

CITY OF FORT SASKATCHEWAN

Notice of Motion – Harbour Pool Swimming Lesson Registration

Motion:

That Council direct Administration to bring back a report by June 1, 2016 with policy proposals outlining the possibility of aiding in aquatic program subscription issues by looking at an advance registration period for residents.

Purpose:

To determine whether Council wishes to proceed with the motion put forward by Councillor Randhawa.

Background:

Key messages received from residents regarding Pool registration days:

Following program registration days, feedback is received regarding the challenges of getting children registered into prime time swimming lesson programs. Since 2014, this feedback has been especially notable through social media. Staff review the feedback and continually look for new ways to accommodate more registrations, based on the needs and wants of citizens.

Typical feedback received:

1. e-Connect is always overloaded on the first day of registration;
2. how to successfully register for programs (on-line, in person at a City facility, or phoning in);
3. classes are full; and
4. residents are looking for more information.

Current Situation:

Harbour Pool is committed to providing a safe aquatics environment open to everyone. The Pool is programmed to meet the various demands of the community by providing City of Fort Saskatchewan residents with water safety education in the form of swimming lessons, public swim, fitness classes, leadership programs, and specialty programs, such as the Piranhas Swim Club.

The Pool schedule is reviewed regularly for efficiencies and areas of improvement. Harbour Pool has unique design features that limit the amount of safe instructor stations that can be provided to the community. For example, high walls, varied depth in shallow areas, and the Pool's design limits the capacity of lessons which can be programmed at any given time.

The City recognizes that there are limited amounts of spaces available for the growing population in swimming lessons during the peak desirable times. Due to the growth in the region, aquatic centres from nearby municipalities are reporting similar registration challenges, such as:

1. lessons fill within minutes; and
2. limited or no room to expand swimming programs.

What has the City done to create more lesson spaces and fill existing spaces?

1. Increased class sizes to the maximum number recommended by Red Cross.
2. Created additional lessons in the fall of 2014, by starting lessons earlier in September and running until late December.
3. Run lessons during Swim Club booking times, noting that classes offered during this time are limited to younger age groups.
4. Prime-time days (Tuesday/Thursday evenings, Fridays, and Saturdays) are currently utilizing the full capacity of the Pool in order to provide as many safe quality lessons to the public as is possible.
5. To alleviate waitlists and attempt to fill programs to capacity, staff call individuals placed on a waitlist to offer available programs. Available programs are advertised at the facility, the City's website and on Facebook. It has been noted that many guests are looking for something specific to their schedule and not necessarily taking what is available.
6. Classes are monitored for trends, and program types are adjusted accordingly for the following sessions.

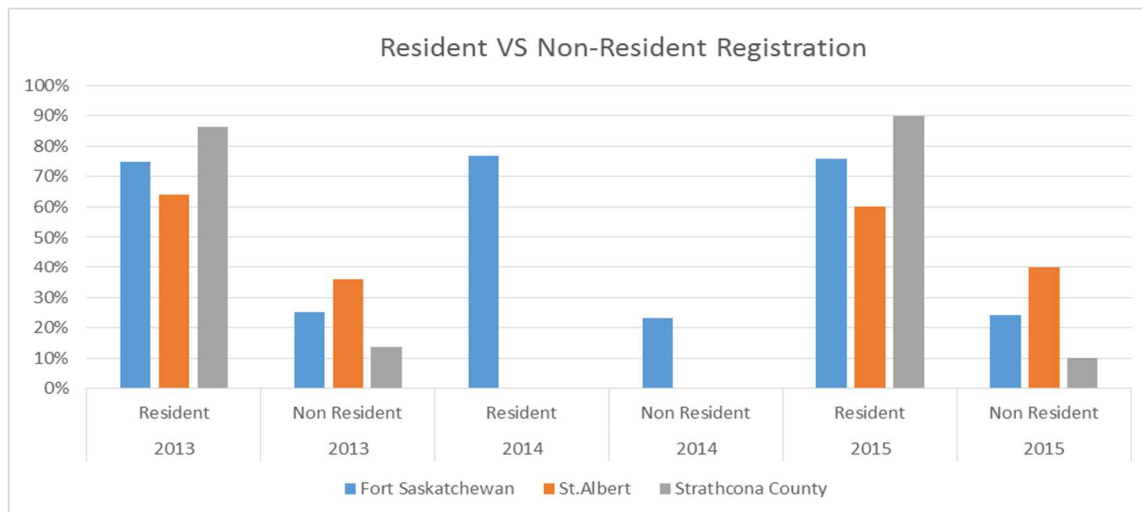
Residents versus Non-Residents:

At this time, Harbour Pool does not distinguish between residents and non-residents. This contributes to maintaining positive intermunicipal relationships and efficient Pool operations.

