

On October 10, 2024, Council directed staff to report on the City resources associated with hosting Touchdown Pacific 2024.

ISSUES & ANALYSIS

The Touchdown Pacific event was unique and complex in comparison to recent events hosted at the City's stadium. The event offered several benefits to community members and partners. However, there were also impacts and risks that required mitigation.

The summary below is intended to provide information on several of the key aspects of the event, along with details relating to experiences that will inform the planning of future events of a similar nature.

Planning Process

The Touchdown Pacific event was a late addition to the City's workplan when it was announced in the fall of 2023. The planning process commenced in early 2024 with extensive efforts to define the scope for the parties involved. This was a similar approach to the preparations for the last major sport event hosted at RAP, the 2007 FIFA U20 World Cup. However, in the previous instance the organizers and staff had roughly two years to work through all the technical details and resource planning.

Staff were aware of the importance of clarifying the requirements for Touchdown Pacific as quickly as possible to ensure the facility was prepared in time. The Manager of Recreation Services was asked to play a lead coordination role given his detailed knowledge of the stadium, experience supporting major events and understanding of City operations. While maintaining his existing responsibilities, this manager facilitated discussions and decisions with partner representatives, colleagues, and other external parties between December 2023 and September 2024.

Stadium Preparation

Two major areas of planning were required to ensure the playing field, and the facility were able to meet the specifications from the BC Lions and CFL. It was determined that the City would retain primary responsibility for preparing the field, and the parties would collaborate on infrastructure adjustments, with the BC Lions taking the lead on all temporary structures.

The playing field at RAP has been utilized for a wide range of cultural, recreational, and sport activities over the decades. While the field is functional for many uses, it is not maintained at the standard required for professional football. Following detailed analysis of the existing condition, desired outcomes, and potential options, staff developed a turf management plan and began implementation of maintenance adjustments in March.

The stadium's permanent seating accommodates approximately 4,000. The target capacity for spectators was set at 14,000 by the BC Lions. This key detail helped to inform the overall site plan, including locations of temporary spectator space, food and beverage stations, portable toilets, and access points.

In the spring, staff determined that the full three weeks between the end of the HarbourCats season and the football game were required to set up the temporary grandstands and to convert the baseball diamond into the football field footprint. This was an unexpected and unfortunate consequence of the plan that resulted in the Victoria HarbourCats using a facility in Nanaimo for their playoff game in

mid-August.

The temporary build-out plan was developed collaboratively between City staff, representatives of the BC Lions, and CFL personnel. The BC Lions procured temporary grandstands for the north side of the property, infrastructure to support spectator zones on the east and west ends, additional concessions, amenities for ticket holders and team personnel, as well as media broadcasting structures.

During the process of inspecting and preparing the facility, staff noted several opportunities to improve safety and functionality within the aging stadium. As a result, the City advanced various minor projects to align with the event, rather than wait for a future date. For example, damaged surfaces in high traffic areas were repaired, technical assessments were completed, aging equipment (eg. concessions) was replaced and cosmetic issues (eg. painting) were addressed. These one-time investments helped to enhance the facility for future event organizers and visitors.

The responsibilities for safety and security relating to the event were distributed between the BC Lions, CFL, and the City. The City coordinated with Victoria Police for general oversight of the surrounding neighbourhood, including pedestrian and vehicular traffic routes. The police also liaised with the security team contracted by the BC Lions and CFL within the stadium to support crowd management.

Transportation

Finally, staff explored opportunities to assist patrons traveling to the game and reduce transportation concerns in the area around the stadium. Public communications and direct messages to ticket holders throughout August outlined a range of mobility options.

Below are some of the related usage statistics for August 31.

- ~18% higher than average number of people used the bus services from BC Transit
- City parkades were used approximately 10% more than in 2023
- 350 vehicles parked in the complimentary park-and-ride shuttle service with Wilson's Transportation in Saanich
- 207 bikes were stored in a complimentary bike valet hosted by Capital Bike in Central Park

It is worth noting that while the main event at RAP was the primary focus, City staff also assisted the BC Lions staff in planning a two-day free festival zone at Ship Point and *Watch Party* in Central Park.

