

Recruitment Efforts Related to Aquatic Programs

Date: June 5, 2019

To: Economic and Community Development Committee

From: Janie Romoff, General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation

Wards: All

SUMMARY

This report responds to City Council's direction for the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PFR) to report to the Economic and Community Development Committee (ECDC) on the Division's efforts to maximize the number of lifeguards and swim instructors hired and the customer service plan around unforeseen program cancellations and program relocation.

Parks, Forestry and Recreation employs over 9,000 part-time recreation workers annually with over 3,000, employed in the Aquatics Business Unit, who hold aquatic-specific certifications and offers a variety of aquatic programs and services including, learn-to-swim, drop-in lane and leisure swims, aqua-fitness and leadership certification programs that lead to employment opportunities.

While PFR recruits qualified individuals through its on-line recruitment platform, several additional methods are used to promote employment opportunities and reach out to interested applicants, particularly individuals who face barriers in applying for jobs with the City. PFR experiences natural attrition and hires approximately 1,800 new recreation workers each year. Recreation workers are part of the City's unionized workforce and as such, the hiring and scheduling process is guided by the Collective Agreement with Local 79.

In an average year, there are a minor number of programs that may be combined with other programs or cancelled, primarily due to facility closures and insufficient registration, or because of staff illness/last minute scheduling changes where a qualified/certified replacement staff cannot be located. In these cases, when a program is consolidated or cancelled, customer notification includes providing alternate program times and locations and assistance is offered in transferring registrations to other classes, with as much notice as is possible.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

Economic and Community Development Committee receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact arising from the adoption of this report.

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

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of April 16 and 17, 2019 City Council directed the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation report to the May 27, 2019 meeting of the Economic and Community Development Committee on:

- a. an update on the Division's recruitment efforts to maximize the number of lifeguards and swim instructors hired for City aquatic programs; and
- b. a customer service plan which ensures that any unforeseen program cancellations include a process for adequate notice to clients and/or options for transfer to other available programs.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2019.MM6.22>

COMMENTS

Aquatics Service Overview:

Parks, Forestry and Recreation offers a variety of aquatic programs and services that see over 4 million visits each year, including:

- 190,000 hours of registered instructional swim
- 200,000 registered instructional swim spaces
- 130,000 hours of leisure and drop-in swim opportunities

Providing programming and/or service at:

- 60 indoor pools
- 59 outdoor pools
- 100 wading pools
- 11 swimming beaches from June until Labour Day

Additionally, PFR offers approximately 10,000 hours or 9,000 spaces as part of its Aquatic Leadership programs, which certify individuals in a number of aquatic certifications such as National Lifeguard, Swim Instructor and Wading Pool Attendant.

Staff Recruitment Efforts:

With an extensive service provision and complex provincially-regulated safety requirements related to facilities and services, PFR employs over 3,000 certified aquatic staff to deliver its swim programs. Each year, approximately 700 new applicants are recruited by the Division to fill vacancies created as a result of staff turn-over, service enhancements and replacement of staff who have taken other opportunities within the organization.

Annually, PFR implements recruitment plans to address the natural attrition in staffing. In 2018, the following approaches were most successful:

- Community-based recruitment sessions: each season, PFR hosts in-person recruitment sessions to assist applicants with the on-line application process, prepare candidates for interviews and complete the recruitment process on-site, when possible. Since the third quarter of 2018, over 600 interested applicants, mostly youth, have attended these sessions.
- Toronto Sport Leadership Program (TSLP): each year over 300 high school students enrol in TSLP in a number of aquatic and land-based sports disciplines. This program runs during the school-year and builds participants' competencies in areas of sports and recreation. Participants who have been successful in completing the certification process are recruited and offered positions with PFR.
- Aquatic Leadership: the City of Toronto has one of the most robust Aquatic Leadership program offerings in Ontario. With over 9,000 spaces available to residents, this program stream is an important component of service sustainability for PFR. Following the completion of Aquatic Leadership certification courses, the Division reaches out to certified candidates, in an effort to recruit these qualified individuals.
- Youth Outreach Workers (YOWs) work directly with local youth to enhance their job preparedness. City-wide, 31 YOWs engage youth in leadership development opportunities, resume preparation, and mock interviews, by holding job readiness sessions in PFR facilities.
- Enhanced marketing and communication: in addition to the City's website, PFR leverages a number of traditional and modern communication channels, including, the use of social media, outreach to high schools and community agencies, flyer drops, advertising through affiliated agencies, media releases and events. Most notably, in December 2018, PFR hosted a media event related to the launch of summer 2019 hiring for part-time Recreation Workers, with the announcement being made by Mayor Tory. Following this initiative, PFR saw a 50 per cent increase in on-line application activity, compared to the same time in the previous year.

In 2018, the Division experienced an increase of 11 per cent over 2017 numbers, in the overall number of recreation workers hired and a 20 per cent increase when compared to 2016. This hiring trend has continued in 2019 in response to the demand for more personnel and has positioned PFR well to respond to its staffing needs for the summer 2019 season.

The City is also in the process of replacing its on-line application system by July 1, 2019, which is intended to enhance applicants' experience online and provide a more efficient platform for applicants and recruiters.

Impacts to Programs:

There are occurrences when programs are impacted or cancelled as a result of unforeseen circumstances such as facility-related issues, insufficient program registration and changes to staffs' ability and availability to take specific shifts.

To respond to these issues, PFR undertakes a number of actions to try to accommodate impacted clients in other programs that have availability. Every effort is made to provide sufficient notice, typically one to two weeks prior to the start of a program season, of a change in a programs schedule, location or when a cancellation must occur.

PFR is advancing its staffing and program plans for the summer 2019 aquatic season and remains confident that there will be sufficient resources in place to address the needs of our customers. The Division is committed to effective communication and customer service if and when program changes are required.

CONTACT

Howie Dayton, Director, Community Recreation, Tel: 416-392-7252, Email:
Howie.Dayton@toronto.ca

Aydin Sarrafzadeh, Manager, Aquatics, Tel: 416-395-6191, Email:
Aydin.Sarrafzadeh@toronto.ca

SIGNATURE

Janie Romoff
General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation