



Media Release

THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF VERNON
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Active Living Centre Referendum: Vernon Aquatic Centre information

On October 15, 2022, eligible voters in Vernon will be asked if they are in favour of borrowing up to \$121 million for the purpose of developing the Active Living Centre – a new multi-purpose indoor recreation facility.

The proposed facility includes a new aquatic centre that features a 50m pool with two movable bulkheads; leisure pool; two hot tubs; sauna and steam room. It also features several dry land spaces such as a double gymnasium with multiple sport courts; an 80-station fitness centre; a 150m synthetic walking/running track; and multi-purpose activity and program spaces.

To help voters make a well-informed decision, the City of Vernon has been offering detailed information about the project and the referendum process through a series of weekly media releases. This week, the City is providing information on the Vernon Aquatic Centre, which is located at the Vernon Recreation Centre on 35th Avenue.

When was the Vernon Aquatic Centre constructed?

The original 25m six-lane pool at the Vernon Aquatic Centre opened in May 1966. In 1993, the Aquatic Centre was renovated and reopened in 1994 with the current aquatic configuration of an eight-lane pool and leisure pool.

Why is a new aquatic centre being proposed?

Based on the results of the [2018 Greater Vernon Recreation Master Plan](#) and needs assessment, an additional 25m of indoor water is needed to appropriately serve the current and future aquatics needs of Vernon and the surrounding area.

During the [Active Living Centre Feasibility Study](#), the public indicated its preferred option to attain more indoor water is to have a single aquatic centre with a 50m pool, rather than operating two 25m pools in different locations.

The need for a new aquatics facility is highlighted by challenges the Vernon Aquatic Centre is facing in three key areas:

1. **Capacity:** The Vernon Aquatic Centre puts a priority on Learn to Swim programs to ensure children in our community are safer around our surrounding lakes. When registration for these programs opens, classes are often at or near capacity within a day or two, and many of them have full waitlists. Because more of the Aquatic Centre's available water and pool time is dedicated to Learn to Swim programs, the ability to offer public swimming time is limited.

Therefore, by adding another 25m of indoor water, Recreation Services would have the ability to offer more Learn to Swim program capacity and multiple programs at the same time (such as public swimming), rather than having to choose to offer just one at a time.

2. **Inability to meet current user expectations:** Trends in aquatics and user expectations evolve over time. The Vernon Aquatic Centre was renovated in 1993 in order to try and meet the needs of the community and trends in Aquatics that were in place at that time. Nearly 30 years later, the current facility no longer meets the needs or expectations of today's user. As examples, and based on public feedback, the size of the change rooms, family change rooms, sauna and steam room are too small and the facilities that are available for people with disabilities and their caregivers are not adequate.
3. **Aging infrastructure:** The original Vernon Aquatic Centre opened in 1966 and was renovated in 1993. Many changes and upgrades have been made over time to keep the facility running as efficiently as possible. Because of this, the facility has a mix of infrastructure from the late 60's and through each decade, to today's most modern equipment; like the new UV disinfection system that was installed this year.

How many kids are signed up for Fall/Winter swim lessons this year and how many are on wait lists?

When Greater Vernon Recreation Services opened Fall/Winter program registrations on August 21, most Learn to Swim programs filled up within 24 hours. At this time, 1,220 kids are registered for Learn to Swim programs through the Vernon Aquatic Centre. Another 660 kids are on wait lists.

If the Active Living Centre is built, would swim lesson capacity increase?

If electors vote in favour of the referendum question and the Active Living Centre is built, an additional 25m of indoor water would be added to the community. The proposed facility includes a 50m pool with two movable bulkheads that would provide an opportunity to separate the pool into two or three different areas to offer various types of aquatic programming at the same time (i.e., swim lessons, aquatic exercises, and lane swimming). Additionally, there is another 25m three lane section of the proposed leisure pool with warmer water that could also be used for programs like preschool swim lessons.

Because of the ability to offer multiple programs simultaneously, it's anticipated that Learn to Swim program capacity would be able to increase.

What is the plan for the Vernon Aquatic Centre site if the Active Living Centre is approved?

The existing Vernon Aquatic Centre is funded through the *Greater Vernon Recreation Facilities and Programming Service Agreement*, with the District of Coldstream and Regional District of

North Okanagan Electoral Areas B and C. Should Vernon electors vote in favour of the referendum and the Active Living Centre be built, the City of Vernon will be in discussions with the District of Coldstream and Electoral Areas B and C as to the future of the existing Aquatic Centre.

The *Active Living Centre Feasibility Study* recommends that if the Active Living Centre is built, the existing Vernon Aquatic Centre be decommissioned.

What is the plan for the Vernon Aquatic Centre site if the Active Living Centre is not approved?

If electors vote against the referendum question, the Vernon Aquatic Centre will remain in its current size and configuration and will continue to be maintained on a regular maintenance schedule. Issues from aging infrastructure will be addressed as best as reasonably possible when they arise. The same type and number of aquatic programs that are offered today will continue as there is no ability to expand aquatic program capacity.

What about the other amenities within the Vernon Recreation Centre, such as the gymnasiums and auditorium?

All other amenities within the Vernon Recreation Centre will remain operational and available for public use, regardless of the outcome of the referendum.

Where can I find more information?

Visit www.engagevernon.ca/activelivingcentre to learn more about the proposed facility, the results of public and stakeholder engagement regarding the project, and how to participate in the referendum process.

If you have questions about the above information, please contact Doug Ross, Director, Recreation Services, at dross@vernon.ca.