Financial Summary

The BC Lions managed the overall budget for the Touchdown Pacific game, which was more than \$2 million. As noted above, the City allocated \$350,000 towards the event costs, through a combination of in-kind and cash contributions. From January to August, staff worked with the BC Lions and CFL representatives to identify the requirements, risks, and opportunities associated with this complex event.

The City categorized investments as either direct, including amounts required for the event, or indirect, which were expenses that supported the visitor experience for this and future stadium events. As outlined in the table below, most of the City's investments related to the field and facility preparations. There were direct expenses which exceeded the original projections, including resources needed for the playing field and facility, as well as costs associated with policing. The City

also generated net revenues of just under \$50,000 from the RAP concession operation.

Description	Total
Field preparation	\$150,000
Facility preparation	\$78,000
Police	\$38,500
Traffic control/transportation	\$15,000
Food/beverage net revenue	(\$47,670)
Direct Costs	\$233,830
Cash to BCL for Event Overhead	\$210,000
Total Cost	\$443,430
Funding:	
In-kind and Cash Commitment	\$350,000
Parks, Recreation and Facilities approved budget	\$93,430
Total Funding	\$443,430

When the event was announced staff estimated the \$350,000 commitment would cover the City’s costs and a portion would be provided as cash to support other event costs managed by the BC Lions. Following discussions with the BC Lions representatives and in consideration of the higher than anticipated costs, staff allocated \$140,000 of in-kind costs to the original \$350,000 commitment and funded the additional in-kind costs through the budget for Parks, Recreation and Facilities.

The indirect costs, including one-time facility repairs/improvements and equipment purchases totaled \$113,000. As noted above, these investments improved the facility for future events and were covered through capital and operating budgets within the approved Financial Plan.

The above information comprises the resource investments related to this major event. However, it does not account for the time spent by all City personnel who helped during the planning or execution of the event. The core planning team was supported by colleagues throughout the organization to ensure that the event was carried out safely and effectively.

Local Impact

One of the primary objectives of the City partnering with the BC Lions to host Touchdown Pacific was to support the local economy and provide a wide range of community benefits. The City also used the event as an opportunity to showcase the potential of RAP and future investments in this public amenity.

Based on the outputs of an assessment conducted by Destination Greater Victoria, the estimated economic impact that resulted from Touchdown Pacific 2024 is approximately \$16 million. The figure is the result of an analysis of direct and indirect inputs, including number of visitors, spending on local products and services, jobs supported, and other factors.

As with any major event, and particularly those hosted at RAP, there can be repercussions for the residents and property owners located in the immediate vicinity of the stadium. In the weeks leading up to August 31, there were temporary traffic disruptions and noise impacts relating to the installation of grandstands and movement of materials and equipment. On the day of the game, traffic control

measures including vehicle restrictions to certain roads were established to safely manage the large number of people who arrived in the neighbourhood in advance and then exited the area in the early evening.

Learnings

Reflections on the experience of planning and co-hosting this major event led staff to identify several opportunities for future reference. One critical area that was highlighted for future improvement relates to project management. The City does not typically (co)host large events of this kind and so special attention must be paid when this model is applied to mitigate potential risks to staff capacity and other City deliverables. The coordination for such a complex first-time event requires a long lead time (*i.e.* ideally 12 months or more), a well-defined scope, and dedicated project team to maximize effectiveness. Additional time and attention are particularly important when working with an aging facility like RAP.

CONCLUSIONS

The event met its primary objectives and set another example of the opportunities for Victoria's public facilities to be used for safe, family friendly, high-quality entertainment. Although the direct investment from the City was higher than anticipated, the event generated a local economic impact of approximately \$16 million. Overall, staff and representatives of the BC Lions, CFL and other partners have assessed Touchdown Pacific 2024 as a successful venture.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas Soulliere
Deputy City Manager

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager.