

Excellent care, for everyone,  
everywhere, every time.



February 20, 2018

Sent via email

Thomas Soulliere  
Director  
Parks, Recreation and Facilities  
City of Victoria  
City Hall  
1 Centennial Square  
Victoria, BC V8W 1P6

Dear Mr. Soulliere,

**Re: Island Health Support for Funding for the Replacement of the Crystal Pool in Victoria**

I am pleased to write a letter of support on behalf of Island Health as its Chief Medical Officer of Health.

As I have been made aware, the new pool will have some very important features such as increasing access for individuals with some form of disability by 20%. It will be respectful of sexual orientation and cultural safety. In addition to being a place of gathering and enhancing connectedness for all ages in the community, it will provide local employment opportunities. Beyond all these proven contributions to health, the new facility will also provide opportunities for both aquatic and land based exercise and fun.

Island Health is particularly gratified that the City of Victoria has decided to keep the pool's location in one of the more disadvantaged local communities as measured by socioeconomic status as done by postal code. The easy access provided by keeping the pool close to a segment of the population that is differentially affected by lower rates of activity is highly commendable. It will contribute significantly to maintaining an overall healthy population in our capital city.

The city has seen fit to consult with Island Health staff such that the amenities developed for the pool could enhance the availability of rehabilitation opportunities for our patients and help in their recovery through attendance at specialized programs at the new Crystal Pool.

It is not a common event to be able to write a letter of support for such a critical facility for our community. That swimming is a great form of exercise is well established in the medical literature. Exercising in water provides the body with 12 to 14 percent more resistance than when exercising on land. Individuals can also exercise longer in water than on land without increased effort or joint or muscle pain. While swimming places high demand on the heart and the lungs, improving and strengthening cardiovascular functioning, it also is a low-impact form of exercise. Thus, swimming is particularly important for seniors as it allows them to exercise their entire body with minimal musculoskeletal stress. Benefits to all ages include building bone density, increasing endurance and physical mobility. This is an activity that we can start from when we are very young and provide a lifetime of enjoyment and fitness. Acquiring the ability to swim in a pool designed to minimize water related injuries will help avoid drowning and near-drowning in other bodies of water.

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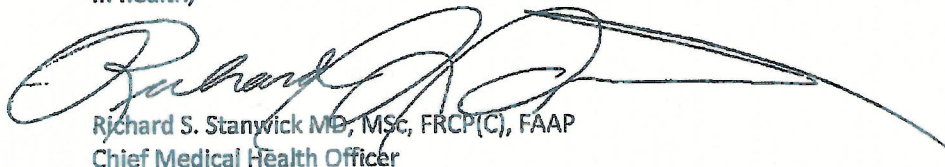
The importance of creating the opportunity to have a first rate aquatic facility for the public is underscored by American research showing that swimmers have about half the risk of death compared with inactive people (Chase NL, Sui X, Blair SN. 2008. Swimming and all-cause mortality risk compared with running, walking, and sedentary habits in men. *Int J of Aquatic Res and Educ.* 2(3):213-23). Australian research by the Royal Life Saving Society has found that one extra visit to a public swimming pool each week would be enough to shift most "inactive" Australians up to "low activity", cutting their risk of lifestyle-related disease by 16% and saving more than \$4,500 per person in the form of better health, reduced medical costs and improved work attendance each year. These potential health gains mean that the average pool visit might cost \$6 to \$8, but is worth nearly \$27 to Australian society in health gains alone, with the average aquatic facility producing \$2.72 million worth of health benefits annually. The generalizability of these findings to our population underscores both the physical and fiscal benefits of the new facility.

As well as being an agent of good health and sound investment, a new pool can serve individuals with existing health issues as well. Parents of children with developmental disabilities report that recreational activities, such as swimming, improve family connections. Water-based exercise can help people with chronic diseases. For people with arthritis, it improves use of affected joints without worsening symptoms. Individuals with rheumatoid arthritis have more health improvements after participating in hydrotherapy than with other activities. Water-based exercise also improves the use of affected joints and decreases pain from osteoarthritis. Being active in water can also assist those who are recovering from various types of injuries as well as managing chronic pain. As a form of exercise, swimming can prevent or improve type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease. Swimming also can improve one's mood and overall sense of wellbeing. It may even be beneficial for preserving one's memory as one gets older.

A challenge for public health and community leaders will be to make sure that everyone is in a position to take advantage of these benefits. As Dr. Paul Barnsley, the author of the Royal Life Saving Society – Australia study states "if we don't find the money for pools we'll end up paying for it via the health system."

In considering a prescription for both promoting health and assisting those with pre-existing health conditions in Victoria, I would put this new pool as being something we need "stat". I therefore would fully support this project receiving the critical funding it deserves from all levels of government.

In health,



Richard S. Stanywick MD, MSc, FRCP(C), FAAP  
Chief Medical Health Officer

c.c. Leah Hollins, Board Chair, Island Health  
Kathy MacNeil, President and CEO, Island health