

Problem:

A strong reason given by the City to forgo the 50 meter option for the new Wascana Pool was expense: 4.5 million dollars more to add 25 meters to the lane pool, while maintaining the water park design of the new plan. In doing so, the Administration both acknowledged then discredited the substance of many concerns from the established Wascana swimming community.

From the Feb 12 Executive meeting notes, it reads:

Administration acknowledges that this approach does not fully address the needs expressed by lane swimmers and some sport user groups. Some citizens have suggested that Administration's design takes away a former service that provided capacity to train for 50-metre competitive events. It should be noted that the former Wascana Pool was not designed as a competitive facility. It was 42.7-metres in length, and it is only within the last decade that the pool was made available with painted lanes and ropes for swimming the 42.7-metre distance.

It has been a year since the decision and stakeholders are still upset.

Effects:

The effects of going with the current pool design includes real loss of experience for the established lane swimming community and other sporting groups who would prefer to access a regulation long-course pool in the new outdoor water park. The other concern is displacement of users who came for the free swim time after 6:30pm. While many might really enjoy the amenities of the new water park, they may or may not be able to afford it if there are user fees attached at that time in the day. While it never seemed a question to the City that this Wascana Pool rebuild shouldn't be extravagant and focused on families who can afford its usage, the 2021 budget also suggested that the long-term financial viability to supply services as done in the past could be under question. I wonder what this means for the new Wascana Pool and as a side note, I am concerned about how potential user fees could affect people who will use the rebuilt Maple Leaf and the current Dewdney Pool.

I'd also like council to consider that many opponents to water park are adults and seniors who want a replacement 50-meter swimming pool, and are concerned that a new waterpark will change the park vibe. As found in the raw survey data from November 2019, one survey participant said, "make it senior friendly, not just kid friendly".

Longtime pool user Jeannie Mah told me that the August 2019 Stakeholder meeting opened with the task of writing their biggest fears about the new pool plan on a piece of paper. They were then told to crumple up their notes and throw them on the floor. This action meant to Mah that the City had no intention of discussing the needs and fears with established user groups for a new Wascana Pool.

This is concerning as older folks' bodies respond well to water exercise to meet activity targets for their age groups. Getting out in the summer time is especially important as many older adults become more homebound when they retire. Having reason to be outside and enjoy summer activities with fellow swimmers should be fostered. According to Active Aging Canada's website,

"Statistics Canada reported in 2013 that only 1 in 5 adult, and older adult Canadians, achieve the recommended 150 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity per week, based on the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines.

Age Friendly Regina *"is encouraging cities of all sizes to become Age Friendly, i.e. where citizens of ALL ages, including older adults, can enjoy healthy and active lifestyles.*

For that to happen, their voice needs to be heard, their views considered, their needs taken into account, their contribution acknowledged, and their participation encouraged. City planners and city fathers need to pass the development and approval of policies, programs and services through the screen of an Age Friendly lens.

This obviously applies to the planning of the renewal of recreational facilities such as a community pool. For such a pool to be contributing to the Age Friendly characteristic of a City, it needs to meet the needs and expectations of all age categories, the older adults as well as the young. The facility should be accessible to all ages and condition and be affordable."

While it makes sense to have more play elements at the new Wascana Pool because Regina ranks as one of the youngest cities in Canada ([Regina, Saskatoon still among youngest, fastest-growing cities in country | CBC News](#)), we still have the issue of what people do for swimming outside once they grow up. As of 2016, there were 66,870 people in Regina under 24 years of age (Statistics Canada). Contrast to those 50 years of age and older and you had 70,440 people. There is also fact that these little ones will eventually want lane swimming and other aquatic activities outdoors. This is no joke. Then there is the issue of climate change and hotter summers. Regina folks will want a variety of ways to cool off during this time while being outside and the more ambitious types will want to do more than just hang out in Wascana Park's new lazy river. Currently the Recreation Master Plan sites that more and more Canadian cities have fewer outdoor pools and this is a motivating factor to reduce the number Regina has. I am wondering if this is actually good policy moving forward. Since the Wascana Pool is supposed to become a destination pool for all of Regina, the lane pool might get a bit too packed in the hotter and hotter summers to come. The City might regret having gone this way with a 25 meter pool in 10 years time.



