



## STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

### 2013-2017 Recreation Service Plan

<b>Date:</b>	November 6, 2012
<b>To:</b>	Community Development and Recreation Committee
<b>From:</b>	General Manager, Parks Forestry and Recreation
<b>Wards:</b>	All
<b>Reference Number:</b>	P:\2012\Cluster A\PFR\CD17-111412-AFS#15975

#### **SUMMARY**

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This report seeks approval for the City of Toronto 2013-2017 Recreation Service Plan. The Plan was developed in accordance with principles adopted by Council in August 2009, and the Public Consultation Framework adopted by Council in April 2011. The Recreation Service Plan will guide the City of Toronto's delivery of recreation programs and services over the next five years.

The plan aims to increase overall participation in recreation, decrease financial barriers, and improve local and geographic access. It outlines the current role of Parks, Forestry and Recreation in the provision of recreation within the broader context of the Toronto recreation service sector, that has many and diverse providers. Parks, Forestry and Recreation plans to improve access to recreation with specific attention to children, youth and seniors, and reduce barriers faced by low-income families, newcomers, and people with a disability.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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**The General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation recommends that City Council:**

1. Adopt the attached 2013-2017 Recreation Service Plan;
2. Authorize the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation to:
  - a. Implement the proposed new criteria for selecting Priority Centres contained in the recreation service plan for fall 2014;

- b. Replace the term "Priority Centre" with a new name for the policy;
  - c. Expand the "Swim to Survive" program in partnership with Toronto's school boards beginning in the fall of 2014;
  - d. Develop a youth leadership program as outlined in the Recreation Service Plan in partnership with other City divisions, youth-serving agencies, and the school boards; and
3. Direct the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation to report back through the 2014 Budget process with a detailed implementation plan based on the direction from Council provided through their consideration of this report.

### **Financial Impact**

The Recreation Service Plan is a tool for guiding the funding and management of Toronto's recreation services over the next five years. It will act as a framework for Council's future budget and resource allocation. Adoption of the Recreation Service Plan carries no financial impact in 2013, however there will be impacts in 2014 and future years.

Funding for additional Priority Centres, planned to be implemented in 2014, carries a projected Operating Budget impact of \$1.5 million gross in 2014 and annualization of \$3 million gross in 2015 for a total new annual cost of \$4.5 million gross. The net budget impact is expected to be somewhat less, as a result of a lower draw on Welcome Policy funding. This impact can only be estimated once 2011 census tract data is available in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter of 2013 to determine the locations involved.

Funding for an expanded Swim to Survive program to be implemented in 2014 carries a projected Operating Budget impact of \$0.500 million gross and net in 2014 and annualization of \$1 million gross and net in 2015 for a total new annual cost of \$1.5 million gross and net. Alternative funding sources may reduce this estimate slightly.

The cost of a youth leadership program has not been estimated. The program is intended to be free, but delivered in cooperation with other City programs, school boards and community organizations. An estimate for this will be provided as part of the 2014 budget consideration.

The table below summarizes the Gross Operating Budget impacts that can be currently estimated. A more detailed report on an implementation plan and its phasing will be provided as part of the 2014 budget process, including offsets resulting from a reduced draw on the Welcome Policy.

Gross Operating Expenditures Impact Table					
Direction #	Action Item	Brief Summary of Line Items	2014 Financial Impact (\$ 000's)	2015 Financial Impact (\$ 000's)	Full Annual Financial Impact (\$ 000's)
10.2	New Priority Centres	Convert all Recreation Centres that are eligible under the new criteria to Priority Centres as defined by Council.	\$ 1,500.0	\$ 3,000.0	\$ 4,500.0
11.1	Swim to Survive	Implement the increased delivery of the Swim to Survive program.	\$ 500.0	\$ 1,000.0	\$ 1,500.0
			\$ 2,000.0	\$ 4,000.0	\$ 6,000.0

In addition to the Operating Budget impacts some Recreation Service Plan recommendations require Capital Budget funding within the Parks, Forestry and Recreation 10 Year Capital Plan and beyond. The direction related to AODA compliance is currently projected for inclusion within Parks, Forestry and Recreation's 10 year capital plan, and is expected to exceed \$10 million over the 10 years. Information technology initiatives, including registration and permitting systems improvements, volunteer management, and customer service improvements are also projected in the Parks, Forestry and Recreation Information Technology Strategy within the 10 year Capital Plan. The direction to develop a 20 year Parks, Forestry and Recreation Facility Plan will extend beyond the Plan, particularly as it includes the construction of new facilities.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

## DECISION HISTORY

On August 5 and 6, 2009, Council approved the development of a five-year Recreation Service Plan founded on the principles of equitable access, quality, inclusion and capacity building. (EX33.23 – Development of a City-wide Recreation Service Plan) <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2009/cc/decisions/2009-08-05-cc38-dd.htm>

On April 12 and 13, 2011, Council approved the consultation framework for the Recreation Service Plan. (CD2.1 – Recreation Service Plan Public Consultation Framework) <http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2011.CD2.1>

## ISSUE BACKGROUND

The Recreation Service Plan, 2013-2017 is built upon *Our Common Grounds*, a strategic plan for Parks, Forestry and Recreation adopted by Council in 2005. The Recreation Service Plan will guide Parks, Forestry and Recreation's policy, funding and management of recreation services over the next five years.

