

Giuliana Carbone
 Deputy City Manager

Parks, Forestry & Recreation
 City Hall, 4th Floor, West Tower
 100 Queen Street West
 Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

 Tel: (416) 392-8182
 Fax: (416) 392-8565
 jromoff@toronto.ca
 www.toronto.ca

2017 OPERATING BUDGET BRIEFING NOTE

Program Waitlists and Strategies to Address the Increase

Issue/Background:

- This briefing note responds to Budget Committee motion 28.1 #7 (b), adopted on December 20, 2016, requesting the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PF&R) to provide a briefing note on a list of programs and geographic areas with significant waitlists, and strategies to provide programming to address those needs.
- The demand for recreation programs across the city has grown with the addition of new facilities and through the expansion of Centres Where Programs Are Free ("CWPAF"), specifically in free and low cost programs, as well as, "primary" or learn-to recreational opportunities such as camps, learn to swim, learn to skate, sports, arts and general interest programs.
- In addition to registered and instructional programs, PF&R offers over 300,000 hours or 60% of drop-in leisure programming city-wide at no cost, to ensure that access to recreation programs and services is available, particularly in areas of the city facing high need and where instructional programs are highly subscribed.

Key Points:

- Registration in recreational programs has increased by 8% over the past three years. Utilization overall for city programs is high (81.2%) particularly in aquatics, summer camps and general programs for preschool and school aged children.
- PF&R addresses supply and demand by regular review of program uptake (utilization), waitlist trends, and capacity analyses, to assess registered instructional programming and adjust service mix as required.
- Programs are in high demand particularly during "prime-time" hours, specifically on evenings between 5pm and 10pm and on weekends. Most facilities are programmed or permitted to their maximum space capacity during these times and cannot easily add additional programs and services and/or increase class sizes.
- Lower desired times and/or locations, as well as programs that are no longer as popular, result in some programs not operating at capacity. Programs not cancelled because of low enrolment will operate with available spaces. System wide, this resulted in available capacity of approximately 117,300 spaces or 18.8% of total spaces in 2015.

- Notwithstanding the above, waitlists have grown from 115,000 to 189,000 clients or by 64% over the past three years.
- As programs reach maximum capacity, clients are waitlisted for programs upon request. There are no limits to the number of programs a client may choose to waitlist for. As a result, waitlisted figures are often inflated. However, they provide staff with data on the program areas, locations and age demographics and support the planning of additional spaces-where capacity to expand the service exists.
- Waitlist management is a multifaceted approach. The overall objective is to reduce wait lists, optimize available spaces and manage programs according to changing need and registration trends.
- In-session wait list management is a labor intensive and manual process. Staff identify the next client on the waitlist who is contacted to register for a program where space has become available. Should they decline or not respond, staff proceed to the next client on the waitlist.
- PF&R has developed administrative policies to ensure that program spaces are better utilized overall. In 2016, the implementation of non-attendance and duplicate registration policies resulted in a 30% increase in the number of clients moved from waitlists into programs. These policies, in addition to other efforts resulted in over 15,600 waitlisted clients being accommodated into programs.
- Tables 1 and 2 provide the District geographical distribution of waitlist and the distribution of waitlists by program area based on 2015 information.

Table 1: Geographic Distribution of Waitlists by District (2015)

District	Max Spaces Available	Utilization of Capacity (% of Max Spaces)	Available Spaces	Waitlisted Clients*
Etobicoke York	183,088	81.5%	33,812	51,487
North York	159,293	81.8%	28,971	44,047
Scarborough	158,705	81.4%	29,476	65,638
Toronto East York	123,624	79.7%	25,105	28,295
Total	624,710	81.2%	117,364	189,467

* Waitlisted clients may be waitlisted for more than one program; waitlists are not capped.

Table 2: Waitlist Distribution by Program Category (2015)

Program Category	Max Spaces Available	Utilization of Capacity (% of Max Spaces)	Available Spaces	Waitlisted Clients*
Arts & Heritage	50,807	78.4%	10,956	16,811
Camps	87,949	91.1%	7,819	38,813
Clubs	2,210	68.5%	696	107
Fitness & Wellness	65,865	70.5%	19,423	11,821
General Interest	25,723	82.3%	4,547	5,488
March Break	4,935	94.1%	292	1,640
Preschool	63,359	85.8%	8,979	18,290
Skating	30,177	92.0%	2,403	15,302
Ski	9,520	50.4%	4,724	2,949
Sports	80,917	78.0%	17,786	17,240
Swimming	203,248	80.4%	39,739	61,006
Grand Total	624,710	81.2%	117,364	189,467

* Waitlisted clients may be waitlisted for more than one program; waitlists are not capped.

- Of the total waitlisted clients, 86% are children and 14% are adults with aquatics, camps and preschool programs being the most in demand program areas.
- There are approximately 117,300 program spaces or 19% capacity available in PF&R's recreational programs and services. Of this available capacity 72% relate to children programs and 28% to programs for adults.
- Availability is highest in aquatics, fitness and sports programs; however the times of day, locations and program offerings may not be suitable for families/as desired and clients may be registered in a program while waiting for another making the correlation between capacity and wait list complex using our current technology and data solutions.
- In order to optimize capacity utilization and address waitlists, PF&R has undertaken the following service reviews and administrative policy work in 2016:
 1. Staff review program schedules and adjusts for the upcoming season based on demand to accommodate growing need and eliminate programs with declining enrolment.
 2. Staff adjust program capacity at the beginning of the season by compressing under-subscribed programs and reallocate programming resources to programs with waitlists, in an effort to move clients into programs, where possible.
 3. Participant Attendance Policy removes clients from programs after missing the second class.
 4. Duplicate Registration Policy removes clients from programs that are scheduled to occur at the same day/time as another.
- The Division is taking further steps to address high demand in program areas with waitlists including by not limited to:

- Greater focus on "Learn To" opportunities, particularly in the areas of primary children and youth programs, also considered "Primary Program Model";
 - Focusing on more drop-in opportunities for adults and seniors who seek flexibility in attendance; and
 - Phasing out private and small-group programs by converting to larger group lessons, and add instructors where possible to addresses capacity issues.
 - Modernization of registration system through the replacement of the existing system (CLASS) which will make registration and waitlist management more effective and user friendly.
- Staff will report back to Council on the CWPAF (Centres Where Programs are Free) and opportunities to continue to optimize these spaces with administrative policy and programming changes.
 - This work will continue into 2017, with the development of the Primary Program Model and effective local service planning measures to ensure better equity in programming across the system, at paid and free community centers.

Prepared by: Howie Dayton, Community Recreation Director, Parks, Forestry & Recreation
(416)392-7252, howie.dayton@toronto.ca

Further Information: Janie Romoff, General Manager, Parks, Forestry & Recreation,
(416) 392-8182, janie.romoff@toronto.ca

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