

**PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURE COMMISSION**

TO: MAYOR AND COUNCILLORS

SUBJECT: AQUATIC WAITLIST REDUCTION AND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
SWIMMING LESSON PILOT

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**THAT** the report titled “Aquatic Waitlist Reduction and Elementary School Swimming Lesson Pilot” from the General Manager Parks, Recreation and Culture, dated June 13, 2023, be received for information.

**REPORT**

The Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission, at its meeting held on June 13, 2023, received and adopted the *attached* report providing information on the activities being undertaken to reduce the waitlists from aquatic programs and to increase swimming opportunities for elementary school students in Burnaby.

On behalf of the Parks,  
Recreation and Culture  
Commission,

Councillor S. Dhaliwal  
Chair

Commissioner R. Kent  
Vice Chair

**TO:** PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURE COMMISSION (PRCC)  
**FROM:** GENERAL MANAGER PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURE  
**SUBJECT:** **AQUATIC WAIT LIST REDUCTION AND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SWIMMING LESSON PILOT**  
**PURPOSE:** To provide information to Commission and Council on the activities being undertaken to reduce the waitlists for aquatic programs and to increase swimming opportunities for elementary school students in Burnaby.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**THAT** the report titled “Aquatic Wait List Reduction and Elementary School Swimming Lesson Pilot” from the General Manager Parks, Recreation and Culture dated June 13, 2023 be received for information; and

**THAT** Commission forward a copy of the report titled “Aquatic Wait List Reduction and Elementary School Swimming Lesson Pilot” from the General Manager Parks, Recreation and Culture dated June 13, 2023 to Council for information.

### **1.0 POLICY SECTION**

This initiative falls in line with the City’s Social Sustainability Strategy, the Burnaby Promise and the Burnaby Strategic Plan.

### **2.0 BACKGROUND**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Lifeguard-Instructor training and general Learn to Swim programs were stopped Canada-wide from March through October of 2020 and then only offered in a reduced capacity until all pandemic restrictions lifted in late 2022. As a result, there has been a backlog of demand for these programs as families seek to make up missed swim lessons during the last three years.

Similar to other Canadian municipalities, the City has been facing challenges in terms of reduced availability of staff. The lack of available, trained aquatic staff has adversely affected the City’s ability to meet the public’s demand for aquatic programs and services.

In response to these challenges, on February 6, 2023, Council directed staff to develop a plan to reduce the waitlists for swimming classes in Burnaby. Additionally, Council instructed staff to explore a partnership with the Burnaby School District to introduce a swimming program for elementary students in the 2023/2024 school year. To address these issues, on March 27, 2023 Council approved a new position, Manager of Aquatics, aimed at enhancing the City’s delivery of aquatic services and programs.

**3.0 GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Managing wait list and optimising swimming lesson times**

To effectively manage the waitlists and optimize swimming lesson times, staff conducted a manual review of the current waitlists to gain insights into the number of participants registered, their levels, and the courses in demand. The review identified that many individuals were listed on multiple waitlists, which skewed the true demand for lessons (*Attachments 1 and 2*).

In order to address the demand and improve program delivery, staff are exploring options, including:

- Implementing linear programming techniques;
- Allocating dedicated lesson times across the entire pool;
- Adjusting lesson set lengths to accommodate different needs;
- Introducing flexible instructor and staffing models;
- Condensing high-demand lessons to accommodate more participants;
- Introducing drop-in lessons for water safety exposure;
- Scheduling back-to-back lessons during peak demand times; and
- Releasing two seasonal lesson sets simultaneously.

While process improvements can help ensure optimal space utilization, significantly reducing waitlists and sustaining the desired level of service is contingent upon the City's ability to recruit qualified staff.

Recruitment of aquatics staff is an ongoing process. *Attachment 3* provides a summary of recruitment efforts over the past five years. So far in 2023, 46 Lifeguard-Instructor staff members have been hired. However, current trends indicate that staff are working fewer hours compared to previous years, necessitating the need for additional staff to maintain the same level of service. As new staff members are brought on-board, priority is given to adding swim lessons that cater to the highest demand levels.

The Parks, Recreation, and Culture (PRC) and People and Culture (P&C) departments are actively researching leading recruitment practices in the aquatics market and will develop a comprehensive Burnaby Aquatics Staffing Strategy. This strategy will prioritize equity, diversity, and inclusion, with the goal of retaining employees and recruiting the necessary number of qualified staff to meet the residents' program demands. Key highlights of the strategy include:

- Establishing an in-house aquatics training school with a "bursary program" to remove financial barriers for low-income Burnaby youth, such as registration fees, equipment, transportation, etc. Staff will work closely with community agencies and the Burnaby School District to identify and support young individuals in enrolling in the program;
- Collaborating with the Lifesaving Society to connect with people from other countries who have accepted aquatic credentials and could work seasonally for the City; and

- Exploring funding opportunities with Work BC to provide training for adults seeking new job opportunities in the aquatics field.

To enhance recruitment efforts and remain competitive, the City of Burnaby has implemented immediate changes, including:

- Reducing the number of qualifications required for a Lifeguard-Instructor from three to two by eliminating the Lifesaving Society Instructors award requirement; and
- Offering a premium to lifeguard-Instructors who hold their Lifesaving Society Instructor award when instructing Bronze Star, Medallion and Cross-programs, which are pre-requisites for Lifeguard certification. This will aid in the development of new lifeguards.

**Developing a pilot project/ swimming program with the Burnaby School District**

Currently, the City of Burnaby offers swim lessons for Lakeview, Lochdale, Second Street, and Saint Helen's elementary schools, utilizing outdoor pools.

To further enhance aquatic opportunities for Burnaby's children, the City and the Burnaby School District have established a working group. The primary objective of this collaboration is to develop a swim program that aligns with the school curriculum. By integrating swimming lessons into the school day, the program aims to enhance water safety skills among Burnaby children.

The working group will explore various aspects of the program, including its structure, implementation, and integration with the existing curriculum. The ultimate goal is to provide an accessible avenue for Burnaby children to participate in swimming lessons and acquire essential water safety skills.

Through this partnership, the City and the Burnaby School District are committed to promoting the well-being and safety of the community's children by offering swimming education as a valuable component of their education.

**4.0 COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

- Not applicable

**5.0 FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

There are no financial considerations with this report. Any initiatives that require funding outside of PRC's current operating budget will be brought forward for Council's consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Morrison-Clark, General Manager Parks, Recreation and Culture

**ATTACHMENTS**

- Attachment 1 – Registration by class type.
- Attachment 2 – Registration summary table.
- Attachment 3 – Summary of recruitment efforts over the last five years.

**REPORT CONTRIBUTORS**

This report was prepared by Eric Bientjes, Director Recreation, and reviewed by Isabelle Taillon, Recreation Manager, Carol Chard, Aquatics Manager and Anita Bhandari, General Manager People and Culture.