

## History of the Budget Discussion on Pools

- The TDSB owns 84 swimming pools that are located in schools. Most of the pools were built in the 1960's and 1970's but some of the pools were constructed as far back as 1912.
- Of the 84 pools, four pools are closed and two are leased. This leaves 78 school pools that are funded by the school board.
- The cost to operate school pools is \$17M annually. This includes the cost of utilities (\$6.5M), caretaking and daily maintenance (\$5.2M) and swimming instructors (107 at a cost of \$5M) to support school aquatics programs. There are also capital costs for pool repairs and major maintenance work. The estimated capital cost to renew all school pools is about \$56.5M in total. Since 2003, the TDSB has spent \$8.3M on capital repairs to pools.
- The City of Toronto's Parks, Forestry and Recreation Department currently has access to 35 school pools for community programs provided after 6pm on weekdays and on weekends. The City also owns 30 indoor pools and 60 outdoor pools across Toronto. Prior to June 2007, the City accessed 41 pools.
- The City currently pays the Board about \$5M annually to use the 35 pools, leaving the school board to fund the balance of the operating costs (\$12M) and total cost of capital repairs. (*The City's decision in June 2007 to limit their access from 41 to 35 school pools left the board with a \$600,000 budget impact for 2007-08.*)
- Funding for pools has been a budget pressure since the 7 school board amalgamation creating the TDSB in 1998. Prior to 1998, pool costs were addressed through the normal budget process and local education tax levy. After 1998, all school boards in Ontario were funded through a provincial formula and direct access to property taxes by school boards came to an end. The cost of swimming pools was not included under the new education funding model. Consequently, maintaining aquatics programs and school pools has been a budget pressure for the board since 1998.
- In 2001, the board was presented with a plan to close pools. Although closures didn't occur then, what did happen was the creation of a lease agreement with the City for community access to school pools.
- Every year, through the budget process, the cost of maintaining school pools is identified against other emerging education program issues. In June 2007, the Board voted in support of a motion that would begin the decommissioning of all school pools effective June 2008 if funding for pools could not be secured

through either a specific education mill rate for Toronto residents and businesses, or, through Provincial grants.

- Staff initiated discussions with Provincial and City staff on the decommissioning of pools motion in the fall of 2007. Copies of the approved board motion were provided to the Minister of Education, the Deputy Minister and Ministry Finance staff, as well as to the City's Budget Chief, the City's Chief Executive Officer and senior City staff in the Parks, Forestry and Recreation Department.
- On January 3<sup>rd</sup>, the Chair and Vice Chair of the TDSB met with City Budget Chief Shelley Carroll to further discuss the Board's approved motion concerning school pools, including the request for consideration of a local levy to address cost of these valuable community facilities.
- The Chair also met with Minister Wynne at the beginning of January to discuss the board's budget pressures, including the board's pools motion.
- The outcome of the conversations between the Board's Chair and the Minister and the discussions with City Councillors are well documented in Toronto's local papers. The Province "ruled out letting school boards raise their own taxes to pay for local issues such as pools". Similarly, the City has stated that the "cash-strapped city cannot pay any more than it already does for the use of 35 school pools". So where does this leave the board? Back to the motion approved in June 2007, the decommissioning of school pools will begin in June 2008.
- Board staff expect to complete a comprehensive review to identify the schools that would experience significant scheduling challenges if their school pool was closed. The 35 City funded pools would remain open as long as there were no capital cost issues.
- The unfunded school pools (with limited exception for three pools in special education schools) would be phased-out over two years, beginning with the schools that don't have program scheduling issues. The balance of the unfunded pools would be closed for Sept 2009 once pool area conversions were completed.
- The cost of decommissioning pools is estimated between \$5000 and \$15,000 per pool depending on its size. Total estimated cost of \$500,000.

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