instructed class would be \$3.32. Many seniors at Class B facilities attend a high number of classes per month and their cost per use could be even lower.
- Not all Class B membership pass holders will see an increase in price; 12% (172 people) will see a decrease in price. The other 30% (437 people) will see an increase of \$10 or less per month.

### **Household impacts**

- Household membership passes make up 41% of all membership pass types (7,245 people) – more than any other type. The reason a higher number of household rates are affected is because the household category is popular due to the low price point.
- The new price will be equal to two adult membership passes. Families with two adults will be able to add all their children living at the same address without additional cost.
- A parent with two children will find savings in the household membership, as it is cheaper than buying one adult and two child/youth/student membership passes.
- 72% of household membership pass holders (5,197 people) are expected to see an increase of between \$5 and \$10 per month. A monthly increase of \$10 for a family of four would be the equivalent of \$2.50 per person per month.
- 24% of people with a household membership pass (1,724 people) are expected to see a decrease in fees.
- The household membership pass will continue to be a low-cost value option for families, particularly for those choosing the lower categories. For example, a family of two adults and three children can enjoy access to swimming, skating, and gym sports for \$42.34 a month, or \$8.47 per person. Families may see a price increase, but they will also benefit from access to more activities in the new model and access to more locations.

- On average, each household membership pass benefits 3.7 people.
- Senior couples are unlikely to buy the household membership as the senior discount already provides a better rate.

### **By age groups**

- There is no particular age group impacted by the new model. 90% of senior membership pass holders will experience either a decrease in their monthly fees or an increase of less than \$5 per month. Approximately 417 seniors (2% of all membership pass holders) may face a monthly increase of \$10 or more and almost all of these are at Class B facilities. Depending on client selection of the three new membership levels, this number could be much lower.
- The monthly increase for the approximately 417 members at Class B facilities addresses the long-standing undervaluation of the memberships at a level that does not reflect the cost-of-service delivery. This ensures fair access to services for all residents, regardless of the facility type.
- 72% of adult membership pass holders (3,360 people) will experience a decrease in their monthly fees. The number of adults likely to experience an increase of more than \$10 per month is limited to 329 people (7% of adult membership pass holders).
- Child, youth and students are grouped together with the same rates. 83% will see a decrease in rates (1,439 people). 45 people in this category will see an increase of \$10 or more per month. The highest priced category for a child/youth/student annual membership pass is \$26.59 per month.

The new model has the potential to attract more residents to this beneficial service through clearer communications and better packaging of service bundles. Streamlining the approach across 58 facilities will improve accuracy of budget allocation and allow for more effective tracking of cost recovery, ultimately supporting better service delivery. Additionally, the integration of the new online booking system (ACTIVENet) has the functionality to enable residents to purchase and manage membership passes online, offering greater convenience and flexibility.

### Implementation and timeline

To ensure a smooth transition to the new membership and admission model, a comprehensive communication and marketing strategy has been prepared, supported

by a detailed rollout plan. The strategy aims to effectively showcase the benefits and opportunities of the new model to all residents through a multi-channel approach.

A key component of successful implementation is clear, consistent messaging delivered by knowledgeable staff. Staff will be trained to assist residents in understanding the changes, answering questions, and helping them navigate the updated system. Visual guides and resources will be available at facilities and online to support clients during the transition.

Pending approval, the implementation phase will begin, focusing on a gradual transition that addresses the needs of existing clients most impacted by the new pricing model. This approach will ensure that any significant changes are phased in over time, allowing clients to adjust smoothly. While many will be fully transitioned to the new model within the first year, some may take up to four years to fully align with the updated pricing structure. The goal is to ensure all residents are aligned with the new, equitable pricing model, providing fairness and clarity in service offerings.

The phased implementation will provide time for existing members to adjust, reducing the impact of changes to membership pass holders and fee schedules. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation will ensure that the implementation process remains responsive to community feedback and aligns with the City's broader strategic goals.

The start of implementation is tentatively scheduled for fall 2025, with the marketing and communication efforts beginning well in advance to ensure a successful launch.

Current membership pass holders will be able to keep their current plan until it expires. This will reduce a surge to client service locations upon implementation and will give those seeing a price increase up to a year before it takes effect.

To support residents through the transition, dedicated resources will be available for Councillors, including a toolkit with FAQs, online resources and other communication materials. These resources are intended to help ensure Councillors are well-informed and equipped to respond to and assist residents.

