

# BRIEFING

Item # 5.2.3

**Community Services Briefing to  
SPC on Community and Protective Services  
2019 September 11**

**ISC: UNRESTRICTED  
CPS2019-1074**

## **Progress Update: Review of Lifeguarding Provisions**

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### **PURPOSE OF BRIEFING**

In response to changing lifeguarding standards and Notice of Motion C2018-1446, Calgary Recreation has consulted with The Royal Lifesaving Society – Alberta and Northwest Territories Branch (Lifesaving Society) to begin reviewing lifeguarding requirements and practices at City-operated pools. Initial findings indicate Calgary Recreation will need to alter current standard of practice to meet industry best practices for lifeguarding. Once the review of all City-operated sites is complete, an implementation plan with a net zero budget impact will be developed by Administration.

### **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

#### **Background**

The Alberta Public Health Act, the Alberta Public Swimming Pools Regulations and the Alberta Health, Public Health and Compliance Pool Standards contain legislation that governs the operation of public swimming pools. The legislation specifically requires that all pools develop and follow a Safety and Supervision Plan based on current industry best practices.

The safety standards set by the Lifesaving Society have been applied by the courts as industry best practice and are followed by Calgary Recreation. The standards set by the Lifesaving Society are informed by fatality inquiries across the province and country. Courts have found that a lack of lifeguard supervision or an inadequate number of lifeguards on duty in a facility for the given operating conditions has resulted in injuries or fatalities in Canadian swimming pools.

Calgary is not alone in its need to update our practices. The City of Edmonton, following two drowning fatalities in 2012 reviewed their lifeguarding practices, resulting in an increased lifeguarding requirement. These fatalities occurred under the pre-existing 1:75 lifeguarding ratio.

#### **Initial Review and Findings**

Working with the Lifesaving Society, a two-step process was identified to effectively complete the lifeguarding review, including a Lifeguard Positioning Analysis and Safety and Supervision Plan review in light of upcoming changes to standards. Information on these processes is outlined in the Attachment. Lifeguard Positioning Analyses are routinely done on each City-operated basin every five years or when conditions change. Safety and Supervision Plan reviews are conducted annually.

To initiate this work and report back in the time frames directed, Administration reviewed four of 12 City-operated aquatic facilities: Killarney Aquatic & Recreation Centre, Sir Winston Churchill Aquatic & Recreation Centre, Thornhill Aquatic & Recreation Centre, and Village Square Leisure Centre. These facilities were chosen because they are heavily utilized and are representative of the variety of City-operated site designs.

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The Lifesaving Society has provided Calgary Recreation with a report of recommendations from the reviews at each of the four facilities examined. Administration is in the process of evaluating the recommendations to ensure compliance with legislation.

The joint review has found that the initial four facilities have sightline concerns. These concerns present challenges to lifeguarding and result in the recommendation from the Lifesaving Society to change current practices. Specifically, most of the facilities require two zones of lifeguard supervision where previously only a single zone was used.

Administration has met with aquatic representatives from non-City operated swimming pools in Calgary to network and share learnings to validate and evaluate if City practices align with other local service providers and industry best practice. Application of the emerging new standards is inconsistent to date.

Calgary Recreation has met with the Law Department to understand the legal implications of the recommendations from the Lifesaving Society. Moving forward, Administration will need to conform to evolving industry best practices to be compliant with provincial legislation.

## **Next Steps**

The findings from the four initially reviewed facilities, with feedback from The City's Law Department, have indicated that going forward Calgary Recreation will need to alter its current single zone lifeguarding supervision to a two zone practice to meet emerging industry best practices for lifeguarding.

The remaining eight aquatic sites will be reviewed. Some of these facilities have similar designs to the four initially analyzed, allowing the process to be expedited. Once reviews are completed, implementation plans will be developed, including adjusted operating hours, basin availability and programming to minimize service and customer impact.

## **ATTACHMENT(S)**

Lifeguard System Review