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Oshawa Aquatic Club  
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To: Mayor Carter and Members of Council

From: Julie Reid, President of the Oshawa Aquatic Club

Re: The Reconsideration for an 8 Lane Pool at Northwood Business Park

Date: May 14, 2024

As the recreation needs assessment still declares, **"The degree of growth projected beyond 2031 - particularly in the northwest - supports a slightly larger design template whereby the indoor aquatic centre contains a 25 metre pool with a minimum of 8 lanes."**

I am continuing to urge you to allow for a reconsideration to the proposed changes to the future Northwood Business Park community centre with the following recommendations.

### **Recommendations:**

That Council revisit Monteith Brown Planning Consultants rationale for recommending an 8-lane sport friendly pool.

That the size of the proposed pool in the Northwood Business Park remain at the approved 8-lanes versus a scaled-down 4 lane option at a differential cost of \$966,000 or .6% of the total cost of construction of the centre.

That Council consider the impacts of a \$16,000 capital dollar cost differential per annum over the 60-year lifespan of a public swimming pool for the costs to construct an 8-lane versus a 4-lane pool.

That Council consider that they are currently approving a 7.8M dollar cost per lane for a 4-lane pool versus 4M per lane for an 8-lane pool.

That Council consider why they are treating north Oshawa residents inequitably in building a smaller pool than any other municipally owned in the community.

That Council consider the impacts of not providing any public discussion at any Council or Committee meeting prior to the construction tender regarding the size of the proposed pool in the Northwood Business Park.

And further, that council be open to a reconsideration of complex and controversial matters so that by working with user groups, problem solving and sharing ideas together CAN provide alternate answers that benefit the community at large.

## Background:

The preliminary 2023 P.R.L.C. Facility Needs Assessment completed by Monteith Brown Planning Consultants, it was recommended that the “facility components that should be included at the future northwest community centre include:

- indoor Aquatics Centre: a 25-metre lane rectangular pool with a **minimum of 8-lanes**
- plus a **separate** leisure pool and **separate** therapeutic pool, designed with **sport-friendly** and age-friendly features in mind.”

## It is our contention that:

- ❖ Monteith Brown Planning Consultants (MBPC) are a very reputable recreation consulting firm in Ontario and most municipalities undertaking plans of this nature engage this firm. They are currently undertaking projects in Oakville, Mississauga, Pickering, Whitby, Clarington and Brampton as well as many others. They are thorough in studying and recommending the right service provision levels for pools and other amenities. MBPC recommended an 8-lane sport-friendly pool to accommodate the population growth and Oshawa’s respective aquatic needs. They are seldom inaccurate in their recommendations.
- ❖ Swimming is the most popular leisure activity in Canada. Staff have reported there is pent-up demand now for swimming lessons. A 4-lane pool has a small capacity for lessons at a maximum 2,500 to 3,000 lessons per year. An 8-lane pool has the capacity for 8,000 to 10,000 lessons per year which will serve the growing population in Oshawa adequately into the future. This is further supported by a report from the Aquatic Sport Council of Ontario that indicates that an 8-lane sport-friendly pool will not only accommodate more lessons but also reduce the net deficit costs as a result.
- ❖ Inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility are pillars of the City of Oshawa’s work to ensure that diverse and underrepresented populations are welcomed and included in all city services.
- ❖ In the fastest growing part of the community, which is made up of an increasingly diverse population, the council is considering a much smaller pool with less capacity than any other part of Oshawa. You are not being fair-minded with a 4-lane pool decision for these residents. A recent Lifesaving Society study on drowning found that new Canadians value learning to swim but have not had the opportunity due to pent-up demands on lessons. 79% of new Canadians will be around water in the summer and are four times more likely to be unable to swim. The 2023 Lifesaving Society Annual report showed a drastic increase to aquatic sport:
  - a return to pre-pandemic levels as 2023 is the new highwater mark for certifications in Ontario
  - Bronze medal awards are up 30%
  - National Lifeguard certifications are up 23%
  - Instructor certifications climbed by 24%

- ❖ Swim Ontario also shared their 2023/24 Swimming Registration Comparison from pre-pandemic registration to current registration:

