

Town of Riverview

COUNCIL REPORT FORM



Presented to: Mayor and Town Council

Presented by: Parks, Recreation, Facilities & Community Relations

Date: November 25, 2024

Subject: Aquatic Registration Review

At the Regular Council Meeting of September 9, 2024, Council directed staff to research and report on the implications of providing priority enrollment to residents registering for swimming lessons. This report provides historical context, an assessment of the resident-first enrollment model, and supportive actions to address the identified root causes.

BACKGROUND

History of the Pat Crossman Memorial Aquatic Centre

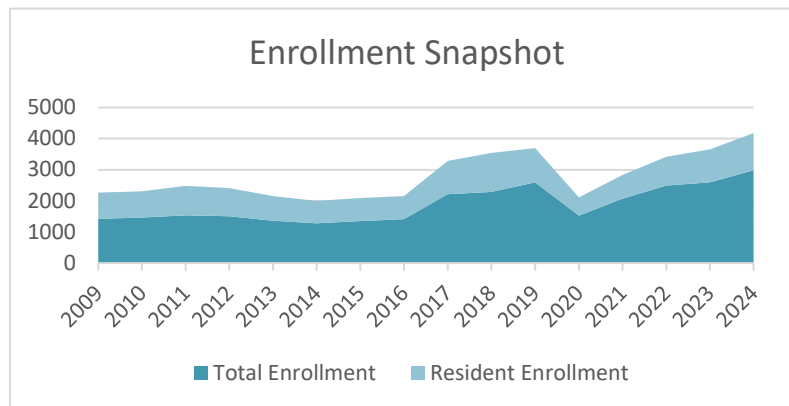
The Pat Crossman Memorial Aquatic Centre, built in 1979 as a collaborative project with Riverview High School, is a provincial asset serving as a cornerstone of recreation for the community. Reciprocal agreements between the Province of New Brunswick and the Town of Riverview originally split operational costs, but these agreements were updated in 2005 to reflect increased municipal use and the Town's significant investment in expanding the facility.

Currently, the Province provides modest funding for utilities, while the Town supports the facility's operations, which have grown from 11 employees in the 1980s to over 50 employees in 2023. Hosting swimming lessons, fitness programs, rentals, and drop-in activities, the facility is nearing the end of its lifecycle and will be replaced by the Riverview Recreation Complex (RRC) in 2026.

Residential Priority Historical Context

- No Residential Priority Since 1992: Alongside implementation challenges, this unofficial policy was removed to support continued regional delivery of life-saving education, such as the Grade 4 swimming program open to all children in the school district's catchment area.
- Key Historical Council Actions:
 - *2012*: Council explored online registration to improve service. At the time, enrollment consisted of 60% residents and 40% non-residents.
 - *2013–2015*: The implementation of new registration systems faced technological challenges, and software reviewed during this period lacked the ability to prioritize enrollment by geographic location.

Enrollment and Demographics



- *Population Growth and Age Demographics* - Riverview's population has steadily grown from 19,128 in 2011 to 20,584 in 2021, with an annual growth rate between 0.56% and 1.46%. While the 0–14 age group—a critical demographic for aquatic programs—has increased in absolute numbers (2011: 3,030; 2021: 3,156), its proportion of the total population has declined from 15.8% to 15.3%, indicating a potential long-term shift in enrollment patterns.
- *Expected vs. Actual Resident Enrollment* - Expected resident enrollment based on the 0–14 age demographic has remained relatively stable and is being met (e.g., 504 in 2011 to 525 in 2021), but actual resident enrollment has consistently exceeded these projections, with peaks in years such as 2011 (939) and 2018 (1,255). This discrepancy suggests strong participation from residents wishing to enroll in programming more than one season per year.
- *COVID-19 Impact* - Enrollment experienced a significant decline in 2020. While total program participation has since recovered (2023: 2,592; 2024: 2,982), resident participation has not rebounded to pre-pandemic levels, resulting in a higher proportion of non-resident enrollment. There is also some indication that the fluctuation is also a stacked result of the closure of the St. Pat's Family Centre.
- *Increase in Overall Program Participation* - Despite the challenges, overall program participation has seen substantial growth, increasing by 93% from 2011 (1,539) to 2024 (2,982). This rise reflects the facility's growing regional appeal and expanded programming, underscoring the need for continued investment in capacity and accessibility.

