

Dear Mayor and Members of Council,

There have been some wonderful and grandiose plans and visions put forward with these three recreational facilities. And if one was not pragmatic, prudent or concerned about the future, one might say build them all. But that belays the point that everyone today needs to be pragmatic, prudent and concerned about the future. And your citizens have said that many times over the past few years.

The energy and sustainability framework says we are to be 100% renewable by 2050. Building much of what is being presented in these reports will not get you to 100% renewable. In fact, it is simply continuing the unsustainable status quo.

The other feature to this plan is the same feature that has been put forward by many in the past. Build enough stuff and we will rebuild and regain back the economy we had in the past. That past and present economy was and is not sustainable nor is this plan to build more stuff sustainable. All you will end up in the end is a lot more buildings that will be empty, need of repair and eventually going the way of the wrecking ball much like our past heritage properties have gone, demolition through neglect. We already see a large number of empty lots in the downtown and that number is growing, even along Albert Street and in other parts of the city.

What this pandemic has shown us in spades is that our ability to be resilient, the ability to survive, and be able to weather storms has not been there and will not be there in the future if we do not build resilience into everything we do. When the next pandemic or weather disaster happens, are we going to be able to respond? As you roll a ball in a bowl and the speed gets faster and faster, if there is not a rim on your bowl to stop the rolling ball of the economy or some freeboard at the top of that bowl, our economy will continue to go towards the edge and go into free fall and not come back.

I entitled this point, what is good enough for a point. What is good enough and how can we realistically ask our taxpayers to, in my mind, overspend and put our city further into debt, something similar to what was said about the current football stadium? How can we not help the people, the homeless, those with food insecurities, and mental health problems and instead build more recreation facilities? To paraphrase another, you can't eat recreation facilities. You can't drink more recreation facilities.

I and others would clearly do things differently. Rather than being known as the best place to swim, play baseball or watch hockey and football, I would rather us being known as the first capital city in Canada to be considered as not having anyone homeless in our city. I would rather wish to be known more as being 100% renewable and taking any efforts to get there quicker would be my goal. I would rather be known as the place where no one goes hungry. Putting only some of the funds being proposed for many if not all the facilities being considered would get us to those goals sooner and help more people more substantively today, and not just tomorrow.

These facilities will simply have the marginalized stay marginalized, continue to have people go hungry. Together, we can do better if we wish to do it. It does take leadership and guts to be sustainable. It is your choice.

Jim Elliott