



Presentation to Council Re. Maple Leaf Pool Closure

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Presented by:

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Good Evening Mayor Fougere and City Councillors,

My name is Shayna Stock and I'm the Executive Director of the Heritage Community Association.

It is not an overstatement to say that Heritage residents are devastated and outraged by the planned closure of Maple Leaf Pool. It is frustrating that it has gotten to the point of immediate closure without there being a succession plan. We've all known for many years that Maple Leaf Pool was getting old and run down. It is hard to understand why the City did not engage our community in creating a plan for its replacement sooner. There's nothing we can do about this fact now, so I don't want to dwell on it. But the City does have other outdoor pools that are the same age as Maple Leaf, and I want to strongly recommend that Council and City staff begin talking *now* about the future of those facilities, so that those communities do not experience the gap in services that Heritage is about to experience.

Maple Leaf Pool receives an average of 134 visitors a day. These numbers are not declining; they have remained roughly the same over at least the last 5 years according to numbers provided to me by City administration. Throughout the summer, this represents roughly 11,000 visits.

As the only rec facility in our neighbourhood, Maple Leaf Pool is a lifeline for many families and individuals. Many children spend all day every day at that pool, providing them with safe, supervised recreation while their parents or guardians work or take care of younger children. One third of Heritage families are single-parent families, and the pool is a major support for these, and all families, while school is out.

The pool is also well used by seniors, many of whom live in one of several nearby seniors complexes.

With heat waves becoming more common, the pool acts as a neighbourhood cooling centre on the hottest days, especially for people whose apartments or homes don't have AC.

I have spoken to Police Chief Evan Bray about the potential impact of the pool closure on crime and safety in our neighbourhood. He agrees that the pool is vital to keeping people - especially youth - engaged in safe, positive activities during the summers, and shares our concerns that its closure may be damaging to the safety of our neighbourhood. Chief Bray is here today and available to answer questions if you have any.

In a neighbourhood and a city that can often feel very divided by socio-economic and racial lines, Maple Leaf Pool offers a central, neutral meeting place where people from all backgrounds and ages play, exercise, make friends, and socialize with one another. It is a community hub, and a treasured neighbourhood resource, whose benefits extend far beyond recreation and physical health.

This is about more than losing an option for leisure; residents' concerns are coming from a place of real fear for the health and safety of their families and our neighbourhood, and also from a place of deep pride and appreciation for what is an exceptional asset to our community.

The Core Neighbourhood Sustainability Action Plan, endorsed by the City in 2012, calls for the rehabilitation of Maple Leaf Pool, or the building of a new recreation facility and pool on that site. It states: "Maple Leaf pool is a valued and well-used community gathering space. Investigating opportunities to use sustainable energy to heat the pool would offset operation costs and set a great example of sustainable development in the neighbourhood."

The City's own Official Community Plan identifies "complete neighbourhoods" as a key Community Priority, which it defines as "safe and inclusive neighbourhoods that are easy to get around and that have a mix of housing choices, amenities, and services." The Plan explicitly identifies recreation as one of the "daily lifestyle needs" that residents of a neighbourhood should have easy access to as part of a "complete neighbourhood." Maple Leaf Pool is the only recreation facility in our neighbourhood. Decommissioning it will mean we have none.

Within the OCP, our neighbourhood is identified as an Intensification Area, where the City wants to encourage development and population growth. Removing one of our neighbourhood's most prized assets is not conducive to attracting more people to the area.

The OCP also calls for the City to "Ensure access to a variety of recreation programs and services in all neighbourhoods" and to "Study the application of new financing strategies and development incentives to provide, maintain and operate recreation facilities." One of the stated objectives of the Core Neighbourhood Plan within the OCP is "to enhance community based recreation to meet the needs of Core Neighbourhood residents."

We appreciate the City's offer of programming in our neighbourhood to meet some of the needs left behind by the pool, but programming will not replace the unstructured, drop-in recreation opportunities and community hub that a pool provides.

The City's current plan calls for the pool to be replaced by another outdoor recreation facility -- or mix of facilities -- that costs much less to build and maintain and will likely be unsupervised. The proposed timeline means that facility wouldn't be built for at least 4 or 5 years. We believe strongly that the City needs to keep the value of Maple Leaf Pool in the Heritage neighbourhood; if a pool costs \$4M to re-build, we do not want to see the cost of that removed from our neighbourhood and re-invested in a city-wide facility. We also believe strongly that 4 or more years is too long for our neighbourhood to wait for another recreation facility; even 1 year will have a significant impact on our community.

We respectfully request that the City invest in re-building the pool, with a goal of re-opening it by summer 2020. We also request that, in 2019 (or until Maple Leaf Pool re-opens), there be free transportation and admission to Wascana Pool for residents of Heritage and Al Ritchie, and an investment in programming in Heritage.

We have nothing against a destination aquatic facility in Wascana Park -- we suspect many of our residents may enjoy it from time to time -- but a leisure facility of that nature should not happen at the expense of a vital neighbourhood asset like Maple Leaf Pool. Maple Leaf Pool needs to be prioritized,

and if that means the Wascana facility is delayed while the City raises additional funds, we believe that's a much smaller sacrifice than the cost of our community being without a recreation facility for several years.

Regardless of Council's decision tonight, I want to emphasize that the Heritage Community Association is eager to continue working with City staff on making sure the recreation needs of our neighbourhood are met to the best of our collective ability. We have offered to work together to access capital grants that are available for community-based facilities like this. We appreciate the City's willingness to engage us in next steps, and look forward to working together to make the best of this difficult situation.