

DELEGATION REQUEST

Names of persons speaking: Eleanor Nesling, Seamus Nesling

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Contact name: Eleanor Nesling

Subject matter: No/ Insufficient access to area swimming pools for those who depend on swimming for fitness and well being.

Specific request of the regional district, if any (i.e. letter of support, funding): Reopen the Aquatic Centre for lane swimming and rehab.

Requested meeting date: January 26, 2021

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Presentation to Comox Valley Recreation Commission

Re: Need to restore lane swimming at the Aquatic Centre

Delegation:

Eleanor and Seamus Nesling

We urge the commission to reopen the Aquatic Centre pool for the purpose of lap swimming and rehab. The pool at the Sports Centre is insufficient to meet the needs of swimmers in this community.

You are to be commended for keeping the Sports Centre pool in operation. Staff and patrons are working together to ensure adherence to covid protocols. We, along with many others, feel it is a safe place to visit.

However, so many people are trying to swim laps or go to rehab swim that the time slots are filled within seconds of becoming available. This is extremely frustrating to those of us who are swimming to maintain our physical, mental and emotional health in these difficult times.

Many of us who swim are seniors who cannot enjoy other forms of exercise such as running or tennis. Swimming puts minimal stress on joints making it the only suitable form of exercise for people with physical infirmities, those recovering from surgery or injuries, or those with physical disabilities. When we don't swim our fitness levels deteriorate.

This year there are many more of us as many snowbirds have stayed home. According to the WHO's guidelines we should be exercising as much as possible during the pandemic. To do this in the better ventilated Aquatic Centre would be beneficial.

The situation was worsened drastically when lap swimming slots were removed in the new year to make way for other programs. Now swimmers must hover over their computers throughout the day in a demeaning contest to see who can snag the few available spots.

Let me take a moment to walk you through a typical session with the on-line booking system.

First, you must be logged into the system ten days ahead of the day on which you wish to swim at the exact time you wish to swim.

Now you sit staring at the screen with your mouse hovering over the register button until your computer clock tells you it is time to pounce.

The system does not tell you when that moment is. You must hope that your computer clock matches the booking system clock.

Click, and hope that you are a few milliseconds faster than anyone else. If you click too soon your attempt will be rejected and by the time you make a second attempt it will be too late. Generally all slots are filled within 30 seconds.

Sometimes you do everything right, only to have the system freeze part way through the process, especially if trying to book a second person.

Being put on a wait list is no help at all; openings rarely come up, or if they do, not at a useful time, and never for two people.

One day last week I tried registering in four different time slots on one day before I was successful. The spaces had filled up in seconds.

And before you ask, there is nothing wrong with my computer skills. Our household includes two ipads, a laptop and a very recent iphone. I have tried them all, with the same result.

Many people complain about the booking system but we emphasize that is not the real issue. The booking system is clunky but workable when demand matches availability. At this time demand far exceeds availability.

I have requested through FOI for a one week period the number of people who try to register, the number who end up on wait lists, and how many of those on wait lists are eventually successful. I had hoped to have this information for this presentation but have not yet received it.

My husband and I, and other swimmers we have spoken to have grown increasingly frustrated with this state of affairs. I spent part of my husband's birthday lunch watching the clock so I could book swimming times 10 days away. We know a lady from Hornby Island who had to stay overnight in a hotel because the only time she could get was at 8:20 pm. People leave the pool early so that they can get around to reception and try to book another swim in person. This process is frustrating and stressful.

We have a pool sitting idle. Please let's use it. Let's show that we actually care about our taxpayers fitness and health. I have researched online and found no evidence of covid transmission associated with swimming pools as long as healthy environments are maintained. The staff at the Sports Centre, with the cooperation of patrons, have been implementing required protocols successfully. The Commission should be gratified to be serving a community so keenly engaged in keeping fit. I urge you to open the Aquatic Centre pool as soon as possible.

Please don't abandon the seniors, snowbirds and people with physical limitations in our community.

Eleanor and Seamus Nesling