

Recreation + Culture Budget: Wascana Pool

Friends of Wascana Pool are heartened to know that funding is in place for the Wascana Pool Rebuild, even without the benefit of the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program, which would have returned some of our federal taxes to Saskatchewan (Ogema Pool).

Because COVID-19 has disrupted civic, provincial, and federal budgets, Friends of Wascana Pool would like to propose that a simple less costly replacement of a regulation 50-metre Wascana Pool would be more ecologically-friendly, historically respectful, fiscally responsible, and the most inclusive solution.

Adapting sensibly to changing budgetary, recreational, ecological, and global health situations would demonstrate the fiscal agility and public responsibility needed during a crisis: at this time, we all must work towards the common public good.

Many people in both the June and November surveys say “build an indoor water park for year-round use - so needed in winter” and “keep Wascana Pool as it was - a simple pool.” Since 2019, two new inflatable Water Parks have opened at both Regina and Saskatchewan Beach, without parking problems or the need to cut down trees.

If the Wascana Pool Rebuild refuses to rebuild what we had - a 50 metre swimming pool - with a primary focus on swimming - it will demonstrate that Regina refuses to uphold its commitment for recreation for adults and seniors, going against the Official Community Plan of a vibrant and inclusive community, as it refuses to acknowledge the clear strong comments from citizens

In the **June 2019 survey**, 68% (2691 people) wanted to maintain the current size and use of Wascana pool, while 11% did not. 23% had no opinion. Inexplicably, we are presented with a pool reduced to half its size -even when “five out of ten said that a leisure & recreation pool was one of most important features of the renewed Wascana Pool”.

At the Stakeholder meeting in August 2019, when the pool consultant told swim groups that rectangular pools are boring, and that recreational swimmers wanted to stand and chat or go down a lazy river in 28c water, we saw the error. No record of my comment on this is seen in the raw data.

We who identified as recreational swimmers men that we swim for recreation! What else could those words mean? Because of this misinterpretation, a costly Water Park, unsuitable for recreational and fitness swimming (the wish of 68%), with no respect for the aquatic history of Wascana Lake and Wascana Pool.

While 73% also wanted expanded water features in the June survey, our task was to imagine the best pool possible. We were unaware that it was a contest - that if we chose water features, choosing for the social good, not merely for our individual needs, we would lose the only long-course outdoor pool in Regina for adults. No one could have imagined that current use patterns would not be an important consideration in a rebuild.

When no 50 metre pool option appeared in the **November survey**, (as mandated in the Request for Proposals), the numbers changed. The Open House saw that 92% wanted to maintain the current pool size, and 59% did not think that water features were important.

37% (722 people) commented, in detail, often vehemently - in shock, anger, outrage, insulted and betrayed - that there was no 50 metre pool option, yet the executive summary says "The tone of the open end response is generally positive."

The June Executive Summary tells us that 5% of comments wanted a 50 metre pool - 91 comments; yet the 45 comments for an indoor water park is counted as 10%, so the 91 comments for a 50-metre pool should be 20%. *(50 metre pool: 91 added to Keep it as it is: 31 Need swim lanes: 47. = 138 or almost almost 30%.) 38 people said NO water park in Wascana Park, and 8 said to build it somewhere else. Comments from 32% of 4,207 residents)*

Many comments in both surveys said to Wascana Pool as it is, "simple, peaceful, tranquil, an oasis" - also call for rebuilding a classic 50 metre pool - "keep it as it is, serene, this is a Park."

Urban recreation planning should not only be guided by children's wishes on an iPad survey. While the 5,313 responses to City survey claim an 80% percent approval for watersides, many responses came from children handed an I-pad!

To exchange the purpose of recreation - for health and well-being, to recreation as entertainment - is a sleight of hand which short-changes the health of adult and senior citizens.

To manufacture consent by allowing children to choose water toys in an I-Pad survey, while no replacement 50 metre replacement pool option is available for Regina citizens who have have paid taxes all their working life and who use Wascana Pool is deceptive, and not even fair to children.

Would these children understand that their water play choices - a water slide which runs onto the grass, a lazy river, or a zip line - would mean no outdoor 50-metre pool for the rest of their adult lives? Did these children understand that their choices would displace the existing adult and youth swimming population who were actively using the pool every summer, their elders?!

