

STAFF REPORT TO COUNCIL

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DATE: June 8, 2020

TO: MAYOR AND COUNCIL

NAME AND TITLE: Dave Dyer, General Manager of Infrastructure and Public Works

SUBJECT: COVID-19 - Parks and Outdoor Recreation Facilities Plans

ATTACHMENT(S): Parks and Outdoor Recreation Facilities COVID-19 Plan- Status Update June 8, 2020

RECOMMENDATION(S):

THAT COUNCIL RECEIVES FOR INFORMATION the report dated June 8, 2020 from the General Manager of Infrastructure and Public Works titled "COVID-19 Parks and Outdoor Recreation Facilities Plans."

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to provide information to Council regarding the City's parks and outdoor recreation facilities COVID-19 plans.

DISCUSSION:

The COVID-19 pandemic has created the need for Public Works - Parks and Solid Waste Services Division to look at balancing the health of Prince George residents; how the department provides its services; and the financial implications of maintaining and operating the City's parks and outdoor recreational facilities.

For more than two months now, many parks and outdoor recreational facilities have been closed and/or the usage has been altered. Parks, parks amenities, and trails have been open for casual use with signage about physical distancing, and the City is now gradually increasing access to outdoor recreation.

The decision to re-open outdoor recreation facilities, to implement changes in the processing of bookings and to the issuing of permits and contracts results from a phased-in approach that considers the following:

- The ability to comply with Provincial Health Officer's orders and recommendations and WorkSafe BC guidelines;
- Measures to ensure the safety of the public and staff are in place;
- Reasonable demand for the facility, service or program;
- Appropriate staff resources are available with required training;
- Risks can be adequately managed; and,
- Timeline to implement safety measures, training and modifications required for reopening.

The Provincial government has tasked the British Columbia Recreation and Parks Association (BCRPA) to develop a set of guidelines for how the public recreation and parks sector can operate safely during the pandemic. BCRPA is providing information, tools, and strategies for local government decision-making regarding safe operations that will limit transmission of COVID-19 within the recreation and parks sector. BCRPA is assisting BC Municipalities by:

- communicating a common approach that can be applied by the sector in Phases 1 through 3 of BC's Restart Plan;
- providing strategies for service areas which are flexible and adaptable to the varied needs of local governments; and,
- outlining a continuum of steps for communities to follow in restarting recreation and parks services (both the expansion and possibly retraction, depending upon the progress of the pandemic).

Figure 1. below outlines the framework that has been created by BCRPA that is aligned with the Province's Re-start Plan and provides guidance on the phasing or levels during which communities can re-open their parks and outdoor recreational facilities. City staff have been utilizing this framework in their recommendations to City Administration for re-opening plans.

