

SCONA POOL RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION

That the August 24, 2022, Integrated Infrastructure Services report IIS01425 be received for information.

Requested Council Action	Information		
ConnectEdmonton's Guiding Principle	ConnectEdmonton Strategic Goals		
CONNECTED This unifies our work to achieve our strategic goals.	Urban Places		
City Plan Values	ACCESS		
City Plan Big City Move(s)	N/A	Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities	District Planning/ 15-minute districts
Corporate Business Plan	Serving Edmontonians		
Council Policy, Program or Project Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C598 Infrastructure Asset Management Policy • The Approach to Community Recreation Facility Planning in Edmonton (2018) 		
Related Council Discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2010CSR009 Update on Scona Pool, Community Services Committee, August 24, 2010 • CR_2026 Aquatic Infrastructure Update - Private, Community Services Committee, June 29, 2015 • CS00254 Edmonton Public School Board - Pool Operation Cost Sharing, Community and Public Services Committee, April 14, 2021 		

Executive Summary

- Based on the principles of the Infrastructure Asset Management Policy (C598), the previous direction provided by City Council about Scona Pool and in light of the ongoing maintenance needs and recent significant system failures, Administration is pursuing permanent cessation of all operations and closure of the facility.

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- The facility has required more than \$1 million of maintenance and repairs since 2015 and conceptual estimates to address the emergent repairs to extend the life of the facility by five to ten years is at a minimum of \$6 million.
- There are three City pools within five kilometres of Scona Pool: Bonnie Doon Leisure Centre, Confederation Leisure Centre and Kinsmen Sports Centre — with the enhancement of Queen Elizabeth Outdoor Pool (in the summer months). Based on the catchment area defined in the Approach to Community Recreation Facility Planning in Edmonton (2018), community members around Scona Pool would have another aquatic facility available to meet the City's basic commitment and within Council's priorities of 15 minute communities within communities.
- Council has approved funding for the Rollie Miles Recreation Centre design meant to replace Scona Pool, and the project is underway. Completion of Development Design is expected for Q1 2024. Delivery of the new recreation centre, including a new indoor pool, is not currently funded.
- Administration will notify River City Recreation of the decision to close, providing them 30 days' notice as indicated in the agreement with the City. Compensation to the operator may be required. Administration will work with the affected school, swim teams and rental groups to explore booking time at alternative aquatic facilities, but in turn, this may affect current users and user groups of those facilities.
- Decommissioning, decoupling and demolition scope, schedule and budget for Scona Pool will be developed and evaluated as part of the Rollie Miles Recreation Centre project.

REPORT

Strathcona High School was built in 1953 and the swimming pool (known as 'Scona Pool') was added to the structure in 1957. The swimming pool is 65 years old and is on Edmonton Public School Board land.

The City of Edmonton operated the pool until 1989, at which time the facility was contracted out to a private company. River City Recreation Inc. has been contracted to operate the pool since September 2009.

The facility's physical condition has been closely monitored for many years as the building was noted to have serious deterioration in 2010 (2010CSR009 Update on Scona Pool at Community Services Committee on August 24, 2010). The function of the facility is inadequate, with extensive deficiencies impacting operations, accessibility, inclusivity and user experience. The condition of Scona Pool is such that there has been a high probability of multiple system failures, including the structural, mechanical, and electrical systems, for many years.

Maintenance and renewal decisions at Scona Pool are driven by the asset management strategy for the facility. As discussed with City Council in June 2015 (CR_2026 Aquatic Infrastructure Update - Private), permanent closure is necessary upon a significant system failure. At the time, it was anticipated that a significant failure would take place within a year or two. Administration and River City Recreation have worked creatively to keep the facility running for an extended period of time while minimizing significant investment in renewal. The facility, its systems and

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components are aging and it is becoming increasingly more challenging to maintain it in safe and running condition.

Heat Exchanger

On June 29, 2022, a system failure occurred at Scona Pool when the pool heat exchanger started leaking and was shut down. This failure impacts the water flow to the pool, chlorine feed and the boiler and steam distribution for the pool.

River City Recreation has been maintaining the pool temperature by feeding hot domestic, or potable water into the pool. While this action is keeping temperatures within operational limits through summer, the lower external temperatures will render this solution ineffective. Additionally, it is placing an excessive demand on domestic hot water, leading to low supply and temperatures across Strathcona High School and causing greater wear on the hot water heaters.

