



**SUBJECT:** Recreation Direct Delivered Program update  
**TO:** Environment, Infrastructure & Community Services Cttee.  
**FROM:** Recreation, Community and Culture

Report Number: RCC-01-23

Wards Affected: all

File Numbers: 915-01

Date to Committee: January 12, 2023

Date to Council: January 24, 2023

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### **Recommendation:**

Receive and file recreation, community and culture department report RCC-01-23 regarding an update to Recreation Direct Delivered Program.

### **PURPOSE:**

#### **Vision to Focus Alignment:**

- Increase economic prosperity and community responsive city growth
- Building more citizen engagement, community health and culture
- Deliver customer centric services with a focus on efficiency and technology transformation

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### **Background and Discussion:**

On March 25, 2019, staff received the following staff direction:

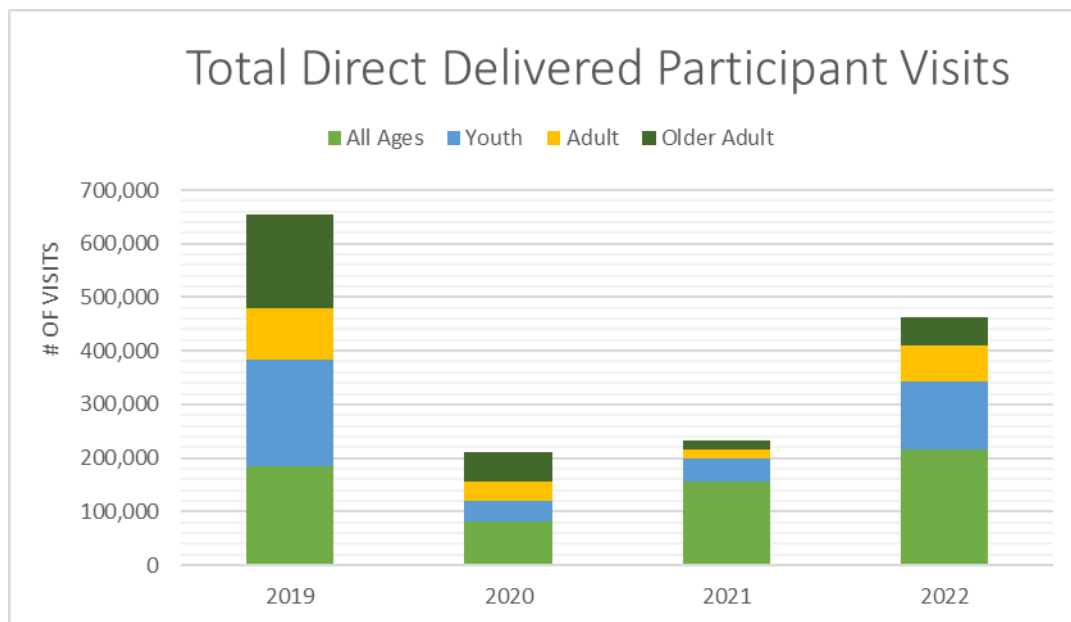
Direct the Director of Parks and Recreation to conduct a workshop for council that provides an overview of current practices and opportunities in recreation services with a focus on youth and people with special needs and report back with opportunities for the 2020 budget. (SD-10-19)

The workshop was postponed due to the pandemic. Since then, staff have realized that a more comprehensive review of all direct delivered programs including adult, older

adult, youth, and individuals with a disability is required. A status update report was planned for the end of 2022; this report is meant to satisfy the request.

Since March 2020, community need, interest and expectations have vastly changed as related to recreation. Despite the overall impact from safety measures and provincial regulations, City recreation direct-delivered programs (e.g., swimming lessons, camps, fitness classes) were able to adapt, bounce back from frequent closures and navigate a rapidly changing environment while trying to adjust to important shifts in customer behavior. Post pandemic has brought on new industry trends, a focus on outdoor recreation and passive use assets, and a renewed need for connections.

City staff have worked tirelessly since March 2020 to create flexible program offerings that would satisfy provincial restrictions and health and safety measures with a few goals in mind, such as maintaining service delivery and providing diverse options catering to customer preferences (e.g., virtual, small group). Recreation, Community and Culture has shifted on a dime, often re-designing programs in a few hours to meet new regulations that would take effect a day or two later. Despite these efforts, two and a half years later, we continue to witness lower participation numbers in many direct-delivered programs compared to pre-pandemic.



