

Meeting Date: September 2, 2025
Department: Community Services
Report No.: CS-2025-33
Submitted by: Robert Lilbourne, Director of Community and Development Services
Approved by: Rob Browning, Chief Administrative Officer

SUBJECT: User Fee Review

RECOMMENDATION: THAT: Council receive report CS-2025-33 titled User Fee Review for information.

BACKGROUND:

On a routine basis of approximately every 5 years, staff conducts a review of user fees, using several comparable municipalities as benchmarks, to determine if adjustments are required. The purpose is to provide context for the Municipality's current fee structure and to identify whether adjustments may be warranted based on market alignment, service quality and financial sustainability.

The Municipality contacted 14 different municipality's of similar size and services, including Tri Township Arena.

COMMENTS:

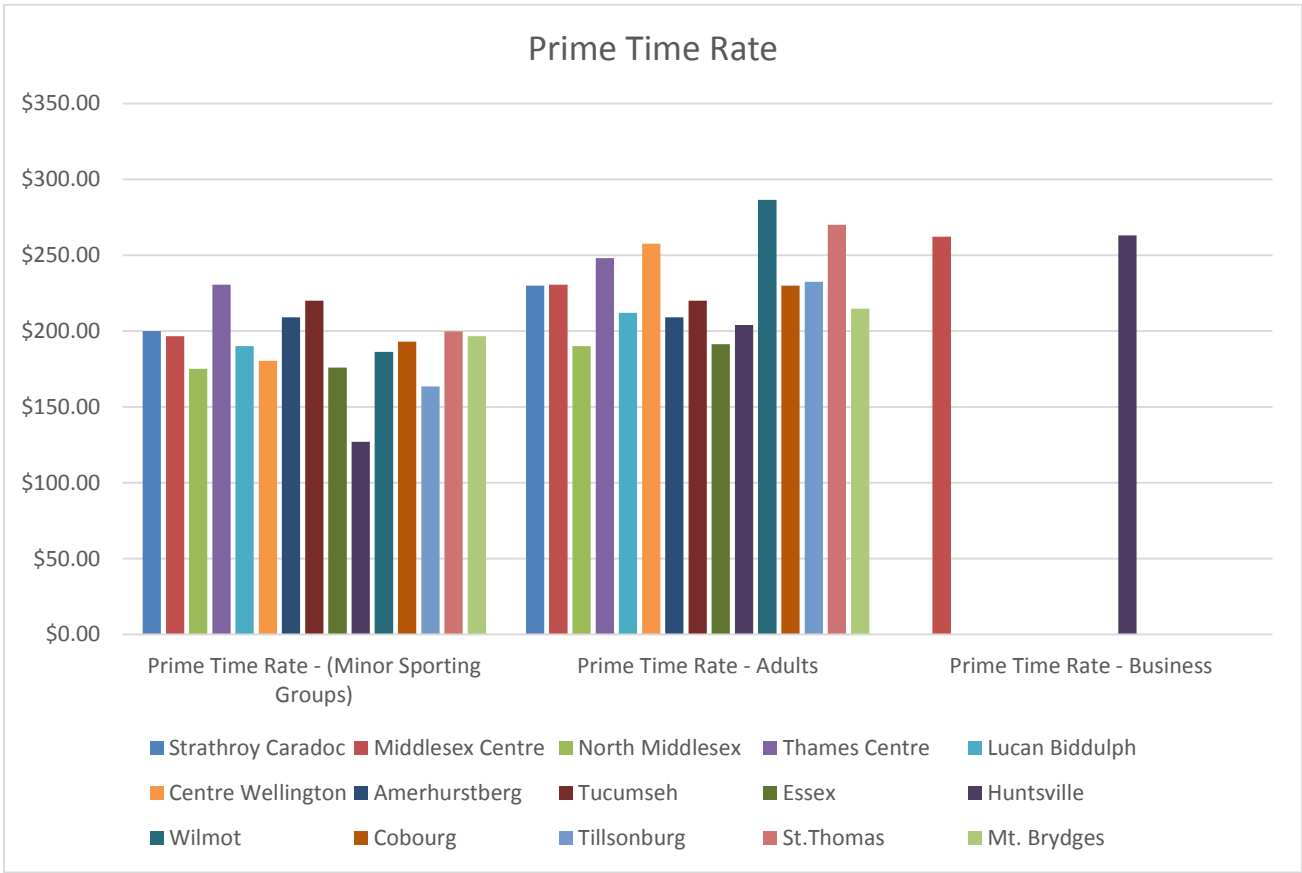
When conducting this type of comparative analysis there are challenges. While some fees, such as ice time, allow for straightforward comparison, many other recreational and facility-related fees are much more complex to evaluate. The primary challenges include:

