

TO:	CHAIR AND MEMBERS COMMUNITY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING ON AUGUST 13, 2019
FROM:	LYNNE LIVINGSTONE DEPUTY CITY MANAGER ACTING MANAGING DIRECTOR NEIGHBOURHOOD, CHILDREN AND FIRE SERVICES
SUBJECT:	LONDON STRENGTHENING NEIGHBOURHOODS STRATEGY NEIGHBOURHOOD EVENT EQUIPMENT LENDING PROGRAM

RECOMMENDATION

That, on the recommendation of the Deputy City Manager/Acting Managing Director, Neighbourhood, Children and Fire Services, this report **BE RECEIVED** for information.

PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER
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- London Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy 2017-2020 (April 26, 2016, May 24, 2017, June 20, 2017)
- London Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy 2017-2020: Neighbourhood Event Equipment Lending Program (November 13, 2018)

LINK TO THE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE CITY OF LONDON
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London Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy's Neighbourhood Event Equipment Lending Program is aligned to the Strategic Plan for the City of London 2019 – 2023 under the Strategic Area of Focus - *Strengthening our Community*; Outcome *Londoners are engaged and have a sense of belonging in their neighbourhoods and communities*; Expected Result – *increase the number of meaningful opportunities for residents to be connected in their neighbourhood and community*; and Strategy - *Strengthen engagement opportunities for all Londoners to participate in their neighbourhoods*.

BACKGROUND

At its meeting held on June 11, 2019, Municipal Council REQUESTED that Civic Administration consider and report back, before the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year, with respect to the viability of extending the definition of eligible groups in the current equipment lending policy (defined as groups of neighbours working to build community in their neighbourhood, this could be a neighbourhood association or an informal group of neighbours) to include home and school associations, to allow for those bodies to be eligible for equipment lending during the school calendar year (2019-S12) (5.2/6/CPSC).

The purpose of this report is to:

- Provide a brief overview of the current program;
- Outline the current guidelines of the program;
- Highlight program results to date; and,
- Provide resource implications with respect to the above proposed change to the current Neighbourhood Event Equipment Lending Program for Council to consider.

The Neighbourhood Event Equipment Lending Program (NEEL)

London Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy's focus is to support neighbourhood driven activities and decision making. One of the strategies identified by residents, under the theme of "*Tools and Resources to Support Neighbourhoods*" is to support residents to build capacity through a variety of tools and resources to improve neighbourhoods through neighbourhood driven activities and decision making. One of the specific action steps to implement this strategy identifies that the **City of London continue to share physical assets such as tents, movie kits, chairs, tables, etc., to support neighbourhood events and activities.**

The purpose of the Neighbourhood Event Equipment Lending Program is to support residents and neighbourhood groups to hold small events, festivals and gatherings in their local neighbourhood supporting neighbourhood driven activities. Buying, borrowing or renting event equipment can be difficult for new or smaller resident groups. Therefore, Civic Administration offers neighbourhood groups some of the equipment needed in organizing events free of charge.

Over the past nine years, Civic Administration has purchased items such as tents, chairs, tables, and games to slowly increase the number of physical assets available for residents to borrow in order to hold their events. Funds to support these one-time purchases were identified through small year-end surpluses in Neighbourhood, Children and Fire Services (NCFS) if and when available.

Current Guidelines of the NEEL Program

This Program is available for resident groups, which are defined as groups of neighbours working to build community in their neighbourhood. This could be a neighbourhood association or an informal group of neighbours. This does not include faith based organizations, not-for-profit organizations, or other groups affiliated with formal institutions such as schools because often these groups have access to other resources or the ability to raise funds. Civic Administration recognizes the great community building work of schools, places of worship, and not-for-profits in London neighbourhoods.

The NEEL program is open to residents and neighbourhood associations who are supporting small grassroots neighbourhood events that bring local neighbours together to have fun and celebrate in their neighbourhoods. By lending equipment, it allows neighbourhood volunteers to devote their time and efforts to organizing events and in turn, reduces the barriers while making sure safety and security measures are effectively practiced. Additional information about the NEEL program is attached as [Appendix A](#).

