



September 10, 2019

The City of Calgary
Recreation
700 Macleod Trail S.E.
Calgary, AB T2G 2M3

ATTN: James McLaughlin, Acting Director

RE: Report to the SPC on Community and Protective Services: Flatwater Pool Business and Service Continuity Update

Dear James,

On behalf of the Beltline Urban Development Committee of the Beltline Neighbourhoods Association (BNA), we would like to firstly thank Calgary Recreation, Calgary City Council and the SPC on Community and Protective Services for providing us with an opportunity to share our perspective on the upcoming closure of the Beltline Aquatic Centre, currently scheduled for January 1, 2020. We are requesting that the Committee recommend that Council provide bridge funding and direct Recreation to reconsider this deadline so that alternatives can be adequately and fairly evaluated.

The BNA has had an opportunity to meet with Recreation, tour the facility and speak with affected parties. We remain extremely concerned that the closure of this facility will have a lasting impact on our community of 25,000 residents (which is also the most densely populated and among the most walkable in the city) in addition to the large nearby Centre City employment base.

We understand that Recreation was obligated to contribute to the the \$60 million in budget cuts recently mandated by City Council. While we recognize that the decision to close the facility was an extremely difficult one, we don't believe that the plan adequately considered the needs of our population, and in particular, vulnerable members of our community. We are deeply concerned that the services provided at the Beltline Aquatic Centre will be difficult, if not impossible, to sufficiently replace or re-accommodate elsewhere.

The Municipal Development Plan (MDP) identifies a goal to evenly distribute the City's population growth between established areas and new communities. Recent census data has demonstrated that we are continuing to trend away from achieving this outcome. At the same time, we continue to see divestment in some of the Beltline's critical infrastructure (the closure of the City's last remaining Centre City police station being another recent example). This is in spite of the fact that the Beltline has one of the City's largest resident and business populations and contributes substantially to the City's overall tax base (historically, second only to downtown). The trend we continue to see is one where Beltline's contribution to municipal tax revenues goes to subsidize infrastructure for new communities while investment in our own remains flat. Over time, this will make it difficult for the Beltline to live up to its potential as a vibrant, complete community that supports not just young professionals, but also families and residents covering the entire socioeconomic spectrum.

With respect to the closure of the Beltline Aquatic Centre, we respectfully request that Calgary Recreation and the SPC on Community and Protective services consider the following:

- Based on our conversations with Recreation, we understand that the decision to close the Beltline Aquatic Centre was made principally because of its relatively low attendance (even compared to other tier 1 pools) and the degree to which user fees are resultantly tax-subsidized relative to comparable facilities. While we don't dispute that the facility sees low attendance, we would contend that it also serves as a vital community resource and provides services that cannot reasonably be re-accommodated at either Repsol Sport Centre or the Gray Family Eau Claire YMCA -- the only remaining facilities within the community's catchment once Beltline and Inglewood are closed. These facilities are also not comparable to the Beltline Aquatic Centre in terms of scale, user base, services, or proximity (Repsol for example also functions as a major competition venue, which limits availability to members of the general public).

- The metric that council has previously directed Recreation to use for the establishment of new facilities is based on a catchment population of 90,000. This metric clearly assumes that a large number of users will access these facilities by personal automobile. We believe that a significant proportion of Beltline Aquatic Centre users arrive on foot or by other alternative means such as bicycle. This is one of the factors that makes Beltline Aquatic Centre unique, accessible, inclusive and therefore impossible to rationalize using the City's catchment metric. Arguably this metric all but guarantees that no new facility would be deemed 'feasible' for the Beltline at any point in the near future (even at buildout, our population will be insufficient to trigger this threshold) -- an absurd fact for an urban community with our density and population base.
- Once the facility closes, the City forfeits any practical means to consider strategies for making it more operationally sustainable. It will no longer be possible to explore ways to advertise or raise awareness about the facility's programs to generate higher attendance, change or adjust operational models, or repurpose portions of the facility for other more relevant and economical uses. Once the facility closes its doors, these opportunities are gone and the critical services that the facility provides will be gone as well.

To help ensure that the above concerns and a strategy for replacing the facility's programming can be appropriately evaluated, we would respectfully request that the SPC of Community and Protective services make a recommendation for bridge funding that would allow the facility to stay open long enough for a more extensive plan to be prepared. This would also allow for adequate time to consider alternate funding strategies, operational models, changing operators, changing programming, reviewing the fee structure, establishing community partnerships, options for closing or repurposing portions of the facility (including perhaps the pool itself) for uses that may be more appropriate and cheaper to maintain.

Thank you for considering the BNA's feedback.

Sincerely,



Peter Oliver
President
Beltline Neighbourhoods Association



Tyson Bolduc
Director of Planning
Beltline Neighbourhoods Association

CC: Councillor Jeromy Farkas, Ward 11
Councillor Evan Woolley, Ward 8



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