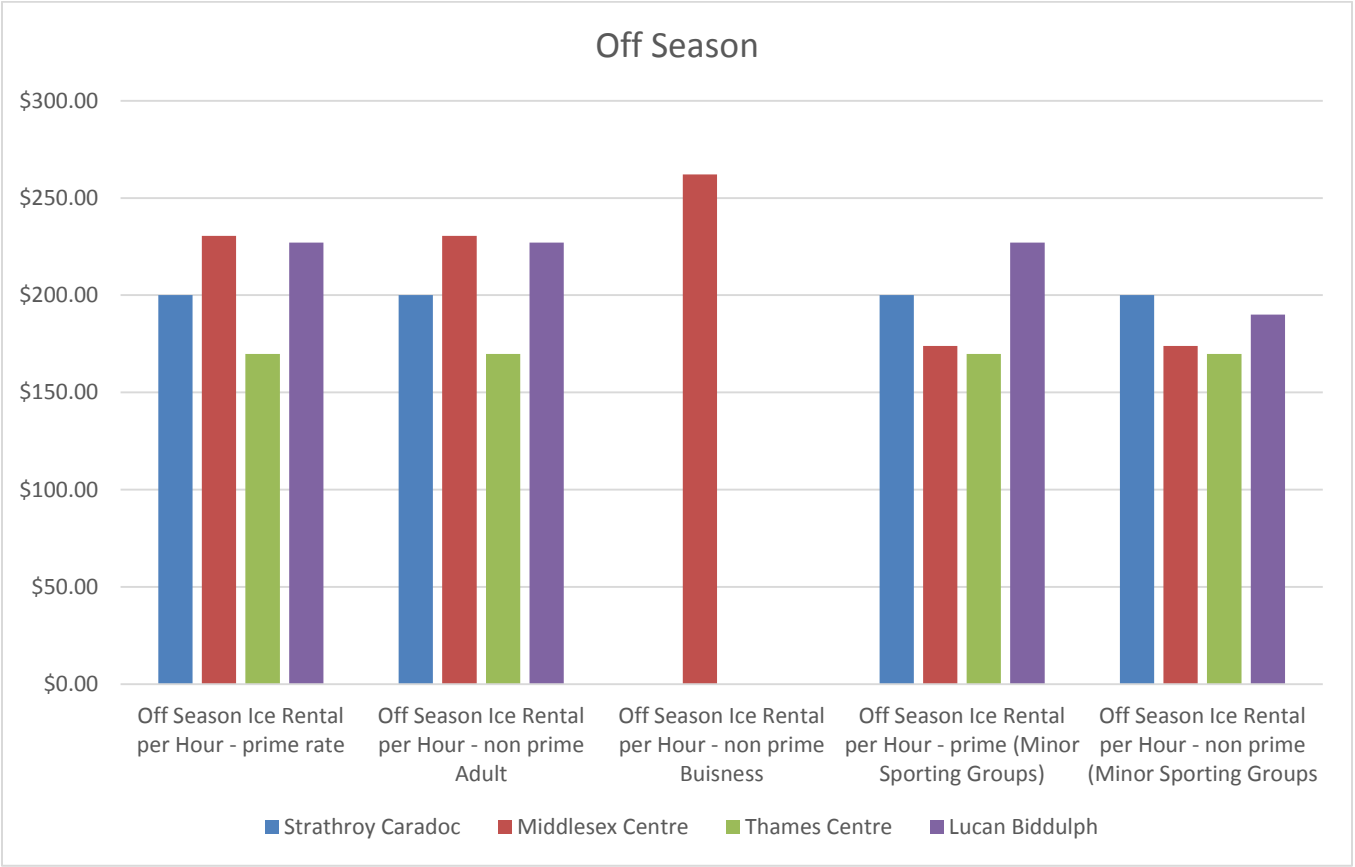
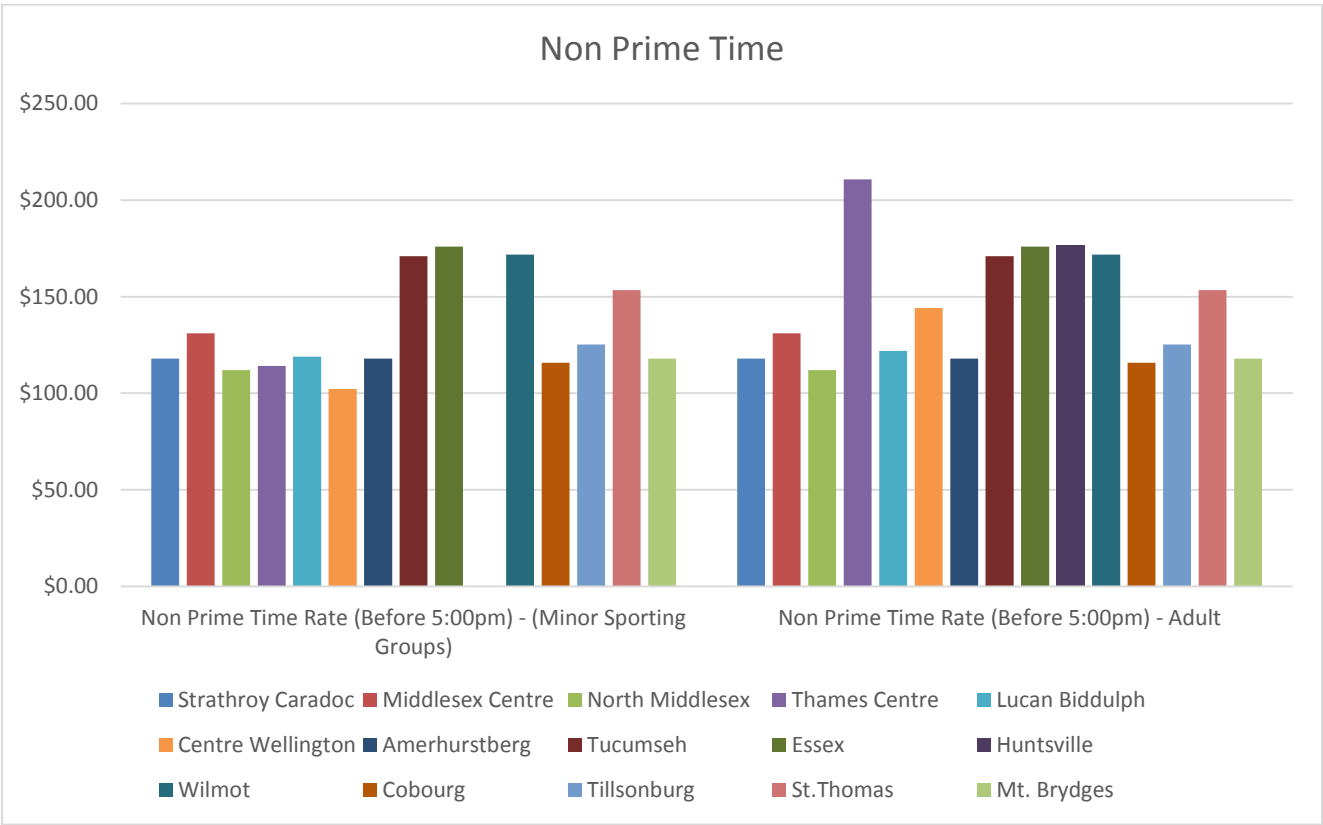
- **Variation in Facility Size and Quality:** Rental rates for community rooms, sports fields, and halls vary significantly based on the size, age, and quality of the facilities provided and fee rational i.e. Sports field rentals charge per person, per hour, per game etc.
- **Service Inclusions:** What is included in the rental (e.g., staffing, setup/tear down, and equipment) differs between municipalities and can affect pricing.
- **Subsidy Structures:** Differences in council-approved subsidy models and grant support can influence pricing, making direct comparisons more difficult. I.e. Some municipalities do not have minor rates.

