

## **Letter of Support: Leisure Access Program**

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To the City Council, City of Edmonton:

Dear Councillors,

On behalf of the University of Alberta Students' Union, representing 37,000 undergraduates, we would like to share our support for extending leisure access pass eligibility to include registered full-time post-secondary students.

The ability to afford a healthy life is one of students' most pressing issues. This summer has seen record unemployment among youth in Alberta, peaking at 28% for returning students. Under pressures like time, means, distance, stress, and food insecurity, many of us struggle to find a mentally and physically healthy lifestyle. Access to recreation facilities and programming can be crucial.

There is value in the on-campus facilities that we already pay for, but affordability concerns are driving students farther and farther from North Campus and the LRT, especially in the last five years. We have warmly welcomed the new Downtown Student Housing Initiative, but the housing unlocked by that funding will take time to materialize. Making students eligible for the leisure access program will quickly open up impactful options for the growing share of students who face long or late-night commutes.

In theory, many students are already eligible for the leisure access program depending on their household income levels. However, to even start applying, they need to learn that students might be eligible, guess at whether their living situation in a given time frame counts as a household, and get firm household income numbers that are often sensitive when means-tested supports are involved. Whether a student working toward financial independence even sees themselves as potentially eligible depends on deeply personal factors.

For the share of post-secondary students who would use this pass, default eligibility would eliminate most of these barriers and unlock access to a healthier lifestyle grounded in their local communities.



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