At its meeting on August 5 and 6, 2009 Council adopted the following principles in the development of a Recreation Service Plan:

1. **Equitable Access** - providing equitable recreation access on a geographic and demographic basis for all residents of Toronto.
2. **Quality** - providing the highest quality of programs and services to enhance the health, quality of life and well-being of residents.
3. **Inclusion** - ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to access and participate in programs and services that are planned, delivered and managed to recognize diversity and encourage participation of marginalized and racialized people and groups.
4. **Capacity Building** - providing programs and services of social, economic and physical benefits to all participants and that create a sense of community, belonging and vitality.

On April 12 and 13, 2011, Council approved the Recreation Service Plan Public Consultation Framework. This launched an engagement process with Toronto residents and recreation stakeholders. The City hosted four public meetings (one per district), nine focus groups – with newcomers, homeless individuals, youth and women's groups, and 15 stakeholder sessions for permit holders, people with disabilities, and other groups. Over 570 people attended these sessions. A survey was available on paper and online during the spring and summer of 2011. It was promoted widely at recreation centres, with partners, in the media, and through social media. Over 2,500 people participated in the 23-question survey. The feedback from the consultation process provides the foundation for the Service Plan directions and recommended actions.

## **COMMENTS**

Publicly funded recreation is integral to the success of Toronto. It is an important aspect of what makes Toronto an attractive place to live and work. Toronto's recreation programs promote physical activity for people of all ages and abilities; build social connections within neighbourhoods; and train future leaders. There is a strong relationship between the provision of public recreation and benefits to personal, community, and economic wellbeing.

## **Recreation Service Sector and Coordinated Planning**

The City of Toronto is an important player in a large recreation service sector, which includes a variety of public, non-profit, and for-profit providers. The City invests in recreation in a variety of ways, including direct service delivery, partnerships, and grants. The City also facilitates recreation by providing space in our facilities that can be used by other providers, partners and residents. Recreation services such as community development and outreach are important components, helping to ensure that programs are designed and delivered to meet community need. The Recreation Service Plan identifies

the need to expand public access to recreation assets, and encourages public input in decision-making. In doing so, Parks, Forestry and Recreation pays special attention to the interests of populations facing barriers, such as newcomers and persons living with disabilities.

Service planning helps ensure that Parks, Forestry and Recreation's programs and services remain relevant to the diverse and changing needs of Toronto's residents and communities. This plan briefly describes the recreation service sector and categorizes it into four major groups. They are, (1) Parks, Forestry and Recreation's recreation programs, (2) City partnerships with community providers, (3) independent non-profit providers (including school boards), and (4) for-profit providers. The Recreation Service Plan sets the framework for coordinated planning with Toronto's other recreation service providers and recommends enhanced engagement and partnership to improve sector coordination.

### **Improving Access to Recreation**

The benefits of recreation are especially important for those residents who can least afford user fees. Parks, Forestry and Recreation has made progress in providing low-income residents with recreation opportunities through the Welcome Policy and Priority Centres.

Poverty exists in all areas of the city, so the Welcome Policy is an important tool to ensure that residents can afford to take programs at a recreation centre near them. Welcome Policy use has increased dramatically since it was implemented a decade ago and it continues to meet a critical need in communities across the City. The Recreation Service Plan recommends that Parks, Forestry and Recreation continue the use of Welcome Policy as a means to support access to recreation regardless of income.

Priority Centres were established in 1999 as a way to increase access to recreation in neighbourhoods with high levels of low income population by eliminating program fees. The analysis in the plan shows that Priority Centres are working as a way to meet the need of neighbourhoods that have a high proportion of low-income residents. They serve the local community needs efficiently and reduce demand on Welcome Policy funding. At the same time, Priority Centres encourage social inclusion and support participation in recreation.

While Priority Centres are an effective way to serve concentrated populations of low-income individuals, the original method for designating them resulted in an inconsistent and inequitable distribution across the city. The Recreation Service Plan recommends a revised method for determining Priority Centres that is intended to serve the highest number of low-income census tracts, and better meets the needs of low income populations in an equitable and consistent way. The term "Priority Centre" will be replaced with a more generic term, in order to avoid the potential for stigma associated with the Priority Centre designation.

Parks, Forestry and Recreation anticipates that the revised method will result in additional Priority Centres, with a full year impact in the range of \$4.5 million in foregone revenue. The exact locations will be confirmed based on the release of additional 2011 census data. As implementation of additional Priority Centres occurs, there will be reduced demand on Welcome Policy, which is anticipated to partially offset the additional Priority Centre costs. Initial estimates of the offset are in the range of \$1 million.

