

Report to Community and Protective Services Committee

To: Chair and Members
Community and Protective Services Committee

From: Cheryl Smith, Deputy City Manager, Neighbourhood and
Community-Wide Services

Subject: Recreation and Sport Summer Program Updates

Date: May 31, 2022

Recommendation

That, on the recommendation of the Deputy City Manager of Neighbourhood and Community-Wide Services, the Recreation and Sport Summer Program Updates report **BE RECEIVED** for information.

Executive Summary

This report presents and identifies the upcoming summer program offerings across Recreation and Sport. This includes levels of service for day camps, summer playground programs, and aquatic programs and facilities, and identifies current successes and challenges in continued efforts to return program offerings to pre-pandemic levels.

Linkage to the Corporate Strategic Plan

The Recreation and Sport Summer Program Updates report is aligned with the following strategic areas of focus in the City of London Strategic Plan (2019 – 2023):

- Strengthening our Community, contributing to the outcome that Londoners have access to the services and supports that promote well-being, health, and safety in their neighbourhoods and across the city; and,
- Leading in Public Service, contributing to the outcome that Londoners experience exceptional and valued customer service.

Analysis

1.0 Background Information

1.1 Previous Reports Related to this Matter

- [Parks and Recreation Master Plan Annual Report](#) (March 29, 2022)

2.0 Discussion and Considerations

2.1 Background and Purpose

The City of London offers high quality Recreation and Sport programs and facilities that engage residents and visitors of all ages and abilities. Recreation and Sport programs and facilities play a significant role in community building through the facilitation of active and passive activities, opportunities for structured and spontaneous play, and strengthening of neighbourhood connections. These services provide places for people of all ages and abilities to be active and learn new skills, connect with one another, share their interests, exchange ideas, and experience diversity.

Throughout 2020, 2021, and into the beginning of 2022, all programs and services were impacted by COVID-19. This was due to facility and/or participant restrictions that have included capacity limits and full facility closures. Now that public health measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 have been lifted, the Recreation and Sport team at the City of London continues to focus on returning these programs and services to pre-pandemic service levels, using 2019 as the baseline year.

The purpose of this report is to provide a service update to City Council on the upcoming 2022 summer season, noting service challenges and successes.

It should be noted that this report only includes Recreation and Sport programs that are provided directly by the City of London. It does not include third party rentals or third party provided programs delivered in City of London facilities.

2.2 Recreation and Sport 2022 Summer Program Updates

For some City of London Recreation and Sport programs and facilities, the path to returning to pre-pandemic levels is easier than others. For example, outdoor sport fields, arenas, and general programming have fewer challenges than programs, such as aquatics, playgrounds, and day camps. This is because these programs have been historically dependent on the continuous City of London leadership and certification programs offered as part of the development pathway, which includes training through to employment.

Due to multiple, pro-longed closures of in-person opportunities due to COVID-19, leadership programs and their corresponding pathways could not be offered. As a result, the City of London, like many municipalities, is in a position where individuals with specific expertise and/or mandated qualifications are in short supply in the labour market. Civic Administration continues to explore solutions and consult with other municipalities and relevant governing bodies throughout Canada.

The following provides an overview of specific impacts on programs where specific expertise and/or mandated qualifications are required:

Summer Day Camps:

Year	Locations offered	Spaces offered (approx.)
2019	23	6800
2020	13	2400
2021	12	3000
2022	22	6100

Additional day camp information:

- One school site that has been used in the past is closed in 2022 as a result of necessary construction during the summer months.

Summer Playground Programs:

Year	Locations offered
2019	38
2020	0
2021	18
2022	25

Additional playground information:

- Specific information about sites is not released until mid-June when the Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB) will confirm which playgrounds may be under construction through the summer months.

Aquatic Programs:

The pandemic has had the most significant impact on aquatic programs. These services are highly dependent on the development pathway for lifeguards due to regulations/legislation and technical testing requirements. Certification courses were not permitted during COVID-19. As a result, the lifeguard pathway stopped. Although these programs have now resumed, there is a shortage in qualified lifeguards that is impacting all service providers across the province, and it will take time to overcome this.

