

REPORT

Parks and Recreation

To: Mayor Cote and Members of Council **Date:** November 1, 2021

From: Dean Gibson **File:** 1949996
Director of Parks and Recreation

Item #: 2021-495

Subject: **Canada Games Pool Unplanned Closure Update**

RECOMMENDATION

THAT this report be received for information.

PURPOSE

To update Council regarding the background and status of the unplanned closure of the Canada Games Pool.

SUMMARY

The Canada Games Pool (CGP) is currently closed for the foreseeable future due to the discovery of a leak in the main pool tank. The City is presently working with a team of professionals to investigate the source of the leak. The timeline for leak repairs is unknown at this time. If determined feasible, repairs are not expected to be completed until at least early 2022.

The City is also working to resolve an earlier issue involving the flooding of a key mechanical area within CGP that is critical to the operation of the pool systems. A solution to the flooding issue has been identified and materials and equipment to implement the solution are currently being sourced.

All CGP public programs and facility rentals have been cancelled through to the end of 2021. In addition, many CGP staff will be impacted by either a reduction or elimination of work. Parks and Recreation staff are looking into options that may allow for the pool fitness centre to reopen at an earlier date as well as providing additional fitness services in other community recreation facilities in the city. An extensive communications plan is being implemented to provide timely updates to the public.

BACKGROUND

The City is currently constructing the new *təməsew̓txʷ Aquatic and Community Centre* to replace the existing Canada Games Pool (CGP) and Centennial Community Centre (CCC). Construction activities on this project commenced in the spring of 2021. Excavation of the site is largely complete and the placement of footings and foundations is currently underway. As a result of the close proximity of the construction of the *təməsew̓txʷ Aquatic and Community Centre* to the Canada Games Pool, the drainage system that collects roof, surface, ground, pool discharge, and sanitary water for the CGP site was required to be relocated. The construction of the *təməsew̓txʷ* project has been staged such that the operations of CGP and CCC can continue until the new facility is open for public use.

DISCUSSION

THE ISSUE

Flooding - Extraordinarily heavy rains in late September and early October have revealed a deficiency in the relocated drainage system at CGP. This deficiency has resulted in the flooding in a critical mechanical area of the pool, disabling electric motors that circulate, treat and clean the pool water and circulate domestic hot water throughout the building. Without domestic hot water, the facility is unable to sustain appropriate health and facility cleaning standards. As a result, the pool, inclusive of its fitness centre, has been closed for the past several weeks. The operations of the adjacent Centennial Community Centre are unaffected.

A solution to the flooding issue has been identified and materials and equipment to implement the solution are currently being sourced. It was anticipated that an update on the schedule to complete this work and re-open the pool would have been available by October 31.

Pool Leak - Concurrent with the resolution of the CGP flooding issue, it was recently discovered that water is leaking from the main pool tank at a significant rate. Cracks in the concrete pool tank have also been observed. The City is currently working with a team of professionals to investigate the source of the leak and recommend options to address this situation. This team includes geotechnical, structural and mechanical experts with knowledge of pool construction, failures and repair strategies. The team has been rapidly on-boarded to understand both the complexities of the existing aged facility (Canada Games Pool) and the new construction activity occurring next door. An action plan has been developed to:

- Identify the source(s) of the leak and evaluate the damage
- Propose a remediation plan (with options) to repair the pool tank and adapt the facility as necessary for continued use until 2024 when demolition is scheduled to occur
- Prepare high level cost and schedule estimates for the purpose of decision making
- If feasible, pursue repair of the pool based on Council direction

Work is ongoing at this time. If determined feasible, it is not expected that a repair can be completed until at least early 2022.

THE IMPACTS

Community – Due to the closure of the pool, key CGP services have been impacted including:

- Public swimming (including water slide, tot pool, and hot tub)
- Instructional swimming classes (all ages), Water Safety Instructor and National Lifeguard training courses.
- Aquafit classes
- Fitness Centre
- Sauna
- Facility rental to organizations including swim clubs, artistic swimming clubs, local schools, post-secondary institutions, local social service agencies
- Community Public Shower service (presently relocated to Centennial Community Centre)

CGP Staff - In addition to service impacts to the public, the availability of work for CGP staff has also been affected. As was the case during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, the City is approaching the resulting Canada Games Pool staffing situation from a position of caring and compassion by striving to mitigate impacts on staff as much as possible. All staff have been personally notified of the current situation at the pool. Many of the pool's 100 auxiliary staff will experience a reduction or elimination of work hours. The City will assist with connecting auxiliary staff to alternate employment opportunities within the City and other municipal parks and recreation departments in the region and prepare the necessary documentation to enable staff to apply for EI and other income supports. Currently 18 permanent CGP staff who are not required for their core duties will be assigned to other responsibilities within the Parks and Recreation or other City departments. Free, confidential counselling is also available to staff through the City's Employee and Family Assistance Program.

SERVICE RESPONSE

Alternate Services - Recognizing that the closure of the pool significantly impacts many aspects of individual and community life in New Westminster, the Parks and Recreation Department is in the process of developing service delivery alternatives. Options under investigation include:

- re-opening fitness services at CGP site (pending feasibility to re-establish circulation of domestic hot water)
- extending operating hours of the fitness centre at the Queensborough Community Centre
- increasing the capacity of the youth fitness centre in Moody Park (co-located at Century House)
- re-purposing underutilized community recreation facility spaces as temporary fitness centres

- increasing the capacity of existing group fitness and cycle classes at other community recreation facilities (pending easing of related public health order restrictions)
- providing online fitness training videos
- extending the 2022 operating season for Moody and Hume Park outdoor pools (if required)

Communications – The City is committed to keeping Council, the public and City staff up to date on the emerging situation at CGP. In addition to this and future public reports to Council, updated messaging is being routinely posted on the City's website and Citypage Online, communiques are going out via social media channels and Parks and Recreation direct e-newsletters, and periodic updates are being posted on the City's electronic community message centre board. Printed and electronic publications from the Parks and Recreation Department will also feature updates on the status of the Canada Games Pool. Parks and Recreation staff are also available to respond to in-person, telephone or e-mail inquiries. For Council's reference, a series of responses to frequently asked questions is also included with this report as Attachment "A".

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are financial implications associated with the above. Staff are working on estimating these impacts and will bring forward further information to Council in subsequent reports.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL LIAISON

The full resources of all appropriate City departments, most notably Parks and Recreation, Engineering, Office of the CAO (Communications), Human Resources, and Finance, are supporting the response to the issues at CGP.

OPTIONS

Options for Council's consideration include:

1. Receive this report for information.
2. Provide alternate direction to staff.

Option #1 is recommended.

CONCLUSION

It is acknowledged that the current situation at the Canada Games Pool has significant impact on the health and well being of many individuals, families and community organizations in New Westminster. The City is employing its very best efforts to respond to the issues at hand, provide timely and accurate information to the public, and implement alternative services to help mitigate some of the impacts associated with the extended closure of the facility.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment "A" - Canada Games Pool Unplanned Closure Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

This report was prepared by:

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