



## Media Release

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### **City Council reviews results of Active Living Centre Feasibility Study survey**

Vernon City Council has reviewed the results of the latest survey for the proposed Active Living Centre for the ongoing feasibility study.

The study was established as a result of the 2018 Recreation Master Plan, in which the Greater Vernon community identified a need for new indoor recreation opportunities. The feasibility study was undertaken to better understand the costs and benefits associated with public investment in new indoor recreation facilities.

“We have done a significant amount of public engagement and stakeholder consultation during this study,” said Doug Ross, Director, Recreation Services. “We have spoken with and received feedback from thousands of Greater Vernon residents through pop-up events, stakeholder sessions, an open house, an online survey, an elected official’s workshop, and most recently, a statistically-valid controlled mail survey.”

“Surveys with a one-time access code were mailed to a randomized sample of 5,000 households within the City of Vernon, District of Coldstream and Electoral Areas B and C,” Ross continued. “The number of completed surveys from each area and the age demographics of respondents indicate the survey results represent a fairly accurate cross-section of the Greater Vernon area, when compared to data from the 2016 Statistics Canada Census. According to RC Strategies + PERC – the company that conducted the survey – the results provide a margin of error of plus-or-minus 4.3 per cent, nine times out of ten, which is very good.”

Based on the extensive public feedback previously received, Recreation Services believed there was a strong desire within Greater Vernon to build a new or expanded aquatic facility, including a 50m pool.

“The survey results seem to reinforce what we were hearing,” said Ross. “We are encouraged to see that the results are coming from a wide cross section of the community with support coming from a mix of people that have used the facilities recently and some that haven’t”.

The results also indicate the feasibility study process is not being driven by any particular stakeholder group, as only 10% of respondents indicated they are a member of a swim club or masters swimming program. The largest numbers of respondents were from people that use the facilities for leisure, family and casual swimming (49%), for programs like swim lessons and

aquafit (40%) and people that use Kal Tire Place for indoor walking (42%). Support was also reinforced for an indoor walking/running track, dedicated program multipurpose spaces, a fitness centre, and more gymnasium space.

Once the feasibility study is complete, a report will recommend whether it's best to build new spaces at one time, or do the project in phases over a number of years. The report will also assist Greater Vernon elected officials to identify a balance between what the community wants and needs and what the community can afford.

Results of the survey indicate there is a broad understanding within the region that an increase in taxation would be required to develop and operate new or expanded facilities. Of those *in favour of*, or *not sure of*, developing new facilities, 37% indicated they would support a tax increase up to \$100 annually, 15% supporting an increase of up to \$150 and 20% up to \$200 annually.

"This is a significant investment for our communities and the goal of the study is to find an indoor facility mix that meets the current and future needs of a growing community, while also having the opportunity to attract new residents and visitors to the Greater Vernon area," said Ross.

Greater Vernon Recreation Services anticipates presenting a preferred option to elected officials and the public towards the end of May.

### **Survey results highlights and background**

Survey respondents included a mix of current recreation facility users and residents that have not recently used facilities in Vernon. The following figures indicate the percentage of respondents that have used the Vernon Aquatic Centre and Kal Tire Place in the previous 12 months:

- Leisure, family and casual swimming (49%)
- Programming such as swim lessons, Aquafit, aqua therapy, etc. (40%)
- Programming such as swim club, masters swimming, synchro, etc. (10%)
- An indoor walking track at Kal Tire Place (42%)

### **Facility priorities**

The following figures indicate respondents strongly support the enhancement or expansion of indoor aquatic facilities and an indoor walking/running track. These results correspond with the findings of the 2018 Recreation Master Plan.

- There is a need to enhance or expand indoor aquatic facilities (81%)
- There is a need to enhance or expand an indoor walking/running track (64%)
- There is a need to enhance or expand other dry-floor spaces, such as gymnasiums, a fitness centre, and multi-purpose and program spaces (between 52 – 60%)

Within the responses, 92% of the households with children, 76% of the households without children, and 78% of the households with members aged 60+, indicated there is a need to enhance or expand indoor aquatics in the Greater Vernon area.

## **Funding for development and operation of expanded facilities**

The survey results indicate there is an understanding among the Greater Vernon public that increased taxation would be required to afford the development and operation of expanded recreation facilities. When asked whether their household would support a property tax increase for a new Greater Vernon Active Living Centre and/or renovated facilities, the majority of respondents (64%) said “yes.”

- Yes (64%)
- Not sure (16%)
- No (20%)

For those who were in favour of a tax increase to expand facilities or not sure, the majority (82%) indicated their priority for increased taxation is a new or expanded aquatic facility, followed by a new indoor walking/running track (42%).

When asked what level of annual tax increase they’d be willing to support to help fund the development and operation costs of a new and/or renovated Greater Vernon Active Living Centre, 37% of tax increase supporters said they’d be willing to pay up to an additional \$100 annually, while 15% said they’d be willing to pay up to an additional \$150 annually and 20% indicating they would support an increase up to \$200.

## **Facility location**

Respondents were asked about the importance of locating all the potential aquatic and dry-floor spaces on one site. The majority of respondents (66%) said it is “very important” (34%) or “somewhat important” (32%) to have all the spaces on one site instead of two.

## **Aquatic options**

Respondents were asked to identify which two types of aquatic spaces should be considered most important for the area.

The majority of respondents identified that a 50m pool is the most important option to be considered, followed by a smaller, secondary pool with warmer water than the main pool (that can accommodate aquatics programming, provide space for therapeutic uses, provide warm-up space for competitions and accommodate additional lane swimming, etc.).

- 50m pool (with a moveable bulkhead that allows for the pool to be divided into 2 x 25m pools) (60%)
- A smaller, secondary pool (51%)
- A leisure pool with a shallow water area (44%)
- 25m pool (similar to the current lap pool at the Vernon Aquatic Centre) (8%)
- 11% of respondents did not support the development of any of the options.

To stay up-to-date on the Active Living Centre Feasibility Study process, visit [www.qvrec.ca](http://www.qvrec.ca).