



Legislation Text

File #: AR-20-163, **Version:** 1

TAMRMS#: B06

Re-opening of Recreation Facilities

Presented by: Percy Janke, Director of Emergency Management, Emergency Operations Centre

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the attached plan for the re-opening of recreation facilities, under modified services and service levels, be approved including the following:

- Re-opening of Servus Place Fitness Centre as early as the week of July 19 - 25
- Re-opening of Servus Place Arenas (3) as early as the week of July 19 - 25
- Re-opening of Servus Place Artificial Turf (1) as early as the week of July 19 - 25
- Re-opening of Fountain Park Recreation Centre as early as the week of August 2 - 8, and the
- Re-opening of Jarome Iginla and Kinex Arenas as early as the week of August 9 - 15

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide Council with detailed information, including anticipated service level reductions and a financial impact assessment, to enable a decision on the extent and timing of recreation facilities and program re-openings.

ALIGNMENT TO PRIORITIES IN COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC PLAN

N/A

ALIGNMENT TO LEVELS OF SERVICE DELIVERY

Due to the impact of Order 25/2020 issued by the Chief Medical Officer of Health on June 12, 2020, and the guidelines referenced by that Order, it may be necessary to modify service levels in order to facilitate re-opening of City facilities.

ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL DIRECTION OR MANDATORY STATUTORY PROVISION

N/A

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

On March 13, 2020, recreation facilities were closed by the City of St. Albert in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Shortly thereafter, the Province of Alberta provided direction that all recreation facilities be closed throughout the province.

A comprehensive list of what is currently open is identified in our public facility re-entry plan attached to this report.

The Province of Alberta initially announced that recreation facilities would be part of stage 3 in their re-launch strategy. On June 9, 2020 the province announced the early start of stage 2 (June 12) and expedited recreation facilities to be part of stage 2.

On June 11, 2020 the Emergency Advisory Committee (EAC) endorsed the following guiding principles to plan for the re-opening of recreational and cultural facilities:

- Outdoor facilities will be prioritized over indoor, to extent feasible.
- Facilities will be brought back when they are ready and using cost-recovery to the extent possible.
- Identify what regional partners are doing and consider the impacts of our decisions.
- Where possible, prioritize re-openings to meet the demand of user-groups.
- Impacts to service levels and resource capacity will be considered.
- Organizational risk and responsibilities.

On June 18, 2020 EAC endorsed the re-opening of the following recreation facilities as they were in alignment with both the guiding principles and the language of CMOH Order 25/2020 with minimal financial impact to the City, including:

- Larry Olexiuk Field
- Select city operated ball diamonds (6)
- Woodlands Water Play Park
- Woodlands Beach Volleyball

Not all of the above facilities are open yet, but City Administration is working to ensure that these facilities are re-opened as quickly and as safely as possible.

Administration is making a recommendation for a phased approach to re-opening facilities in this plan to meet user and community need and re-start recreation facility service delivery to St. Albertans in a fiscally responsible manner. The Recreation Facility Re-entry plan (Attachment A) aligns to the guiding principles provided by the Emergency Advisory Committee (EAC), established community demand, and financial modeling based on the best information currently available.

In addition to adhering to the guiding principles, each specific recreation facility plan has been developed in alignment with the only remaining relevant CMOH Order still in effect - Order 25/2020 - and the guidelines referenced in that Order that municipalities are told to comply with “to the extent possible” which is not a defined term. Faced with that ambiguous direction from the Province, Administration has considered modified service delivery expectations, staffing impacts, facility utilization rates, proposed revenues and expenditures, and legal considerations that will be provided confidentially, in order to assist Council in making informed decisions on facility re-openings.

The re-opening of Fountain Park Recreation Centre could happen as early as the week of August 2 - 8 however there is a higher risk from a financial perspective as pools are always more costly to

operate than other recreation amenities. Financial viability will also depend on the readiness of the public to return to the pool which is unknown at this time. The projected net cost to operate FPRC from August - December 2020 is \$960,000. This is a 21% cost recovery in comparison to the 2019 actual cost recovery of 47%. The decision to reopen FPRC could be deferred to be considered as a part of the larger financial impacts to the corporation planned to be presented later in July. If the decision was deferred that would impact the proposed re-opening date.

STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATIONS OR ENGAGEMENT

Engagement has taken place with user groups and sport partners to confirm and understand their facility needs in alignment with provincial guidelines. Local sport groups are continuing to clarify and understand the provincial guidelines in alignment with their operation. They also are working under the guidance of their Provincial Sport Organizations as they continue to prepare for the public's readiness to return to sport.

Administration continues work with local community partner organizations in re-opening their partner facilities to the public while achieving COVID-19 compliance. These facilities include groups like St. Albert Soccer Association, St. Albert Curling Club, St. Albert Minor Baseball, St. Albert Kinsmen and many others. These facilities provide excellence in service to the local sport and recreation community.

Administration continues to communicate with regional partners to understand their recreation facility re-openings and public demand in the region.

IMPLICATIONS OF RECOMMENDATION(S)

Financial:

Financial scenarios and forecasts presented to Council on April 20, 2020 and May 19, 2020 represented "possible" scenarios of facility and program openings along with the financial implications of these timelines. Upon Council approval of facility re-opening plans, Administration will prepare a comprehensive financial forecast for 2020 for all City operations for presentation to Council later in July 2020.

The financial impacts provided for each facility component/program are based on the estimated direct costs of operating that service and do not include fixed costs of running the facility itself. These costs will be considered and included in the comprehensive forecast to be provided at a later date.

It is important to understand that while the cost implications to re-opening the facilities is fairly well known, there is significant risk on the revenue side most specifically linked to spontaneous use and individual program participation such as swimming lessons.

We understand our maximum revenue generating capability based on facility capacity restrictions but what we do not clearly understand is what the actual uptake on our offerings would be. Some things that may impact participation include potential rising numbers of active COVID infections, people's general comfort with public gatherings and resident's personal financial situation. With no historical

events of this nature, there is no real data upon which to base our assumptions. Participation levels and revenue generated will need to be monitored closely through the remainder of this year and likely next.

All financial estimates at this point are based on an assumption that we are not significantly impacted by a second wave of the virus and that current restrictions on gatherings are lifted over time and not restricted further.

Legal / Risk:

The Legal Department will continue to provide confidential legal advice to Council on this, and related topics associated with facility and program re-openings.

Program or Service:

Recreation opportunities benefit the mental, social and physical health of community members, and so while extremely important to offer these services, it is important to note that the COVID modified services may look very different to community members than previous operations. Modifications can include maximum gathering sizes, physical distancing, health and safety modifications and ultimately, they may change the user experience and limit flexibility of facility operations.

It is important to note that program and facility offerings may have to evolve if the Province of Alberta modifies its guidelines in the coming weeks and months, or if the legal obligation to follow those guidelines ceases to be qualified by the words “to the extent possible” as is currently the case under Order 25/2020. The final result is anticipated to be a return to previous service levels and user experience with high levels of user satisfaction - however, at this point there is an undetermined timeline to reach that goal.

Organizational:

The approval of these recommendations will result in the recall of laid off employees and return of some employees on redeployment in other departments back to the Recreation and Parks department. This is positive from a Human Resources perspective as it signals broadly to employees that recovery is happening, and peers of these workers would see their colleagues returning. With the return of staff to their home departments, existing service levels within Public Works should be maintained through the hiring of seasonal casuals.

However, there may be some risk of negative public image from residents in terms of value for money of the services if staff are recalled and revenues or use of the facilities is lower than expected.

ALTERNATIVES AND IMPLICATIONS CONSIDERED

1. Council could postpone consideration of this matter until July 6, 2020 when remaining Recreational and Cultural Facilities are being presented, and by which time more detailed confidential legal advice is anticipated to be available. This would allow for analysis of the legal advice at the June 30, 2020 Committee of the Whole meeting, and would also allow more in-depth consideration of service levels at that meeting, both factors that could impact Council's

decision making process -- However delaying the decision comes with a risk of delaying the proposed timelines for facility re-opening and could potentially jeopardize revenue from a number of ice bookings.

2. Council could delay the decision on Fountain Park Recreation Centre until the modelling of the whole corporate financial situation is ready for presentation to Council later in July.

Report Date: June 29, 2020

Author(s): Percy Janke and Diane Enger

Department: Emergency Operations Centre

Deputy Chief Administrative Officer: Kerry Hilts

Chief Administrative Officer: Kevin Scoble