

# Phase II of WRC to open in January | NewHamburgIndependent.ca

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Construction at the Wilmot Recreation Complex has been delayed roughly three months, with the new facilities now projected to open to the public in January.

Phase two of the \$11.6-million project, which includes two swimming pools, an indoor track, and meeting rooms for seniors and community groups, was originally set to open in September.

But construction was delayed by a combination of circumstances, said Scott Nancekivell, director of parks and recreation for Wilmot Township.

First, the wood being shipped from B.C. for the roof was delivered late. Interior work on the pools couldn't go ahead until that roof was up. Then, the wet spring also slowed down builders, as outside walls were often too wet to spray insulation.

For a project of this size, a few months delay is not unexpected, Nancekivell said.

"Two and a half months is basically a minor delay, as far as we're concerned, when you compare it to many other infrastructure projects elsewhere in the province," he said.

"With a project of this magnitude the schedule is going to change... There's always unforeseen obstacles that happen, and you can't predict the weather."

Wilmot Mayor Les Armstrong said he was disappointed the building wouldn't be ready this fall, but the end result will be worth the wait.

"You set it up and hopefully things are done in certain timeframe," he said. "It's very disappointing when it's three months, but I think that people understand... it's acceptable because of what they're getting.

"I hope they understand, and I think they do."

Despite the delays, the project won't run over-budget, Nancekivell said. The township has a contract with Jackson-Barill Management, Inc. to complete the building at a set price, and it will be up to them to deal with any added labour costs from missing deadlines.

When the Independent checked with Jackson-Barill in January, the project was said to be on schedule and the much-delayed roof set to arrive soon.

The icepads built by the same company for the first phase of the WRC also ended up two months behind schedule.

Terry Broda, a former Wilmot councillor, said the township should have been more diligent with the contractors, checking up regularly and pressuring them to meet the deadlines.

As a councilor during the project's planning stages, Broda didn't get the hard deadlines he wanted to impose on the project.

"I think it's good business practice," he said. "You don't lose weeks and weeks of production without forcing the question and saying 'look guys, what are you doing to correct this?'"

"When you let four or five months go by, it's too late."

Nancekivell said he was doubtful the township could have done anything differently to encourage

builders to meet their deadlines.

“A lot of these things are beyond our control when you’re relying on suppliers,” he said. “It’s hard to say ‘I want it here and I want it here now’ when it’s not ready yet.”

Financial penalties could have been built into the contract, but the township decided pushing too hard would be unwise.

“It’s a bit dangerous, because then you have contractors rushing,” Nancekivell said. “It tends to be a bit of a dangerous practice.”

Armstrong agreed, saying that no companies would have wanted the job if council set a hard deadline.

Moving the construction schedule back means another three months that local swimmers are stuck treading water in the old New Hamburg pool, an outdated facility that the township plans to retire after the new WRC facilities are finished.

The delay is no surprise and the Wilmot ACES swim team is prepared to wait for their new pools, said club president Jackie Buehlow.

“We weren’t expecting to be in until January anyways,” she said. “We’ve already accommodated for that.”

Nancekivell has been in touch through emails, she said, keeping her updated on revised schedules.

“They’ve done a great job...to work with the township has been great.”

One of the new pools will be big enough for the ACES to hold major swim meets, which the old New Hamburg pool was too small to host.

That capability will be a big help for the club, as a large meet could raise \$2,000 to \$10,000 for the club, plus rental revenue for the township, Buehlow said.

The ACES originally planned on holding a swim meet in November, but that plan was quickly revised over the winter in expectation of delays. The club has now scheduled a competition in January, in the first month that the WRC pools are expected to be open.

Buehlow said she’s not concerned about another delay ruining those plans. “We’ll deal with it, whatever happens.”

Because the current New Hamburg pool has limited practice space, the ACES have been forced to limit new members for the past year. With more lanes for swimmers, the club can finally continue to grow, she said.

The WRC’s new phase two will include a large family change room, three new meeting rooms for local clubs, and dedicated office space for Wilmot soccer and the ACES swim club.

There’s also a dedicated room where kids can play mini-sticks, Nancekivell said, after rowdy games in the main lobbies became a concern.

The township won’t be missing out on any revenue lost because of a delayed opening, he added. Pools are always expensive to run, and the revenue from swimming lessons and rentals never fully pays for the maintenance and staff costs.

While ice pads can nearly generate enough money to sustain themselves, Wilmot will need to use tax-payer money for roughly two-thirds of the pool operations.