Ice Rental Fees

As identified above ice rental fees allow for straightforward comparison. They are among the most comparable user fees across municipalities. In this category, Strathroy-Caradoc lands in the top half of all the municipalities surveyed but for the majority of fees surveyed are below the average. The consistency in ice rental structures across municipalities makes this one of the more reliable indicators for comparative analysis.

Where direct comparisons were possible, supporting visuals such as bar graphs have been included to illustrate Strathroy-Caradoc’s relative positioning.



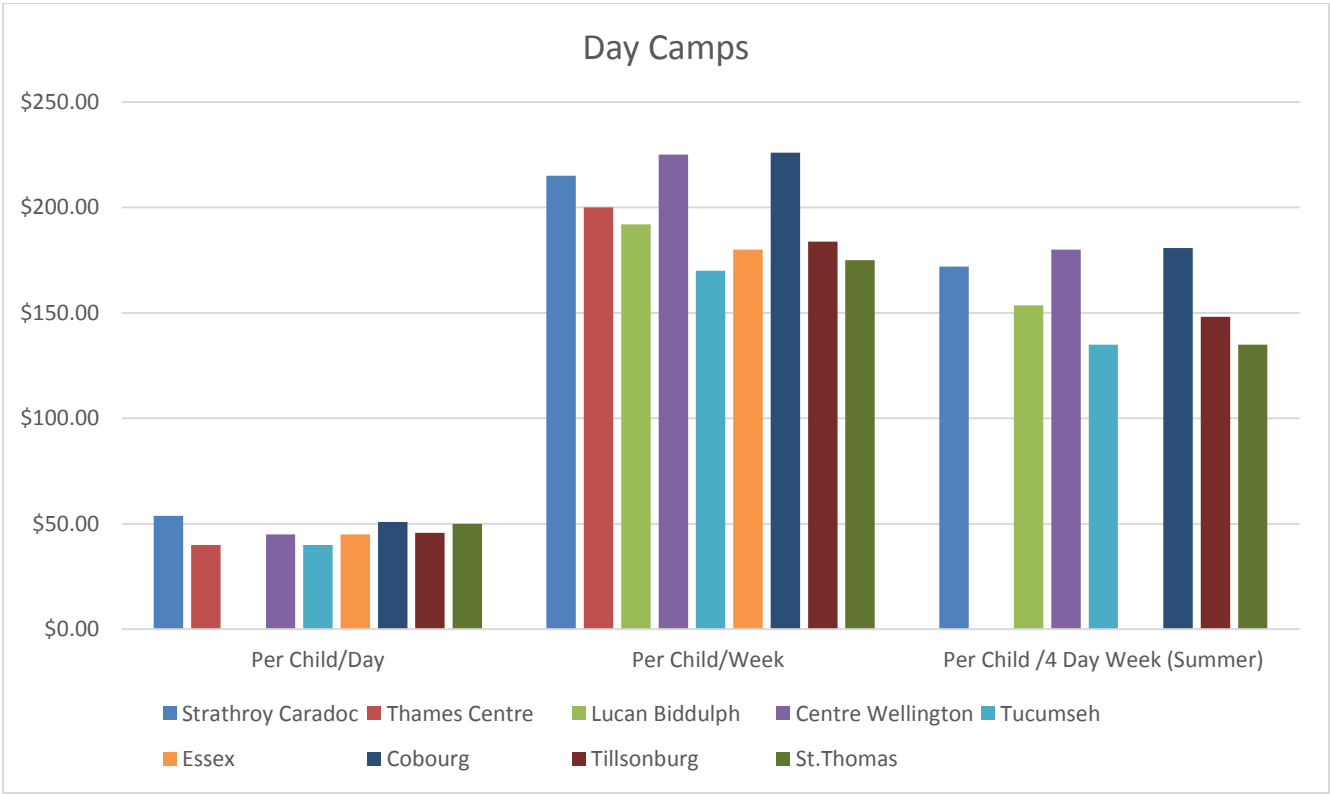


As previously noted, many recreational and facility-related fees are more difficult to evaluate due to inconsistencies in how they are structured and reported. Despite these challenges, staff have analyzed the available data to the best of our ability to assess whether Strathroy-Caradoc’s fees are competitive and comparable.

The department’s goal is to ensure that our fees remain aligned with those of municipalities of similar size and demographic profile. Where direct comparisons could be made, staff have included the following bar graphs to illustrate Strathroy-Caradoc’s relative position.

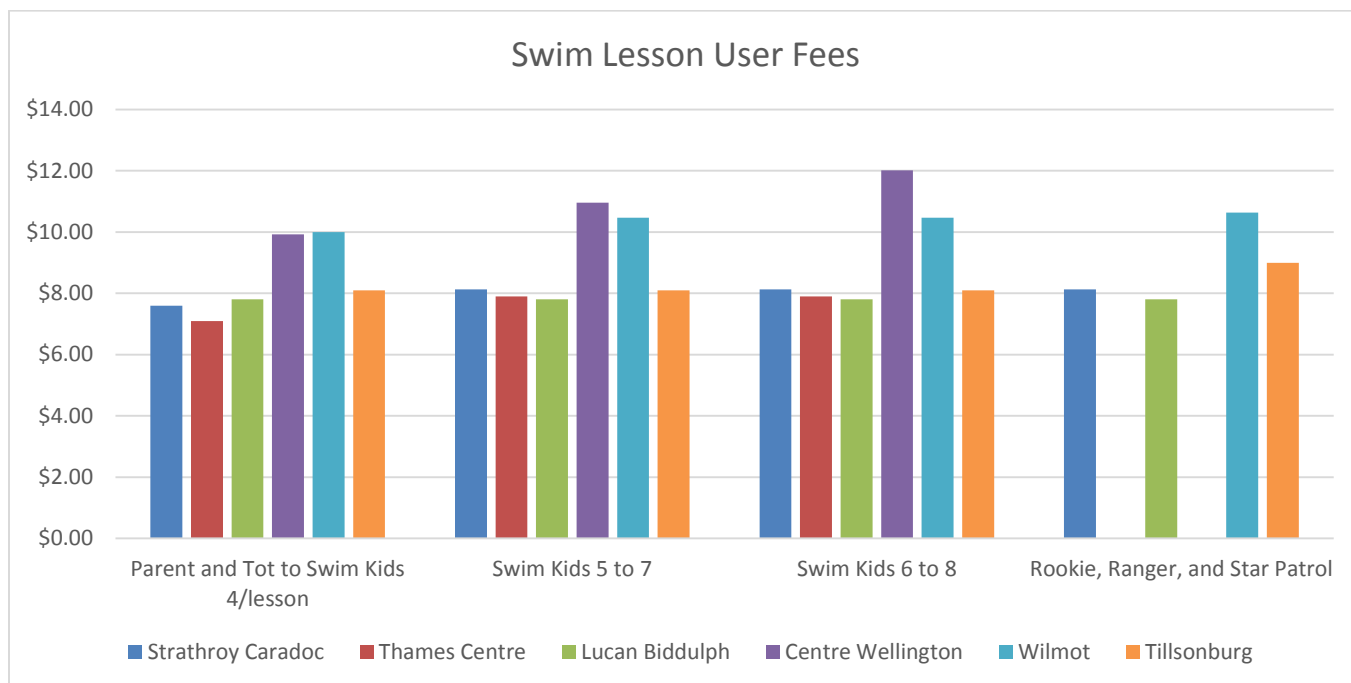
Day Camp Fees

Data indicates that Strathroy-Caradoc’s day camp fees are the highest among those surveyed for daily rates and specialty camps, and fall within the top half of all responses for weekly camp rates. It is important to note that day fees are only utilized during March and winter break camps.



Swim Lesson Fees

Swim lesson fees also place Strathroy-Caradoc in the low-range among surveyed municipalities. Due to the varied and often inconsistent data submitted by other municipalities, many aquatic fees were excluded from the comparison as they could not be reliably interpreted.

