CORPORATE REPORT

NO: R123 COUNCIL DATE: June 15, 2026

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO:	**Mayor & Council**	DATE:	**June 10, 2026**
FROM:	**General Manager, Parks, Recreation & Culture**	FILE:	**0550-20**
SUBJECT:	**First Three Introductory Levels of Swim Lessons Free for Surrey Children**		

RECOMMENDATION

The Parks, Recreation & Culture Department recommends that Council receive this report for information.

INTENT

This report provides Mayor and Council with information on a new initiative that will offer the first three introductory levels of City of Surrey ("the City") swim lessons free of charge for all Surrey children 12 and under at the City's indoor and outdoor pools.

BACKGROUND

At the Regular Council meeting on May 25, 2026, Council unanimously approved the following motion:

1. *"Direct staff to make the first three introductory levels of City of Surrey swim lessons free of charge for all Surrey children 12 and under, effective July 1, 2026; and*

2. *Direct staff to report back to Council on implementation details, including program uptake, registration processes, instructor capacity, and any budgetary considerations arising from this initiative."*

In response to Council's direction, staff have implemented the required changes to the registration process, developed a robust communications plan, and are actively recruiting additional instructors and implementing strategies to increase lesson capacity.

The City is home to a large and diverse population of children and families, including newcomer families, who face a statistically higher risk of drowning. Learning to swim is a critical life skill that supports water safety, physical confidence, and healthy child development.

The City currently offers Lifesaving Society Swim for Life ("LSSL") programming at each of its five indoor pools and eight outdoor pools including a Preschool Stream (levels 1 to 5) for children ages 3 to 5 and a Swimmer Stream (levels 1 to 6) for children ages 6+. The first three introductory swimming lessons levels consist of levels 1 to 3 in both Streams.

In 2025, the City offered 9,337 lessons and recorded 45,394 individual registrations through the LSSL swim lesson program. The programming is designed to meet the learning needs of residents of all ages and abilities.

DISCUSSION

Effective July 1, 2026, the first three introductory levels of City swim lessons will be offered free of charge for all Surrey children 12 and under at all City indoor and outdoor pool locations. The initiative is intended to increase participation by reducing financial barriers to introductory programming.

Registration for summer outdoor pool lessons began on May 11, 2026 and registration for summer indoor pool lessons began on June 7, 2026. Surrey children 12 and under registering in the first three introductory levels of City swim lessons at indoor and outdoor pool locations on or after that date will not be charged a fee. Residents who previously registered for the first three introductory levels of City swim lessons are eligible to apply for a refund through the outdoor pool contractor, Tides Out Ltd. Registration will continue to follow the Surrey resident priority process. This initiative will provide residents of Surrey with 3,400 free swim classes for a total of approximately 23,300 free swimming spaces per year at our indoor and outdoor pools, which represents approximately 52% of all swim lesson spaces.

Staff will add additional Preschool and Swimmer Levels 1 to 3 lesson opportunities to increase registration spaces and support the anticipated rise in demand.

Recruitment

Recruitment and training of swim instructors for Summer 2026 is ongoing. The City offers a Leisure Access Program ("LAP") fee reduction for lifeguarding courses and partners with the Surrey School District #36, to expand access and support lifeguard and swim instructor recruitment of high school students. Staff have also promoted lifeguarding and swim instructor opportunities through social media, the City's website, and outreach to colleges and universities across the Lower Mainland.

Over the past two years, the City has successfully recruited and trained more than 200 new lifeguard and swim instructor staff. As a result, staffing levels are now comparable to pre-COVID levels; however, demand for swimming lessons has also increased significantly since the pandemic.

FUNDING

Based on current lesson offerings, providing the first three introductory levels of City swim lessons free of charge for all Surrey children 12 and under is expected to result in an estimated combined revenue reduction of approximately $835,725 in the 2026 budget.

Looking ahead, the estimated combined annual revenue impact is approximately $1,416,154 based on the current number of swim classes and registrants in these introductory levels. The revenue shortfall will be addressed through City operational savings.

CONCLUSION

The City remains committed to providing accessible, high-quality aquatic programming. By offering the first three introductory levels of City swim lessons free of charge for all Surrey children 12 and under, the City is strengthening its commitment to water safety and drowning prevention, while helping ensure all children have the opportunity to develop lifelong swimming skills.

As the City moves forward with the development of the new $310-million Newton Community Centre, which will include a 50-metre competition pool and a leisure pool, the City will be well positioned to continue meeting the aquatic programming needs of a rapidly growing, world-class city.

Laurie Cavan
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