A neighbourhood event is defined as one being held in a public space utilizing volunteers, has a low budget, has low cost/no cost activities, is labelled grassroots (led by local leaders and volunteers), has attendance up to 300 people, and is a non-profit and non-fundraising event. Event examples include street parties, community BBQs, movie nights, plant swaps, and small neighbourhood festivals. Events this program does not support include private functions (birthday parties), school-based events, yard sales, events organized by places of worship, business related events, and events that charge an entry fee.

The original decision to focus the Neighbourhood Event Equipment Lending Program on resident groups was based on the following factors:

- resident groups are unable to access most funding opportunities due to their informal nature;
- resident groups do not own buildings so storing equipment can be difficult;
- the number of resident groups is relatively small so the program is manageable;
- the program operates on a first-come first-serve basis, so organizations with paid staff would have an advantage over resident groups; and,
- places of worship, schools, and not-for profit organizations have an ability to raise funds or access other resources to rent or buy equipment.

Highlights of the 2018 and 2019 NEEL Program

In 2018, Civic Administration supported a total of 72 local neighbourhood events with equipment including chairs, tables, tents, and large outdoor games. Just under 41% were informal resident groups and 59% were local neighbourhood associations.

To date in 2019, Civic Administration is supporting 42 local neighbourhood events with equipment. From October, 2018 to April 2019, six local neighbourhood events were supported (low season). It is important to note that the NEEL program is not advertised during the low season nor are there any casual staff to currently support the program during this time.

Considerations Regarding the Inclusion of Home and School Associations in the Definition of Eligible Groups for the NEEL Program

Eligibility

The group currently eligible for the NEEL program are resident groups, which are defined as groups of neighbours working to build community in their neighbourhood. This could be a neighbourhood association or an informal group of neighbours who organize one event a year.

A Home and School Association is an independent parent group that fosters ideals of cooperation and partnership within schools as well as within communities. The role of an Association is to foster communication between the school and the parent community and to organize events and activities to enrich the school community and provide additional funds for the school.

It is also important to note that the current NEEL program only supports events that are held in a public space utilizing volunteers, has a low budget, has low cost/no cost activities, is labelled grassroots (led by local leaders and volunteers), and has attendance up to 300 people. The event must be a non-profit and non-fundraising event.

In London, there are 139 elementary and secondary schools including private institutions. According to the Home and School Association of Ontario’s website, there are 42 Home and School Associations in London within the Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB). The London District Catholic School Board (LDCSB) has 31 Catholic School Councils which are considered the equivalent to the TVDSB’s Home and School Associations, according to information provided by the administration of the LDCSB.

Based on the 73 parent groups identified above by the TVDSB and the LDCSB and the understanding that both French School Boards and private schools in London may have similar parent groups, Civic Administration is recommending that for the purpose of expanding eligibility, the estimated impact to be considered for the NEEL program would be up to 140 additional groups. This also allows for future growth of Home and school Associations/parent groups.

Resource Impact

It is important to note that there is no dedicated budget or staff resources for the current NEEL program. Summer casual staff who are hired to support summer programs such as the outdoor movie nights, support resident groups by overseeing the pick-up and return of equipment at the City of London storage facility. Summer staff are also involved in completing an inventory, cleaning, and maintenance of the equipment throughout the summer. City staff in NCFS manage the requests for equipment, oversee the scheduling and approval process, and manage pick-up and drop off outside of the summer months as the number have been very low. This all occurs in addition to the other responsibilities of these staff.