*Note: "All ages" refers to programs that are open to all.*

In addition, the following have impacted and continue to impact recreation trends and offerings in Burlington:

- The [Framework for Recreation](#) policy approved by council in February 2020 which highlights the Recreation, Community and Culture's (RCC) department vision, values, principles and goals for the provision of recreation in our community.
- The City's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy as well as commitment to Truth and Reconciliation and how RCC will continue to offer barrier-free programs.
- There has been a growth of private recreation providers and facilities in Burlington, and we have seen families gravitate towards those.

Staff are bringing forward background information for committee's consideration in advance of a fulsome program review commencing in 2023 which will include engagement and a workshop with council.

### **Strategy/process**

In efforts to be as responsive as possible during the various milestones since March 2020, staff have engaged with their customers and made tweaks to program offerings. To prepare for a more fulsome service review; staff have done research, trends analysis and customer engagement and draw the various generic conclusions:

- There is a new demand for adult daytime program offerings due to the work from home/flexible work environment.
- Specialty programs are growing in popularity (e.g., theatre and music programs).
- There is a preference for quality over quantity. For example, customers prefer private swim lessons to larger group despite the additional cost.
- There is a higher value placed on "human connections" and as a result very little lasting interest for virtual programs.
- Due to inflation and the economic climate, families are adjusting their budgets and have less discretionary spending to allocate to items like recreation.
- Program participation may continue to look different and therefore should not be compared to pre-pandemic state.

Recreation, Community and Culture staff will conduct a direct delivered program review in 2023 while considering key service priorities:

#### **1. Stabilization**

- Refers to service stabilization, continuity of operations, and staff attraction/retention. Customers have told us on numerous occasions that consistent service is paramount for them to achieve their personal health and wellness objectives.

- Stabilization may mean moving forward with programs that have lower participation to allow time to rebuild. It implies a review of need and resource allocation which could lead to new standards for instructor to participant ratios.

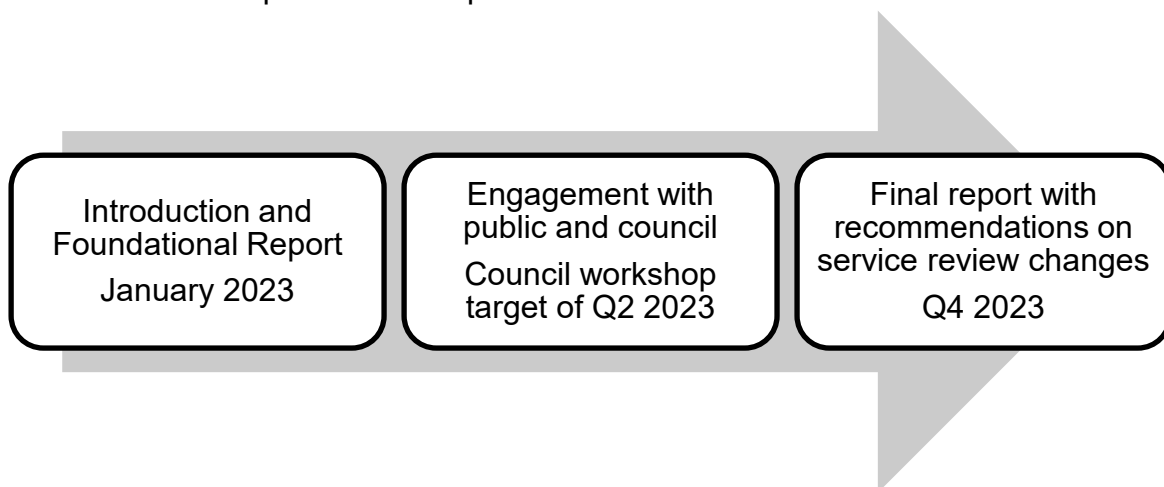
## **2. Strengthening community partnerships**

- Refers to collaboration between direct-delivered and partner-led services to ensure Burlington is serving residents holistically as it relates to Recreation and Leisure.

## **3. Growth**

- Refers to supporting the growth of the community with program offerings while pro-actively planning for future and long-term needs. Considerations will be given to current and future population demographics in Burlington.

This review will take place in a few phases:



The time has come to do a deep dive of the menu of programs offered; analyzing participation, alignment with emerging trends, rates and fees and cost recovery ratio, and ensuring alignment with the [Framework for Recreation](#).

Community Trends	Rates and Fees	Engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What are the emerging trends in recreation and in Burlington?</li><li>• What are the short and long term anticipated needs?</li><li>• Are we currently meeting these need? (either through direct delivered or partner-led offerings)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are programs priced appropriately to drive desired participation?</li><li>• What cost-recovery ratio should staff target?</li><li>• What programs should remain low/no cost?</li><li>• Where does sponsorship fit among rates and fees?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What are we doing well? Not well?</li><li>• What does the community want more of?</li><li>• Are there any continuous improvement initiative that could improve program delivery and achieve higher participation?</li></ul>

The main objective is to understand the post pandemic “next normal” in recreation so we can continue to deliver customer service excellence while enhancing the quality of life for everyone, every day and ensure resources and tax supported funds are allocated to best serve the customer.

