

## **Status Update on the Regent Park Swim Pilot and Engagement Efforts**

**Date:** November 20, 2019

**To:** Economic and Community Development Committee

**From:** General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation

**Wards:** Ward 13 - Toronto Centre

### **SUMMARY**

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This report responds to Council's direction for the Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division (PFR) to consult with the Access to Recreation Group in Regent Park to address local access to recreation services through programs, partnerships, permitted use of space and through broader community consultation on the Registration and Booking Transformation project, which seeks to replace the Division's registration and facility booking system.

In addition, this report provides a status update on the Regent Park Swim Pilot program, as approved by City Council, as part of the 2019 budget process.

In 2019, PFR established a Community Reference Group, comprised of members from the Access to Recreation Group and local schools, to consult on local recreational service delivery, particularly on the Regent Park Swim Pilot and the replacement of the Division's registration and facility booking system, which is at its end of its lifecycle.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

1. Economic and Community Development Committee receive this report for information.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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

The Regent Park Swim Pilot was approved during the 2019 budget process with a cost of \$0.080 million gross and net in 2019, with the expectation that the pilot be continued into 2020 for a total of \$0.160 million gross and net. A base funding of \$0.080 million gross and net towards the continuation of the Regent Park Swim Pilot will be included in Parks, Forestry and Recreation's 2020 Operating Budget submission.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has been provided the financial impacts associated with this pilot program for review as part of the 2020 budget process.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

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At its meeting of March 7, 2019 City Council increased the 2019 Operating Budget for Parks, Forestry and Recreation by \$80,000 gross and \$0 net to develop a Regent Park Aquatic Program Pilot to increase access for those experiencing complex barriers to program registration, in partnership with Lord Dufferin Junior and Senior Public School, Nelson Mandela Public School and local community organizations, to be offset by a decrease in the 2019 Capital from Current Contribution of \$80,000 and City Council direct the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation to report on the results of this pilot prior to the 2020 budget process, with the expectation that the pilot be continued.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewPublishedReport.do?function=getCouncilDecisionDocumentReport&meetingId=15350>

At its meeting of January 16, 2019 the Economic and Community Development Committee directed the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation report to continue to work with the Access to Recreation Group in Regent Park to address local access to recreation services through programs, partnerships, permitted use of space and through broader community consultation on the modernization of the registration and facility booking project and to provide a status report to the Economic and Community Development Committee in the fall of 2019.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewPublishedReport.do?function=getDecisionDocumentReport&meetingId=15375>

## **COMMENTS**

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### **Service Overview:**

The Regent Park community is served by a number of parks and community recreation assets, including Regent Park Community Centre and Athletic Grounds, Pam McConnell Aquatic Centre and a number of seasonal locations such as artificial ice rinks and wading pools. Programs at the Regent Park Community Centre and Pam McConnell Aquatic Centres are offered at no cost, as these locations are designated free centres.

Each year, approximately 25,000 hours of registered and drop-in recreational programming is offered to the community at these locations. There are approximately 10,000 spaces in various registered and instructional programs, including, but not limited to, learn-to-swim, sports, camps, general interest programs, fitness and leadership opportunities. These programs are well registered, particularly in learn-to-swim and summer camps; though some programs have capacity for additional participants. On average, programs were 81 per cent full in 2018, with waitlists for high demand programs.

In addition to registered programs, there are over 250 free drop-in programs including swimming, sports and fitness programs offered to residents, as well as approximately 400 free and low-cost space rentals for local organizations and community groups each year. These are well used and provide less structured drop-in opportunities which appeal in

particular to youth, adults and older adults with over 200,000 drop-in visits from participants annually.

### **Regent Park Swim Pilot Program:**

In 2019, Council approved the implementation of a swim pilot program in the Regent Park community. The pilot program was developed in collaboration with the Access to Recreation Group, in an effort to increase local access to learn-to-swim programming for students at Nelson Mandela and Lord Dufferin Schools, which are local schools in Regent Park. Taking a co-design approach to addressing local access ensures the program goals meet local community needs. Program outcomes related to this pilot include:

- development of swim competencies and continuous participation in swim programs
- connecting and enrolment of children to pre-leadership and leadership opportunities within the aquatic disciplines
- connecting teens to certification opportunities and employment recruitment events locally and across the city

The pilot program launched in summer 2019 and is designed to deliver three main components:

Component 1 – Summer Aquatic Camp: 120 students enrolled and attended over July and August. Activities included learn-to-swim, aquatic sports activities, land sport and camp activities, lifesaving and first aid, and a weekly inner-city trip.

Component 2 – Learn-to-swim program during school-time: 270 students to participate in a learn-to-swim program as part of their school day. This component began in September and will continue until the end of the school year.

Component 3 – After school aquatic club: 200 spaces in an after-school aquatic club to advance children's swim competencies and enter into pre-leadership programs with a longer term objective of sustained participation and a pathway to employment in Parks, Forestry and Recreation programs. This component began in October, and will continue until June 2020.

To date, participant and parent surveys indicate a positive overall experience and constructive feedback regarding the registration process and program activities. Staff will incorporate feedback into the final pilot evaluation. Thus far, this pilot program is meeting its intended objectives which were to improve local access for children and build their swim competencies. Specifically:

- All participants have been enrolled locally and directly through schools within the Regent Park community, without the need to register on regular registration days;
- 47% of participants to date are new to swim programs and were able to gain access for the first time as a result of this pilot program;
- 72% of participants have completed and achieved learning objectives of the swim level they enrolled in; and
- 100% of participants have reported significant improvement in swim skills and competencies.

## **Ongoing Engagement and Program Enhancements:**

Over the past year, Parks, Forestry and Recreation has been working closely with local stakeholders, including the Access to Recreation Group and continues to monitor demand for programming and respond each planning cycle by making necessary programming changes. In 2018 and 2019, approximately 1,000 additional program spaces were added, specifically in the Regent Park community, through the implementation of the Council-approved Recreation Growth Plan.

Locally responsive outreach, information sessions and programming continue to be developed and implemented in consultation with stakeholders. Recent successes include:

- registration Information sessions to provide leisure counselling and familiarity with the ways to register and permit space in the community to build community capacity
- provision of Recreation amenities for local school use including supervised lunch-time programming, use of skating rink and athletic grounds
- hosting the highly successful Rink Social program and annual Family Day programs to provide opportunities to celebrate winter as a community
- targeted recruitment of youth to participate in the Toronto Sport Leadership Program providing participants with the skills and qualifications required to apply for work in various recreational programs
- local employment information and recruitment sessions to engage local youth and adults in PFR employment opportunities

## **Registration and Booking Transformation:**

The Access to Recreation Group is a community stakeholder engaged in the design and development of the new registration and facility booking software solution. To date, engagement has included an introductory planning session, a focused consultation to document the Access to Recreation Working Group's recommendations and a community consultation with Regent Park residents.

Stakeholder groups have provided valuable input that will be considered by the City's implementation team. Engagement will continue as development progresses, in order to ensure that communities across Toronto lacking the infrastructure or knowledge to access or navigate new technology, continue to be supported.

Parks, Forestry and Recreation continues to work with community groups and organizations in the Regent Park community, specifically the Access to Recreation Group and local schools, in an effort to enhance local access to programs and services and to promote leadership and employment opportunities to local youth and adults.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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