Funding to support a dedicated budget for the expanded NEEL program to allow for approximately 140 additional Home and School Associations/Catholic School Councils/School Parent Groups to borrow equipment would need to be found in order to maintain the current level of service, particularly during the busy months of September, October, May, and June. This includes additional resources to support replacing worn equipment on a regular basis, increasing inventory of physical assets that are popular with children and families, increased staff resources for the program, and increased storage space requirements for physical assets as the current storage facility is at full capacity. The estimate cost for expanding the eligibility group is outlined below:

Additional Resource Requirements	Sept to Dec 2019 (4 month costs)	2020-2023 Annual Costs
Replacement of equipment due to wear and tear	\$2,000	\$3,000
Increase inventory of equipment	\$1,000	\$2,000
Additional storage space	N/A	\$5,000
Increased staff resources	\$ 4,200	\$ 28,500 ¹
Technology support to enhance and maintain the web-based lending and tracking program	\$2,000	\$2,000
TOTAL COST	\$9,200	\$40,500

If Council wishes to expand the eligibility of the NEEL program to include home and school associations and similar parent groups across all school boards and private institutions effective September 1, 2019, NCFS would need to find an additional \$9,200 to support the additional staffing and equipment costs in an effort to maintain the current level of service in 2019.

Moving forward with the NEEL program in 2020, a dedicated budget to support the year round resource requirements to maintain the current level of service as outlined in the chart above would be developed as part of the 2020-2023 Multi-Year Budget process.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

As noted above, if Council chooses to proceed with extending the the definition of eligible groups in the current equipment lending policy to allow for those bodies to be eligible for equipment lending during the

¹ Staffing costs support one part time casual staff (15 hours/week) for November to April and one full time casual staff for May, June, September and October (plus phone, steel toed boots, mileage, and uniform).

school calendar year, additional one time funding in the amount up to \$9,200 will need to be identified in 2019. Civic Administration will also need to bring forward a Strategic Investment Business Case as part of the 2020-2023 Multi-Year Budget process.

CONCLUSION

The heart and essence of every city are its neighbourhoods. London Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy is fundamentally a resident driven strategy that encourages resident participation and engagement to help make all of London’s neighbourhoods stronger.

London Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy and its related strategies and actions such as The Neighbourhood Event Equipment Lending Program, builds on Council’s commitment to “*Strengthening Our Community* so that *Londoners are engaged and have a sense of belonging in their neighbourhoods and communities.*

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RECOMMENDED BY:	
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APPENDIX A

Information About The City of London's Neighbourhood Event Equipment Lending Program

Purpose

The City of London supports Neighbourhood Events that serve to build community and promote health and wellbeing in a variety of ways. The City values and appreciates the efforts that neighbourhood volunteers devote to organizing events and City staff strive to reduce the barriers while making sure safety and security measures are effectively practiced.

Buying, borrowing or renting event equipment can be difficult for new or smaller resident groups. Therefore the City of London offers neighbourhood groups some of the equipment needed in organizing events free of charge.

Please Note: this program is only for resident groups, which are defined as groups of neighbours working to build community in their neighbourhood. This could be a neighbourhood association or an informal group of neighbours who organize one event a year. This does not include faith-based organizations, schools, or other groups affiliated with formal institutions.

Neighbourhood Event Definition

The type of event is held in a public space utilizing volunteers, has a low budget, has low cost/no cost activities, is labelled grassroots (led by local leaders and volunteers), and has attendance up to 300 people. This event is a non-profit and non-fundraising event.

Promotion

The Neighbourhood Event Equipment Lending Program is regularly promoted through the City's social media accounts, the NeighbourGood monthly email newsletter, community events, and workshops.

Booking

Residents request equipment through an online form accessible on the City's website. After reviewing the details of the request, staff reach out to the resident to confirm details for the booking.

Pick-up & Drop-off

Residents are told when and where they can pick up the equipment for their event. The equipment is kept at a storage facility at the Carling Heights Optimist Community Centre. A Neighbourhood Children & Fire Services staff arranges to meet the resident for pick-up and drop-off.

Current Inventory (total of 133 pieces of equipment)

The available equipment includes:

- Pop-up tents (8x8 and 10x10) (5 maximum)
- Folding Tables (5 maximum)
- Folding Chairs (10 maximum)
- Sandwich Sign (2 maximum)
- Giant Outdoor Games (5 maximum)
- Garbage holders

Equipment is regularly inspected and cleaned by staff to ensure everything is in good working condition. Repairs and replacements take place as required and as resources are available throughout the year.