

# ROUGH WATERS FOR RESERVOIR RACE



the city's recreation department has cancelled the licences of the Alberta Dragon Boat Race Foundation to practise and compete on Glenmore Reservoir. Calgary Herald Archive

## Dragon boat festival in jeopardy

### City yanks licences from organizers

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CALGARY HERALD

Concern over how an annual dragon boat race is run has led the city to cancel the organizer's licences, leaving participants wondering where that leaves them.

"It's devastating," said Darin Gregson, a board member for an independent dragon boat team called the Aquanauts. "We've already started planning, fundraising and practising. It comes as such a shock to us, I'm stunned.

"Most of the teams can't afford to own a boat, and if we did, there's no place to use it or

store it. This is taking (dragon boating) away from hundreds of people in Calgary."

Earlier this month, the city decided not to renew the licence of the Alberta Dragon Boat Race Foundation, which allowed teams to practise on the Glenmore Reservoir. It also didn't renew its event licence for an annual August race.

The not-for-profit foundation runs the event, charging teams an entry fee, which includes supplying boats and coaches for practice sessions. Some groups, such as breast cancer survivors, use the race as an opportunity to fundraise.

Karen Young, manager of strategic planning and policy for the city's recreation department, said it has been working with the Alberta Dragon Boat Race Foundation to address concerns for the past two years.

"We do remain supportive of

**“ This is taking (dragon boating) away from hundreds of people in Calgary ...**

DARIN GREGSON, AQUANAUTS DRAGON BOAT TEAM

the sport," Young said. "We're very interested in encouraging other groups."

Problems with last year's event included not keeping a route clear for EMS crews, not having enough life-jackets in the boats, allowing children behind the alcohol lines in the beer garden and leaving the first aid and lost children tents unstaffed, Young said.

As well, she said, the foundation was using more motorized boats than allowed and had asked to cut down trees to accommodate bleachers.

But Shawn Samol, president of the dragon boat foundation,

said the city's criticisms are incorrect and the recreation department is bowing to pressure from the other two user groups on the reservoir — the rowing and canoe clubs.

"We're very sad and disappointed," he said.

If the city wants the event — which had 115 teams last summer — to be smaller, it should have been discussed, Samol said.

"It's come to light that the city has been in discussions with other people, either taking over the event or making it a smaller event," he said.

Ald. Brian Pincott said the

city has tried working with the foundation, including using conflict mediation and an outside auditor.

"For whatever reason, they felt the foundation was unable or unwilling to make the necessary changes," he said.

Pincott said the city is talking to two other organizations to "make sure we do have a festival this year. This isn't about killing the festival."

Charlene Waldal, president of the Sistership Dragon Boat Association, said her team of breast cancer survivors has its own boat and will be able to continue practising.

"We're still hopeful there will be a festival," Waldal said.

"It brings breast cancer survivors back into life and back into fitness."

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