Submission for: Preliminary 2024-2027 Multi-Year Operating and Capital Budgets re: Pool Closures - Opposition to Closures

Standing Policy Committee Community Services, Meeting date: Sunday March 17, 2024

Executive Policy Committee, Meeting dates: Friday , March 15, Tuesday, March 19

Council, Meeting date: Wednesday, March 20

Please see my letter of opposition below:

I am writing you all today in opposition to the Closures of Windsor Park and Happyland Park Outdoor Pools. These areas are growing communities with a tremendous amount of infill housing with an imminent significant increase in densification with the Olexa project at the old Packers site. The Olexa project alone, will add an additional 2-3000 units in very close proximity to the Happyland site. Those 2-3000 units will translate into thousands of adults and children with recreational needs and the current Happyland Park Pool, when properly staffed was often at capacity, with limited access.

How can the city justify these moves when the pool barely meets the needs of the community as it stands? Replacing these facilities with Splash pads and the like will only serve a small portion of the community and will certainly place more young adolescents at risk with little or no options. What are the best possible outcomes for destroying the pools at Happyland. Am I to understand as well that there is currently no proviso for even a Splash Pad at this location?!? Taking away all water access to folks that attend this site would criminal. The wading pool at the Happyland location has been understaffed and often un-opened for years as it currently stands.

I do hope that Councillors will take note of the fact that Happyland Pool was a vibrant and well attended location prior to the pandemic and perhaps a few years prior. Staffing shortages, (and I am well aware of the ongoing staffing shortages having witnessed personally a grandson participate in the intake and intense training of new life guards and instructors over the past year for many city locations) have led to Poll closures on weekends and shortened hours over the past number of years.

We attended Happyland Pool as a family with 3 children on countless occasions over the years. My children and grandchildren continued to attend as youth and adolescents. What will they and future generations do going forward? An awful lot of those attending the pool and living in the area are blue collar and not everybody has a vehicle. I am very aware of the current and significant increase in attendance by recent arrivals to Winnipeg; representing a cultural cross section that would certainly bring a smile to Folklorama! We continue to invite people from all over to move to Winnipeg - and we want to reduce the services provided!?

Where are these people going to go for a family based recreational outing that provides for cooling on our increasingly hot summer days!

A number of years ago, the city saw fit to support a fledgling group of disc-golf enthusiasts and invest in establishing the first formal City of Winnipeg Disc Golf location at Happyland Park. This has increased attendance at Happyland Park 100 fold and this during all seasons. This tiny piece of green-space; barely a few acres, has become a recreational home to countless individuals, not only from the Norwood-St-Boniface area but from all over the city.

Happyland pool is the oasis needed during a hot summer day and is necessary to ensuring a basic quality of life for the residents of the community and greater Winnipeg.

When we take into account, the numbers of people attending the pools when they are fully and consistently operational, outdoor pools provide an inexpensive family friendly activity that promotes healthy living and community relationships. These are infrastructural elements that need to be maintained and or regenerated; not removed!

I sincerely hope that the City will see clear enough to do an about face on this decision and ensure that Happyland Pool and others slated for demolition throughout the city are maintained and promoted as one of the essential and wonderful things that make Winnipeg a great place to live and raise a family!

Sincerely,

Gary Tessier