



DE19-175

December 9, 2019

SUBMISSION TO CITY COUNCIL

BUDGET 2020 - WASCANA POOL REBUILD

INTRODUCTION

The Regina Multisport Club (RMC) is a non-profit association whose mission “fosters athlete development and supports the swim, bike, run community in achieving their goals by providing safe, affordable events and activities for all abilities and ages”. RMC is Regina’s largest aquatic club. Our 2018-2019 membership was 370, made up of young athletes just learning to swim and to race triathlons, to other young triathletes ranked top 10 in Canada with Olympic aspirations, to age group adults who race locally, nationally and internationally against top ranked triathletes. Our athletes represent Regina and Saskatchewan in Canada Summer Games and represent our city in International Triathlon Union and Ironman world championships. We have a member who has won multiple Ironman world championships in his age group and other members who regularly reach the podium in multisport events. Our young athletes swim up to 750m in a triathlon, and our adults generally swim 750m – 3,800m in a triathlon. A 50m x 25m pool provides many benefits to our members, the primary benefit being in the capacity it affords for training, but also benefits in endurance training, swim rhythm, gaining confidence, and as a racing venue.

RMC requests that funding be approved for a 50 metre by 25 metre pool in Wascana Park to replace the previous Wascana Pool which was approximately 47 yards by 25 yards.

I understand the difficulty in deciding how best to allocate our tax dollars across competing demands. Having spent a great part of my business career in project management at SaskTel, SaskPower and other organizations, I know that there are always more projects needing money

than there is money for projects. And, I think that understanding RMC's business and why we're asking for a 50m pool will help you make an informed decision.

Capacity

Old Wascana Pool had 9 - 50yd (actually 46.6yds per P3A) lanes. Longer lanes have a greater capacity than shorter lanes. This past summer, and this has been fairly consistent in recent summers, city admin allocated 3 of those lanes to aquatic groups between 8 a.m. and 10 a.m. The aquatic groups would fill those lanes with swimmers, and the remaining 6 lanes would be used by lap swimmers. A 25m pool would reduce that capacity by half or so, depending on the design. And, the aquatic groups would now need 6 lanes allocated to them in order to fit in all of their athletes. Continuing on, the diagrams presented to the public were 6, 8 or 10 lane pools. Using the worst case capacity example which is the 6 lane option, if the city intends to continue allocating the same capacity to those aquatic groups until such time as a new indoor facility is ready to take on that load, then there is no room for lap swimmers between 8-10 a.m. In the best case 10 lane capacity scenario, there are 4 - 25m lanes remaining for lap swimmers, where there used to be 6 - 50yd lanes. Obviously, there won't be room for everyone. Alternatively, if the lap swimmers, be they swimming for purely recreational, fitness or competitive training purposes such as I do, are accommodated during those times at New Wascana, then the aquatic groups can't train there during those times. What will need to occur, for capacity reasons, is for additional outdoor pool capacity for lap swimmers and/or aquatic groups to train in when there is no indoor capacity during the summer. Bottom line - our athletes need a place to train during the summer.

Endurance Training

Unlike typical competitive swimmers, triathletes need to focus on our endurance, which is crucial to our success. We race distances usually up to 3,800m, and usually outdoors in a river, lake or ocean. 50-meter pools help us to work on our endurance because it's a longer distance than a 25m pool before taking a break while turning to go in the other direction. Without a nearby open water source to train in during the summer, a 50m pool, although not ideal, is our best option and twice as good as a 25m pool.

Rhythm

Triathletes prefer a 50m pool because it helps us get into a rhythm. We each have a specific cadence, or stroke rate that we use throughout our races. A steady stroke rate is better trained and maintained with a 50m pool, again because it is longer than a 25m, hence the fewer times our cadence is broken as we turn at the wall.

Confidence

Many of our members have no prior swimming experience. Some start off without even being able to swim a 25m length, let alone 50m or 3,800m. As they gain confidence in a 25m pool, primarily in the shallow end, their next challenge is a 50m pool and swimming in water over their head. This causes a lot of anxiety, as does the next level of confidence building – open water swimming where not only are you in over your head, you can't see the bottom and that black lane line which shows you where to go. So, swim confidence occurs through progressive challenges and it requires constant reinforcement leading up to a race and during the race season. Neither a 25m nor a 50m pool can truly mimic the challenge of an open water swim, but a 50m is the next best thing. It's the step between the comfort of a 25m pool and an open water swim.

Racing

RMC has held triathlons in Wascana Park and its pool since at least 2005, first as See Jane Tri and then both See Jane and See Dick Tri, both fundraisers for the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation, then the Rise and Tri which ran from 2016-2018, and finally our last event, the Wascana Farewell Splash and Sprint. Both adults and children participated in our Wascana Park events. Wascana Pool and Wascana Park have provided the ideal venue for racing, with a 50yd pool for swimming followed by cycling and running through the park. Unfortunately for the public, the pool was closed to them while we swam, and road restrictions were in place for our cycling. We would like to continue holding events at the pool, however, with less capacity in a 25m pool than a 50m pool, it would take longer to put all of our racers through the swim and onto their bikes, thereby tying up the pool and the roads for a longer period. For example, the See Jane/Dick Tri had the pool closed to the public from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., and road restrictions from 7:00 a.m. through 1:00 p.m. These times would be extended somewhat, to the detriment of the public.

Other benefits

A 50m pool facilitates multiple, varied, concurrent uses. As an example, water polo can be played in one half the pool while swimmers swim laps in the other half. Or, some youth can dive in the deep end while other youth frolic in the shallower half. And a 50m pool sets up outdoor aquatics for future population growth and future, unknown benefits.

Finally, while the Recreation Master Plan states that outdoor pools will shrink from 5 to 3 over time is the strategy, City Council needs to ensure that the best strategic and tactical decision is made now in light of the next 50-70 years, and that there is capacity for all participants to enjoy their sports and recreation in

outdoor aquatic facilities. With a new 50m indoor pool several years away, and swim capacity being reached 10 years or more ago, choosing a 50m pool for Wascana Park is the best option to avoid yet another recreation infrastructure need years down the road.

Funding

Funding the additional \$4.5M cost for a 50m pool would not be easy and RMC is not in favour of impacting the feasibility study nor the eventual development of a new indoor 50m pool for a 50m Wascana Pool. I think we can have both. Excepting financing costs, \$4.5M over 50-70 year life span equals @ \$64,000-\$90,000 per year. Stated another way, it's \$23 per each of its 193,000 citizens, or \$.33-\$.47 per year per citizen. I think that's a small price to pay for a gem in the jewel of Regina that Wascana Park is. How do we pay for that? Can we use new revenue from the .5% mill rate increase for recreation infrastructure? Can we use new revenue from the Sponsorship, Naming Rights and Advertising Program? Will the provincial and federal governments finally kick in funding for recreation infrastructure that we can use for Wascana Pool? Or do we increase our debt load to fund it? I can't answer these. I can only suggest them as ways to meet the aquatic needs of RMC and others, needs that have been met until now and are jeopardized in the future. At this point in time, we don't know if the city can meet the capacity needs of its outdoor swimmers. Making a budget decision without that knowledge may not be in the best long-term interests of Regina and its citizens.

Again, thanks for the opportunity to have my say in this matter, and I'm open to further discussion to help understand our collective points of view.

Sincerely,

Rob Nelson

President, Regina Multisport Club

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