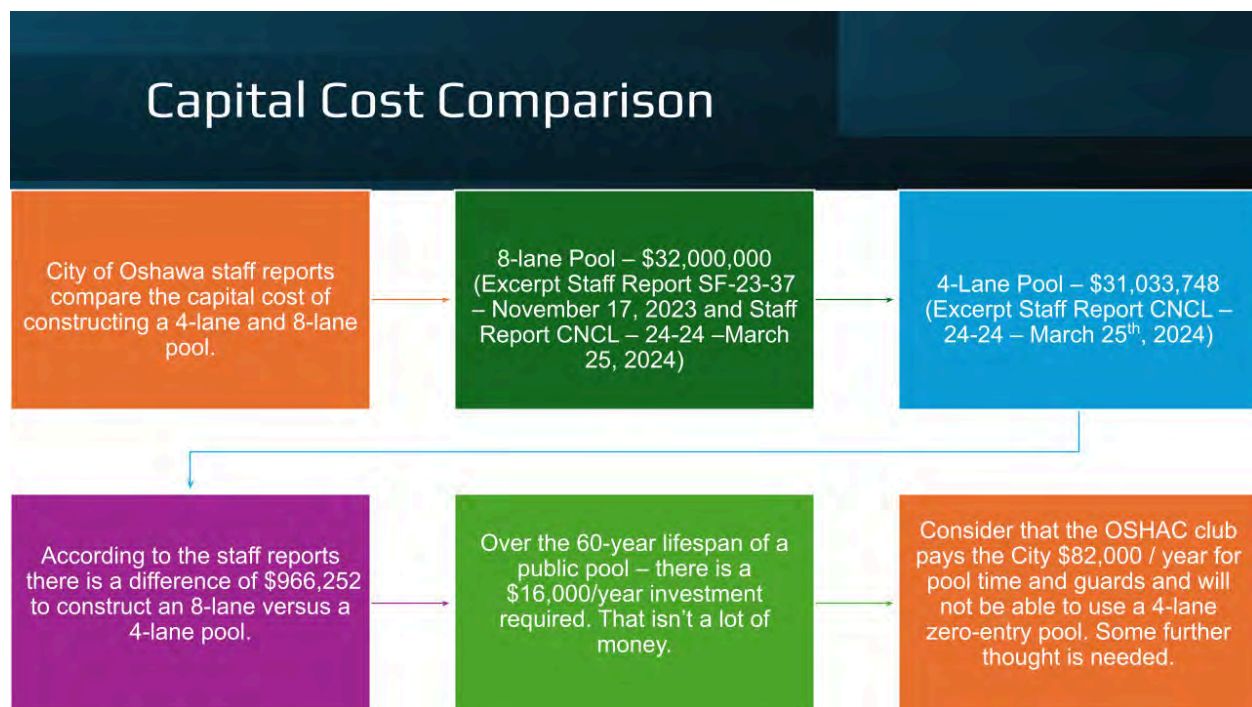
	2023-2024	2019-2020
All Member Classes	21,984	19,669
Competitive	12,556	12,632
Pre Competitive	5,680	4,679
University	422* *U of Ottawa transferred to Quebec	440
Masters	2,117	910
Coaches	1,209	1008

- ❖ Oshawa places a large emphasis on youth engagement and employment. We have only to look at the homeless rate and the use of drugs in the youth population to know that we need to engage youth in healthier activities that will ensure better outcomes for the future.
- ❖ Aquatic sport engages youth to take on leadership roles and serve as mentors to children. Engagement in recreation gives youth a better chance of finishing school and going on to post secondary education, a lesser chance of young parenthood, and the use of drugs.
- ❖ Oshawa's pool provision standards is 1 pool for every 30,000 residents. Considering the needs assessment, population growth of north Oshawa and demographics, patterns of participation, trends, new aquatic activities, current pent-up demands, best practices and the future sustainability of the aquatics in Oshawa, a 4-lane pool will be oversubscribed in less than 5 years with lessons alone. An 8-lane pool will accommodate future needs.
- ❖ Very few if any municipalities build 4 lane pools anymore – especially communities the size of Oshawa. Brampton did build a couple in the 1970s and quickly abandoned the concept due to complaints of overcrowding and the inability to accommodate adequate lesson space for the surrounding area. St.Mary's in Ontario has a 4-lane pool but it serves a population of approximately 7,000 residents. The population of north Oshawa is expected to grow substantially within the next 5 years. Council is responsible for planning for the future; we count on you to make the right decision for the residents today that will last for the next 50 years. No municipality the size of Oshawa builds 4-lane pools for a reason - the capital expense does not justify such limited use.
- ❖ The capital cost differential is less than 1M dollars in a 162M construction budget which is .6% of the total construction budget. This is less than \$16,000 per year over the 60-year lifespan of a public swimming pool. We would ask Oshawa Council to think of

future needs and not make a short-term decision. Frankly, it is penny-wise and pound foolish as the saying goes.

**Table Comparing the Construction Costs of the Pool (as per the staff report CNCL 24 24)**

Original Construction Costs at 209M		Alternative Cost Designs at 162M		Comments
Component	Cost Estimate	Component	Cost Estimate	Difference in Cost of an 8 Lane Versus 4 Lane Pool is less than 1M
8 Lane Pool	32,000,000	4 Lane Pool	31,033,748	966,252



- ❖ Taking a business-minded approach, would you rather construct a superior facility that will accommodate future growth for \$1M more than an inferior style of pool that will be overcrowded soon after opening? Breaking that down by construction cost per lane – **an 8-lane pool will cost 4M a lane to construct while a 4-lane pool will cost 7.8M a lane to construct.** An 8-lane pool is not a question of affordability. It's a question about getting the best facility type for the taxpayer's investment. It's about building a facility we'll ALL be able to use and be proud of. It's about an investment of .6% more of the facility cost for an 8-lane pool.
- ❖ The current 5-step process is very complicated and the opportunity to speak once an agenda item has been pulled is flawed. Requiring a Council decision in order to allow for a **Reconsideration** consisting of two voting processes with a 2/3 majority is simply not acceptable.

