

Community Recreation 2018-2020 Growth Plan and Waitlist Management

Date: November 6, 2017

To: Community Development and Recreation Committee

From: General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation

Wards: All

SUMMARY

This report responds to the Community Development and Recreation Committee's (CDR) request for Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PFR) to report on a strategy to reduce waitlists and grow recreation services.

Implementation of the Council-approved Recreation Service Plan (RSP) is nearing completion and has achieved its main objectives of increasing overall participation in recreation, decreasing financial barriers, and improving local and geographic access.

Community Recreation offers affordable, quality recreation programs. Due to high demand for these programs, Community Recreation continues to experience waitlists for registered/instructional programs.

To address demand and ensure the best response, Community Recreation analyzes local programming. Service planning in recreation, including programming changes and additions, is informed by a variety of inputs including local demographics, trends, changes in registration patterns, and customer feedback. A program mix is created that optimizes the space available in facilities, and programs are expected to meet divisional service standards to ensure consistency in how they are delivered.

A key part of Community Recreation's efforts to address demand and alleviate waitlists is through the implementation of the Growth and Waitlist Management Plan (the Growth Plan).

The Growth Plan, if approved, will be phased in over three years (2018-2020) subject to annual budget approval, and is projected to add 60,000 program spaces to address demand. Additionally, with the scheduled opening of new and expanded community centres over the next three years an estimated 11,000 net new program spaces will also be added.

Implementation of the Growth Plan, if approved, requires funding which has been requested through a New and Enhanced business case in the 2018 PFR Operating Budget to be provided over three years including \$0.482 million gross and \$0.386 million net and 11.13 FTEs in the 2018 budget.

Following is an overview of the strategies and measures PFR is undertaking to respond to demand, reduce waitlists and maximize participation in its programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation recommends that:

1. City Council approve the Community Recreation 2018-2020 Growth Plan as outlined in Appendix 1 of this report, that will add 60,000 program spaces at existing community centres where demand and projected future demand exist, over three Phases as follows, subject to annual budget approval:

Phase	Year	Number of New Spaces	Cumulative Total of New Spaces
1	2018	10,000	10,000
2	2019	25,000	35,000
3	2020	25,000	60,000

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact associated with adopting the recommendations of this report.

The 2018 Operating Budget Submission for Parks, Forestry and Recreation includes a New and Enhanced request for funding of \$0.482 million gross and \$0.386 million net, and 11.13 FTEs to implement Phase 1 of the multi-year plan to address the Growth Plan for Community Recreation programming. Phase 1 of the planned expansion, if approved, would add an additional 10,000 recreation program spaces in high-demand programs across the city.

Allocation of the 10,000 spaces will be provided through analysis of available space at all recreation centres across the city along with addressing unmet demand in adapted programs and integrated services. Funding is subject to City Council approval through the 2018 Budget process. Phases 2 and 3 of the Growth Plan would add an additional 25,000 spaces each year in 2019 and 2020 at an estimated cost of \$0.769 million net and \$0.830 million net respectively. These will be submitted for consideration in future year budget cycles together with other City priorities.

Funding estimates for all phases include staff and non-salary expenditures. Costs to secure additional space as part of the Growth Plan has not been estimated and, if required, will be included with any future estimates.

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

EQUITY IMPACT

Community Recreation offers affordable, high-quality recreation opportunities that are highly valued by residents. These programs provide opportunities for social connection, physical activity, skill development, creative expression, and leadership development.

If fully implemented, the Growth Plan will have a significant and positive impact on:

- Women, who are often the primary caregiver and who will benefit from more recreation opportunities for their children.
- Youth, who will benefit from expanded program and employment opportunities.
- Immigrants and refugees who will benefit from opportunities to socialize in their communities; learn new skills such as swimming and skating; have time and space to establish new friendships, and, for those whose first language is not English, opportunities to communicate in English.
- Persons with low income who, without access to free and low-cost options, would likely experience financial barriers to participating in recreation.
- Persons with disabilities who may have increased opportunities to participate in recreation programming, socialize and develop recreational skills.

