

Committee of the Whole (2) Report

DATE: Tuesday, February 10, 2026

WARD(S): ALL

TITLE: **ADVANCING VAUGHAN'S EVENTS CITY VISION THROUGH EXPANDED SUPPORT FOR HOSTING EVENTS**

FROM:

Gus Michaels, Deputy City Manager, Community Services

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

To seek approval for the modernized and updated 'Festivals and Events Support Program', formerly known as the Fairs and Festivals Support Program which will now recognize three categories of events aligned with the Host in Vaughan Grant, increase the subsidy from 75% to 100%, and raise the maximum funding cap. The program provides financial assistance to support Community Service Organizations in organizing and hosting festivals, events, and sanctioned sports tournaments in the City of Vaughan.

Report Highlights

- To promote Vaughan as an "Events City" as recommended through the Council approved Vaughan Municipal Events Strategy, staff have been tasked to review the Festival and Events Support Program to provide additional financial support to help maintain and attract these events.
- Proposed updates to the program include the addition of two new event categories: "Major Festivals and Events" and "Sanctioned Sports Events," aligning with the City's existing Host in Vaughan grant program.
- To better meet the needs of today's event landscape, subsidy support will increase from 75% to 100%, and the funding cap of \$3,500 will be increased to \$7,500 for Major Festivals and Events, and \$5000 for Sanctioned Sports Events.

Recommendations

1. That Council approves the updated changes to the Festivals and Events Support Program as follows for qualifying Community Service Organizations hosting fairs, festivals, events, and sanctioned sports events:
 - a. In alignment with the Host in Vaughan Grant program, the Festivals and Events Support Program recognizes three categories of events:
 - i. Major Festivals and Events
 - ii. Community Activations
 - iii. Sanctioned Sports Events;
 - b. Increase the subsidy for City-owned services-in-kind and/or City facility rentals from 75% to 100%;
 - c. Increase the maximum subsidy from \$3,500 to \$7,500 for Major Festivals and Events, implement a new \$5000 maximum subsidy for Sanctioned Sports Events, while maintaining the \$3,500 cap for Community Activations.

Background

The Festivals and Events Support Program was originally established under the title Fairs & Festivals Support Program and approved by Council in 2008 to provide financial assistance to qualifying Community Services Organizations. At its inception, the program offered a 50% subsidy for eligible services and facility rentals up to a maximum of \$3,500 per year. For example, if a Community Service Organization requests \$1000 in permit contracts and Services in Kind support that are eligible for the Festivals and Events Support Program funding, \$500 would be credited back upon approval. In response to a recommendation made in 2014, Council approved updates to this program that expanded support by increasing the subsidy from 50% to 75% while maintaining the annual funding cap of \$3,500.

The City has consistently supported and encouraged events organized by Community Service Organizations that meet established criteria and contribute to enriching, preserving, and celebrating Vaughan's diverse community.

The purpose of the Festivals and Events Support Program is to demonstrate Vaughan's ongoing commitment to assisting Community Service Organizations that meet these criteria. To qualify for support, organizations must satisfy the following requirements:

- The group must be recognized as a Community Service Organization with the City operating as a not-for-profit organization, be volunteer based, and open to all City of Vaughan residents. Participation must not be restricted based on race, religion, or political affiliation;

- The event is a temporary gathering that brings people together for purposes such as to enhance community wellness, social inclusion and diversity. Events may range in theme, scale, and duration; and,
- The group must submit a comprehensive business and communications plan, including a detailed list of revenue sources, including grants and other forms of formal funding along with a strategy for actively pursuing fundraising opportunities and other revenue streams.

As part of Council’s endorsement of the Vaughan Municipal Events Strategy in 2024, which recommends promoting Vaughan as an “Events City” and attracting more events, staff have been tasked with reviewing the Festivals and Events Support Program to enhance its support.

Since the last update of the Festivals and Events Support Program was undertaken in 2014, community events in Vaughan have seen steady growth with eight Community Service Organizations receiving funding in 2019, prior to the pandemic. The lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic continued to negatively influence community events and related programming, resulting in fewer festivals and events taking place citywide. Many local organizations (Community Service Organizations) are still in the process of attempting to re-establish their event operations. Consequently, only three Community Service Organizations received support in 2024 and four in 2025.

To revitalize the event community, Recreation Services hosted the City’s inaugural Events Annual Meeting in May 2025, inviting more than 200 Community Service Organizations and event organizers to an information session. A common theme that emerged from feedback from attendees was the rising cost of hosting events and the growing need for increased financial support. In response, staff initiated a review of the Festival and Events Support Program to modernize the program and enhance the level of support available to organizers.

