

DATE: August 18, 2020

TO: MAYOR AND COUNCIL

NAME AND TITLE: Adam Davey, Director of Community Services and Public Safety

SUBJECT: Update on the reopening of the Kin Arenas and Aquatic Centre

ATTACHMENT(S): (1) Temporary Aquatics Swim Schedule

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That Council RECEIVES FOR INFORMATION the report dated August 18, 2020, from the Director of Community Services and Public Safety, regarding an update on the reopening of the Aquatic Centre and Kin Arenas.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an update on the reopening of the Kin Arenas on August 17, and the Aquatic Centre, scheduled for September 8.

DISCUSSION:

The information provided in this report is current as of August 18. The overall situation - thus information - has changed since the last report on July 27, and is expected to continue to change on a frequent basis. Therefore, information in this report is subject to change and should be considered accordingly.

The three Kin Arenas reopened on Monday, August 17. The Aquatic Centre is preparing to open on September 8. Information is provided on three topics below. First, an update on the reopening of the three Kin Arenas. Second, an updated projection on fall/winter ice usage and arenas demand. Finally, an update on the reopening of the Aquatic Centre scheduled for September 8.

KIN ARENAS:

The three Kin Arenas reopened on August 17 for summer use, which included figure skating and hockey camps. Over the previous couple of weeks, staff on short-term layoff and reassignment were recalled to the arenas and began preparing the facilities for operations under COVID-19 modifications. Each arena is treated as a separate facility, complete with separate entry, assembly areas and exits. Every user group has completed their own Return-to-Play plan in accordance with the City's Arena Safety Plan, the BC Recreation and Parks Association/Via Sport guidelines (both organizations are working closely with the Provincial Health Officer) and their respective Provincial Sport Organizations. The Return-to-Play plans must adhere to the Provincial Public Health Order(s) currently in effect.

At present, each arena has a maximum capacity of 50 people, including staff and patrons. There is a maximum of 20 skaters allowed on the ice at the same time. There is no use of stands/spectator seating, change rooms, and other amenities at this time as the current schedule was built to achieve high-usage and quick turnarounds between groups (within the constraints of COVID modifications, such as enhanced cleaning between each group). The current process can be described as, “*players arrive dressed, get on the ice, and then get out.*” This process allows the maximum number of user groups’ ice time. There is a thirty minute turn-around between each group to ensure the enhanced cleaning procedure can be adhered to and to allow users to enter/exit, remove skates, etc. Initial indications suggest the new process is working as well as is reasonably expected, all things considered (during a global pandemic under public health restrictions).

Staff continue to actively monitor and assess the current operational model and are regularly communicating with the main user groups, soliciting feedback. The current plan will remain in place – provided we continue under the status quo of Phase 3 of the Provincial Restart Plan – for the remainder of the summer ice block. Administration shall re-assess the current schedule and operational processes prior to the start of winter usage, in early October. An Administrative Procedure regarding ice usage allocation provides information and context on how the City shall equitably and fairly allocate ice time, and will be shared with our user groups to ensure consistency and clarity. As demand is anticipated to be greater than ice availability, all user groups will be allotted a maximum of 50% of their normal ice requests. This is because there are only three sheets of ice available out of six. Initial details on the fall/winter season are provided below.

FALL/WINTER ARENAS USAGE FORECAST AND CONSIDERATIONS:

There remains many unknowns regarding ice use demand for the upcoming fall and winter seasons. This mostly revolves around two questions: one, will a return to gameplay be allowed (i.e., transition from practicing, or “skills and drills” to gameplay), and two, will the current restriction of 50 patrons be expanded to allow modified spectatorship (i.e., will fans be allowed to watch BCHL and WHL games)? Should the Province maintain the status quo of no gameplay and a maximum of 50 people in one location, ice use demand may be manageable with three sheets under current restrictions. All main user groups may be allotted a maximum of approximately half the ice usage as expected under normal operations. However, should a return to gameplay be implemented and, in particular, a return of BCHL/WHL games, three sheets of ice will not be sufficient to meet demand. At minimum, a fourth sheet, the CN Centre may need to be considered by Council to reopen.

Administration will continue to closely monitor and work with our impacted user groups. A follow-up report will be brought to Council in September.

