

Overview of fees for recreation programs, 2014

User fees

Parks, Forestry and Recreation intends to increase user fees by 6 per cent in 2014 (an inflationary increase of 2.25 per cent and an additional increase of 3.75 per cent). This is on top of a total 13 per cent user fee increase in 2012, and an inflationary increase in 2013.

While the budget analyst notes contend that this maintains Toronto rates at or below GTA-wide rates, this does not take into account the cost-of-living, and particular needs and aspirations of Toronto. In addition, most people in Toronto will not be receiving a 6 per cent, or even a 2.5 per cent, raise in income this year to cover these costs. Therefore, we ask that PFR drop the 3.75 per cent user fee increase.

Most importantly, we do not see community centres as commodities, the price of which can be compared—like a household item—from location to location. Instead, we see them as public services that should be structured based on the needs and aspirations of communities. In this regard, we also ask that PFR stop using the language and framework of 'cost recovery', as it implies that community recreation is or should be a privatized commodity as opposed to a public service.

User fees and the Welcome Policy

Since the **Welcome Policy has now been indexed to user fee increases**, we assume the individual allocations will be going up by 6 per cent should this increase go through (although we ask the Community Development and Recreation Committee to verify this point). If this is the case, additional budget will be needed for the Welcome Policy in 2014. Instead, PFR proposes cutting the Welcome Policy by \$700,000. (While PFR states that the 16 new Priority Centres will reduce Welcome Policy demand by \$700,000, there is no evidence that this is the case. In fact, the Welcome Policy is currently budgeted to serve less than five per cent of eligible Toronto residents. The hundreds of thousands who are left out will not be served by 16 new Priority Centres, in particular as they do not currently have defined baseline programming or minimum hours.)