### Options Considered

Staff could continue to run programs in hopes that participation eventually increase, and it may correct itself in a few years. However, conducting a review is a more pro-active approach and will drive at a solution and resolution in a shorter timeline.

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### Financial Matters:

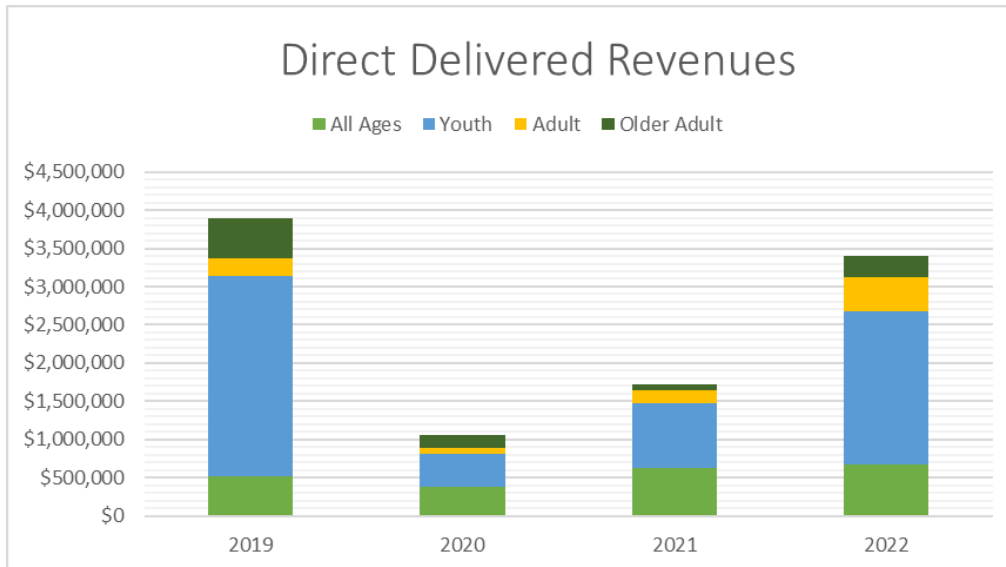
At this time, and until the review has been completed, staff do not have a complete analysis of the financial impacts. It is expected the project will confirm that:

- Rate categories should be consistent across Recreation Services.
- Tax subsidization for various program categories needs to change.
- Processes are currently too rigid to allow the ongoing flexibility required to meet ever-changing customer needs.

Recreation program revenues were the lowest in 2020 due to the many closures, started to recover in 2021 and continued to increase in 2022.

2022 revenues are still lower than those from 2019, a similar relationship to participation trends shown above. Staff expect these revenue impacts to persist in 2023 and as a

result have projected through the 2023 budget; \$195,923 in permanent revenue losses and \$683,935 in temporary revenue losses.



*Note: "All ages" refers to programs that are open to all.*

Since March 2020, staff have done their best to mitigate financial impacts, strategies implemented include cancelling or combining programs with low enrollment, selling last-minute discounted space to maximize facility utilization, boosting sales for various programs with enhanced marketing campaigns, to name a few.

Following the service review, staff will conduct a detailed financial analysis and bring it back to committee before the end of 2023.

### **Total Financial Impact**

Not applicable.

### **Source of Funding**

Not applicable.

### **Other Resource Impacts**

Not applicable.

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## **Climate Implications**

Climate implications will be included as part of the scope of the review. Staff strive to limit or eliminate carbon emissions associated with programs and products utilized.

Depending on the program, weather could have an impact and mitigation strategies are implemented if applicable. An example of this is for summer camps, if the weather is too hot for outdoor play, staff look for shaded area, add-in water play, and limit time spent outdoors.

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### **Engagement Matters:**

Staff will inform the community and partners of this program review and seek to engage with both on needs, current service offerings, continuous improvement initiatives. Staff will also engage with committee through a workshop to be held in 2023.

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### **Conclusion:**

Recreation direct delivered programs must undergo a formal review to ensure that they are aligned with the goals of the [Framework for Recreation](#) and that they meet the needs of the community.

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Respectfully submitted,

Emilie Cote

Manager of Recreation Services

Ext. 7353

### **Report Approval:**

All reports are reviewed and/or approved by Department Director, the Chief Financial Officer and the Executive Director of Legal Services & Corporation Counsel.