



## REPORT

### Council

**Meeting Date: September 18, 2023**

---

**FROM:** Finance Department

**DATE:** September 12, 2023

**SUBJECT:** **Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides Community Assistance Request**

**LOCATION:** Add address

**WARD:** Town-wide

Page 1

---

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

That the staff report on Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides request for community assistance be received and staff be directed by Council to approve or deny community assistance.

#### **KEY FACTS:**

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- In accordance with the town's "Corporate Community Assistance Policy/Procedure" community assistance funding is available to charitable organizations which exist for the purpose of providing municipally-related programs, services and projects for the benefit of residents of Oakville, subject to specified criteria and limitations.
- Staff are processing minor variance and site plan applications for 1949 Ironoak Way, where the Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides (LFCDG) are proposing to establish its corporate offices and training and teaching facility with the construction of a new building.
- An application for community assistance was submitted by LFCDG that would have the effect of waiving a portion of the development charges associated with the development of the new training school project.
- Should this request be approved, financing approval from corporate contingency would be required, as there is no provision included in the town's operating or capital budgets.
- It is a recommendation of this report that staff be directed by Council to approve or deny the community assistance request. The request is for a grant

to cover of a portion of the estimated \$1.1 million in town development charges, and LDCDG has indicated that a grant of \$100,000 would be helpful.

**BACKGROUND:**

Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides (LFCDG) was established in Oakville in 1983, and was the first school in Canada to specialize in training guide dogs for people who are blind or visually impaired. LFCDG is now a leader in the dog guide sector and the only service dog school in the world with seven distinct programs, namely:

- Canine Vision: for people who are blind or visually impaired
- Hearing: for people who are deaf or hard-of-hearing
- Autism Assistance: for children who have autism spectrum disorder
- Service: for people who have a physical disability
- Seizure Response: for people who have diabetes with hypoglycemic unawareness
- Facility Support: for professional agencies assisting individuals in traumatic situations

LFCDG's mission is "to empower Canadians with disabilities to navigate their world with confidence and independence by providing Dog Guides at no cost to them and supporting each pair in their journey together".

LFCDG has seen increasing demand for dog guides, and has a goal of increasing the number of people that receive a dog guide from 150 per year to 250 per year to reduce wait lists and waiting times. LFCDG has stated that the largest constraint to accomplishing this goal is the lack of a proper facility, and as such, they have decided to build a brand new national dog guide training school at 1949 Ironoak Way. Staff are processing minor variance and site plan applications for the 89,000 square foot facility, which is intended to be an internationally recognized facility that supports best practices in assistance dog training and support to clients. The waiving of a portion of the development charges applicable to this new facility would support the realization of this project as it will allow for community raised funds to be fully directed to the support of the actual construction costs of the new facility.

**COMMENT/OPTIONS:**

The total budget for the new training school is \$50 million. LFCDG has received or had pledged approximately \$38 million, and is launching a public capital campaign and other fundraisers over the next two years with the hopes of raising the balance of required funding. A significant portion of funding in place is from the sale of its two existing facilities, and \$5 million from reserve funds. By waiving a portion of the development charges associated with this project, community raised funds may be fully directed to the actual construction costs of the new facility.

The Corporate Community Assistance policy/procedure provides guidance with respect to the provision of community support to registered charitable organizations in the form of direct grants, fee waivers, or municipal staff support. To receive consideration, the community group must demonstrate that there is:

- community support for the programs, services, or projects offered by the group; and
- a need for financial assistance; and
- That adequate funding for the programs or services is not available from other sources.

And meet the following criteria:

- Be a registered charitable organization initiating or delivering programs and services to the municipality.
- Operate under a formal organizational structure with an active Board of Directors and/or Executive committee/Officers.
- Be based in Oakville, with a majority of members or people served being Oakville residents.
- Offer services, programs and activities that primarily benefit Oakville citizens.
- Be able to demonstrate the fiscal viability and accountability of the organization and of any specific service, program or activity for which funding is being sought.
- Be able to demonstrate that the funding assistance requested from the town supplements funding the organization has received through other sources and its own fundraising efforts.

Through its submission, LFCDG has demonstrated that it is a viable, registered charity, operating in Oakville and providing programs that benefit Oakville residents. It is a national organization that has strong roots in Oakville, and is proud to call Oakville home. LFCDG engages a number of volunteers and staff residing in Oakville, stating that there are 200 active volunteers and many of the 103 employees that live in Oakville. There have also been 43 Oakville residents that have received a dog guide at no cost, and there are many more on the waiting list. The new school is expected to be a focal point for international dog schools and will help make LFCDG a leader in Canada and internationally, attracting visitors and international conferences. LFCDG will provide regular tours to the public to show the difference the school makes.

Development charges for the 89,000 square foot building are estimated to be approximately \$2.2 million for the town, region and school boards. The town portion of development charges is \$1.1 million, and LFCDG has indicated that a grant of \$100,000 would be helpful.

Should community assistance be approved, it would also require approval of funding from corporate contingency, as there is no provision included in the town's operating or capital budget for grant in lieu financing.

Should Council approve the requested community assistance, LFCDG has indicated in their submission documents that the town would be recognized in the following ways:

- Permanent donor wall at the entrance of the new school (donors \$10,000+)
- Highlighted, with media, at the public launch of the campaign in November
- Highlighted, with media, at the grand opening celebrations
- In LFCDG's annual report (circulation 65,000+)
- In LFCDG's newsletter (circulation 62,000)
- Through LFCDG's social media accounts (estimated 30,000+)
- E-blast to stakeholders (62,000)
- Website recognition
- Mention to potential funders

**CONSIDERATIONS:**

**(A) PUBLIC**

The Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides is a registered charitable organization that specializes in training guide dogs. Their mission is to empower Canadians with disabilities to navigate their world with confidence and independence by providing dog guides at no cost to them and supporting each pair in their journey together. There have been 43 Oakville residents that have received a dog guide at no cost, and there are many more on the waiting list. 200 active volunteers and many of the 103 employees live in Oakville.

**(B) FINANCIAL**

The approval of community assistance would also require approval of funding from corporate contingency, as there is no provision in the town's operating or capital budget to fund such requests.

**(C) IMPACT ON OTHER DEPARTMENTS & USERS**

N/A

**(D) CORPORATE STRATEGIC GOALS**

This report addresses the corporate strategic goal(s) to:

- Be fiscally sustainable
- Enhance our social environment

**(E) CLIMATE CHANGE/ACTION**

N/A

Prepared by:

Matt Day

Manager, Development Financing & Investments

Recommended by:

Jonathan van der Heiden

Deputy Treasurer and Director of Finance

Submitted by:

Nancy Sully

Commissioner, Corporate Services and Treasurer