Administration reviewed the options, including replacing the tubes within the existing heat exchanger unit and replacing the entire unit. Given the heat exchanger age, time and cost for manufacturing, and pressure equipment recertification risks, replacement of the full heat exchanger would be required to operate the pool.

Building Condition

Prior to the failure of the heat exchanger, Administration had undertaken a building condition assessment, envelope and settlement investigation to understand the state of the overall infrastructure. The pool exterior envelope continues to deteriorate. It has visible cracking due to settlement issues and envelope failure has led to significant spalling of the brick near the roof of the facility. Fencing has been placed around sections of the facility to prevent injury from falling bricks.

A physical assessment was completed in July 2022. The report finds that significant repairs and renewal are required to maintain the facility in operation, including:

- foundation and superstructure;
- building envelope (walls and roof);
- interior finishes and fixtures; and
- mechanical and electrical systems.

Based on recent experience with similar facility renewal projects, the budget for this work is estimated at a minimum of \$6 million. This cost is anticipated to address emergent repairs only and is not anticipated to extend the lifecycle beyond another five to ten years. There is a strong likelihood that the costs will be higher once renewal is initiated and other issues are discovered through the course of renewal activities, which has happened with a number of facility renewal projects in aquatic buildings of similar age. For example, there are signs of water leakage from the pool basin into adjacent school spaces that would need to be addressed, possibly even in advance of a renewal, which may expose more significant basin issues.

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Closure and Key Considerations

Based on the asset management strategy for Scona Pool and in light of the significant system failures, Administration is pursuing the permanent cessation of all operations and closure of the facility.

The following were taken into consideration when making the decision:

Asset Management: The asset management strategy for this facility was directed by City Council in June 2015 (CR_2026 Aquatic Infrastructure Update - Private) as a permanent closure upon a significant system failure. Policy C598 Infrastructure Asset Management and the companion Infrastructure Strategy speak to better investment decision-making associated with renewal needs. This work also formally incorporates the consideration of removal, disposal, divestiture or service elimination options as appropriate, ensuring the best service outcome given available resources. Administration will provide a report to Council prior to the 2023-2026 budget deliberations sharing the Asset Rationalization Framework and assets contemplated under the Asset Rightsizing Analysis.

Level of Service: There are three City pools within five kilometres or a 15-minute drive of Scona Pool: Bonnie Doon Leisure Centre, Confederation Leisure Centre and Kinsmen Sports Centre — with the enhancement of Queen Elizabeth Outdoor Pool in the summer months. Within the same area, there are also two pools at the University of Alberta with some public access. The *Approach to Community Recreation Facility Planning in Edmonton* (2018) states, "Every resident will have a place to connect, be active and participate in recreation indoors within five kilometres of their residence." Based on the above catchment areas, community members around Scona Pool would have another aquatic facility available to meet the City's basic commitment.

Attendance: Scona Pool has had lower attendance numbers than other City pools for many years, averaging 36,000 users per year (all comparisons averaging 2015-2019). Similar scale facilities with only a swimming pool amenity yield higher yearly attendance: Confederation 167,000, Eastglen 61,000 and Bonnie Doon 125,000.

Rollie Miles Recreation Centre: Council approved funding for the design of the Rollie Miles Recreation Centre to Checkpoint 3 of the Project Development and Delivery Model (PDDM). Completion of Development Design is expected for Q4 2023. Delivery of the new recreation centre, including a new indoor pool, is not currently funded and could take an additional three to four years to be in-service following completion of the Development Design.

Impact on the Community: While attendance at Scona Pool is lower than similar facilities, the users have had significant involvement in its continued operations, including: (1) Friends of Scona Rec is a community-based group advocating for the continuation of operation of the pool pending its eventual replacement with the Rollie Miles Recreation Centre; (2) the Strathcona School students and swim teams; and (3) businesses such as Northwest Scuba, Ocean Sports Scuba Club and Discovery Swim Club, Olympian Swim Club, Orca Artistic Swim Club and the United Alberta Paddlers Club. The closure of the pool may impact the ability of the clubs and businesses to operate. Scona Pool is not included in the City and School Board's Joint Use

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Agreement which defines school access and fees for accessing City pools, so closure should not directly impact Joint Use demand on the other area pools.

Impacts on the Contractor: The contract for the operation of Scona Pool is in place with River City Recreation for the next three to five years. The agreement requires the City to provide 30 days notice and pay their reasonable fees within this period.

As Scona Pool is operated by a third party, the closure of this facility will not result in a decrease in City staff employment.

