



Council Briefing Notes

Brought to you by CUPE Local 79

EX 28.2 - RECREATION FACILITIES MASTER PLAN

Summary

As the union representing recreation workers in numerous classifications and roles, Local 79 is pleased to offer its support for the principles contained in the Recreation Facilities Master Plan 2019-2038 (FMP). Addressing growing waitlists and eliminating the state of good repair (SOGR backlog) are integral to keeping City-operated programs at the core of our city's recreation sector.

Local 79 nonetheless is concerned about the lack of clarity in the FMP's discussion of 'partnerships.' We are supportive insofar as partnerships are developed as a way of anchoring recreation in City programs, while ensuring widespread access to municipal and non-profit recreation. We are fundamentally opposed to the suggestions contained in Recommendation #90, which appear to open the door to P3s and alternate funding models.

Local 79 respectfully recommends that the Executive Committee:

- Support the Recreation Facility Master Plan.
- Affirm the City's role in setting the benchmark for high quality, affordable and accessible recreation programs.
- Coordinate with not-for-profit providers to ensure all Torontonians have access to high quality, affordable, and accessible programs, anchored by programs directly operated by the City, in City of Toronto facilities.
- Direct the General Manager, Parks, Forestry & Recreation to implement the Recreation Facilities Master Plan 2019-2038 through a development model that uses publicly financing and without P3s or alternate service delivery.

Discussion

Local 79 is proud of the work all our members do to take care of Toronto, but we know that recreation services have a significant – and positive! – impact on people's quality of life. As the Staff Report's equity impact analysis points out, recreation services are particularly important for equity-seeking groups including "women, recent immigrants, racialized groups, LGBTQ2S communities, persons with disabilities, individuals with mental health issues, those who are homeless and other potentially vulnerable groups." Recreation programs are essential to poverty reduction and strengthening communities.

Unfortunately, our City's recreation facilities are facing a significant state of good repair (SOGR) backlog and

the prospect of ever-increasing waitlists. This was most recently raised at the Community Development and Recreation through CD 23.2 regarding programs for people with disabilities. The bottom line is that without the new and revitalized recreation facilities, waitlists could double to 400,000 by 2025.

We also know that SOGR backlogs are mounting in a number of areas that are essential for poverty reduction – the TTC, Toronto Public Libraries, and Toronto Community Housing, for example (see: <http://www.cupelocal79.org/wp-content/uploads/The-Gardiner-Tsunami-2016.pdf>). It is essential, therefore, that the Executive Committee support the Master Plan's recommendation to increase capital investment to \$2.1 billion over the next 20 years.

Local 79 is cautiously supportive of the Master Plan's commitment to working with partners to ensure widespread access to affordable recreation programs. We are troubled, however, by lack of clarity about what those partnerships would look like. We are supportive to the extent that the Master Plan envisions working with community agencies to ensure there is minimal overlap in service, while maintaining City of Toronto programming at the core of the entire sector's services. This means ensuring ongoing operating funding to support PFR staff as well as addressing the growing problem of permitted groups directly competing with City programs inside City facilities.

We would be remiss if we did not raise warning flags about other potential implications of "partnerships." Recommendation #90 raises possible facility delivery strategies that include design/build and developer-built facilities as project management options. Local 79 and its allies oppose, in the strongest possible terms, any use of P3 or other so-called alternate funding models to building recreation facilities.

There are myriad reasons for our opposition, many of which can be found in detail at www.cupe.ca/privatization. At the very least, Councillors should be aware of the Ray Friel Recreation Centre P3 nightmare in Cumberland and Ottawa. Construction and operation of the facility was plagued with bankruptcies, declining cleanliness, increased customer complaints, and a demand for an extra \$2 million above the agreed-to operating contract. For these reasons, Ottawa brought the facility back in-house and now delivers services there directly.

Given the restricted nature of the City's capital budget and the importance of recreation programs to so many Torontonians, we cannot afford to risk a similar "partnership" model for building and revitalizing Toronto's facilities.