Regina, Saskatoon still among youngest, fastest-growing cities in countr...

Despite a slowdown, Saskatchewan's major cities continue to rank among Canada's fastest growing municipalities.

Causes

I believe when planning any kind of new development, it is critical to integrate the established community's input. These Wascana user groups were the ones standing to lose the most with the new pool development. Throughout the planning process, the biggest community concern was how to maintain a large sized outdoor pool to do lap swimming in and reduce footprint of this new project on the park for environmental and noise reasons. I'm afraid the City fail established users this way.

In looking at the June 2019 Wascana Pool Survey, there was almost equally strong support for, "Maintaining the current size and use of the pool for lap and recreational swimming" as there was for a "More and expanded water features focused on families"(taken from June Survey Data). Needless to say, when the design options were shown to the public in November of 2019, there was no rectangular pool design concept option that was of the same size or greater like 50 meters for participants to respond "yes" or "no" to in the on-line survey. It was only after public outcry for a 50-meter option that the City got busy and produced two 50 meter pool designs. Global Regina only put a story out on the two new pools on February 9th which means few people had time to see the designs or respond in time for the February 12th Executive meeting, when the final design decision was made. ([City of Regina releases new Wascana Pool concept designs](#)).



City of Regina releases new Wascana Pool concept designs

The city administration report shows a design concept featuring a 25-metre lane pool and separate leisure pool.

Since the decision not to expand the lane pool size, individuals like myself have been trying in any way possible to get the City and the Provincial Capital Commission to reconsider the size of the lane swimming pool.

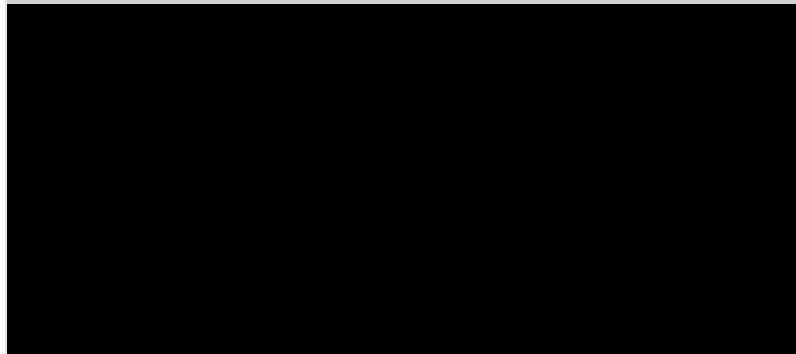
Solutions:

When looking at the 2021 budget, the Wascana Pool Rebuild will be accessing 12 million in provincial funding for the build. This amount was not previously known and therefore the new pool is only going to cost City taxpayers 3.5 million. Bearing this in mind, an additional Gas Tax funding of 12 million from the Federal government is mentioned in the 2021 budget. These funds are not said to be earmarked currently in the budget but must be used by 2023. To me, it looks like this injection of cash from outside puts us in a good place to build a larger rectangular Wascana pool than the one currently agreed upon. Doing this would honour the established pool community who built their summers around using a long rectangular pool. I am not saying that the pool has to be 50 meters long, though you'd be fully solving the problem if you did, but I think even increasing the pool by 10 -15 meters would go a long way in assuaging discontent. It would be a bit more money but money well spent.

In speaking with councilor Andrew Stevens last March or April of 2020, he said, "It was certainly within Council's purview to ask Administration to revisit the concept design and submit an alternative proposal to the PCC for consideration." I am begging him and others on council to move forward with whatever legal measures are needed to add length to pool.

Finally, please keep the free evening swim times at Wascana Pool, so that it is truly accessible for all, and please continue the no fees policy at Dewdney Pool and the new Maple Leaf Rebuild. According to stats compiled by Doug Elliot for the Heritage

Community Association website, Heritage has about double the amount of low-income homes and almost double the amount of dwellings that are unaffordable as compared to the city average ([Neighbourhood Demographics](#)). I'm pretty sure North Central would have similar stats.



Neighbourhood Demographics

See the latest data on Heritage, compiled by Doug Elliott from the 2016 Census, in bar-graph form, with comparis...

Lesley Farley