

# Programs or Hours of Operation at City Facilities

(M. Walters)

## Recommendation

That the June 20, 2018, Citizen Services report CR\_5818, be received for information.

## Previous Council/Committee Action

At the March 20, 2018, City Council meeting, Councillor M. Walters made the following inquiry:

Can Administration provide a report on the type and the amount of public engagement conducted prior to changing services, programs or hours of operation at City facilities?

## Executive Summary

A variety of channels and strategies are used on an ongoing basis to gather the public's feedback as well as their patterns of use and preferences in relation to program and service delivery at the City's community and recreation facilities. These efforts are aligned to the goal of continuous improvement within the service delivery of these facilities. Public engagement is conducted with citizens to gauge impacts, gather feedback, and to ensure Administration makes decisions in the best interest of users of these facilities and citizens in general.

Administration continuously reviews service delivery, including the programs and services offered and the hours of operation, which results in ongoing additions, deletions, and changes to the offerings provided by these facilities. With seasonal based hours at each facility and in excess of 500 individual programs and services offered each week, any changes are made in an effort to balance effective and efficient operations with service delivery options that users and citizens desire.

When Administration is considering changes to service delivery that are deemed potentially impactful to a large number of users/citizens, thorough public engagement is conducted prior to any implementation. Examples of these changes could include significant adjustment to facility hours, a change to a long standing program or program slot, or introduction of a new fitness provider within facilities. The public engagement tactics used to gather feedback in these examples could include public

surveys, user and/or citizen focus groups, public meetings and/or visits to a program to speak with participants. The feedback received helps Administration make a decision related to the change being considered.

There are cases when this more thorough public engagement is not undertaken prior to a change in service, particularly when a smaller number of users/citizens would be impacted by a change. In these instances, Administration bases its decision on the ongoing citizen engagement and feedback that is gathered over the year (seasonal surveys, customer comment cards, new product available to market) and/or review of analytics (attendance and participation volumes and patterns, program and service pro-forma and budget).

In all cases, Administration uses a variety of comprehensive communication methods and channels to advise the user/citizen of any program or service change.

Administration makes every effort to make these changes at more natural times to reduce impact to users, such as at the change of program season or after a facility retrofit or maintenance shutdown.

### **Report**

Administration continuously reviews the services, programs, facility hours, and amenities offered at City recreation centres and attractions and makes adjustments to support efficient and effective use of resources and to respond to varying needs of current members, users and citizens. These adjustments include additions, deletions, or changes to service delivery and are collectively considered alterations to the seasonal service delivery model of a facility.

These ongoing reviews include the use of a variety of citizen based feedback tools including; online and in-facility customer comment cards, in person feedback to staff and seasonal program and service surveys. As well, periodic focus groups with facility users are held to gather feedback about their experiences at the facility. Collectively, these public engagement channels help Administration make decisions about service delivery at each facility.

Administration also utilizes analytics on an ongoing basis to assist with service delivery. This includes program attendance data, program fill-rates, user attendance patterns, benchmarking and industry best practice reviews, accommodation for facilities in maintenance shutdown or renewal, as well as more operational considerations such as expense, revenue and cost recovery analysis, and approved budgets.

Together, the ongoing citizen feedback and analytics are the key factors that determine alterations to service delivery at facilities. When a specific alteration to service delivery is being considered, Administration considers the scope and scale of

the proposed alteration to determine the level of public engagement required. When the changes being considered are determined to be potentially more impactful to the use and enjoyment of users/citizens or from a facility operation/financial perspective, thorough public engagement is conducted. This includes broad or targeted surveys, focus groups and/or public meetings, and open houses with users and citizens about the specific alteration being considered.

These ongoing and more comprehensive public engagement sessions can take the form of:

- Advise: the public is consulted by the City to share feedback and perspectives that are considered for policies, programs, projects, or services.
- Refine: the public is involved by the City to adapt and adjust approaches to policies, programs, projects, or services.
- Create: The public collaborates with the City to develop and build solutions regarding policies, programs, projects, or services. This can include community initiated engagement.
- Decide: The public is empowered to make decisions directly or on behalf of the City about policies, programs, projects, or services.

When Administration determines that the change being considered is anticipated to have a lesser impact, primarily due to lower number of users, Administration utilizes the feedback and data from its ongoing yearly engagement and analytic tools to help shape decisions around service delivery at facilities.

In all cases, comprehensive communication to users and citizens is undertaken to ensure they are informed before any change is made, with a target of a minimum of two weeks notice but in most cases much more advance notice. This communication may include signage at the facility, in-person communication at facility front counter or program area, customer based online portals, social media, or direct mail to existing members. Whenever possible these changes are implemented at the start of a program season or following maintenance or retrofit shutdowns in an effort to be less impactful to seasonal service delivery schedules.

**Corporate Outcomes and Performance Management**

<b>Corporate Outcome: Edmontonians use facilities and services that promote healthy living</b>			
<b>Outcome(s)</b>	<b>Measure(s)</b>	<b>Result(s)</b>	<b>Target(s)</b>
Citizens are engaged and involved in the operational decisions of facilities	Percent of customers who believe they are able to provide feedback	2017: 54 percent	Maintain or increase over prior year
	Percent of customers satisfied or very satisfied with facility hours of operation	2017: 91 percent	Maintain or increase over prior year

**Others Reviewing this Report**

- M. Sturgeon, Acting Deputy City Manager, Communications and Engagement
- S. Padbury / R. Kits, Acting Deputy City Managers, Financial & Corporate Services