

## CITY OF FORT SASKATCHEWAN

### Aquatics Services Plebiscite

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#### **Purpose:**

For Council to provide direction to Administration regarding the Aquatic Expansion Plebiscite.

#### **Background:**

The Recreation Facilities and Parks Master Plan Update (RFPMPU) was created to provide guidance for future recreation expansion. Council provided direction that Administration hold a plebiscite to determine public opinion on the future expansion of the City's aquatic services.

Developing the RFPMPU was a process that engaged the community and stakeholders. Feedback was received from 730 residents, capturing their needs and wants for recreation facilities and amenities.

A comparative analysis of these priorities included:

- feedback from participants
- regional and provincial trends
- utilization of facilities
- current condition of facilities
- financial impacts to the City
- municipal comparisons

The feedback received from the public was that the majority of the respondents show a preference for the expansion of the City's aquatic services. This concept would have a new pool at DCC and a revitalization of Harbour Pool.

The existing Harbour Pool facility is in good condition, structurally sound, and not in need of any major upgrades to keep it operational to current service levels. Because of the design of the pool, utilization is at capacity. The adopted RFPMPU (pg. 22) indicates three phases for aquatic expansion:

- |             |                                                                                                                             |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Short-term: | - develop a universal change room at Harbour Pool<br>- engage the public to determine if they support the aquatic expansion |
| Mid-term:   | - build a new aquatic centre at the Dow Centennial Centre                                                                   |
| Long-term:  | - modernization of Harbour Pool                                                                                             |

The three phases provide an opportunity to create distinct projects and spread costs over multiple years, reducing the impact on sources of funding as outlined in the RFPMPU 12 year Financial Strategic Plan.

A critical step in engaging the public that was identified in the RFPMPU was the undertaking of a plebiscite to get a mandate from the general public to move forward. As such, Council approved \$75,000 in the 2016 budget for the plebiscite process.

Council faces three general choices with respect to the timing of the plebiscite:

1. Undertake a plebiscite in the fall of 2016.
2. Undertake a plebiscite in the fall of 2017.
3. Defer the plebiscite beyond 2018.

Undertaking the plebiscite in the fall of 2016 would require Council to decide, at some point this spring, which of the three possible expansion concepts should be considered in the plebiscite question:

- Ⓐ Expand the Harbour Pool
- Ⓑ Keep the Harbour Pool and add aquatics at the DCC
- Ⓒ Closing the Harbour Pool and rebuilding and expanded aquatics centre at the DCC

Doing the plebiscite this fall is consistent with the approved RFPMPU and allows the planning process to move forward.

Doing the plebiscite during the 2017 municipal election offers a cost savings and allows for the project to be subjected to an enhanced level of public discussion. It is expected that the plebiscite will get greater participation as part of a municipal election than it would if it were to happen as a standalone process.

Deferring the plebiscite until after the 2017 election affords the next Council the opportunity to decide how it wishes to proceed. While this will delay the planning process significantly, it does allow Council and the community the chance to further understand the impact of the energy sector slow-down on the region before committing to such a significant capital project.

If the plebiscite is deferred until the 2017 election or beyond, it will still require Council to consider the expansion concepts to help facilitate an understanding of the location for the new skate park. In addition, it is recommended that the MSI funding allocations for the City of Fort Saskatchewan be carefully reviewed during the 2017 budget process as it is not advisable to hold provincial grant dollars for such a long period of time. Also, Administration will be recommending the change room renovations at the Harbour Pool be put in the 2017 budget as there will be at least another 5 years of operations in that facility and the current change room facilities are not adequate.

### **Plans:**

The 2015 Recreation Facilities and Parks Master Plan Update is referenced for this presentation.

### **Financial Implications:**

- The approved 2016 budget allotted \$75,000 to hold an Aquatic Expansion Plebiscite.
- Having the Aquatic Expansion Plebiscite held in conjunction with the 2017 municipal election would see a potential for cost savings.

### **Alternatives:**

1. That Council direct Administration to move forward with a plebiscite in the fall of 2016.
2. That Council direct Administration to hold the Plebiscite during the 2017 Municipal Election.

3. That Council direct Administration to defer the Aquatics Expansion Plebiscite for consideration after the 2017 municipal election.

**Recommendation:**

That Council advise how they wish to proceed.

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File No.:

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Submitted to:	City Council	Date: April 12, 2016