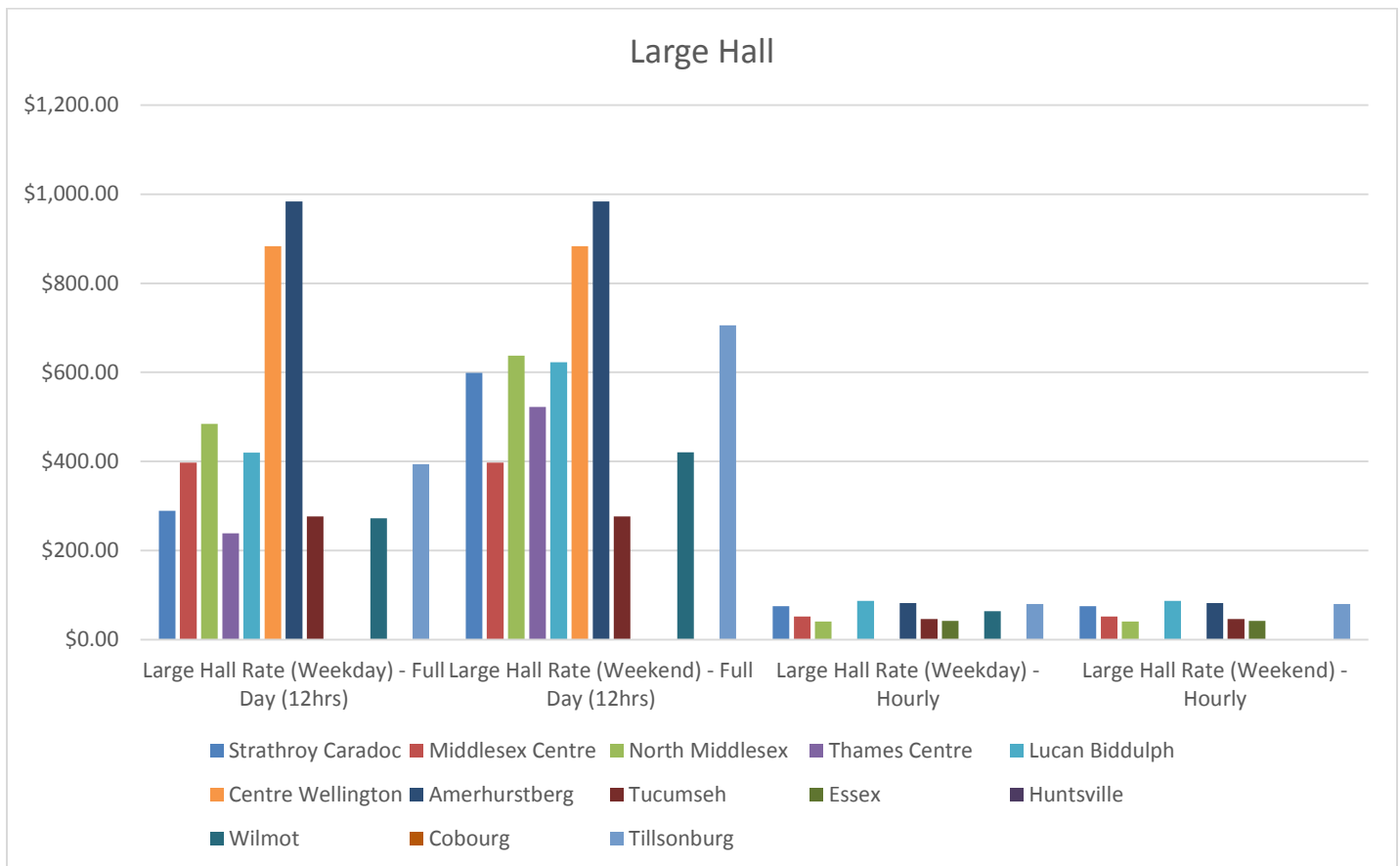


Room Rental Fees

Rental fees for auditoriums, meeting spaces, banquet halls, and sports fields vary widely in structure and methodology, making direct comparisons difficult. Many are priced using different units (e.g., per participant, per game, per event), and staff did not have the resources to follow up with each municipality to clarify these details.

Staff are providing bar graphs to illustrate some of the fees applied to these types of facilities, but it is important to keep in mind that the information provided varied and in many cases we are not comparing apples to apples.

The fees associated with Community halls for the Municipality again are not the highest and not the lowest within the comparator group. This is one area that is extremely difficult to gauge as halls may have many factors associated with the cost, such as set up, tear down, size etc. There is one hall that is as close to identical to the CCC and that is the facility in North Middlesex which based on the survey has a higher fee for the large hall and slightly lower fee for the small and medium spaces with conditions.



Despite these limitations, staff have completed a thorough review of the available data and are confident that Strathroy-Caradoc's user fees remain competitive when compared to similar-sized municipalities. While a small number of fees are among the highest in their category, the majority fall within the mid-to-upper range of those surveyed.

Upon reviewing the survey data, staff found that very few municipalities implement a non-resident fee. While such fees can be used to prioritize local residents, they often create challenges, including potential declines in registrations and rental rates. Administration of the fee can also be complex, particularly when determining whether it applies to minor sports groups and individuals whose participants frequently come from multiple communities.

As an alternative to non-resident fees, staff explored options to ensure residents are prioritized during registration. The current booking software allows staff to delay registration access for non-residents, providing Strathroy-Caradoc residents with preferential access without creating barriers that could reduce overall participation or revenue.