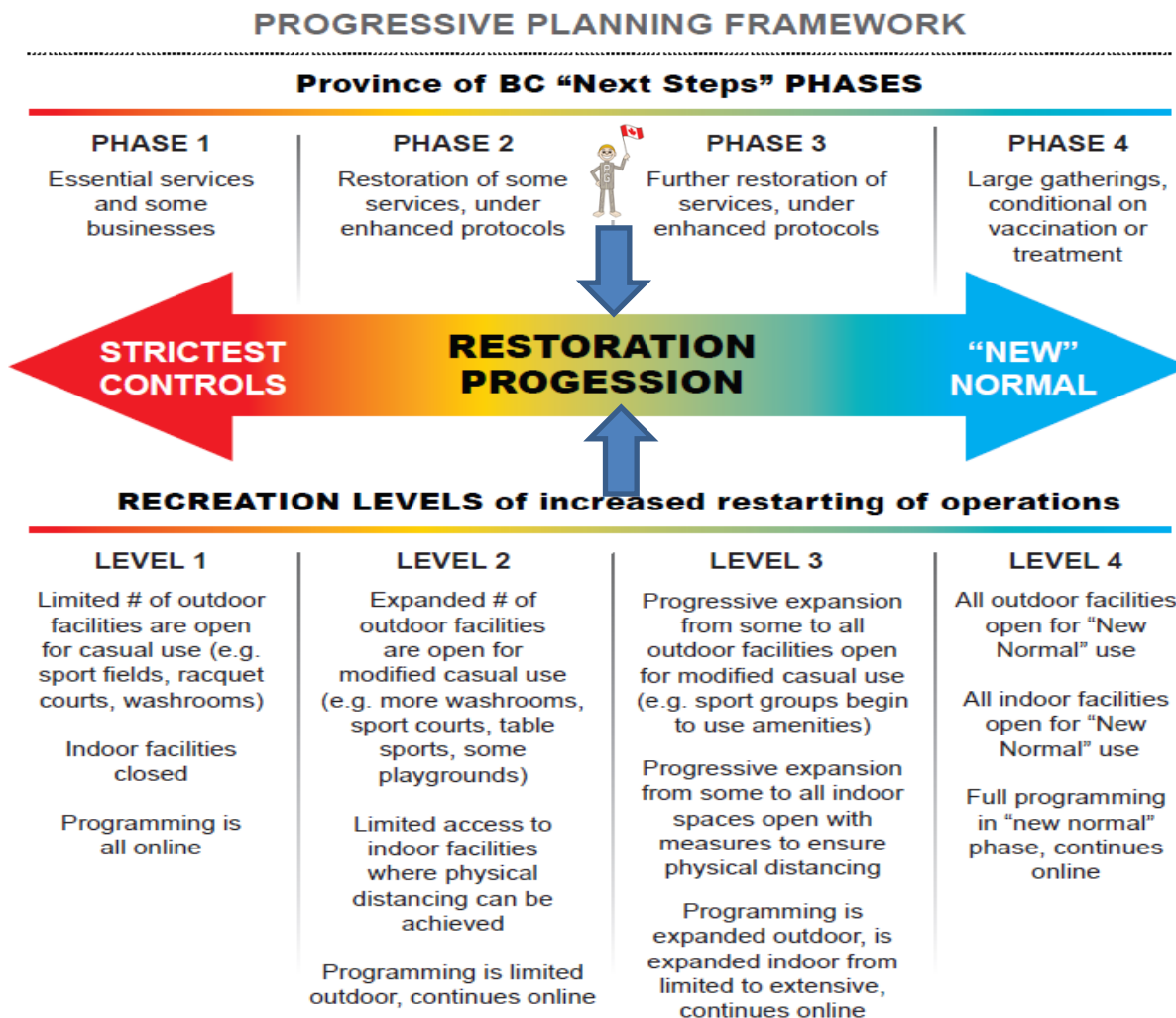


Figure 1: Progressive Planning Framework from 'The Recreation and Parks Sector Guidelines for Restarting Operations- COVID-19: Recovery through Recreation and Parks.' BCRPA (2020)

Please see the attachment to this report '*Parks and Outdoor Recreation Facilities COVID-19 Plan - Status Update June 8, 2020*', which provides the most up to date information for the status of Prince George parks and outdoor recreational facilities.

All downtown parks, major parks, nature parks, and trails are open for enjoyment. The City of Prince George and School District 57 reopened all of the roughly eighty (80) civic and school playgrounds within the Prince George area on Friday June 5th; as well, the City opened the fenced dog parks and washrooms/outhouses. In a number of cases, these facilities/amenities have signage reminding the public of the risk of usage, the need for physical distancing and the importance of hand hygiene.

City of Prince George and School District 57 Community Use sport fields are open to the public for casual use. Bookings will not be accepted and contracts and permits will not be issued for sport fields for the remainder of the 2020 season.

A number of sport fields, ball diamonds and outdoor recreation facilities, are co-managed through a park rental agreement with the City and particular user groups. The City and those user groups will now proceed with the signing of the annual formalized park rental agreements for the 2020 season. The organizations must adhere to the City's process, which includes insurance and the submission of the local sport organization's approved 'Return to Sport/Play' plan and a signed COVID-19 facility use rental agreement waiver.

Bookings, contracts and permits for individual requests to use park and park facilities will not be issued for the remainder of the 2020 season. Small gatherings for casual use are welcome at any park or park facility, following provincial health orders and recommendations, on a first come, first serve basis. The Parks Division and staff will continue to maintain facilities for Prince George residents; however, usage is at the risk of the resident and must comply with Provincial health orders around events and gatherings, and recommendations for reducing transmission risks of COVID-19 including physical distancing, sanitation, and hand hygiene provisions.

Masich Place Stadium

Masich Place Stadium will remain closed until the current construction is complete and the necessary City of Prince George COVID-19 safety plans are in place.

Once construction work is complete, bookings for Masich Place Stadium will be contingent on the demand for the use of the facility. Bookings will be accepted and contracts and permits will be issued for this facility that reflect the control and responsibility on the municipality to ensure safety plans are adhered to with respect to physical distancing, flow of participants and common touch areas. Those organizations that request to book must have an approved 'Return to Sport/Play' plan, a signed COVID-19 facility use agreement waiver, and insurance papers submitted.

Public Track Walking Program - a plan will be put into place that will allow walkers to begin utilizing Masich Place Stadium with enhanced safety protocols. This will include signage, entrance/parking lot restrictions, physical distancing on the track, monitoring of participants in the facility, education, sanitation of touchpoints, and enhanced cleaning of washrooms. To operate the facility and meet the provisions of the safety plan, it will be necessary to move staff from the workgroups that they have been assigned to this summer season back to Masich Place Stadium. These staff have been redeployed to other areas of the division because of the decrease in labourers (7) in the Parks and Solid Waste Services Division. Moving the staff back to Masich Place Stadium will have the following service level impacts:

- weed control along medians and boulevards (around trees, poles and signs, as well as fence lines);
- additional trim mowing in major parks, medians and boulevards;
- garbage removal and litter control in the City parks, playgrounds, and dog parks; and,
- graffiti removal and vandalism repairs.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:

City Administration and Parks and Solid Waste Services Division continue to work on the re-opening of parks and outdoor recreation facilities in alignment with the Province of BC's 'Re-start Plan' and the BC Recreation and Parks Association. This phased process takes into consideration the need for enhanced safety protocols for both the residents of Prince George and the City employees that work in the parks and outdoor recreation facilities in our community.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Dave Dyer, General Manager of Infrastructure and Public Works

PREPARED BY: Gina Layte Liston, Director of Public Works

APPROVED:

Kathleen Soltis, City Manager

Meeting Date: 2020/06/15