While Community Recreation staff will continue to best address program mix and manage attendance and waitlists with improved administrative policies, in the absence of investments as outlined in the Growth Plan, it is anticipated that demand will continue to grow.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of October 24, 2017, the Executive Committee adopted the 20-year Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan with amendments. The Plan will be considered by City Council on November 7, 8, and 9, 2017.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2017.EX28.2>

At its meeting of April 13, 2017, the Community Development and Recreation Committee adopted item CD19.4, "Centres Where Programs Are Free (Free Centres) Review" with amendments.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2017.CD19.4>

At its meeting of March 2, 2017, through item CD18.8, the Community Development and Recreation Committee directed the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation to report to the Committee before the end of 2017 on the status of the 2013-2017 Recreation Service Plan implementation, and include:

- a. The capacity within current recreation programs to respond to unmet demand as demonstrated through existing waitlists;
- b. A framework for developing a multi-year service plan for primary recreation programs and that reflects growth and needs, is based on principles of equity and inclusion, and identifies resource requirements; and
- c. Opportunities and impediments to execute such programs with local school board and other new city facilities:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2017.CD18.8>

At its meeting of December 3, 2013, City Council adopted item CD25.5, "Designating Community Centres Where Programs Are Free (Priority Centres)" with amendments and designated 16 new Centres Where Programs Are Free.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2013.CD25.5>

At its meeting of July 16, 2013, City Council adopted item CD22.1, "Recreation Service Plan 2013-2017 Implementation Plan" with amendments.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2013.CD22.1>

At its meeting of November 27, 2012, City Council adopted item CD17.2, "2013-2017 Recreation Service Plan" with amendments.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2012.CD17.2>

COMMENTS

Parks, Forestry and Recreation offers over one million hours of recreational programming with over 10 million visits annually. Of this total, approximately 75% of participation is available at no cost to residents through free drop-in/leisure programs, the implementation of Free Centres, and the Welcome Policy subsidy.

2013-2017 Recreation Service Plan Status Update

The Recreation Service Plan (RSP), now nearing completion, has been effective in increasing the availability of affordable, accessible services and ensuring the Community Recreation branch is delivering programs that are considered introductory, or primary in nature. These programs maximize community space and provide access to a greater number of individuals due to larger program class sizes.

City Council has approved a number of investments and service level changes as part of the RSP implementation including:

- Free Centre expansion
- Swim to Survive expansion
- Improved registration process and systems
- Development of the Facilities Master Plan

Through the implementation of the RSP as well as increasing the investment in new or enhanced recreation facilities, Community Recreation has been able to serve a greater number of residents with affordable, primary, larger group programs.

Since the approval of the RSP in 2012, recreation opportunities, utilization and participation have increased. Specifically, the number of spaces in registered/instructional programs has increased from 593,985 in 2013 to 619,097 in 2016, an increase of 25,112 spaces (or approximately 4.2%). Utilization (fill rate) has increased from 80.4% to 82.3% over the same period. Additionally, participant visits for registered/instructional and drop-in/leisure programs (combined) increased from 9,222,125 visits in 2013 to 10,728,119 in 2016, an increase of 1,505,994 (or 16%) in recreation programs city-wide.

Service Planning Framework

Community Recreation is advancing a city-wide service planning framework, one of the recommended actions in the RSP. The framework equips staff with the tools and information needed to improve service planning and develop programs that are responsive to changing recreational interests at the local level. To ensure there is a consistent approach to service planning across the city, the following inputs are used by programming staff as they develop their seasonal program mix:

- Registration and utilization trend analysis
- Demographic analysis
- Census data
- Community consultation and customer input (formal and informal)
- Industry trend review
- Capital plans
- Application of Equity Lens to consider needs of diverse/underserved/at-risk communities

Service Planning and Primary Program Model

Community Recreation balances the availability of registered/instructional and drop-in/leisure programming. Customer preference for self-directed activities continues to be strong. Youth and adults in particular need greater flexibility in scheduling when they attend classes or pick-up games as an example. Equally important are opportunities to play without instruction. Table tennis, drop-in basketball and lane swimming are examples of such programs. Based on 2016 data, drop-in/leisure programs represent 46% of Community Recreation's total program hours and accommodate, in some cases, a greater number of participants per scheduled hour than a registered/instructional program can. That being said, registered/instructional programming particularly for children and youth, remains in high demand and represents an important aspect of Community Recreation's service delivery model.

The RSP defines primary programs as "introductory programs that set the stage for lifelong participation in recreation. They focus on physical literacy, health, and life-skill development, and are delivered in group-based settings. This maximizes the use of community centre space." Many primary programs are delivered in all community centres, community schools and satellite facilities, providing they are supported by local need, interest, demographics, and the availability of appropriate space. Examples include Ultra Swim levels 1-9, adventure and activity camps, learn-to-skate, beginner fitness, sports, and arts programs.

