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The city's problem-filled pool

Wallace Emerson's reno leaves swimmers dry

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The phone at the front desk of Wallace Emerson Community Centre at Dufferin and Dupont rings daily with the same question: What's up with the pool?

The indoor pool closed last fall for the installation of a new filtration and humidification system, at a budgeted cost of about \$679,000. Signs around the busy facility, which runs programs for kids, adults and seniors and has a full weight room, gym and outdoor rink, said the pool would open again--last January.

But, there's still no swimming at Wallace Emerson. In fact, the date for the pool to be full of water is now mid-November.

The delay is due to a series of unfortunate events. "When you're working on an old building, there are always issues," says Daniel Mc-Laughlin, projects manager for capital projects for the City of Toronto's Parks, Forestry and Recreation.

First, when contractor Beta & Associates drained the pool last fall, groundwater began seeping into the work area, which then had to be "de-watered" and dried out. This delayed cutting open the roof to insert a new humidification system with a crane. That phase of the project was ready to go last winter, but snow on the roof -- lots of it -- meant it was put off until spring.

And, more recently, as the ceiling in the pool room was being put back up, the contractor discovered a deteriorated steel beam, which had to be repaired -- another month's work. The delays and extra work have exceeded the \$1-million budget that Wallace Emerson had been allotted for upgrades; the city has not said by how much. The remainder was to be spent over the next few years mainly on the building envelope-- the roof, foundation, windows and doors.

Community swimmers and centre staff are frustrated after more than a year of waiting for their pool. The city, too, is surprised at how badly this renovation has gone. "This is without a doubt the worst project I have been dealing with in many years," said McLaughlin.

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