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Media Release

For Immediate Release

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Recreation Centre Referendum: Current aquatic facility and programming challenges

SUMMERLAND – The Summerland Recreation Centre Referendum is happening on November 4, 2023. At that time, eligible voters in Summerland (including residents and non-resident property owners) will be asked if they are in favour of the District borrowing up to \$50 million for the purpose of developing the proposed Recreation Centre – a new multi-purpose recreation facility intended to replace the Summerland Aquatic & Fitness Centre.

The proposed new facility includes an aquatic centre, fitness centre, two multi-purpose rooms, universal access and family change rooms, and modern energy efficiency building standards (minimum LEED Silver).

The current facility is at end-of-life and is experiencing a number of significant and ongoing building and maintenance issues, as well as the consumption of approximately 86% more energy per unit of floor area than the average swimming pool. In this week's media release to share detailed project information, we're talking about the facility's physical challenges, program capacity issues, and the recommended solutions.

What is the history of the Summerland Aquatic & Fitness Centre?

The original facility was constructed in 1976 with the offices added in 1988 and a larger fitness room in 1996.

The facility was built when the population of Summerland was 6,724 (approximately half of what it is today). Over the years, spaces have been adapted as best as possible to meet increased program demands, but are not functioning properly.

What specific challenges exist for the Aquatic Centre?

Based on a [2018 Facility Condition Assessment](#), all major building mechanical, electrical and pool systems have exceeded their expected usable life. Most of the building envelope is in poor condition with significant air and water leakage and potential for mold. The facility is consuming approximately 86% more energy per unit of floor area than the average swimming pool. The facility does not have fully modern accessible, universal, or family change rooms or proper accessible entry into the pool basin.

Additionally, the facility is experiencing the following ongoing issues:

- Termites that compromise the structure of the building
- Ant and rodent infestations
- A leaky roof that requires major repair
- Hot tub failures
- Instability of the main pool basin

- Inability to source facility replacement parts due to antiquated electrical, plumbing, and pool systems

What specific challenges exist for aquatic programming in Summerland?

Most aquatic programs in Summerland are at maximum capacity with long waitlists. Due to the current size of the aquatic centre, only one activity may take place at a time. This results in current demands not being met for public sessions, programs, swim clubs, and rental requests.

Another challenge with having a single pool basin is that the desired pool temperature cannot be met for user groups. It is too warm for competitive swimming and too cool for aquatic rehabilitation programming and for young children. Also, the pool basin shape does not have the modern features such as beach entry, shallow leisure areas or spray/play features which could allow for more inclusive programming for all ages and abilities.

Additionally, the shallow end pool depth is 2.5 feet, which is not deep enough for many swimmers to complete proper rotations under the water, meaning the pool does not meet FINA standards (internationally-recognized swim competition standards). Summerland has active and dedicated swim clubs (Orca Swim Club and Orca Masters Swim Club) with more than 100 members. Due to the pool basin design, swim competitions cannot be held in Summerland so the Orca Swim Club must travel to different communities to compete.

What aquatic features are included in the proposed facility to address the current issues or challenges?

The proposed Recreation Centre includes an aquatic centre that features:

- 6-lane, 25m lap pool constructed to meet FINA standards
- Leisure pool with warmer water that can be used for swim lessons, leisure swimming and rehabilitation (Recope) programming
- Hot tub
- Steam or sauna room
- Accessible pool entry
- Pool viewing area to accommodate spectators during swim lessons and competitions

If a new, larger facility is constructed, is there an anticipated increase in use by participants?

The Summerland Aquatic Centre puts a priority on swimming lessons to ensure children in our community are safer around our surrounding lakes. Because more of the Aquatic Centre's available water and pool time is dedicated to swimming lessons, as well as Recope (rehabilitation program) and swim club, the ability to offer other public swimming time is limited.

The fact that most aquatic programs are at full capacity with long waitlists indicates a higher demand for pool time than can currently be accommodated.

If electors vote in favour of the referendum question, the new aquatic centre will include a lap pool and a leisure pool (as noted above), offering the ability to have multiple programs happening at the same time throughout the day (such as swim lessons *and* public swimming), rather than having to choose to offer just one. Because of the ability to offer multiple programs simultaneously, it's fully anticipated that attendance would increase.

Additionally, by adding two dedicated dryland multi-purpose rooms to the Recreation Centre (for fitness and family/youth programming), new programs could be introduced to the facility, or other current community-based programs could expand capacity to better meet the growing recreation and wellness demands of residents.

Why build a new pool when Summerland residents can use the pool in Penticton?

There is currently limited registration available for non-residents of Penticton and many programs are difficult to access. Without a pool or recreation centre, Summerland residents would be reliant on other communities to provide recreation services, including swimming lessons and other fitness programs, such as aquatic rehabilitation (Recope). Transportation limitations are an issue for many Summerland residents, especially for those with limited income and with mobility issues.

For more information on the proposed Summerland Recreation Centre project and the upcoming referendum, please visit www.summerland.ca/recreationcentre.

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