INDOOR WALKING

Previously, there were four indoor walking options available throughout the city during winter months. These included the Northern Sports Centre (NSC), Pine Centre Mall, and two City arenas: RMCA and the CN Centre. At present, both the CN Centre and RMCA remain closed. In previous years, the RMCA and CN Centre opened for public walking use by mid-October. Should Council wish to provide a limited indoor walking service, the most cost-effective method would be to utilize the CN Centre. The CN Centre provides the ability to allow ice usage and walking at the same time, to a maximum of 50 people in each floor space – ice level and concourse. Staff require approximately four weeks to prepare an indoor walking service. Therefore, to accommodate a mid-October opening, Administration would require direction by mid-September to build and staff a cleaning protocol and expand the online registration tool used at the Aquatic Centre to book (free) online walking registrants. The process for walking would be the same as registering for swimming; however, at no charge. Because there are two alternative options available in Prince George (NSC and Pine Centre Mall), Administration does not

recommend providing an indoor walking service at this time due to the overall budget shortfall. However, should the CN Centre reopen for ice usage, supplying indoor walking would be relatively easy to accommodate.

CONCERTS AND HOCKEY FANS

As of the writing of this report, the Provincial Health Order limiting gatherings to 50 people remains in effect and there is no indication that this will be lifted in the near future. Previously scheduled concerts and hockey games (WHL and BCHL) remain under this Order. Should this change, a future report shall provide recommendations for reopening consideration. Currently, both the BCHL and WHL seasons are tentatively scheduled to begin in early December, according to the leagues.

PROGRAMS TEMPORARILY UNAVAILABLE

Indoor public skating and learn to skate: The RMCA and Elksentre are the arenas designated and equipped for public skating and learn to skate programs. With these facilities closed, there is no access to the skate shops for skate rental services and sharpening. With current COVID restrictions, a registration system similar to the Aquatic Centre is required, and participation is limited due to physical distancing requirements. This makes learn to skate programs particularly difficult for young children, given the close proximity necessity (similar to swim lessons). Further, with only three sheets of ice, availability is limited. However, there are numerous outdoor ice rinks, including the Ice Oval, which may be available for recreational opportunities.

AQUATICS:

The Aquatic Centre is preparing for a reopening date of September 8. A media release with further information shall be provided in the final week of August. The online registration system is available for use starting on August 31 (details on this will form part of the media release and website updates). Patrons will be able to register online for upcoming swim blocks. Alternatively, patrons may phone the Aquatic Centre for registration. The online registration tool allows the City to collect information that Northern Health may use for contact tracing purposes in the event of a COVID-19 outbreak. A per visit admission registration process is required vs. a drop-in aquatic pass to ensure occupancy doesn't exceed 50 and there is fair opportunity for all residents. Punch cards and family rate are also not available for use until a return to normal operations occurs. Punch cards do not expire. There are two exceptions to the temporary pay-per-use system: UPass and the Leisure Access Program (LAP). Patrons utilizing these programs will be required to phone the Aquatic Centre for over-the-phone registration and additional instructions. Finally, walk-in registration is permitted if swim blocks are not fully booked. Each swim block has a maximum of 40 registered spaces available.

The Aquatic Centre Swim Schedule is attached for more information. Northern Health has been working closely with the Aquatic Division assisting in providing safe pool operations. Updates and changes since the last report on July 27 include: limited use of the hot tub, to a maximum of three bathers, the lazy river is available for one patron at a time, and the 1-metre diving board is open. Amenities that remain closed are: the fitness centre, sauna and steam rooms, high diving boards, and dive towers, and the waves in the wave pool will not be in use.

Aquatics staff will continue to actively monitor and assess the new swim schedule. Depending on user feedback and data analysis, the schedule may be revised into the fall and winter timeframe. A monthly update report shall be provided to Council. The recall of 11 full-time staff, 20 regular part-time staff and 16 casual staff has occurred. The majority of casual staff continue to not be scheduled for work. Should the Aquatic Centre have to temporarily close on short notice due to anticipated higher than normal sick time this fall, full refunds will be provided to patrons.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:

The reopening of the three Kin Arenas on August 17 was successful. The city's figure skating clubs and hockey groups scheduled for the reopening week completed all necessary COVID-related new regulatory and procedural requirements. Staff shall continue to closely work with user groups and implement procedural and process changes in accordance with Provincial Public Health Orders and guidelines.

The Aquatic Centre is on track to reopen on September 8, with online registration available starting August 31. Administration shall provide another report in September that addresses the evolving Return to Sport environment and potential demand for additional ice.

The information in this report is accurate as of August 18, and is expected to change in accordance with evolving Provincial guidelines.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Adam Davey, Director of Community Services and Public Safety

APPROVED:

Kathleen Soltis, City Manager

Meeting Date: 2020/08/31