

REPORT

Parks and Recreation

To: Mayor Cote and Members of Council **Date:** January 31, 2022

From: Dean Gibson, Director of Parks and Recreation **File:** 2015209

Item #: 2022-77

Subject: Summer 2022 Outdoor Aquatics Plan

RECOMMENDATION

THAT this report be received for information, and

THAT Council direct staff to bring forward amendments to outdoor pool admission fees as described in this report, to the Parks and Recreation Fees and Charges Bylaw No. 6673, 2001.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to share the information, plan and timeline regarding the extension of the 2022 outdoor pool season.

SUMMARY

The Canada Games Pool (CGP) facility is to be decommissioned in early 2022. The services offered by the indoor pool are greatly relied upon and missed by the community of New Westminster. In an attempt to keep the community whole, the Parks and Recreation Department has consulted, analyzed and partnered with, community members and partners in an investigation as to whether or not an extension of the outdoor pool season will help to mitigate this loss.

BACKGROUND

On November 24, 2021 – Council announced the early decommissioning of the Canada Games Pool and Fitness Centre as a result of the failure of key mechanical and structural pool systems. As Canada Games Pool services were effectively halted, the Parks and Recreation Department initiated a process of developing service delivery alternatives for the affected services.

The two key services affected by the closure – 557 sq.m CGP Fitness centre and a 65 metre swimming pool with tot pool, swirl pool, sauna and aquatic features. This report focuses on aquatic services.

EXISTING POLICY AND PRACTICE

It has been the practice of the City, and Parks and Recreation Department, in the face of unplanned closures and/or disruption of services, to attempt to resume services as early as possible and sustain those services using all reasonable and practical means

The City's public engagement practices are guided by the Public Engagement Strategy (2016) and Public Engagement Policy (2021). Staff from the Public Engagement Team (Office of the CAO) worked closely with Parks and Recreation staff to engage and seek feedback regarding the extension of the Outdoor Pool season

DISCUSSION

Public Engagement Findings

Without another indoor pool to direct services to, the Parks and Recreation staff team presented to Council the option of extending the outdoor pool season. A public engagement survey and poll was developed in partnership with the Public Engagement Team. The *Be Heard New West – Outdoor Pool Preferences Survey* and poll was conducted from December 5 to 29, 2021 via the Be Heard New West public engagement platform. Over 500 respondents engaged in the survey.

Key findings from the *What We Heard: Outdoor Pools Survey Summary* (Attachment 1) note:

- 83% of 792 unique respondents answered they would attend one of the swim programs (lane swimming, aquafit, swim lessons or leisure swim), should the Moody Park outdoor pool open in mid-April of 2022.
- 55.3% of 550 respondents reported the earliest month they would attend the pool would be April, 35.1% May, and 9.6% June
- 65.9% of 551 respondents reported the latest month they would attend the pool would be October with 34.1% September
- The most likely times of participants visiting the pool (from 552 responses) are Monday-Friday evenings (219), and Saturday/Sunday mornings and afternoons (184)
- 43.5% of 554 respondents answered they would register for swimming lessons and 45.3% respondents answered they would not.
- Swimming lessons would most likely be attended on Saturday mornings (134) of 273 respondents and weekday evenings (108).

Key themes which emerged from the optional open-response question (260):

- i. Increase heating options at the outdoor pools (46)
- ii. Expand the proposed season and swim time offerings (45)
- iii. General excitement and support for the potential of an increased operating season (27)

- iv. Cover or enclose the outdoor pools (25)
- v. Provide adult-only swim times (24)

The survey results speak clearly to a community preference to extend the operating season for the outdoor pools. Based on the findings from this survey, combined with historical use patterns at both outdoor pools, staff are making plans for an extended outdoor pool season and updated daily operating schedule as outlined later in this report.

In response to the key themes that arose from the open-ended responses;

- City staff will be evaluating the sites to identify areas where semi-permanent tent structures may be erected for the cooler months of the outdoor pool season. These structures will provide some cover and shelter for those viewing, instructing and changing in inclement weather. Other options including wind screens and portable heaters will be evaluated as the pools open.
- Initial decisions on the planned pool season are based on survey results, past historical use and projected staffing capacities. Services may need to be adjusted based on actual user demand, staffing capacities and patron feedback.
- While (25) respondents requested a cover over one or both outdoor pools, staff had initially investigated this concept and it was deemed cost prohibitive and operationally complex due to the nature and type of independent HVAC systems needed to safely circulate, filter and dehumidify an outdoor natatorium filled with pool air circulating volatile organic compounds.
- Adult only swim times will be provided at each pool throughout the extended pool season.

