

DATE: June 21, 2021

REPORT NO: REC-08-2021

SUBJECT: **West Lincoln Community Centre and Recreation Services COVID-19 Update**

CONTACT: Wendy Beaty, Coordinator of Recreation Services
Mike DiPaola, P.Eng. Director of Public Works and Recreation

OVERVIEW:

- The purpose of this report is to provide an overview on the West Lincoln Community Centre and recent community events and programs; and to provide an update on upcoming Recreation Services' programs and events based on the current COVID-19 pandemic situation.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That, Report REC-08-2021, re: West Lincoln Community Centre & Recreation Services COVID-19 Update, dated June 21, 2021, be received for information

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN:

Theme # 2:

- **Support for Business, Opportunities for Residents** – Creating a positive image and a community where it is easy to do business.

Theme # 4:

- **Local Attractions** – Providing amenities, programs and services that bring the community together.

Theme # 5:

- **Community Health and Safety** – West Lincoln continues to be a safe community where all residents are supported to thrive throughout their lives.

BACKGROUND:

Spring 2020 Closure

On Friday March 13th 2020, the Township partially activated its Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) in response to the spread of the COVID-19 virus. At that time the Township enacted a series of closures such as programs/events, camps, and facilities which included the West Lincoln Community Centre.

On June 12, 2020, the Township made the difficult decision to not offer the summer camp program.

Re-opening 2020

On June 26th, 2020, improvements to COVID-19 case counts and spread allowed for the Township to re-open the Splash Pad at the Community Centre under the guidelines from the Province and Niagara Region Public Health.

West Lincoln joined with all municipalities across the Niagara Region to present a virtual Canada Day event on July 1st, 2020.

On August 10th, 2020, the Walking Track at the Community Centre was re-opened with reduced hours and new restrictions for use and capacity.

The annual Harvest Routes event was presented to the community on October 2nd and 3rd, 2020, with an adjusted format and reduced programming.

The arena was re-opened on October 4th, 2020 with several new processes around cleaning, access and screening. Recreation Services was able to restart limited ice programs such as Men's and Ladies' Shinny, Preschool Skating and Adult Skating.

A reduced winter fitness program schedule was planned and set to begin January 18th, 2021, but did not materialize due to the province-wide shut down and "stay at home" order announced prior to the end of the 2020 calendar year and early new year respectively.

Winter 2020 Closure

Increases in COVID-19 cases across the province and regionally were seen throughout the Fall months of 2020 and on December 18th, 2020 the Province announced that the Niagara Region would move into the Red Zone of the Response Framework. This meant further restrictions on facility use, the cancellation of programs and new limits on facility capacity.

Three days later, the Province went further and announced that there would be a province-wide shut-down as of December 26th, 2020 for a 28-day period. The result of the shut-down meant the closure of the West Lincoln Community Centre and a hold on all programming.

On January 12th, 2021, the Provincial Government announced enhanced measures in the Province wide shut-down via a "Stay at Home" order, in order to minimize mobility of the community. The intent of this order was; only leave your household for the purposes of groceries, medical appointments, and essential work. The enhanced Public Health and workplace safety measures were in effect for all of Ontario and were in place until at least Thursday February 11th, 2021.

On February 11th, it was announced that March Break for schools would be moved to April to curb travel and the spread of COVID-19.

On February 12th, the Province announced that the Niagara Region would remain in the Grey Zone of the Provincial Framework for a period of 14 days.

Winter 2021 Re-Opening

On February 26th, the Provincial government announced that the Niagara Region would move to the Red-Control Zone of the Provincial Framework as of March 1st, 2021. This would allow for limited facility usage and programming to restart. The West Lincoln Community Centre opened for restricted ice and walking track usage on March 3rd, 2021.

Recreation Services presented a Family Easter Weekend event with curbside pickup of activity kits and virtual activities from April 2nd to April 5th. Participation levels were good and several positive comments were received from the community.

Spring 2021 Closure

As COVID-19 cases were rising at an alarming rate, the government announced a Province-wide lockdown by enacting the emergency brake on April 3rd. West Lincoln and the entire Niagara Region also declared a State of Emergency on April 3rd.

On April 8th, the Province announced a declaration of Emergency and Province-wide Stay at Home Order that would stay in effect until May 19th.

From April 12th to 16th, Recreation Services offered virtual activities as part of the March Break in April programming. Feedback was positive from participants and there was an appreciation for offering something for the kids during the Stay at Home Order.

