

Reopening of recreation centres, Library begin to take shape

On Friday, kids took another step towards a return to normalcy, once again being allowed to beat the heat at splash pads in parks across Aurora.

But it will be a number of weeks before other recreational and public facilities are open to the public, it was decided last week.

Splash pads and public washrooms in parks are the latest amenities to be re-opened under Stage 2 of the Province's plan to gear up following mass closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

With the announcement of Aurora moving to Stage 2 of the Province's reopening plan, Town facilities, amenities and local businesses can begin to move forward and start to open with a phased-in approach, said Mayor Tom Mrakas last week. Our main focus is the safety of the public and staff. The Town will ensure it takes every precaution and considers all health considerations when making the necessary arrangements to open other facilities and resume services in the weeks ahead.

The pandemic is not over and we must all still continue to follow the health guidelines and advice from officials to ensure our amenities continue to stay open.

Sports fields will be the next slate of amenities to re-open for use on July 6.

Come Monday, permits will again be issued based on seasonal requests from sports groups but the fields will be permitted for training only. No games will be allowed. There will be no line painting for sports such as soccer, nor will turf mowing be determined on height. Instead, mowing, grooming and field inspections will take place on a weekly basis.

Allowing the Aurora Public Library to move from its current curbside pickup model to opening its doors to pick-up and drop-off of materials while allowing residents to access services like computers and photocopiers is slated for early July although no specific date has been assigned just yet. Once opened, however, patrons will not be permitted to handle books or materials on shelves, nor will they be allowed onto the second floor. Hours will be limited and computer access will be by reservation. Curbside service will continue.

The re-opening of public pools will be staggered.

The pool at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex is currently slated to re-open for private lessons, lane swims, aquatic sports, and aquafit classes with limits on the number of participants on July 20,

with the pool at the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex set for a September re-opening.

In order to achieve this, change rooms will be closely monitored, cleaned and disinfected to maintain standards while no spectators will be allowed poolside. Hot tubs and spas will remain closed.

Ice pad play is currently scheduled to resume with the issuing of permits in August. Up to three ice pads will be opened in this first stage for training only. No games will be allowed, and there will be no access to dressing rooms or for spectators. There will be a limit of 10 people per ice pad with the remaining pads set to re-open in the late summer or early fall pending Stage 3 reopening.

Remaining closed for the foreseeable future will be playgrounds, indoor walking tracks, the Club Aurora fitness centre, squash courts, the rock-climbing wall at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex and meeting rooms within each of the recreation facilities.

Also remaining closed to the public for the foreseeable future are the Joint Operations Centre on Industrial Parkway North and Town Hall itself.

At Town Hall, a minimal number of staff will work on site until September, but business continues: all planning and building permit applications will still be accepted and processed while marriage licenses, lottery licenses and other applications will be processed by appointment only. Residents remain encouraged to continue to make payments to the Town online or by dropping a cheque into the mail slot at the entrance of Town Hall.

The ability to start up any facility, program or amenity requires evaluation of the Provincial orders, guidelines, and the ability to implement with current resources (personnel or equipment needs), development of new policies/procedures, communication to the public and user groups, and evaluating the feasibility of starting up (cost and resource implications), said Robin McDougall, Aurora's Director of Community Services, in a report to Council last week. All this takes time to ensure we cover everything and meet public health's approval. Staff recognize the public's interest in getting back to normal as soon as possible; therefore, we're working diligently to meet expectations while maintaining safety as our top priority. Regardless of when the facility, program or amenity is opened, the public will need to be diligent about personal hygiene and sanitation as it is not practical or possible for the Town to ensure that all sites are sanitized at all times.

WHERE THINGS STAND ON COVID-19

Aurora-wide, the rate of new cases of COVID-19 remains encouraging, with the number of active cases entering single digits at the start of the week.

At press time, there were a total of 8 active cases within Aurora and 92 cases deemed resolved and recovered for a total of 115 confirmed cases.

15 Aurora residents have lost the battle against the virus.

Of the 115 total cases, 55 are attributed to institutional outbreak, 27 to close contact, 20 to local transmission, 11 to travel, and two related to a workplace cluster.

Region-wide, as of Tuesday evening, there are 322 active cases, 246 deaths, and 2,421 recoveries, for a total of 2,989.