CURRENT & FUTURE FACILITY MODELS

Current Facility – Aquatic Review Findings

The Pat Crossman Memorial Aquatic Centre has served the community for decades but faced significant challenges due to its age and increasing demands. In 2016, an independent review highlighted operational inefficiencies, including financial burdens, recruitment difficulties, and inadequate supervision. Key findings included:

- **Financial Challenges:** The facility's operational costs were placing a growing strain on municipal resources. The review recommended bolstering program enrollment and optimizing operations to reduce its tax burden on residents.
- **Staffing and Program Delivery:** Recruitment and retention issues affected program capacity and quality. To address these gaps, significant investments in staffing were required, with Council reaffirming the Town's commitment to high-quality recreation programs.
- **Benchmarking and Best Practices:** The review compared Riverview's facility to others in Atlantic Canada, identifying opportunities to improve cost efficiency, staffing, and service delivery. Recommendations focused on modernizing practices to meet current and future demands while maintaining financial sustainability.

Riverview Recreation Complex (RRC)

The RRC, set to replace the Pat Crossman Memorial Aquatic Centre in 2026, is a transformative regional facility designed to meet the recreational needs of Riverview and its neighbouring communities.

Regional Facility Vision: from the outset, the RRC was designed to serve as a hub for Greater Moncton and Albert County. Approved in 2020, the facility's business plan highlights its role in filling critical infrastructure gaps while promoting regional growth, social connections, and economic activity.

- **Key Features and Benefits:**
 - **Addressing Regional Gaps:** Offers the region's largest pool complex and only municipal indoor turf field, addresses deficiencies identified in the Southeast Regional Recreation Plan. For reference, Greater Moncton Area pool supply is 1:36,043 residents compared to Fredericton's 1:10,201, highlighting the need for additional capacity.
 - **Strategic Location:** Positioned on Bridgedale Boulevard for convenient access to neighbouring communities as well as integration with the Mill Creek Nature Park.
 - **Funding Support:** Endorsement with the Southeast Regional Service Commission and Provincial funding highlighted the regional nature of the RRC facility.
 - **Economic and Social Impact:** The RRC is anticipated to generate \$520,000 annually in economic activity, hosting regional events and engaging over 20 regional community associations.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE

Riverview has a tradition of being a welcoming and inclusive community. This principle has guided its approach to events and public amenities, ensuring accessibility for both residents and non-residents. Preserving inclusivity is central to Riverview's identity, and altering the enrollment process could undermine these values and impact on other programs and events.

While resident-preferential enrollment is an understandable request, implementing such a system would create operational strain, delays, and potentially reduce enrollment and revenue, threatening program sustainability. The Town is committed to tackling the real challenges of high demand, staffing shortages, and increased children's programming needs by expanding capacity and ensuring access for all participants.

IMPLICATION ANALYSIS

To evaluate the implications of implementing a residential priority enrollment model for aquatic programs, staff conducted a thorough review process outlined below. This approach enables the town to address key complaints, analyze operational challenges, and weigh the potential benefits and drawbacks of prioritizing resident enrollment.

- **Facilitated Team Sessions:** Reviewed enrollment data and explored registration models, cost-benefit analyses, and feedback mechanisms to address program access concerns.
- **Structured Decision Matrix:** Assessed the resident-first model against operational, financial, and strategic criteria to determine its feasibility and implications.
- **Strategic Alignment and Recommendations:** Emphasized balancing resident satisfaction with inclusivity and sustainability to maintain the RRC's regional relevance and financial stability.

Problem Definition and Root Cause Analysis

The analysis identified high demand for swimming lessons, regional growth, and pool space as the primary root causes of program access challenges. Additionally, residents expressed frustration over perceived inequities in access, citing their tax contributions as justification for priority enrollment.

Assessment Overview

A detailed evaluation of the resident-first model was conducted using a structured decision matrix.