Why the City should maintain the current registration process and not create a resident only preference:

1. To allow community residents the choice to access swimming lessons that work with their family's schedules and lifestyles, it is beneficial to have a relationship with our neighbouring municipalities. While there are people registering for City of Fort Saskatchewan lessons from outside the community, it is believed this is consistent with the number of Fort Saskatchewan residents signing up for aquatic programs in other municipalities. Fort Saskatchewan residents may sign up for lessons in other communities for reasons, such as work location, pool design preference, swim club association, and specialty training (leadership programs, diving, synchronized swimming, etc.), in addition to the ability to find programming that better meets their schedules. We would anticipate that if we created barriers to outside residents registering in our programs, our residents would eventually become subject to the same barriers in other municipalities.
2. Due to our proximity to the City of Edmonton and Strathcona County, the City's ability to attract and maintain staff has been limited at times. There is a general trend in aquatics that lesson participants will move on to take lifeguard training courses at the same facility in which they took their lessons. Those future lifeguards then have the potential to become staff at the facility. Any type of restricted registration process could result in residents enrolling in lessons in a different community which may slightly affect the recruitment of lifeguards in the future.
3. Non-resident restrictions for swimming lesson registration have the potential to create the following situations:
 - a) Dishonesty – people could potentially set up accounts using addresses of people they know. Verification of residency could become difficult and a time consuming process, leading to inaccurate statistics. This could result in the City's databases being filled with inaccurate information.
 - b) Breakdown of municipal relationships.

- c) Broader economic impact – rural residents use other City facilities and businesses in the community. For example, a non-resident who is registered in swimming lessons may be annual pass holders at City facilities and frequent local businesses.



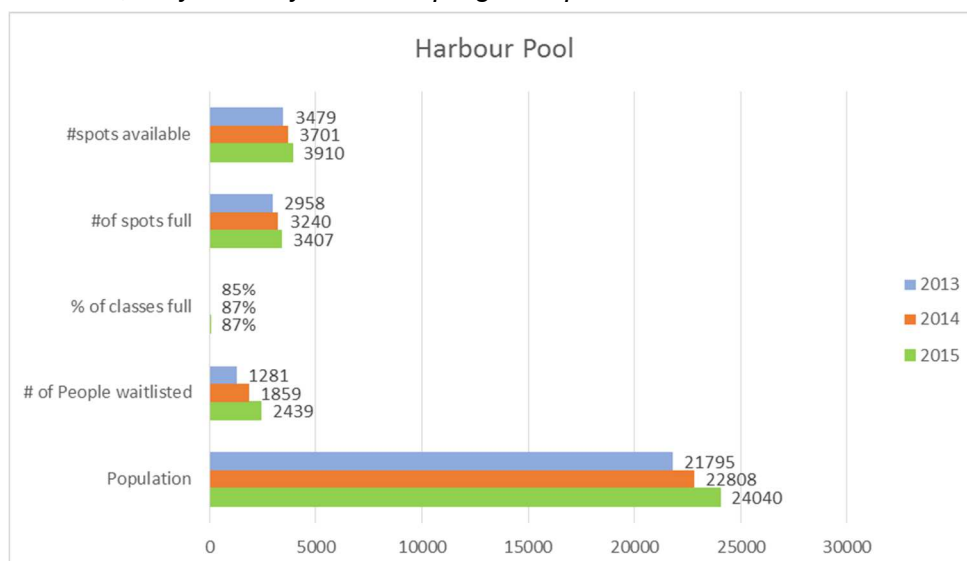
* Please note, 2014 information from St. Albert and Strathcona County was unavailable at this time.

Are programs actually full?

One common belief is that all lesson programs are full. The chart below shows there are still spaces available in lessons. This shows that the issue is with the prime time capacities of our Pool and not overall lesson availability. The Pool schedule and space are reviewed on an on-going basis and staff are continually looking for efficiencies and ways to increase what can be offered to the community.

Annual Program Comparison of Red Cross Lessons

- * Note that waitlist numbers can represent the same person waitlisted for multiple courses; however, they will only take one program spot.



Where do we go from here?

1. Harbour Pool staff continually review the registration processes and Pool programming by exploring different options for program delivery and optimizing the usage of the Pool space where possible.
2. Review the registration process to ensure fairness and clarity for registrants.
3. Provide consistent messaging to residents regarding Pool registration, which will include:
 - updating the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and reposting on the City's website;
 - update and promote Successful Registration Day information;
 - ensuring the "busy page" on eConnect has proper messaging; and
 - provide all staff with key messages to communicate to residents.
4. Set up an inquiry process for residents regarding swimming lessons and registration. This will help identify key points of what residents are looking for in the City's program delivery model, as well as the registration process.

Recommendation:

Administration recommends maintaining the current registration process. The Pool staff will continue to look for efficiencies until more aquatics space is available in the community.

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Submitted to:	City Council	Date:	April 12, 2016