Secondary programs are defined as "likely to respond to individual needs and provide individual benefits." Examples include but are not limited to, advanced sport programs, specialized summer day camps, small group classes, and individual instructional programming such as private lessons.

Community Recreation has analyzed its course offerings and categorized them based on these definitions. The analysis found that approximately 80% of program hours are for primary programs. Moving forward, the division will continue to monitor its program mix to ensure the balance between registered/instructional and drop-in/leisure programs and ensure it is focused on primary programs. The outcome of this effort optimizes

participation and utilization of space, manages service demand and provides customers with choice in how they can engage in community recreation.

Program Waitlists

Notwithstanding the focus on introductory and larger group programs, waitlists have increased approximately 74% over the past three years. The following factors have led to increased demand on Community Recreation's services:

- Quality and affordability of programs
- Population growth
- Addition of new facilities
- Expansion of Free Centres

In 2016, there were 198,236 waitlist spaces for registered/instructional programs and 62,230 unique waitlisted clients. Children (0-12 years) make up the majority, representing approximately 75% of the clients on waitlists. Of those, 47,594 (or 76.5%) clients were registered in at least one Community Recreation program. A waitlist space indicates a single space for one person in a single program and is different than the total number of unique clients on a waitlist. Through previous reports on waitlists and program demands, staff has identified limitations of current waitlist data:

- Clients already receiving service may be added to a waitlist because they prefer an alternate time or location for programming.
- Clients not receiving any service can be added to multiple waitlists to increase the possibility of being offered a space in any program.
- There is currently no maximum on the number of courses a client can register or waitlist for.

Waitlists are helpful in identifying demand for programs. As indicated in the following table, waitlists are highest in the swimming, camps and sports categories.

Table 1: 2016 Waitlists by Program Category

Program Category	Total Waitlist Spaces
Arts & Heritage	22,148
Camps	37,475
Clubs	82
Early Years	792
Fitness & Wellness	11,252
General Interest	10,544
Leadership	212
March Break	1,886
Skating	16,165
Ski	2,415
Sports	25,592
Swimming	69,673
GRAND TOTAL	198,236

Waitlist Management

Current approaches to address demand include regular review of program mix and seasonal adjustments to move away from programs with declining enrolment, and toward programs with growing demand. Where possible, staff adjust program capacity by combining or reducing undersubscribed programs and reallocating resources (staff, space and programming dollars) to best meet demand in popular programs.

Parks, Forestry and Recreation uses policy and communication tools to help manage waitlists. The Duplicate Program Registrations Policy allows staff to remove customers registered for different programs offered at the same time. The Participant Attendance Policy allows staff to remove customers from programs where they have not attended and not communicated a reason for missing two or more classes. Implementation of these policy and communication initiatives resulted in a 30% increase (15,600 clients) moved from waitlists into programs in 2016.

A new marketing strategy was deployed for the 2017 summer camp season to help alleviate waitlists and fill available spaces. Customers on camp waitlists were notified by

email of alternate camp locations where there was still space available. While a specific causal analysis is not possible, there was a positive correlation between the email campaign and camp registrations. Specifically, over the month-long period between April 20 and May 20, when the email campaign ran, there was an increase of 611 registrations (or 14.4%) completed for the same period in 2017 over 2016. This is significant as most camp registrations are completed in March when registration for summer camp begins.

While these efforts have and will continue to be used to fill available spaces and create additional participation opportunities, waitlist management alone, without significant growth in the number of program spaces, will not be sufficient to substantially reduce or eliminate the waitlist.

Growth Plan

Growing service and increasing capacity in Community Recreation requires an increase in available and appropriate space for programs, and additional investments. The Growth Plan is in addition to any investments made for new or upgraded facilities as part of the Facilities Master Plan which outlines the new and enhanced facilities that are also needed to address existing gaps and respond to growth. Over the next three years, the following recreation centres are scheduled to open or be expanded with an estimated 11,000 spaces in recreation programming:

- Canoe Landing Community Recreation Centre
- Wellesley Community Centre – indoor pool addition
- Bessarion Community Centre
- Earl Bales Community Centre – gymnasium addition
- Birchmount Community Centre – double gymnasium expansion

The Growth Plan, if approved would be phased in over the next three years, 2018-2020, subject to annual budget approval. This multi-year plan will add 60,000 program spaces at existing community centres, where demand and projected future demand exist. Phasing the plan will provide time to allow for a "ramping up" of services over the proposed three years of the project and will allow for annual review of the success of the initiative. While specific courses are yet to be determined, those with the highest waitlists and larger class sizes will be the focus of the Growth Plan to offer the greatest participation opportunities to residents.

