EC6.2

TORONTO

REPORT FOR ACTION

Status Update on the Implementation of the Growth Plan in Community Recreation

Date: June 11, 2019
To: Economic and Community Development Committee
From: General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation
Wards: All

SUMMARY

This report responds to City Council's direction for Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PFR) to report on the Phase 1 implementation of the Community Recreation Growth and Waitlist Management Plan (Growth Plan) CD24.3; and responds to Economic and Community Development Committee's (ECDC) request regarding Recreation Program Registration EC3.13.

City Council directed PFR to report back on the size of waitlists, Growth Plan performance indicators, opportunities and partnerships to expand participation in recreation. In addition, ECDC directed PFR to report on recreation program registration processes, the state of waitlists and improvements to the registration system.

The Growth Plan was developed by PFR to address the ongoing high demand for recreation programs and as a means to begin to address waitlists. This plan was approved by Council December 2017 with implementation beginning in 2018. PFR was successful in achieving the 2018 Growth Plan targets, adding 19,459 spaces in the high-demand program areas of learn to swim, summer camp, sports, art and general programming. In 2018, waitlists were reduced by 9 per cent, which is a reduction of 19,394 waitlist spaces over the previous year.

The Growth Plan was approved as one strategy to address unmet demand for popular, registered instructional programs. Combined with other investments, including, but not limited to, new and expanding recreational facilities and the transformation of the recreation registration and facility booking system, the City is improving customers' overall access to and experience with recreation services.

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.

As part of the 2019 Budget, Council approved the revised phasing of the 60,000 Growth Plan spaces over five years instead of the originally planned three years. This revised approach will allow for manageable growth in existing community centres where physical space during peak programming times (after school and summer break) is at a premium; to allow for the division to secure alternate sites through arrangements with Boards of Education for permitted school facilities; and to ensure capacity to recruit, train and hire part-time staff instructors and leaders.

The 20,000 spaces that were implemented as part of the Growth Plan in 2018 are now part of the PFR base operating budget.

Table 1: Revised Growth Plan Phasing Chart

Phase	Year	Number of New Spaces	Incremental Requirement ($000s)			Status
			Gross	Net	Positions	
1	2018	20,000	$965	$773	22.3	Approved & implemented
2	2019	7,500	$539	$417	10.9	Approved & in progress
3	2020	15,000	$1,078	$834	22.5	Future Year
4	2021	10,000	$719	$556	14.5	Future Year
5	2022	7,500	$539	$417	10.9	Future Year
Total Investment		60,000	$3,840	$2,997	81.1	

The 2019 Council approved Parks, Forestry and Recreation Operating Budget includes funding of $1.504 million gross and $1.190 million net to provide 27,500 program spaces of the 60,000 spaces planned to advance the recreation service outcomes of the Community Recreation Growth Plan. The 7,500 new program spaces added as part of the 2019 Budget process, will be implemented as planned in 2019.

Phase 3, 4 & 5 to further advance the Community Recreation Growth Plan will be submitted for consideration together with other City priorities through the annual budget processes.

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

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.

The Community Recreation Growth Plan's overall equity impact is high-positive. Low-income residents' access to city services and access to city spaces will be positively impacted. The potential or actual impacts include increasing healthy physical activity within recreation programs, and increasing opportunities to participate and engage with one's community. Vulnerable youth's access to city services, access to city spaces and access to training and/or employment will be positively impacted. The potential or actual impacts include increasing healthy physical activity within recreation programs, increasing opportunities to participate and engage with one's community, and increasing access to employment for an estimated 75 youth in Toronto.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of April 3, 2019 the Economic and Community Development Committee adopted the motion from Councillor Ainslie regarding recreation program registration.
http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2019.EC3.13

At its meeting of March 7, 2019 City Council adopted the 2019 Operating Budget for Parks, Forestry and Recreation.
http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2019.EX2.5

At its meeting on July 23, 2018 City Council awarded the Negotiable RFP for the provision of Program Registration and Recreation Facilities/Space Booking System
http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2018.EX36.12

At its meeting of December 5, 6, 7 and 8, 2017 City Council adopted the Community Recreation 2018-2020 Growth Plan and Waitlist Management plan.
http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2017.CD24.3

At its meeting of November 7, 2017, City Council adopted the 20-year Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan with amendments.
http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2017.EX28.2

COMMENTS

The City of Toronto provides a significant volume of recreation service including registered instructional programs, drop-in/leisure activities and community use of space. In 2018, Community Recreation offered 619,774 instructional program spaces, with 154,685 unique clients, with over one million hours of registered and drop-in programming opportunities offered across the City.