While we admire the desire to make Wascana Pool more child-friendly, many of us were children at Wascana Pool: it was summer fun with friends that cemented our LOVE for Regina, and our life-long love for swimming! We are adults for much longer than we are children, and adults need exercise to contribute to a vibrant city.

The COVID pandemic has taught us to recognize the value of essential workers. Let's remember that every summer, essential hospital and retail workers stay in the city doing the work to make Regina function. These working adults need exercise, recreation, summer fun and happiness - many citizens do

not take holidays in the summer; they work to supply needed services, and Wascana Pool gives us small daily holidays and exercise in summer.

The City is responsible for recreation for all ages. Important as civic aquatic facilities are for children to play, outdoor pools are equally important to promote a healthy adult and senior population.

We are the daily outdoor swimmers who the City of Regina's "holistic" approach has pushed aside, our clear pleas in a survey are brushed aside with an indoor 50 metre pool, with no regard for the many people who only swim outdoors in summer, while ignoring that the exercising outdoors has been recognized to alleviate depression. (Appendix E: <https://www.swimming.org/openwater/the-health-benefits-of-open-water-swimming/>).

Please consider a sensible economic solution to meet our outdoor aquatic needs. A frugal 50-metre Wascana Pool pool would facilitates multiple, varied, concurrent uses, allowing swimmers of all ages to grow and become better swimmers, and healthier and happier citizens.

The euphoria of swimming outdoors in an urban park during a Prairie summer is a priceless experience. While municipal swimming pools are funded by the civic government, the health benefits of physical activity in an outdoor setting keeps health care expenses down for both physical and mental health.

As one swimmer said, "Wascana Pool is a unique pool across the country. We should incorporate it into the natural park, not turn it into an amusement park." More. "The city had the vision to see the need for a 50 yard pool in 1947. Why would the city think a 25 meter pool would be sufficient for 2020?" and "An outdoor 50 meter pool in Wascana Park should be a priority in this city. It provides for all citizens and visitors a means to exercise and enjoy the outdoors. With our long cold winters, this is a necessity!" "It feels like a step backwards in this era of increased physical fitness trends to go to a smaller length pool." "Building a 25m pool in this city is the same as building a new outdoor rink than stops at the blue line. Swimming requires 50m."

Since February 2019, we have been told that it is too late to change any designs, that the design has gone to the Provincial Capital Commission. Yet, was there ever a moment to engage with and to listen to user groups? Before the June 2019 Survey, we were told time and time again to wait for the consolation process, as **Appendix A: Time-line 2019-2021** (attached) will show. Our letters are requests for meetings were brushed aside. At the Stakeholder meeting, our objection to the definition of Recreational Swimming was not discussed. While we were promised at the November Open House where many of our questions were never answered, including simple questions such as "Will our Leisure passes be valid?", we were assured that that there would be plenty of time to discuss the final Wascana Pool design, but this was not true. The design was approved without ever appearing on the agenda of City Council. The Provincial Capital Commission refused a meeting. Our questions to the Architectural Advisory Committee have never been acknowledged.

Moose Jaw has a beautiful 50 metre Olympic-size outdoor pool. WHY must we go backwards, as one comment said. Why must we pay more to have less?

Appendix A. Timeline: Wascana Pool 'Public Engagement' PDF attached

Appendix B: Use Patterns

In 2017, Use Patterns for Wascana Pool show that dedicated swimmers are the most frequent and the most loyal of all Wascana Pool users. According to these City of Regina charts, we can see that Wascana Pool had the highest *membership use*, at **7,390**, 60% of city-wide membership (12,154), and **1/3 of all Wascana Pool attendance** (24,011). Long course, offered only at Wascana Pool is for 5 hours daily, is 12.5% of total outdoor pool time.

Considering that **14%** of swimmers use only **12.5 %** of outdoor pool time, and that **37%** of all comments support a 50 metre pool (60% of membership leisure pass holders), the voices of current active users should have value in the rebuild of a civic facility that they were using.

If Leisure Passes are invalid at the new Water Park, (no one would answer this question at the Opne House) we will further damage the physical and mental health of citizens of all ages.

Outdoor Pools

The City operates five outdoor pools. The following table explains utilization at these pools in 2017. Nearly 40,000 single admissions occurred in 2017 in addition to the 33,179 free visits.