The 2018 Operating Budget Submission includes a New and Enhanced funding request of \$0.386 million (net) to support Phase 1 of the Growth Plan for staffing and non-salary expenditures. This first phase would add 10,000 new recreation program spaces in summer camps, adapted recreation and integration services, learn-to-swim and other introductory recreation programs. Funding estimates for all phases of the Growth Plan include staffing and non-salary expenditures and do not include permit costs to secure additional space.

Phases 2 and 3 would add an additional 25,000 spaces each year in 2019 and 2020, the distribution of which will be informed by an analysis of where physical space to add service during higher-demand days and times exists. It will also be informed by where

demand pressures are greatest. In addition to any new investments, staff will continue to optimize space at paid centres where waitlists exist and spaces can be added on a cost-recovery basis. Additional phases for the Growth Plan would be subject to City Council consideration in the future budget cycles with other City priorities.

Performance indicators will be established to understand the impact of the Growth Plan's success including:

- The net number of new spaces created across the city
- The number of unique clients in registered/instructional programs
- The number of customers on waitlists who are receiving a level of registered/instructional service
- Customer feedback
- Overall utilization rates

It is anticipated that waitlists will not be completely eliminated despite increases in investments and changes to service planning. Current policies do not restrict customers from adding themselves to waitlists and capacity in programs will always have limits. However, by increasing the number of net new spaces by 60,000 over three years within the assumption current waitlists are somewhat inflated, it is expected the Growth Plan can help to address demand particularly in popular program areas.

Conclusion

Community Recreation provides high-quality, low-cost recreation opportunities for Toronto residents. Participation can be self-directed through extensive drop-in/leisure programming or through registered/instructional programs. The RSP has been successful in increasing access to quality recreation programs and participation has increased since the RSP was approved. Notwithstanding, demand for recreation programs has increased as have waitlists for registered/instructional programs. Community Recreation has implemented multiple strategies to address demand through service planning and optimizing space, and manages waitlists through administrative policies and communication strategies.

The Growth Plan seeks to increase the supply of high-demand programs to address current and future demand due to population growth and other demographic changes. In addition to the capital plan put forward in the Facilities Master Plan, the Growth Plan identifies the investments and resources required to add an additional 60,000 program spaces over the next three years. If approved, Phase 1 would add 10,000 spaces in 2018 and Phases 2 and 3 would add an additional 25,000 program spaces each year in 2019 and 2020. Funding for the Growth Plan is subject to City Council consideration in the future budget cycles together with other City priorities.

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

Appendix 1: Community Recreation 2018-2020 Growth Plan

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The Community Recreation 2018-2020 Growth Plan (the Growth Plan), subject to annual budget approval, will add 60,000 program spaces at existing community centres where demand and projected future demand exist.

Table 1 below, summarizes the annual increase in program spaces that would be realized through the Growth Plan. Spaces will be allocated to the following highest demand program areas including:

- Learn-to-Swim
- Summer camps
- Arts, sports and skate
- Adapted programs and Integrated services

Table 1 – Annual Increase in Program Spaces through Growth Plan

Phase	Year	Number of New Spaces ¹	Cumulative Total of New Spaces ¹
1	2018	10,000	10,000
2	2019	25,000	35,000
3	2020	25,000	60,000

¹The estimated 11,000 new spaces that will be introduced through the new / enhanced facilities (Canoe Landing Community Recreation Centre, Wellesley Community Centre – indoor pool addition, Bessarion Community Centre, Earl Bales Community Centre – gymnasium addition, and Birchmount Community Centre – double gymnasium expansion) are not included in the new spaces totals above.

Funding Requirements

The 2018 Operating Budget Submission includes a New and Enhanced funding request of \$0.386 million (net) to support Phase 1 of the Growth Plan for staffing and non-salary expenditures. The cost associated with future phases (Phases 2 and 3) of the Growth Plan would be subject to City Council consideration in the future budget cycles with other City priorities

Performance Measures

Performance indicators will be established to understand the impact of the Growth Plan's success including:

- The net number of new spaces created across the city
- The number of unique clients in registered/instructional programs
- The number of customers on waitlists who are receiving a level of registered/instructional service
- Customer feedback
- Overall utilization rates