Overall, leisure visits were up by 5.5 per cent in 2018 compared to 2017 with most of the increased visits to the swim, skate and fitness program areas. Combined, there were over 10.5 million participant visits in 2018 which is an increasing trend as a result of effective service planning, investments in community facilities and through partnerships.

In 2018, PFR successfully implemented Phase 1 of the Growth Plan, adding 19,459 of the targeted 20,000 spaces in high-demand registered programs in high-demand facilities. Of the spaces added, 55 per cent were allocated to Free Centres and 45 per cent to Paid Centres. These numbers accurately reflect the respective demand at these centre types. The Growth Plan spaces were added in the following high-demand program areas:

- 11,891 learn-to-swim program spaces
- 5,952 summer camp program spaces
- 1,616 introductory program spaces in sports, arts and general interest courses

The impact to waitlists in high-demand program areas has been positive, with the number of waitlisted spaces reduced from 215,411 in 2017 to 196,017 in 2018. This represents an overall reduction of 9 per cent (19,394 spaces). In fact, waitlist spaces have dropped to pre-2016 levels in some program areas.

Where capacity exists, the new spaces have been allocated to facilities and program areas experiencing the greatest unmet demand. This expansion is not expected to fully alleviate waitlists but these new spaces are expected to support greater access to recreation, particularly in high-demand programs and in areas of the City with the greatest need for additional services.

Table 2: Total Waitlist Spaces and Percentage Change in Waitlist Spaces

Program Area	2017	2018	Percentage Change in Waitlist Spaces
Swimming	78,362	67,370	-14 %
Camps	40,681	35,508	-13 %
Arts & Heritage	25,236	24,147	-4 %
Sports	26,391	23,682	-10 %
Skating	16,930	17,814	+5 %

Fitness & Wellness	12,116	12,010	-1 %
General Interest	8,813	7,808	-11 %
Ski	2,220	3,328	+50 %*
March Break	2,242	2,549	+14 %
Early Years	2,187	1,679	-23 %
Leadership	123	94	-24 %
Clubs	110	28	-75 %
GRAND TOTAL	**215,411**	**196,017**	**-9 %**

*Ski program waitlists were influenced by a colder winter and limited capacity to deliver instructional ski programs at the Centennial Ski Hill.

To ensure recreation program spaces are optimized PFR actively manages waitlists through a manual process. Through these efforts and the additional spaces available is Phase 1 of the Growth Plan, waitlisted spaces were reduced by 19,394 spaces from the previous year. The efforts to fill new spaces and maximize participation were successful; program utilization remained stable at 82.4 per cent.

While the number of waitlisted spaces continues to be an indicator of demand, the numbers are inflated given that customers are not restricted in the number of programs they can be waitlisted for. In 2018, 77.1 per cent of clients on the waitlist were receiving some service (registered in at least one Community Recreation program) an increase of 0.5 per cent over 2017.

The City of Toronto does not currently have a service standard related to waitlists. City divisions have systems and processes in place to address demand for service. Cross-divisional information sharing occurs to inform best practices to manage waitlists and optimize service opportunities.

As part of the continuous improvement efforts**,** the Municipal Benchmarking Network Canada (MBNC), Parks and Recreation Ontario and Canadian Parks and Recreation Association provides a provincial and national network to share practices and policies around service planning, modernization and demand management. Based on an informal PFR survey on registration and waitlist management sent through MBNC to a number of other Canadian municipalities, five municipalities responded that they face similar service demands for recreation, though at significantly lower volumes compared to Toronto. They identified similar demand in swim programs, summer camps and other learn-to program areas and utilize similar practices on waitlist management (calling clients to notify of a program space) and offering a mix of online, phone and in-person registration options.

System Improvements

Parks, Forestry and Recreation is advancing a number of business transformation initiatives to enhance the customer registration and booking experience. In 2018, the City procured a 10 year contract with Legend Recreation Software Inc. to provide a new registration and booking system. The target launch date is currently scheduled for 2020 with three subsequent releases of enhanced functionality in 2021, 2022, and 2023.

Included in the development roadmap with Legend Recreation Software (Legend) is improved functionality for waitlist management, including automation and customer notification about alternative program options, in addition to enhanced search capabilities and leisure planning tools. The implementation of this new system is being informed by a robust public engagement strategy that began in May 2019. How customers learn, plan and discover recreation opportunities and book facilities including priority registration events, are just a few of the processes that will be discussed with the public.

In advance of the new system's implementation, PFR has employed a number of continuous improvement initiatives that have improved the customer registration experience. While priority registration continue to occur on weekday and weekends beginning at 7 a.m., the time it takes a customer to complete their registration has been significantly reduced over the last two years. Better search tools, access to leisure counselling on how to get ready to register and server upgrades have contributed to the following results:

- 48 per cent more registrations were completed within the first 10 minutes of recreation program registration in 2018 than in 2016;
- Over 80 per cent of program registration transactions annually are completed through the on-line registration system.

Survey results from the 2018 registration periods indicate that on average 64 per cent of respondents are satisfied with the amount of time it took to complete the registration process and 68 per cent are satisfied with the ease of use of the system.

Increasing Capacity

Based on the 2019 Annual Demographic Estimates from Statistics Canada, the city's population has increased by 6.5% from 2014 to 2018. Community Recreation instructional program spaces have grown 3.04% over the same period, with the Growth Plan as the largest investment in recreation growth excluding new facilities. Growing recreation spaces is one part of a multi-pronged approach to addressing demand for new and expanded recreation services in a growing city. The Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan, approved by Council in 2017, establishes a 20-year framework to guide facility development and expansion. Facilities opening in the coming years will add significant service capacity. For example, Canoe Landing Community Recreation Centre and Wellesley Pool which are expected to open in early 2020, Bessarion Community Centre which is planned for 2021, and the recent expansions of Birchmount and Earl Bales Community Centres will add an estimated 11,000 new recreation spaces and thousands of hours of leisure program opportunities.

Parks, Forestry and Recreation continues to partner with local schools to help deliver land and aquatic programs using school facilities. In an average year, the division permits space in approximately 132 schools through both the City's long-standing shared use agreement and school pool agreement and through other permits. More recently, PFR has entered into agreements for the future addition of a pool at Davisville PS (TDSB) and for the shared use of the Canoe Landing complex comprising of a community centre, daycare and (TDSB and TCDSB) schools.

Finally, PFR continues to partner with a number of organizations to support a range of programs and community activities. In 2019, 5,000 participants attended four Rink Social pilot programs in partnership with Evergreen, La Pépinière, MLSE Foundation and Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities. Artificial ice rinks were transformed into hubs of free activity on and off the ice featuring warming huts, skate lending, fire pits and more. In 2018, PFR also partnered with Open Streets TO to create a Pop-Up Park with Come Alive Outside which engaged 18,500 participants.

2019 Growth Plan Expansion

As part of the 2019 Budget process, City Council approved an additional 7,500 space for a total cost of $0.539 million gross and $0.417 million net. The 7,500 spaces approved as part of the 2019 Budget process will be focused on children's recreation programs which represent 75 per cent of those waitlisted for programs. The following table outlines how the spaces will be allocated.

Table 3: Growth Plan Phase 2 Targets

Growth Plan Spaces	7,500
Swimming	3,500
Camps	2,250
Learn to / Intro Programs	1,750

The Growth Plan proposed to add 60,000 spaces over a five year period, subject to annual validation of demand and future budget consideration. A gradual approach will be more successful given physical space limitations particularly at Free Centres.

While it is not expected that waitlists will be eliminated entirely, staff do consider the multi-pronged approach effective.

Conclusion

The Growth Plan has been successful in achieving its objective of increasing the supply of high-demand programs and reducing waitlists where unmet demand was greatest. Phase 1 of the plan was successful in increasing the number of registered program spaces offered by 19,459 in learn to swim, summer camp, sports, art and general programming as well as reducing the number of waitlist spaces by 19,394 (9 per cent) in 2018.

Participation visits increased 2.8 per cent and program hours have increased 0.6 per cent in 2018. Overall, leisure visits were up by 5.5 per cent in 2018 compared to the previous year with most of the increased visits to the swim, skate and fitness program areas. In addition to the Growth Plan, new capital investments will add significant recreation service capacity.

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SIGNATURE

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