Below is a breakdown of the six assessment factors, their scores, and implications:

1. *Operational Feasibility (1/5)* - Evaluates the ease of implementing the model without significant disruptions.
 - **Implications:** Implementing a resident-first model would require considerable resources to verify residency and enforce policies, introducing operational inefficiencies and delays. This makes the model impractical with current resources and infrastructure. An implementation could take up to 18 months and require all residents to visit a Town facility to manually verify their residency, potentially creating access barriers.
2. *Financial Impact (3/5)* - Assesses the potential revenue effects of reducing non-resident participation.
 - **Implications:** Non-resident participation is essential for sustaining revenues (>\$240,000), which directly support program delivery and financial stability. A reduction in non-resident enrollment could jeopardize these revenues, particularly as the RRC's operations scale up. Maintaining regional access is critical to financial sustainability. It is likely that a new recreation software would be required to implement, at an estimated cost of \$75,000.
3. *Community Perception and Inclusivity (2/5)* - Measures the alignment of the model with Riverview's inclusive values and public perceptions of fairness.
 - **Implications:** While residents would appreciate priority access, non-residents may view this as exclusionary, potentially damaging Riverview's reputation as a welcoming and inclusive community. This could create tension between resident and non-resident stakeholders and

open further reviews of the town's other facilities and programs which see diverse regional participation.

4. *Resident Satisfaction (4/5)* - Evaluates the potential improvement in resident satisfaction through priority access.
 - Implications: A resident-first model could enhance satisfaction by addressing perceived inequities and reducing occasional complaints. However, this would come at the expense of inclusivity, operational efficiency and is not likely to resolve the root causes identified.
5. *Alignment with Industry Standards (1/5)* - Considers whether the model aligns with practices in the Canadian aquatic industry, where resident-first models are uncommon (4 noted nationally).
 - Implications: Adopting a resident-first model deviates from industry norms, potentially complicating collaboration and benchmarking with other facilities. This could affect Riverview's reputation within the broader recreation industry.
6. *Future Growth and Facility Vision (1/5)* - Examines the model's impact on the RRC's long-term ability to attract a regional user base.
 - Implications: A restrictive enrollment model would hinder the RRC's ability to attract regional users and sustain future growth, undermining its financial operations and strategic vision as a regional recreation hub.

Overall Scoring and Recommendations - Total Weighted Score: 2/5 indicates low alignment with strategic goals and significant concerns that warrant maintaining the current model or exploring other avenues for improvement.

SUPPORTIVE ACTIONS

To address the root causes of program access challenges, the following supportive actions are being explored for 2025 implementation, focusing on increasing capacity, preserving inclusivity, and maintaining adaptability in programming:

Expand Program Capacity by 15% - Increasing class offerings and adjusting pool spacing will directly address high demand and improve access for both residents and non-residents. This can be achieved through:

- Enhancing Existing Programs: Expand capacity in older classes and create new pool space to accommodate high-demand levels, targeting the most oversubscribed categories.
- Revising Facility Schedules: Optimize the facility's operational schedule to incorporate additional programming, balancing usage among various user groups and maximizing available pool time.

Preserve Inclusivity - Riverview's reputation as a welcoming and inclusive community is a cornerstone of its recreation services. It is recommended to:

- Continue offering access to both residents and non-residents, maintaining Riverview's position as a regional leader in recreation.
- Emphasize the value of inclusive policies in fostering strong community connections and supporting regional partnerships, particularly with the new Riverview Recreation Complex which will fully resolve current demand challenges.

Monitor and Adapt - Ongoing evaluation of program demand and community feedback is essential to ensure offerings remain aligned with evolving needs. To adapt effectively, the following actions are proposed if additional capacity does not fully mitigate access issues:

- Resident Prioritization in Waitlist Management: Encourage participants to join waitlists, which serve as a valuable metric for monitoring demand, while giving residents some priority in the waitlist process.
- Introduce Fee Adjustments: Explore introducing a small resident discount or non-resident fee for programs to address perceived inequities related to tax contributions while preserving accessibility.

By implementing these supportive actions, the town can balance resident satisfaction with operational feasibility, inclusivity, and long-term sustainability, ensuring its recreation services continue to thrive in a growing and diverse community.

CONSIDERATIONS

Legal: N/A

Financial: Revenue impacts to General Operating Fund

Policy: No previous policies affected

Stakeholders: Residents, Current Facility Users, Recreation Stakeholders,

Strategic Plan: Safe and Welcoming Community

Communication Plan: N/A

Recommendation of Staff: N/A

This report has been prepared for information purposes only in response to Council directing Staff to research and report on the topic. The Department intends to move forward with the identified supportive actions contained in the report, beginning in 2025.