



Community Support Task Force
City of Calgary
800 Macleod Trail SE
Calgary, AB T2P 2M5

April 21, 2020

RE: Post-Secondary Student Eligibility for the Fair Entry Program

Dear Community Support Task Force members,

COVID-19 has abruptly forced over 90,000 post-secondary students in our community into new academic and financial realities – the impact of which has been immediate and significant. Many students and their families are experiencing unexpected financial hardship. In a recent student needs assessment survey conducted by the University of Calgary, 95% of respondents indicated they are in financial distress. Specifically, students need financial assistance to cover food and basic living expenses, for mental health and wellness needs, and to assist with changes in their academic and employment situations due to COVID-19.

While initiatives are underway at the university and in our communities to support student learning, research, summer employment, and financial aid, we anticipate that there will likely be increased student demand for the low-income transit subsidy available through Fair Entry from May to August 2020. The Low Income Transit Pass will be essential to supporting students to meet their basic needs during this difficult time, especially since the UPASS program, which typically benefits approximately 9,000 UCalgary students during the spring and summer terms, has been suspended until September 2020 and more than half of students at UCalgary use transit as their primary mode of transportation. Students who are homeowners may also choose to apply to Fair Entry to access the Property Tax Assistance Program. However, we are concerned about barriers including collective household income based on 2018 notice of tax assessments that may prevent those in need from accessing this support.

Although many students individually are likely eligible for the low-income pass, the Fair Entry Program application requires proof of income that may limit eligibility, especially in the context of COVID-19. Many students live with their parents or other adults, and some have recently moved home due to the pandemic, but these other household members including parents do not necessarily contribute to students' living or transportation costs. Other students and their families may have recently experienced job-losses or reduced income due to COVID-19. As a result, many students who did not previously participate in low-income assistance programs or live with others may not be considered eligible for the Fair Entry program. In these unusual and extenuating circumstances, this challenge could be addressed by:

- Waiving the requirement for applicants to provide a notice of assessment for all adult members of a household if they attest that they alone are responsible for their expenses;
- Accepting alternative documentation demonstrating financial need (e.g. showing student loan eligibility, recent changes in income, etc.); or
- Accepting an independent letter or personal attestation as one-time proof of income due to these extenuating circumstances.

Additionally, since students typically receive a UPASS and have access to Campus Recreation facilities, many may be unaware of the Fair Entry program. Notices on the Calgary Transit and The City's COVID-19 response websites referring those with UPASS or monthly pass inquiries to the Fair Entry program would be helpful to ensure that students are aware of options that may be available to them.

Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Edward McCauley, PhD, FRSC
President and Vice-Chancellor
University of Calgary



Jessica Revington
President
Students' Union



Mohammad Mansouri
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