



Council Member Motion For the Committee of the Whole Meeting of February 9, 2023

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** January 30, 2023
From: Councillor Jeremy Caradonna and Councillor Stephen Hammond
Subject: Enabling the revival of the Crystal Pool Replacement Project process and preparation for a public referendum

BACKGROUND

The Crystal Pool was originally built in 1971 and has come to the end of its productive life. Based upon facility assessments, the pool and recreation centre no longer meet existing service needs (e.g. accessibility requirements) and there are concerns about the building's performance in a seismic event. Further, the mechanical systems are inefficient, account for approximately 40% of Victoria's corporate GHG emissions (city-owned buildings), and require frequent and costly maintenance. The original Crystal Pool Replacement Project process (2016-2020) was halted in part by community concerns, including those related to equity, the aquatic features and amenities, and the facility's ideal location.¹ Residents of Victoria, as well as the Victoria City Council, have struggled to reach consensus on the location and basic features of the recreation centre, and a new process is needed to secure a clear public mandate moving forward.

The Crystal Pool Replacement Project is likely to be the most expensive capital project in the City of Victoria's history, likely in excess of \$100m, and almost certainly in excess of the original ~\$70m budgeted for the project. Per the *Community Charter*, capital borrowing over the approval-free liability zone (currently around \$50m) must receive approval of the electors through a referendum or alternative approval process.

RECOMMENDATION

- THAT Council direct staff to report back on the implications and procedures for the following:
- a. Reviving the process of planning and budgeting for a new recreation and aquatic centre;
 - b. Organizing a public referendum for the voters of Victoria at the earliest possible time to include two questions:

¹ In response to these concerns, council carried a motion on 13 June 2019 that if or when the Crystal Pool process proceeds, that an "equity and affordability lens" would be applied to the planning.

- **A binding question:** The public's willingness to borrow the capital funds requisite to build a new recreation and aquatic centre;
 - **Non-binding public input:** The location and features of a new recreation and aquatic centre.
- c. Identifying between two and four sites for the recreation and aquatic centre, to be listed as options on the referendum, taking account of all the following:
1. that the locations be situated within or immediately adjacent to the North Park neighbourhood;
 2. that the options provide voters with a high-level understanding of potential or expected costs, features, and impacts;
 3. that staff apply a climate, equity, and accessibility lens to the project;
 4. that the options account for impacts on workers;
 5. that the options include community amenities and aquatic features, as outlined in the functional program previously presented to Council;
- d. Seeking and obtaining funding from partner governments to offset or minimize the capital costs of constructing a new recreation and aquatic centre.

Respectfully submitted,



Counc. Jeremy Caradonna



Counc. Stephen Hammond