London is among the many cities experiencing a shortage of qualified staff throughout aquatic services. Civic Administration has worked to reduce services equitably across the city geographically and reduced programs that take up the most staffing resources. The programs listed below will have service reductions throughout the summer and fall of 2022:

- Recreational swims
- Fit lane offerings
- Learn to swim

The following chart identifies the specific reductions in comparison to 2019 pre-pandemic levels:

Summer Program	2019	2022
Total hours of recreational swims offered	2913	2564
Total hours of fit lanes offered	1265	927
Total number of learn to swim spaces	6176	4056

Additional aquatics information:

- 2019 data does not include East Lions Community Centre (this Centre is included in 2022 numbers)
- 2022 data does not include Carling Heights Optimist Community Centre (this Centre is included in 2019 numbers)

Aquatic Facilities Update:

Along with the program service reductions caused by the shortage of qualified staff noted above, aquatic facilities, including both indoor and outdoor pools, will see a reduction in hours of operations. Like aquatic programs, Civic Administration has attempted to reduce hours equitably across the city geographically. This includes rotating closures on different days of the week at various locations so that staff can be moved to support various locations.

These specific hours will be communicated with the public and City Council closer to the opening of outdoor pools (July 1, 2022). Civic Administration is still working to hire summer staff and this information may change between now and the time the outdoor pools are open.

Additional steps that Civic Administration has taken includes, but is not limited to:

- Closure of water slides at all locations as water slides legislatively require two staff resources (top and bottom of slide); and,
- Redeployment of qualified management staff to support pool supervision and lifeguarding gaps.

Glen Cairn Pool

The Glen Cairn outdoor pool was originally constructed in 1963 as an addition to the arena and is located at 370 Chippendale Crescent in the Glen Cairn neighbourhood in the city's southeast. In 2015, City Council approved the arena for demolition once the new ice pads were constructed in the Southwest (Bostwick Community Centre, YMCA and Library).

The arena portion of the building was slated for demolition in the fall 2018, however, as pool usage levels continued to decline, it was decided to delay demolition until the future of the outdoor pool could be determined. The community engagement and planning work with the neighbourhood was originally slated for the beginning of 2020 but was delayed due to COVID-19.

Investments in Glen Cairn pool were made in 2021 to keep the pool open to offer safe outdoor activities during the pandemic. Civic Administration had hoped that these investments would allow the pool to remain open for the 2022 season and provide the opportunity for community engagement to be undertaken on the future of aquatic amenities in the neighbourhood without service interruptions.

A structural consultant was retained in the spring of 2022 to review Glen Cairn pool as there was further deterioration of the pool tank and other structural components. The structural consultant has recommended that the pool tank and other structural components need significant repairs before it can be deemed safe for public use. The concrete pool walls, slab, deck, coping and surrounding retaining walls are showing varying signs of deterioration.

Given the age of the pool and existing conditions observed, the full extent of the repairs will be unknown until the restoration is underway, and it is possible that damages are greater than can be visually observed. Due to the significant effort required to make the site safe for use as well as limited contractor availability, completing the repairs in a timely manner is not possible. As a result, and in the interest of public safety, this pool will remain closed for the 2022 season.

A report will be brought forward to City Council on the future of Glen Cairn pool later this year, including the community engagement work to be undertaken.

3.0 Financial Impact/Considerations

The reduced service levels and programming in Day Camps, Playgrounds, and Aquatics will result in net operating budget pressure for 2022 due to revenue loss. Civic Administration will continue to monitor the operating budget impacts throughout the summer months to assess the level of financial impact and continue recruitment efforts and additional mitigating measures to the alleviate the budget pressure.

4.0 Next Steps

Civic Administration will continue to make every effort to promote opportunities to recruit staff for all programs and facilities offered through Recreation and Sport with the goal of reaching pre-pandemic levels of service. Leadership and certification courses will be continually offered throughout the summer, fall, and winter to try to replenish the pipeline/development pathway of staff for future seasons.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic not only had short-term, and immediate impacts on the recreation and sport sector (and many others), but also longer-term impacts that will have to be overcome. This report identifies the longer-term impacts on specific programs and facilities, identifying aquatic services as the most highly impacted service due to the dependence on the development pathway for lifeguards that was halted for the last two years.

Unfortunately, Civic Administration has had to reduce levels of aquatic programs and hours of operations at aquatic facilities as a result. Staff understand this will be difficult for Londoners who look forward to the opportunities in these programs and facilities. Civic Administration is committed to open and continual communication as the Recreation and Sport team works through this time.

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