

Hello Mayor Fougere & City Councilors,

My name is Emily Haidl, and I will be appearing to speak to you on December 10th, 2018 regarding the closure of Maple Leaf Pool. I have been a lifeguard with the City since 2011, and have had many opportunities to experience the impact of Wascana outdoor pool, Dewdney Outdoor pool, and Maple Leaf Outdoor pool.

To me, both Dewdney and Maple Leaf outdoor pools are extremely impactful to the youth within the neighbourhood. At these facilities, there are no financial or transport-based barriers for attendance, so children starting at age three are able to walk to the pool without their parents to be in a safe place for 8 hours a day, 7 days a week. The children that attend these facilities either every day, or semi-regularly are able to build long-lasting, meaningful relationships with facility staff, receive basic care; including aid with personal hygiene, treatment for minor injuries, and one meal a day. In addition, they also have the opportunity to be a part of unguided but supervised play. They have access to someone safe, trustworthy, and consistent to discuss the issues in their lives with every day, and have access to positive role models. Due to the relationships that children build with lifeguards at the facilities, many children hope and wish to be lifeguards themselves when they grow up.

In my experience, the lives of some of the children that come to the facilities can be extremely stressful and tough – I cannot count the times I have had to call social services, or mobile crisis to help children at the facilities. Over 10 of the children that came to Dewdney every day when I worked there were removed from their homes after the pool season was over, and these are only the ones I know of. The situation at Maple Leaf pool is similar. These facilities are often the only resource available to underprivileged and vulnerable populations during the summer months.

While my main concern with the closure of Maple Leaf pool is the impact that will have on underprivileged children and vulnerable populations, I also want to acknowledge the other groups that use Maple Leaf Pool. In my experience, inner-city pools are most frequently utilized by those of aboriginal descent, low income families, and immigrant families. It is a testament to

the impact and importance of these facilities that people have come to the pools throughout their entire lives, and have fond experiences to share.

I believe the pool locations have become a 'place to be', and a resource because they are a financially accessible place where people actually want to go. The facilities are clean and safe, are free from drug paraphernalia, intoxicated adults, weapons, and gang activity. At these locations all are free from judgement, get to interact with understanding staff, don't have to abide by schedules, and get to just focus on having fun.

I am extremely disappointed with the City for making the decision to close Maple Leaf pool with such a lack of forethought. In my opinion, the City should have been both fiscally and socially responsible, and should've planned to close Maple Leaf pool in 2019 years in advance to prevent hundreds of thousands of dollars being uselessly sunk into maintenance of the facility, and to ensure a proper plan was put in place to create a new facility and programming to help fill the needs of the community. Now the City and the Heritage Community association are being left to scramble to come up with adequate facilities and programming that will in no way replace Maple Leaf pool until years from now. I think that in light of this, the City should begin to develop an 'end of life' plan for Dewdney Outdoor pool, so the same thing that is happening to the Heritage Community does not happen to North Central as well.

The decision to close Maple Leaf pool in this way becomes even harder to understand when you look at the City's own documentation and Recreation Master Plans. The City's 2010 Master Recreation plan (page 10) states that targeted population segments for sport, culture, and recreation programs and facilities are "children and youth, to encourage lifelong participation from a young age" and "individuals who are more likely to encounter barriers to participation, including for example, seniors, persons with disabilities, individuals of aboriginal ancestry, single parents, and low-income households and individuals who have recently immigrated", and the 2015 Neighbourhood Profile of the Heritage Community shows (page 10) that the percentage of persons in low-income households under the age of 18 in the Heritage community was 48%, which a stark contrast to the only 19% of youth in all of Regina. In addition, the report states that 30% of heritage families are single parent, compared to 19% of

all of Regina. So, the City is removing a recreation facility from a community it itself has highlighted as needing more investment into sport, culture, and recreation.

I believe that closing Maple Leaf pool in 2019 will result in a variety of deeply, and widely felt impacts to both the Heritage community, and all of Regina, including, but not limited to:

- A lack of basic care, supervision, and interaction for underprivileged youth
- A lack of adequate recreation and exercise facilities for young families
- A decreased number of children and families taking part in many hours of physical activity daily
- None, or significantly reduced access to safe locations for youth during the summer
- An increase in petty crime, mischief, and theft among those under the age of 15 in the community

Although the City has closed Maple Leaf pool in an irresponsible manner, this situation could be taken advantage of to create something new and innovative to service all the needs of the Heritage community. In my opinion, it would be a much more useful and forward-thinking way to spend the City's money to make a larger investment, and create an innovative center with a supervised outdoor component in collaboration with successful community-based organizations rather than rebuild a City of Regina pool that is again going to be underfunded, understaffed, and neglected.