- ❖ User groups must keep trying to be heard. We weren't consulted on a revised design and letting the issue go indicates that we gave up because the process to be heard finally is too cumbersome. That's not a good message to be sending to the public nor a strong example to the hundreds of youth we mentor. **YOU** stand for a community proud of community engagement and transparency in governance issues. **WE** support a council that wants to listen and consider the best options for a pool now and into the future.
- ❖ Monteith Brown Planning Consultants engaged major aquatic users in the original aquatic needs and design concepts and were supportive of an 8-lane pool. These groups and members of the public were not re-engaged as part of the redesign concept discussions and costs. Oshawa prides itself in engaging the community and believes that any changes must engage the people that these policy decisions affect. Please consult us again for our valued input. Each of these user groups all need more aquatic space in a facility to meet specialized requirements to build their programs.
- ❖ There is a positive direct economic impact (restaurants and hotels) of various aquatic meets and competition. *"One of the considerations in favour of the development of aquatic sport friendly facilities may be the economic impact of events and meets as each municipality continually strives to support local business development and retention."*  
\* Source - <http://aquaticsportontario.ca/articles/asc-guide-report.pdf>
- ❖ By looking at the data from Durham's Economic Development Team, and their focus on Sport Tourism, sporting events bring in significant economic activity into the City/Region. Last year, two fall hockey tournaments hosted by Whitby were estimated to bring in \$6 million in economic activity to the area. The parasport games hosted in Durham in 2023 brought in almost a million in economic activity. A sport friendly, 8-lane pool would allow Oshawa to add hosting regional and provincial competitions to the list of ways to attract economic activity to the City. These events offer a way to get a Return on Investment for the additional upfront cost.
- ❖ By creating a 25m, 8-lane, sport friendly pool design, the below 5 highlighted aquatic user groups can host and hold competitions, and further develop training opportunities as seen in the AQUATIC SPORT FACILITY INFRASTRUCTURE REPORT, 2023, presented by Aquatic Associates Consulting, thus bringing additional funds not only to local aquatic Clubs, but also a positive economic impact on local businesses throughout Durham Region.

<b>COMPETITION LEVELS for Level 1 – 25M Pool</b>	
<b>Lifesaving</b>	Club Invitational, Regional, Provincial
<b>Competitive Swimming</b>	Club Invitational, Regional
<b>Artistic Swimming</b>	<i>Training Only, Recreational Competition</i>
<b>Water Polo</b>	<i>Training Only, Recreational Competition</i>
<b>Diving</b>	<i>Training only, Recreational Competition</i>

- ❖ A strong consideration is the Oshawa Aquatic Club is growing and its success with 7 swimmers at the National level and 2 swimmers qualifying and competing at the current

Olympic Trials is unprecedented. Imagine the outcome of athlete ability with a sport friendly pool design. With the upcoming Summer Olympics, OSHAC would like to attract a greater number of swimmers from north Oshawa so that they can swim locally.

- ❖ Looking specifically at the Oshawa Aquatic Club, the Club has lost membership to other aquatic Clubs due to better facilities and/or access to better facilities. For example, the Oshawa residents who now swim with Whitby Aquatic Club, get to practice at the Toronto Pan Am Sport Centre. A sport friendly 8-lane pool in North Oshawa would allow OSHAC to offer Oshawa residents the opportunity to practice in their own City. Durham Artistic Swimming has stated a similar complaint to council in a recent email, regarding another leisure, recreational pool built in North Oshawa. Their Club expansion will not be able to happen in Oshawa. They cannot offer any more programs or teams in their current allotment of time; therefore, they have to waitlist families which is very unfortunate. As a community group they too want to serve everyone who is looking to learn or compete in aquatic sports.

## **We would ask that you do this once and do it right!**

- An 8-lane pool was recommended to meet aquatic needs in North Oshawa and meet Council-approved Pool Provision Standards.
- A 4-lane pool achieves neither of these requirements and will be oversubscribed within a short timeframe. This style of pools are for hotels - not a community that is growing.
- Council will have to build another pool to meet community needs in this area at a further increased capital cost in the future – let alone additional land costs.
- Even if the capital costs were the same as in 2024, it would cost the taxpayer at least another 30M due to overcrowding and not building the right size to begin with.
- It makes more sense to **do it once and do it right** for a .6% investment of the overall facility cost.

In closing, we implore you to consider the points we have raised today and think about how an 8-lane pool is a solid investment now for the sustainability of the delivery of aquatic services in the future.

**Respectfully Submitted,**

**Julie Reid**

with full support from the Oshawa Aquatic Club Board of Directors:

Julie Reid - President

Thuy Chung - Treasurer

Kim Moore - Secretary

Club Officials Chair - Hao Chen

IT Coordinator - Salena Oulds

Meet Manager - Kathy Wetmore

Parent Engagement Coordinator - Ashlee Rosnak

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