Aquatic Services

Outdoor Pools

Based on the results of the public survey and historical use patterns of the City's two outdoor pools, the following plan has been prepared to expand the operations of both Moody and Hume Park outdoor pools to provide some mitigation to the closure of aquatic services at the Canada Games Pool.

New and enhanced services to be offered at the outdoor pools as a response to the Be Heard New West community engagement survey feature:

- Aquafit at Hume Park Outdoor Pool
- Evening and Deep end Aquafit at Moody Park Pool (mornings only previously)
- Adult Swim at Hume Park Outdoor Pool
- Adult Swim at Moody Park Outdoor Pool (now 19+)
- Lane swimming at Moody Park Pool
- Evening Lessons and Weekend option of Swimming Lessons (mornings only previously)
- 3-3.5 hr time blocks for lessons (1-1.5 hr time blocks previously)
- Hyack swim club practice times
- Debit/Credit card payment option added at Hume pool

Moody Park Outdoor Pool

Moody Park Outdoor Pool will operate with an extended season from April 23 to October 10, 2022. Initial hours of operation for this facility are as follows:

April 23 – June 29, 2022 and September 6 – October 10, 2022 –

Monday-Friday 8:00-10:00 am and 1:00-8:00 pm

Saturday 9:00am – 8:00pm

Sunday 1:00-6:00 pm

Lessons - weekday afternoons and Saturday mornings.

Hyack Swim Club rental - Monday-Friday early mornings

June 30 – September 5, 2022

Monday – Sunday – 9:00am – 9:00pm

Lessons - weekday am/pm and Saturday mornings

Hyack Swim Club rental – Monday – Friday early mornings

Staff will monitor attendance and overall facility usage during the extended pool season and adjust the operation as required.

Hume Park Outdoor Pool

Hume Park Outdoor Pool has scheduled capital project maintenance that is currently being performed at this site. This work will be completed late spring prior to the seasonal facility preparations for opening. Hume Park Outdoor Pool will open with an extended season from June 30 – October 10, 2022.

June 30 – September 5, 2022

Monday – Sunday – 9:00 am – 9:00 pm

Lessons - weekday am/pm and Saturday mornings

September 6 – October 10, 2022

Monday – Friday – 12:00 – 8:00 pm

Saturday – 9:00am-8:00 pm

Sunday – 12:00-8:00 pm

Lessons – weekday afternoons and Saturday mornings

Inter-municipal Support

City staff have been in contact with neighbouring communities regarding the option of providing the equivalent of local resident priority access to New Westminster residents. Discussions were had with adjacent communities, however due to a number of factors related to current and anticipated future capacity challenges, this approach has been deemed not feasible. The City of Burnaby has however offered to look for lane availability it may be able to offer the New Westminster based Hyack Swim Club.

Managing Expected Participation Demands

The closure of a large aquatic facility will put increased demand on the smaller outdoor pools. With an expected high demand for these existing and extended services, the City must address the supply vs. demand issue.

Processes must be in place to ensure service delivery is fair, equitable, low cost and low barrier for the residents of New Westminster. Managing capacities, resident priority access and avoiding line-ups for services can be mitigated by instituting a prepaid registration process. All swims and programs will be pre-registered offering a priority registration window for local residents.

The Parks and Recreation Fees Bylaw No, 6673, 2001, supports low cost and no cost swimming admission fees at outdoor pools. The existing fee structure at outdoor pools has been in place since 2005. The existing \$2 weekday and free weekend admission fee structure aligns with, and supports, the Council Approved Parks and Recreation Access and Inclusion Policy, March 9, 2020. In this approved policy and financial assistance program, the \$2 admission fee for all ages was formally established as a department wide and consistent low-cost affordable drop-in fee for admission based services that includes outdoor swimming, public skating and the Try It! program that extends to indoor swims, fitness centres, group fitness programs, gymnastics, and children's services.