Previous Reports/Authority

[City of Vaughan Fairs & Festivals Support Program](#)

[Vaughan Municipal Events Strategy Executive Summary](#)

[Committee of the Whole \(Working Session\) Report Extract – Staff Report on the Findings and Recommendations Report of the Task Force on the City’s Role in Festivals and Community Events \(May 27, 2014\)](#)

[Committee of the Whole \(2\) Report Extract – Tourism Host in Vaughan Grant – 2025 Summer-Fall Fund Recommendations \(June 17, 2025\)](#)

Analysis and Options

The Festivals and Events Support Program is due for an update. In alignment with recommendations outlined in the Vaughan Municipal Events Strategy, City staff have recommended a number of enhancements to increase flexibility, financial support, and overall assistance for Community Service Organizations hosting events in Vaughan.

It is recommended that the Festivals and Events Support Program align with the City's existing Host in Vaughan Grant program and expand its scope to include two new categories of events: Major Festivals and Events and Sanctioned Sports Events. Major Festivals and Events include celebrations of art, culture, food, music, dance, recreation, sport, and other special attractions, and have an expected attendance greater than 2,500 unique participants.

Based on recent events supported by the City, the existing cap of \$3,500 has been reached on several occasions. To ensure continued and meaningful support, it is recommended that maximum subsidy support for Major Festivals and Events be increased from \$3,500 to \$7,500 and Sanctioned Sports Events receive a maximum of \$5,000. These amounts are based on the scope of permits and services typically requested by each category. Major Festivals and Events often require additional Services in Kind which may include a mobile stage, or extra staff for cleaning and waste collection. Sanctioned Sports Events, by nature, are large in scope and may require permits for use of multiple sports amenities as well as Services in Kind requests for lining sports fields and waste collection.

In addition to the above, it is recommended that the current subsidy rate be increased from 75% to 100% of eligible direct City-related costs such as facility permits and Services in Kind for all categories.

Expanding support for Sanctioned Sports Events is a key strategy for attracting large-scale competitions and tournaments to the city. These types of events bring prestige and significant economic benefits such as increased local spending, tourism revenue, and the opportunity for the City to raise its profile as a tourism destination as these events have the potential to attract thousands of attendees from outside of Vaughan.

Examples of recently hosted major sports events in Vaughan have included:

- Canada Soccer Toyota National Championship 2022
- Ontario Provincial Scotties Curling Tournament 2022
- Canada Soccer Player-Development Program Championships 2025
- Baseball Canada Qualifiers 2025

Collectively, the above four events have generated an estimated \$1.6 million in Gross Domestic Product for the province of Ontario and more than an estimated \$2 million in total visitor spending.

Financial Impact

Increasing the subsidy level to 100%, up to \$7,500 for Major Festivals and Events and \$5,000 for Sanctioned Sports Events, would raise program expenses by approximately \$8,000, from \$9,000 to \$17,000, based on events supported in 2025. Since Recreation Services' existing annual budget of \$24,000 is sufficient to accommodate all known 2026 events, these changes will have no financial impact. As the proposed updates to the program continue to attract new and exciting events to Vaughan, any future need for additional funding will be addressed and approved through the budgeting process.

Of significance remains the positive economic stimulus generated through tourism dollars that originates from hosting festivals and events in Vaughan, thereby continuing to further support restaurants, hotels, and small businesses across the City.

Operational Impact

The Festivals and Events Support Program is administered by the Recreation Services Department. The proposed changes will have no operational impact.

Conclusion

In alignment with the Municipal Events Strategy, promoting Vaughan as an Events City has and will continue to promote and foster positive economic growth, community well-being, diversity, inclusion, and the quality of life in our City. As this primary achievement is realized, staff continue to re-assess, analyze, engage and be responsive to the needs of the event-organizing community as is reflected in the updates being recommended to the Festivals and Events Support Program within this report.

These updates will enable qualifying groups to access increased support, accommodate a broader range of festivals and events, and introduce greater flexibility to help community organizers meet the demands of hosting events in our community.

For more information, please contact: Anna Dara, Director, Recreation Services

Attachments

N/A

Prepared by

Blaze Co, Recreation Manager, Client Services, extension 8964

Don De Los Santos, Senior Manager, Economic Development, extension 8874

Anna Dara, Director, Recreation Services, extension 8028