

# Update on Partnership with YMCA of Northern Alberta

## Recommendation

That the December 2, 2020, Citizen Services report CR\_7419, be received for information.

## Previous Council/Committee Action

At the July 10, 2019, Community and Public Services Committee meeting the following motion was passed:

That Administration provide an update to Committee on the recreation partnership opportunities with the YMCA of Northern Alberta.

## Executive Summary

The Castle Downs Family YMCA remains closed due to the financial impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic. Administration and YMCA of Northern Alberta have worked to develop a current state report of the Castle Downs Family YMCA operational and financial impacts in addition to future projections. Due to ongoing operational constraints, there is currently no opening date for the Castle Downs Family YMCA. This delayed opening impacts the availability of public access recreation and wellness opportunities for northwest Edmontonians.

## Report

Indoor recreation opportunities at the Castle Downs District Park consist of the Castle Downs Family YMCA, City of Edmonton Castle Downs Twin Arena, and the Castle Downs Pavilion. The Castle Downs Family YMCA serves 19 neighbourhoods that fall within a 5-kilometre radius of the Castle Downs Family YMCA, meeting the catchment area of the City of Edmonton's Approach to Community Recreation Facility Planning documents. The Castle Downs Family YMCA is the only public, multi-purpose recreation and leisure centre within this catchment area. These 19 neighbourhoods are home to nearly 65,000 people with diverse cultural backgrounds.

The Castle Downs Family YMCA includes a swimming pool, gymnasium, fitness room, indoor playground, meeting rooms, and multi-purpose rooms. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 270,000 individuals accessed the facility each year and the centre served more than 5,000 individuals and families through membership with 66 percent of members being children and youth. During regular operations, approximately 1,500 children and youth participate in swim lessons weekly and

annually more than 1,600 children and youth enjoy summer day camps.

Adjacent to the Castle Downs Family YMCA is a City-run twin ice arena which is used predominantly for hockey and figure skating rentals. Also in the park is the Castle Downs Park Pavilion, which is booked and leased by Administration for external groups. Additionally, the City provides outdoor ice skating experiences near the pavilion during the winter months.

### Current State

Administration, Castle Downs Family YMCA and YMCA of Northern Alberta developed a current state report which examined programming, amenities, current financial state, and future financial projections. The report has confirmed that Castle Downs Family YMCA offers programs and services that are comparable to City-owned and -operated facilities of similar size and amenities. The services and programs provide a variety of recreation opportunities to residents in the Castle Downs area and are well-utilized and well-received by users.

To meet the needs of the community, the YMCA offers a unique member pricing model at the Castle Downs YMCA, providing families a rate that is 28 percent lower than other Edmonton area YMCAs. In addition, the Castle Downs Family YMCA provides financial assistance for 35 percent of members as compared to an average of 10 to 20 percent at other YMCA branches. Given the level of financial assistance provided, the Castle Downs Family YMCA has been operating at an average annual deficit of \$450,000 since 2015.

Over this period, the YMCA of Northern Alberta was able to absorb the negative operating loss at this branch given the performance of other YMCA branches. However, the Castle Downs Family YMCA's fragile financial position has been exacerbated given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, leaving the branch in need of urgent financial support. Given the financial impacts of the pandemic on other YMCA branches, they are no longer able to support the Castle Downs Family YMCA as they are also struggling financially.

In February 2020, Castle Downs Family YMCA harmonized its membership prices and drop-in fees to align with the City of Edmonton recreation drop-in fee schedule. However, as this was done just prior to the closure of all City public recreation centres due to the COVID-19 pandemic, metrics of utilization are not available at this time.

### COVID-19 Impacts

The YMCA of Northern Alberta is facing significant financial challenges due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to Alberta Health's COVID-19 regulations and guidelines, hesitancy of members to return, and the financial position of the Castle Downs Family YMCA, the YMCA of Northern Alberta is not in a position to establish an opening date for this centre. YMCA of Northern Alberta forecasts for 2021 show the

Castle Downs Family YMCA operating at a net loss of between \$700,000 and \$1.1 million. Depending on the economic recovery and evolving COVID-19 regulations and guidelines, these projections could inhibit the ability of YMCA Northern Alberta to open the Castle Downs YMCA facility in 2021. This extended closure would further limit opportunities for recreation for residents of northwest Edmonton.

The YMCA of Northern Alberta has formally requested \$1 million in 2021 operating funding from the City of Edmonton to reopen the Castle Downs Family YMCA, enabling recreation and wellness opportunities for residents of northwest Edmonton at a public entry cost.

Partnership Opportunities

As Administration focuses on a relationship-based city and reimagines actions to recover from the pandemic and the economic recession, Administration will review the City’s current partnerships such as recreation and sport partners.

Future partnership opportunities for this area may include working with Edmonton Catholic Schools through the new high school design process at Castle Downs Park, and including YMCA of Northern Alberta and the City of Edmonton to further develop the Castle Downs Park site as a campus-style recreation/school model. This concept would be similar to the development of Dr. Anne Anderson High School and Heritage Valley recreation centre. Should the opportunity arise, Edmonton Public Library would consider a co-located branch on the site.

Next Steps

Administration continues to meet with YMCA of Northern Alberta representatives regularly. Administration will continue to work with YMCA of Northern Alberta to understand what financial contribution will be required to reopen the Castle Downs Family YMCA on a short-term basis and operate the facility in order to provide recreation opportunities for Edmontonians on behalf of the City as part of the Relaunch efforts. Additionally, Administration will work with YMCA of Northern Alberta to develop a long-term sustainability operation plan to continue to provide recreation and wellness experiences to residents of Edmonton.

**Corporate Outcomes and Performance Management**

| <b>Corporate Outcome: Edmontonians use facilities and services that promote healthy living.</b> |                           |                |                           |
|---|---------------------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Outcome</b>  | <b>Measures</b>           | <b>Results</b> | <b>Targets</b>            |
| Edmontonians utilize partner-operated recreation facilities                                     | Facility Membership scans | 2019: 270,000  | Increase over 2019 levels |
|   | Number of memberships     | 2019: 5,004    | Increase over 2019 levels |

|   |   |                  |                      |
|---|---|------------------|----------------------|
| Recreation facility access is provided to low-income Edmontonians | Percent of memberships provided with financial assistance | 2019: 35 percent | Maintain 2019 levels |
|---|---|------------------|----------------------|

### Attachments

1. Castle Downs Family YMCA - Current State Report - October 2020

### Others Reviewing this Report

- C. Owen, Deputy City Manager, Communications and Engagement
- M. Persson, Chief Financial Officer and Deputy City Manager, Financial and Corporate Services
- B. Andriachuk, City Solicitor