When outdoor pools offer free weekend swims, the unfortunate result is that demand exceeds supply. Patrons would go to the outdoor pools for free swims and encounter "full pools" as occupancy limits were regularly achieved, even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The outcome was disappointed patrons who experienced lengthy line ups or left frustrated. This issue is mitigated on weekdays when the modest \$2 admission fee is charged or when reserved drop-in sales are in place.

The outdoor pools will re-introduce reserved drop-in sales (prepaid sales for a specific swim time block) to serve the most patrons possible, ensure public safety and manage occupancy loads and line-ups. Staff are proposing to introduce a nominal fee for weekend swims will ensure those who register are committed to attending. Initiating the low cost, low barrier \$2 weekday admission rate would ensure commitment to the swim while contributing a small part to operational budget recoveries. An alternative approach would be to charge \$1 as a 50% discount compared to weekday swims. Any changes to the fee structure will need to be approved by Council via amendment to the Parks and Recreation Fees Bylaw.

Staff are recommending that at \$2 admission fee be implemented for weekend swimming sessions at the outdoor pools.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The approved 2022 Outdoor Pool operating budget subsidy is \$310,351. New *incremental* operating budget impacts will be incurred to support the relocated and expanded services as discussed in this report. A further detailed listing of these expenses and associated revenue are outlined in Attachment 2.

A. Aquatics - Outdoor Pool Operations

	Incremental Annual Expense
Utilities and Operating Supplies	\$57,500
Staff cost	\$228,400
Offsetting new revenue	\$114,700
Estimated Incremental Annual Operating Deficit	(\$171,200)

Staff has taken a conservative approach for the Outdoor Pool revenue estimate in table A. This estimate has not reflected the financial impact of the proposed changes to outdoor swimming pool fees and charges. The current estimated \$171,200 deficit from Outdoor Pool operations will be partially offset by the projected surplus from the Relocated CGP Fitness Services (\$75,000) as outlined in the companion January 31, 2022 report to Council.

B. Aquatics - Outdoor Pool Operations – including extension of low cost/low barrier \$2.00 fee to weekend pool use.

	Incremental Annual Expense
Utilities and Operating Supplies	\$57,500
Staff cost	\$228,400
Offsetting new revenue	\$182,700
Estimated Incremental Annual Operating Deficit	(\$103,200)

Staff has taken a conservative approach for the Outdoor Pool revenue estimate in table B. This estimate includes a conservative average revenue projection for pre-booked weekend swim sessions over the course of the extended operating season. The forecasted estimated \$103,200 deficit from Outdoor Pool operations will be partially offset by the projected surplus from the Relocated CGP Fitness Services (\$75,000) and savings from the early CGP closure.

C. Aquatics - Outdoor Pool Operations – including extension of low cost/low barrier \$1.00 fee to weekend pool use.

	Incremental Annual Expense
Utilities and Operating Supplies	\$57,500
Staff cost	\$228,400
Offsetting new revenue	\$148,700
Estimated Incremental Annual Operating Deficit	(\$137,200)

Staff has taken a conservative approach for the Outdoor Pool revenue estimate in table C. This estimate includes a conservative average revenue projection for pre-booked weekend swim sessions over the course of the extended operating season. The forecasted estimated \$137,200 deficit from Outdoor Pool operations will be partially offset by the projected surplus from the Relocated CGP Fitness Services (\$75,000) and savings from the early CGP closure.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL LIAISON

Staff from Parks and Recreation with supports from Finance, Engineering and Public Engagement (Office of the CAO) contributed to this report.

OPTIONS

The following options are offered for consideration by Council.

1. That this report be received for information.
2. That Council direct staff to bring forward amendments to outdoor pool admission fees as described in this report, to the Parks and Recreation Fees and Charges Bylaw No. 6673, 2001.
3. That Council provide staff with alternate direction.

Staff recommend option #1 and #2.

CONCLUSION

Mitigating the impacts of the closure of Canada Games Pool presents significant service delivery challenges. A wide variety of approaches to address this challenge have been considered. The extension of the outdoor pool swimming season and expansion of the range of aquatic services offered at those venues in 2022 and 2023, after which the təmɛsewtxw Aquatic and Community Centre will be open, is both achievable, practical and responds to community preferences as expressed in the recent engagement process.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – What We Heard: Outdoor Pools Survey Summary

Attachment 2 – Outdoor Pool 2022 Extended Season Financial Analysis

This report was prepared by:

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This report was approved by:

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