The redesigned membership and admission model represents a significant advancement in enhancing the recreational experience for clients and aligning fees to a sustainable level where the cost of delivering services aligns with the fees charged. By

streamlining processes, ensuring consistency across facilities, and providing a more equitable and user-friendly framework, this model offers significant improvements.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The report has no immediate financial impact. The new model is revenue-neutral for the City, maintaining current revenue expectations, and aligns with the goal of matching fees to service delivery costs.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no legal impediments to Committee and Council approving the recommendation in this Report.

## **WARD COUNCILLOR COMMENTS**

This is a city-wide report.

## **CONSULTATION**

The development of the new membership and admission model was informed by extensive public engagement. A total of 1,771 survey responses were collected through Engage Ottawa, and 140 residents participated in four consultation sessions held in 2024. Additionally, 100 comments were received through email and social media. Outreach efforts also included emails to staff and Council members, notifications to current membership pass holders, poster advertising in 127 facilities, electronic screen ads in 30 locations, radio ads, and social media, achieving a total of 592,214 impressions.

When asked how the new model would affect their decision to renew or purchase a new membership, 45 per cent of respondents said it would have a positive impact, 17 per cent were neutral and 38 per cent said it would have a negative impact. The positive feedback supported a simplified structure, improved emphasis on equity, having three clear categories, and flexibility in activity and facility choice. Much of the negative responses related to a concern with potential fee increases' the perception of paying for access to activities they would not use and wanting to pay only for access to one specific facility. While the participants did not see proposed prices as part of consultations, a main concern was affordability. Some participants said they could understand a modest increase, so long as they were not priced out from their current routine.

Staff addressed these concerns by explaining the concept of paying for the level of service received. The key idea is that membership and admission fees are linked to the resources and services required to deliver the service. For example, aqua fitness classes require specialized spaces, equipment, and skilled staff, so they are priced within a category that reflects those additional requirements.

As discussions progressed, many residents came to an understanding of the rationale behind the new model. The majority of residents recognized that the model is designed to balance fair access to a variety of services with the need for cost recovery. There was general appreciation that the City aims to provide a simple, flexible, and fair approach, with clear categories reflecting the level of service provided. The overall goal is to offer affordable and accessible recreation to all, while ensuring that fees align with the resources required to deliver each activity.

## **ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS**

As outlined in its Accessibility Policy, the City of Ottawa is committed to ensuring equitable access to the use and benefit of its services, programs, and facilities for persons with disabilities, in a manner that respects their dignity and that is equitable in relation to the broader public.

All actions outlined in the new membership passes and admissions model will also comply with all requirements outlined in the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.

Accessibility is a key focus in the new membership passes and admissions model, and it is also highlighted as a priority in the City's 2023–2026 Strategic Plan.

The new membership passes and admissions model is designed to enhance accessibility by providing clear, affordable, and flexible options for both persons with disabilities and older adults accessing 58 City recreation and fitness facilities. This model simplifies access, ensuring residents can choose the services that best meet their needs, whether they visit frequently or occasionally.

The Hand-in-Hand fee assistance program is an important part of the City's commitment to ensuring that all residents have access to affordable recreation options. As noted in the report, the program provides up to \$185 per year for low-income residents, which

directly supports equitable access to recreation and fitness programs, particularly for low-income residents.

The City's Corporate Accessibility Office was consulted in the development of the model and has provided input on important considerations for the implementation phase. The project team will continue collaborating with the Corporate Accessibility Office to ensure compliance with relevant legislation throughout the education campaign.

## **RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

There are no risk implications associated with this report.

## **RURAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Membership pass and admission remodel will impact all Ottawa residents, including those in rural areas.

## **TERM OF COUNCIL PRIORITIES**

The recommendations in this report align with the 2023–2026 Strategic Plan Priority:

### **A city that has affordable housing and is more liveable for all.**

The membership and admission fee structure supports this priority by improving affordability, reducing complexity, and increasing equitable access to fitness and physical activity opportunities. These changes ensure residents can choose service levels that meet their needs and only pay for what they use, helping to create a more inclusive, livable city for people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities. This work also supports the vision for a “healthy, sustainable, and equitable built environment” outlined in the City of Ottawa Strategic Plan.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

Document 1 – [Appendix A](#) – Proposed Admission and Membership Pass Fees

Document 2 - [Appendix B](#) - Facilities included in new membership pass and admissions model

## **DISPOSITION**

With Council approval, staff will begin implementing the new membership and admissions model in fall 2025, with changes taking effect for all new purchases and renewals as of that time.