Usage Type	Dewdney	Maple Leaf	Massey	Regent	Wascana	Total
Single Admission	0	0	17,313	11,468	10,378	39,159
Members	0	0	3,477	1,287	7,390	12,154
Free Usage	9,168	10,317	6,648	3,786	3,260	33,179
Swim and Aquacise Classes	0	0	2,393	88	0	2,481
User Group Rentals	300	0	2,980	2,432	2,983	8,695
Total	9,468	10,317	32,811	19,061	24,011	95,668

Appendix C: Cost

Dedicated swimmers are the only ones who are told the cost of a 50 metre pool, what is already there, what will now be lost: \$4.5 million dollars. We have never been told the the itemized costs for other water features, such as a lazy river (15 comments in favour) , or a slide that runs onto grass, both which take up much of the footprint of the former Wascana Pool.

As one swimmer said, “Choosing a 50m pool for Wascana Park is the best option if we are to avoid yet another recreation infrastructure need years down the road.

\$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 cents 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”.

Remember that in 2017, the City said that the replacement value of Wascana Pool was **\$2,432,410!**

Outdoor Pools

The City operates five outdoor swimming pools. All of which are over 50 years of age, including three that were constructed in the 1940's.

Outdoor Pools	Year Constructed	Age (in 2017)	Replacement Value	Annual Expenses
Wascana Pool	1947	70	\$2,432,410	\$214,932
Massey Pool	1964	53	\$2,861,810	\$151,526
Regent Pool	1962	55	\$2,717,395	\$175,644
Maple Leaf Pool	1946	71	\$1,484,047	\$176,795
Dewdney Pool	1946	71	\$1,552,949	\$162,350
Average	1953	64	\$2,209,722	\$176,249
Total	—	—	\$11,048,611	\$881,247

Appendix D: The ‘New Pool’ Tender

While the Wascana Pool design is still being finalized by the anonymous Architectural Advisory Committee of the Provincial Capital Commission, and a tender for a “new pool” was issued on February 18th, 2021. Why has the tender for the Wascana Pool project been so secretive, so that to view the project, any interested party must sign a a non-disclosure agreement? Why is a project of this magnitude and importance to the community is being tendered in such a covert manner? This City of Regina project will be built with taxpayer money – and the process should be very transparent.

Appendix E: <https://www.swimming.org/openwater/the-health-benefits-of-open-water-swimming/>

6 health benefits of open water swimming

Better sleep When you swim outdoors, the cold water stimulates your parasympathetic nervous system (PNS), which is responsible for repairing the body.

Stimulating the PNS promotes a feeling of relaxation, often with a sense of contentment, which should deliver a better night's sleep.

Better circulation When we become cold, blood rushes to our organs, making our hearts work a little bit harder.

Every time you swim outdoors, the cold water helps to boost your circulation by pumping blood through your capillaries, arteries and veins.

Increased happiness You'll know that immersing yourself in cold water. Whether in the sea, the Serpentine or simply in the shower, it can make your skin sting and take your breath away.

To reduce the stinging sensation, your brain releases endorphins (painkillers produced by your body), which results in a feeling of wellbeing once you're back on dry land.

Combine this with a workout in the great outdoors (proven to reduce stress and promote mental wellbeing) and you have a powerful way to inject some happiness into your day!

Increased metabolism Swimming in cold water makes your body work harder to keep warm, which increases the number of calories you burn.

The colder the water, the more energy your body will convert from fat to fire up your metabolism and keep your core temperature stable.

Boosted immune system Immersing your body in cold water for an hour can shock the immune system and help produce more white blood cells and more antioxidants. This can help to boost your immune system and reduce your risk of heart disease and cancer.

Better skin Cold water exfoliates the skin, flushing out impurities and making it smoother. This all adds up to you feeling better inside and out every time you swim outdoors. Info sheet

Timeline: Wascana Pool 'Public Engagement'

Introduction: Friends of Wascana Pool formed in 1994, when the City wanted to tear down Wascana Pool and fill in the hole because "it was at the end of its useful life". Swimmers were shocked then, and we are doubly shocked now that a Wascana Pool Rebuild will not, as the words say, rebuild a Wascana Pool, but will displace the swimmers who actively use it every day of our short summer, to swim!