### **Primary Program Model**

The Recreation Service Plan proposes a Primary Programs model that will be a tool for local planning with residents, helping to improve the consistency of program delivery across the City while ensuring that programs remain responsive to local needs. The model prioritizes City delivery of programs at an introductory level, in group settings, and those that teach basic life skills. This focus lays the foundation for lifelong participation in recreation.

### **Continued focus on children, youth and seniors**

Parks, Forestry and Recreation aims to increase participation in recreation for all residents in the city. The Recreation Service Plan however, recognizes the need for continued focus of service on children, youth and seniors. These age groups have fewer options in the larger recreation sector than working age adults. Their access is limited by income and transportation barriers, and the benefits of recreation are most significant when experienced early and are lifelong. To better serve these groups, Parks, Forestry and Recreation provides free drop-in programs for children, youth and seniors and the Recreation Service Plan recommends that this continue.

### **Universal Swim to Survive Program**

The Recreation Service Plan recommends the expansion of the current Swim to Survive program to every grade four student in the city, free of charge. This would ensure that every child, regardless of income, learns basic swim survival skills. The Lifesaving Society estimates that about half of Canadian children never take traditional swimming lessons, even though swimming is the second most popular activity in Canada among school-age children aged five to 12 years. The Lifesaving Society estimates that if every child in Canada could pass the skills in the Swim to Survive program, the numbers of drowning could be reduced by 50 per cent.

The Swim to Survive program is currently delivered in partnership with the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) to 5,300 students, approximately 95 per cent of all grade four students enrolled in the TCDSB. The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) directly delivers the Swim to Survive program to 2600 students, approximately 16 per cent of all grade four students enrolled in the TDSB. There is an opportunity to expand participation through a renewed partnership with both school boards, to remove barriers to full enrolment including pool availability, transportation and scheduling.

The full cost for the Swim to Survive program is estimated to be \$1.5 million when fully implemented but could be lower as alternative funding sources will be pursued.

### **Develop a universal Youth Leadership Program**

In addition, the Recreation Service Plan recommends the development of a universal, City-wide youth leadership program model. Youth, regardless of where they live or their financial situation, should have the opportunity to gain basic leadership skills that will better prepare them for employment and meaningful involvement in their communities. The program would be free of charge and equitably distributed across the City. The model would be developed as part of a youth planning process that includes other City divisions and community organizations.

### **Improving Quality and Consistency of Programs**

Delivering programs and services of consistent high quality ensures that participation in recreation results in better health, quality of life and well-being for Toronto residents. Parks Forestry and Recreation has well developed quality standard and assessment tools in the area of children's and aquatics programs. The Recreation Service Plan outlines how Parks, Forestry and Recreation can improve the quality and consistency of all our programs and services. The Recreation Service Plan recommends that Parks, Forestry and Recreation expand on these quality standards to all age groups and program areas, focusing on safety, health and skill development. It also recommends improving the consistency of cleanliness and repair of facilities.

The Recreation Service Plan outlines the need to develop and implement a Customer Service Improvement Strategy that includes measuring and tracking levels of customer satisfaction of both services and facilities. Additional actions include improving the facility permitting process, the program registration process and the availability of information online.

The Plan also outlines the need for consistent data-collection in order to improve our capacity to measure and report on the achievement of program objectives and outcomes. These efforts will result in improved service planning, and will improve the quality of our services and inform decision-making at all levels.

Parks, Forestry and Recreation's capacity and service planning infrastructure will be strengthened through the Recreation Service Plan. The service system improvements in standards development, customer service, and data collection are underway as part of Parks, Forestry and Recreation's Information Technology Strategy and are reflected in the ten year capital plan.

The Recreation Service Plan sets a course to ground recreation as an integral component of community development and social integration. The Plan aligns with other City efforts such as the Middle Childhood Strategy, the Seniors Strategy, integrated planning for youth and the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy 2020.

## **Future Work**

The report sets the course for future work needed to support Parks Forestry and Recreation in delivering quality recreation programs according to the principles adopted by Council. This work includes:

- Develop and implement a comprehensive Customer Service Improvement Strategy in support of the corporate Customer Service Improvement work and to address improvements to the quality and consistency of our facilities, programs, and services.
- Develop a 20 year Parks, Forestry and Recreation facilities plan to guide facility placement, retrofits, decommissioning, and financial requirements.
- Improve data collection to inform system planning, evaluation, and performance measurement.
- Develop a comprehensive communications strategy that will improve the local and city-wide promotion of programs and services.
- Develop a plan for ensuring that our facilities are accessible to all Torontonians and that facilities comply with the accessibility guidelines that will be required by the AODA.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Recreation Service Plan will guide the service planning efforts of Parks Forestry and Recreation over the next five years in meeting the goals of increased participation in recreation, reduced financial barriers and increased local access. The directions and recommended actions are based on significant input from residents and stakeholders, the documented benefits of recreation and the demographic and leisure trends facing Toronto. This Recreation Service Plan also triggers the need for subsequent work related to user fees, facilities and better communication with residents.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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Jim Hart  
General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1- Toronto 2013-2017 Recreation Service Plan