Staff recommend this approach over a non-resident fee, as it is simpler to administer and requires less ongoing oversight. In addition, staff note that some municipalities apply a capital surcharge to support infrastructure projects, a strategy that staff would also endorse for consideration.

Based on the findings of this survey, staff intend to present a proposed fee schedule to Council that includes the following recommendations:

- Continue with the annual adjustment of fees in line with inflation.
- Adjust summer ice rental rates (June July and August) to align with current prime-time rates.
- Introduce a 2% to 5% capital surcharge on all Community Services-related fees to support ongoing capital improvements.

CONSULTATION:

Manager, Community Services Operations

Manager, Recreation and Culture

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

NONE

ALTERNATIVE(S) TO THE RECOMMENDATION:

1. (Alternative, if any)
2. Council to provide alternate direction.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This matter is in accord with the following strategic priorities:

Local Infrastructure and Capital Investment: Households and businesses in Strathroy-Caradoc will be supported by reliable, financially responsible, and well-maintained infrastructure networks.

Community Well-being and Quality of Life: Residents of all ages in Strathroy-Caradoc will have access to community amenities and activities that are accessible and support active lifestyles and wellbeing.

Municipal Customer Service: The Municipality offers seamless, responsive service and an exceptional experience for every customer.

Managing the Challenges of Growth for the Municipal Organization: Strathroy-Caradoc will be an inclusive community where growth is managed to accommodate a range of needs and optimize municipal resources. We are committed to maintaining operational efficiency and economies of scale through these times of change.

ATTACHMENTS:

2025 Comparator Spreadsheet