As frequent swimmers of Wascana Pool, *Friends of Wascana Pool* and the *Regina Aquatic Foundation* had hoped to participate in a true discussion about the pool we use, the pool we know, to insure that we rebuild the best, most useful, and most inclusive outdoor pool for 21st C Regina, ecologically sensitive to its historical footprint, while maintaining the historic tranquility and beauty of a classic swimming pool in Wascana Park.

We have tried, without success, to participate in the Wascana Pool Rebuild process. As good engaged public citizens, we wrote papers, we requested meetings. We waited patiently and politely. Was our niceness and patience our own undoing? This **timeline** will show how our efforts to participate in true community engagement were rejected and thwarted at every turn.

In **March 2019**, we were told that *the engagement plan was not yet in place*. In **May 2019**, we were told that *the engagement process was still being finalized*, and were told to wait for public discussions

The Timeline: The first survey of **June 2019** was the first time that Wascana Pool was addressed. Until 2019, there was NO public engagement with summer swimmers about Wascana Pool, the only outdoor pool for long-course lap swims.

Back in **2011**, almost a decade ago, Friends of Wascana Pool advocated to renew a 21st Century Wascana Pool at the Design Regina Citizen's Circles - we emphasized an ecological Olympic-size Wascana Pool for the 21st Century.

After the **2016** summer season, no discussions with public swimmers about Wascana Pool's future had been heard. We were still pleading for the City to announce opening and closing dates, hours and prices on site.

In **January 2017**, at a Recreational Master Plan consultation, Friends of Wascana Pool said: all the outdoor pools are old, but serve an important function, and must be maintained or replaced (in the case of Wascana, **NOT with a leisure pool**) but not closed. The uniqueness of the Wascana location was emphasized, and the value of summer outdoor aquatics was supported by all.

Timeline: Wascana Pool 'Public Engagement'

In **June 2018**, a generic survey on the Recreational Master Plan was not even announced at Wascana Pool. In **September** we wrote to the City Heritage Department to consider protecting and rebuilding Heritage Wascana Pool.

In **January 2019**, Friends of Wascana Pool and the Regina Aquatic Foundation both spoke at the Planning Committee and at City Council, without knowing what the Wascana Pool plans were. We thanked you for keeping Wascana Pool in Wascana Park, and respecting the recreational aquatic history of Regina.

In **March 2019**, we drafted a joint Letter of Recommendations for Wascana Pool and a Waterslide Park (Appendix A): we proposed that a simpler and more economical proposal of a classic outdoor pool - a 50 metre FINA pool, with a smaller warmer play pool, and perhaps inflatable slides (safer). We suggested that an indoor water-park could be used 12 months of the year (our examples were the Shaw Centre in Saskatoon, Yorkton, and Surrey), rather than a few hot days on summer weekends, considering that Wascana Pool parking had not been resolved. Rob Nelson, of Regina Multisport and the Regina Aquatic Foundation, had tried to arrange a meeting with Project manager Janine Daderich and City's design team. He was told that the engagement plan was not yet in place.

In **May 2019**, Rob Nelson asked for a charette, so that swim groups could discuss the pool design, but was told that the engagement process was still being finalized. The request for a Charette was never acknowledged.

The **June 2019** survey was the first public engagement on Wascana Pool still gave no hint that we would lose our classic swimming Pool.

The **August 7th** Stakeholder meeting saw no pool designs, but revealed a problem with the interpretation of the Survey. The stakeholders at this meeting were Regina Multisport Club, Regina Aquatic Foundation, Masters Swimming, Water Polo, Friends of Wascana Pool, as well as rehabilitation - Eden Care, and U of R LGBT society. This opportunity to discuss swim needs with aquatic users was disappointing: we were not there for engaging meaningful discussion, it was an information session with a crumpling paper game.

What we did learn was that 'recreational swimmers like water at 28c, and like to go down a lazy river' - revealing that the survey results were inaccurate. Many Wascana Pool public swimmers identified as recreational swimmers - we like long swims in cool water, this is what we do for daily summer recreation. We have no interest in going down a lazy river. We had answered this

Timeline: Wascana Pool 'Public Engagement'

question 'incorrectly', skewing the survey results, so that a recreation pool design took precedence over a 50 metre pool - even if the results of the survey revealed that at least 58%, or 75%, if swim lessons and socialization is counted, want to swim, and **7 out of 10 (65%) think maintaining the current size and use of the pool for lane and recreational swimming is important** - rebuilding an improved classic swimming pool.