Alternative Strategies

The following are alternative strategies to the closure that were reviewed:

Maintain the facility in operation for five to ten years

This option would require repairing the heat exchanger followed by the initiation of a renewal project addressing the building condition assessment findings, including foundation and superstructure, building envelope, interior finishes and fixtures, mechanical systems and electrical systems.

Based on recent experience with similar facility renewal projects, the budget for this work is estimated at a minimum of \$6 million. There is a strong likelihood that the costs will be higher once renewal is initiated and other issues are discovered, which has happened with a number of facility renewal projects in aquatic buildings of similar age. This work would also significantly extend the closure to complete these repairs.

The renewal needed to add five to ten years to the life of this asset is significant, would require an extended shutdown of the facility and presents a very high level of risk for scope, schedule and budget escalation. Additionally, even with the required renewal investment, Scona Pool would not meet current or future levels of service expectations, including accessibility, inclusivity and user experience.

This option does not align with Policy C598 or the Approach to Community Recreation Facility Planning in Edmonton (2018). Furthermore, this level of investment may impact the Rollie Miles Recreation Centre project.

Turning the facility over to Edmonton Public School Board (EPSB)

The school board has indicated in the past they have no desire to operate the pool and no capacity to support its operation and maintenance (CS00254 Edmonton Public School Board - Pool Operation Cost Sharing at Community and Public Services Committee on April 14, 2021). The ownership of the facility and agreements for the space used by the City for pool operations inside the school athletics wing is not clear despite a thorough review of both City of Edmonton and Edmonton Public School Board records. While the facility's ownership is unclear, the City of Edmonton has been acting as the operator since 1957 and is perceived as the owner by the EPSB.

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Next Steps

- Administration will notify River City Recreation of the decision to close, providing them 30 days notice as indicated in the agreement with the City. Compensation to the operator may be required.
- Administration will work with the affected school, swim teams and rental groups to explore booking time at other recreation centres, which could impact other groups who have been allocated time at other facilities, and will work with Communications to advertise swimming options for community access at other City pools in the catchment area.
- Decommissioning, decoupling and demolition scope, schedule and budget for Scona Pool will be developed and evaluated as part of the Rollie Miles Recreation Centre project. This will involve coordination with EPSB as the scope will likely involve alterations to the school's systems.
- A communication plan will be developed to support these activities.

Budget/Financial Implications

Since 2015, approximately \$1.15 million has been spent on maintenance and repairs to the facility to ensure it remains operational. The City's Operating and Management costs to have the Scona pool in operation over the four pre-COVID years and 2022 (projected) average is \$330,000 per year (this includes the fees to the contractor, utilities, materials and service costs).

Annual operating funding for the facility continues to be required to maintain the school's connected infrastructure and ensure the site's safety and security as the decommissioning plan is developed and implemented.

COMMUNITY INSIGHT

While attendance at Scona Pool is lower than other similar facilities; the users have had significant involvement in its continued operations. Friends of Scona Rec, the Strathcona School students, swim teams, and businesses that operate out of Scona Pool have routinely spoken at Council Public Hearings about their wish to see Scona Pool maintained in operation until a replacement is built. The passion these groups have for their community and available recreation opportunities is a valuable source of information to help guide the development of the future state of the site. The sentimental value of Scona Pool to the community is recognized. However, the removal of this aging facility does not remove all access to recreational facilities. Many other facilities within a reasonable distance could accommodate the varying user groups with some minor adjustments.

The valuable insights and willingness of the user groups to speak to their needs will be substantial input into future site development. As the design of Rollie Miles Recreation Centre progresses, Administration will be looking to these groups as part of the public engagement process on the future of the new facility.

GBA+

In its current state, Scona Pool meets very few of the City's current standards as an inclusive and accessible facility. Even with significant rehabilitation and investment into this vintage of a facility,

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Scona Pool will not meet current standards and user expectations. However, the development of a new recreation centre on the Rollie Miles site can ensure that key areas and opportunities are available to address equity for all age groups, abilities and diverse demographics to provide a recreation amenity on this site.

The vintage and current footprint of Scona Pool does not allow for ensuring accessibility requirements for people with physical mobility challenges, nor can it incorporate the needs of diverse demographics to improve inclusivity and safety.

Currently, Allendale School uses Scona Pool for special education programs for physical education and movement. There is available daytime use at City facilities that could support this group through the Joint Use Agreement. As there is no family/inclusive change room available on-site, the facility has made its staff change room available as an inclusive change room. There is accessible parking available at the staff entrance and direct access to the pool deck area for those with different accessibility needs.