Spring 2021 Reopening

On May 20th the government of Ontario released its Roadmap to Reopen, a three step plan to safely and cautiously reopen the Province. Effective May 22nd, Ontario would allow for more outdoor recreational amenities to open with restrictions. This included the opening of West Lincoln's skate park, tennis courts and splash pad.

On June 11th, the Province moved into Step 1 of the Roadmap to Reopen, which allowed for the opening of sports fields for training purposes only (max 10 participants) and the operation of camps.

CURRENT SITUATION:

Ontario remains under Step 1 of the Roadmap to Reopen. Provincial officials indicate that the Province will remain in Step 1 for a minimum of twenty-one (21) days before moving into Step 2.

Vaccination Site

The West Lincoln Community Centre continues to be a COVID-19 vaccination site and clinics are active based on Niagara Region Public Health clinic schedule. The use of the facility as a vaccination site is expected to continue through the summer. Clinic dates for June, July, August and September have been released. With changes to vaccine distribution, there is potential for these dates to increase.

Summer Camp

Recreation Services offered Summer Camp registration beginning on June 8th for a limited number of spots based on staffing and facility requirements. The response was high and all available spots have been booked. The Ministry of Health released updated Summer Camp guidelines which will guide the Township's program to ensure a safe experience for participants and staff. The Summer Camp program begins on July 5th and runs until August 27th.

Canada Day

Staff continue to meet with the Regional Canada Day group to collaborate around region-wide programming for a virtual Canada Day 2021 event again this year. Regional plans are focussed around a Region-wide virtual scavenger hunt event and joint promotion. Staff are also planning to do Canada Day Take Home Kits for the West Lincoln community. Final details for distribution of the kits are being worked out and advertising to the community will begin very soon.

Movies in the Park

In consideration of the limitations around gatherings in the upcoming Step 2 of the Roadmap to Reopen, the Movies in the Park event would be limited to a gathering of 25 people. The Roadmap to Reopen for Step 3 does not currently provide guidance on gathering limits for outdoor events. As such, Movies in the Park will be postponed during Step 2 and reconsidered in Step 3.

Youth Programs and Activities

The opening of the Skate Park was a positive gain against the struggles that community youth are facing during the COVID-19 pandemic. Usage has been high and park users are benefiting from the physical and social advantages of the facility again. The expectation is a return to indoor youth programming, with restrictions, this Fall. Staff are beginning to plan for a cautious return of youth drop-in programs. Program offerings and venue will be dependent on the West Lincoln Community Centre being used as a vaccination centre. If the gymnasium is not available due to vaccination clinics, consideration will be given to utilizing other spaces in the community based on availability.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Township has recognized that all demographics in our community have been impacted. The demographic that is potentially the most vulnerable is youth. In recognition of this, the Township plans to investigate partnerships with organizations and agencies that provide services for youth. The goal is to have a collaborative approach with these various organizations to promote their services and support youth in the West Lincoln community.

Older Adult Programs and Activities

The West Lincoln older adult community is resilient and an increase in walking outdoors for physical exercise has been noticed during the pandemic. According to the Roadmap to Reopen, any indoor recreational programs and activities are unfortunately not able to commence until Step 3. Based on the initial timelines of this framework, Step 3 would not occur any sooner than July 23rd. COVID-19 recovery plans for Step 3 include the opening

of the walking track and the return of Fall-time older adult programming and partnerships for facility usage for older adult activities.

Future Planning for Fall 2021

Based on on-going progress of province-wide vaccination rates and improvements of key public health indicators, the expectation is that indoor sports, fitness classes and recreation programs will be permitted to proceed in the Fall with restrictions. Staff are hopeful to be able to offer facility usage to groups such as West Niagara Minor Hockey and West Lincoln Figure Skating Club and possibly include a modified recreation program set this Fall.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

There are no other confirmed financial implications to report at this time.

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL COMMENTS:

This Report was reviewed by the Director of Public Works & Recreation, Director of Finance, CAO, and the Township Clerk.

CONCLUSION:

Staff will continue to evaluate and adjust recreation programs, events and services in response to provincial and regional restrictions and guidance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Prepared & Submitted by:



Wendy Beaty

Coordinator of Recreation Services



Mike DiPaola, P.Eng

Director of Public Works & Recreation

Approved by:



Bev Hendry

Chief Administrative Officer