Because we thought the survey was to dream of the best pool possible, when choosing water-slides for children, no one realized that our choices for the greater social good would mean the elimination of OUR swimming pool, as it was. There was no indication that it was a battle between swimming and playing, between children and adults, until the pie charts were explained to us. Swimming should be the primary purpose of Wascana Pool, the only outdoor pool in Regina with dedicated long course swim lanes, and only until 1 pm ONLY. This is the central destination pool for the dedicated swimmers and triathletes in Regina.

The public engagement in **Fall 2019** asked citizens to choose from 3 designs which baffled swimmers. Where was the 50 metre option? Swimmers could not even begin to fill out the survey. When we objected, we were told to write our comments. On a survey with no (required) 50 metre pool option, 722 people wanted a 50 metre pool, 37% of all comments.

At the November 14th Open House, 66% wrote comments for 50 metre lap pool. Most people asked why no 50 metre option was offered, as per the City's own Request for Proposals. Project Manager Janine Dadarich assured us that these were not the final designs, that we should write down our concerns, and that **we would have ample time to examine and discuss the new plans**.

The **December 9th** Budget meeting was not about Wascana Pool, Mayor Fougère told one swimmer. No design was ready, and he was well aware of the 50 metre requirement.

At the **February 12th 2020** Executive Committee, when a 50 metre pool option finally appeared, we had 5 days to look at the design, online, before it was rejected by the Executive Committee. There was not time to even discuss IF public could help in a community fund-raising plan to raise the extra "\$ 4.5 million for the 'extra' 25 metres. So between **December** (no decision about Wascana Pool) to **February's** Executive Council meeting, where the final decision about Wascana Pool was made, was the project approved before the design was decided? Was money approved for an unseen 'final' pool plan? The public to never have a chance to discuss the final design, nor more seriously, to have a record of the public voice of citizens at at City Council meeting. We are shocked that no further Council Meeting will discuss and debate a major civic once-in-a-life-time \$15 million public investment.

Timeline: Wascana Pool 'Public Engagement'

In **May 2019**, the engagement process was still being finalized; in **November 2019** we saw 3 versions of one design, without a 50 metre option, as mandated. In **February 2020**, we saw a 50 metre pool design for 5 days before it was rejected, without public display, questions, or discussions, as had been promised at the Open House. Final approval by the Executive Committee insured that the public could not discuss or comment on the final design before it was sent to Provincial Capital Commission.

In **Spring 2020**, we requested meetings with the Lori Carr, Minister of the Provincial Capital Commission, Monique Goffinet-Miller, the Chair of the Provincial Capital Commission, and Barbara Young, the City of Regina's representative on the Provincial Capital Commission. All refused to meet with us. When City Manager Chris Holden responded to our letter to Lori Carr, we were surprised: it was not addressed to him. When we suggested a meeting with the City Manager, that request was rejected.

On **August 2nd, 2020**, we sent a letter through the Provincial Capital Commission to the Architectural Advisory Committee (committee members anonymous) with 10 questions about the proposed Wascana Pool Rebuild - questions which were not answered at the Open House, nor in subsequent letters to the Project Manager or the City Manager. Our requests for Zoom meetings were rejected by the Minister of the PCC, the Chair of the PCC, the City Manager, and by our elected civic board member sitting on the PCC, Councillor Barbara Young. Our letter has never been acknowledged by the AAC.

We were told by City management to go through a **Freedom of Information request** to see the raw data from the 2 Wascana Pool surveys, the stakeholder meetings, and the open house. The FOI request and \$20 fee sent **July 2nd**, was lost for 5 months, going to the wrong email address until **December 8th**, when we were told that a further \$240.50 was needed to receive the information. Many \$10 donations from swimmers were received within a day, and on **December 16th**, a further \$240.50 was sent.

On **December 29th, 2020**, we are told that a 'third party' had 20 days to contest the request, after which the City will make a decision.

On **Feb 4th, 2021**, 7 months after the FOI request sent on July 2nd, we received the information.

On **February 18th, 2021**, a tender for a "new pool" was issued.

On **Feb 23rd, 2021** the Leader Post announces that all decisions are final.