



## Media Release

THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF VERNON  
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Vernon Aquatic Centre reopened to the public**

On Sunday, October 18, the Vernon Aquatic Centre was reopened to the public, following a lengthy closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic and direction of the Provincial Health Officer. During the closure, a number of major maintenance projects were completed, including the installation of a new water filtration system.

The City has an unwavering commitment to the health and safety of our citizens, visitors and staff. To maintain a safe environment for everyone, specific steps have been taken to implement COVID-related safety protocols prior to reopening our facilities, which go above and beyond our previously approved safety plan. The Aquatic Centre reopening plan is compliant with Public Health Orders, the Lifesaving Society of BC, WorkSafeBC regulations, British Columbia Recreation and Parks Association (BCRPA) recommendations, viaSport guidelines, and the Provincial Health Ministry.

Prior to reopening, the final sign off of the new water filtration system was scheduled to take place Friday, October 16, with the project engineer. Due to unforeseen circumstances, the engineer had to reschedule the appointment for midday Saturday (October 17). On Friday, the manufacturer's technician, the installer and Recreation Services staff determined the new system was functioning the way it was designed and was believed to be meeting all of the specifications for safe operation.

The engineer met with the installer and the manufacturer's technician on Saturday, checked the system's installation and operation, confirmed it was meeting all specifications, and indicated that it was safe to reopen the pools. Optimum settings have been established for the new filtration system and the manufacturer's technician remains on site this week to train staff on its maintenance and operation.

On Saturday morning, prior to an aquatics staff training session, it was noted that Perlite was in the water. It was determined the Perlite was released into the pool as a result of one bolt not being properly installed in the new system. The system was repaired once the issue was identified. Perlite is a stable, non-toxic common media used in pool filtration systems. In the water, Perlite has a gritty texture to it, so if someone were to come into contact with it, it would feel like sand. The Perlite is being removed from the pool through a combination of vacuuming and being taken in through the pool's filters.

As part of its operating permit, Recreation Services is required to have a Pool Safety Plan in place for the operation of its aquatic centre, which is approved by the Interior Health Authority. The Plan is considered a *living document* and is modified as required. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the safe reopening of the pool, Recreation Services drafted an addendum to its Plan to provide staff protocols to keep themselves and the public safe while using the facility.

“The draft plan was developed using much of what was learned at the outdoor pools this summer, with adaptations needed to fit the indoor pool environment,” said Doug Ross, Director, Recreation Services. “Part of the staff training session on the weekend was dedicated to reviewing the new protocols and receiving feedback from our lifeguards in order to complete the addendum for the Pool Safety Plan. It is only through the testing of these protocols with our staff in the water that we can confirm they are feasible and appropriate.”

In addition to the Pool Safety Plan, which is a guiding internal document for staff, Recreation Services has also developed and published a Risk Mitigation Plan for the Aquatic Centre. It is based on guidelines from the Office of the Provincial Health Officer, the Lifesaving Society of BC, the BCRPA and WorkSafeBC, and is available to the public on our website.

Prior to reopening to the public, the air temperature in the pool area was intentionally increased to support the raising of the water temperature in the pools. The air temperature was returned to its normal levels on Monday.

“Since reopening to the public, Recreation Services has received no complaints or concerns regarding the quality of the water, and community members have said they’re thrilled to be back,” said Ross. “Recreation Services is pleased to be back in the aquatics business after the lengthy closure; we welcome our clients back to the pools and are pleased to have made numerous upgrades during the closure.”

To view our recreation facility Risk Mitigation Plans, please visit [www.vernon.ca/safereopening](http://www.vernon.ca/safereopening). To book a public swim time, please visit [www.qvrec.ca](http://www.qvrec.ca) or call 250-545-6035 ext. 0.