



A New Pool For Cowichan

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

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A NEW POOL FOR COWICHAN

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

About the New Facility:

What features will be included at the new aquatics facility?

Key features of the proposed facility include:

- An 8 lane 25 metre (expandable in the future to 50 metre) pool of sufficient depth to allow both 1 metre and 3 metre diving boards;
- A large (25 metre) exciting entertainment and therapeutic leisure / wavepool, including lazy river, a variety of spray elements and two water slides;
- 3 additional lanes for length swimming available within the leisure pool;
- A hot / swirl pool, sauna, and steam room;
- Change rooms, and family change rooms to accommodate families and those with disabilities;
- A child minding area;
- A fitness area;
- Space for public viewing of swim lessons, as well as competitions;
- Support space that includes meeting rooms, reception, and offices.
- Retail shop for pool, fitness and leisure products;
- More than double the size of the present Aquannis Centre;
- The complex has been designed to maximize the enjoyment of able bodied users and those with disabilities;

Further, the proposed project budget includes provisions for:

- Building an outdoor courtyard;
- Purchase of furniture and fixtures;
- Decommissioning of the existing Aquannis Centre;
- Site landscaping;
- 200 replacement parking spots.

Optional Design Component:

A “flow rider (surf machine)” is an optional element. Although the present budget does not support the costs of the “flow rider (surf machine)” (estimated to be about \$1.5 Million), it may be possible to finance this from grants, sponsorships, new partnerships or other sources, but that decision will depend on the outcome of public input through a separate opinion question on June 24, 2006. Although it is installed in many places around the world, including the United States, this would be the first installation in Canada.

What will the new facility be called?

It will be named at a later date. The process for naming the facility has not been decided.

What is the Vision for the new facility?

A new aquatics facility to meet our community needs for today and the future; a legacy for you, your children and your grandchildren.

Why do we need a new pool?

Given the serious operating condition of the Aquannis Centre pool, and the fact it is beyond its useful service life, it will have to be shut down soon. If we do not build a replacement facility, Cowichan will not have a pool. We consider offering a range of recreational opportunities to our residents to be key to a healthy and strong community. Many people who use the present Aquannis pool would be unable to travel distances to other community pools, thus denying them the opportunity for sport, recreational, exercise, therapeutic and social opportunities. We want to encourage health and fitness in our communities and provide residents with a range of options for healthy living. Having no pool would leave a huge void in our communities.

Why do we need a facility with so many features?

This facility is actually a moderate, modern facility that will meet more of the needs of our community than a facility like the Aquannis Centre. This facility represents today's standard for pools and is a "need" not a "want".

Who designed the facility?

Vic Davies Architect (2003) Ltd. (VDA) created the concept designs for the new aquatics centre. VDA is a Canadian firm based in Victoria specializing in the design of community recreation, leisure, ice and aquatics centres since 1980. Vic Davies has also been actively involved in sports centre design since the late 1960's in the United Kingdom. Vic and partner Brian Inness are supported by a world-class design team.

Maintaining a highly respected and proven track record in the leisure and recreation field, VDA represents the leading edge in Canada today in the design and development of such facilities. VDA has established an enviable record of providing exceptional value, quality, innovation, and cost conscious results in the design of community and recreation facilities worldwide.

Need for a New Pool Questions:

What's Wrong with the existing pool?

The existing Aquannis pool facility does not meet community needs and desires for aquatics options and is now beyond its useful service life. A 2004 Conditions and Options report prepared for the Cowichan Centre Commission by Engineering consultants¹ ruled out renovation and repair of existing aquatic facilities as impractical and not cost effective. Costs to repair and retrofit the existing facility would be almost \$6.5 million and would require a complete shut down of the pool for 6 to 8 months during construction. This shut down would prevent use of the facility for an extended time period. Engineering studies as part of this report indicate the Aquannis Centre's

¹ Consultants included: Keen Engineering Co. Ltd., Victoria, BC (now known as Stantec); Applied Engineering Solutions Ltd., Victoria, BC.

infrastructure is in bad shape: “it does not meet acceptable safety and Building Code standards, it does not meet current seismic code requirements; the boiler has burst and been replaced; air handling and other mechanical equipment are rusted; and the efficiency leaves a lot to be desired”. Further, the final conclusion of the consultants is “at some time it (the Aquannis Centre) needs to be replaced. That time is now well overdue.”

How did we get to where we are today? And what decisions in regards to the new facility have been made by City and District Councils?

Since 1984, the District of North Cowichan and City of Duncan have realized there is a need to either repair or replace the Aquannis Centre. In 1994, a report and design were created outlining a replacement facility. In 1999, a recreation facilities study strongly indicated the need for a leisure pool. Further, formal partner meetings were held in 2002 / 03. In November 2004, after lengthy consideration of various options, the Cowichan Centre Commission unveiled a proposed \$24.3 million “Bold New Proposal” for Cowichan Centre, including provisions for a 50 metre eight lane swimming pool built to Olympic standards, leisure pool features, a multipurpose ice arena built to international standards with the provision for 2,300 soft seats and a LifeStyles / Fitness / Wellness Centre. For over 10 years, since the original “new pool design” was created in 1994, attempts have been made to involve more partners from the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) in the project. These efforts have not been successful.

Given that urgent need for a new aquatic facility has been determined, the District of North Cowichan and City of Duncan have remained committed to finding a solution to meet the aquatic sports and recreational needs of their residents. A Pool Design Select Committee, comprised of political and staff representatives of the District, City, NAIG, and Cowichan Centre, has been meeting over the past two months with Vic Davies, Architect to bring forward a design for the new aquatic centre.

Each of the Councils of the District of North Cowichan and City of Duncan have unanimously agreed to ask for voter support for the opportunity to borrow monies required to build a new aquatics centre.

How will this new aquatic facility benefit me, my family and other residents of the Cowichan Region?

- Increased enjoyment of aquatic sports and recreation throughout the Cowichan Region;
- Entertainment for all age groups;
- Offering the opportunity for Cowichan residents to enjoy state of the art aquatic sports and recreation closer to home;
- Therapeutic components of the facility (such as the lazy river, bubble seat, massage jets, sauna, steam room and hot / swirl pool) for recreation and rehabilitation, particularly enjoyed by seniors;
- The ability to offer more and better programs for everyone;
- Personal health and wellness; improved physical and psychological health;
- Support for reduction in crimes and the costs associated with them;

- Building on synergies of other facilities and programs offered or planned in and around the Cowichan Centre;
- Increased recreational infrastructure to attract companies, industries and new residents to enhance our economic health and well-being;
- With a modern leisure, swim and dive facility, we will have an enhanced ability to attract both recreational and competitive sports tourism to the Cowichan Valley;
- Improved economic health for the region.

Pool Costs and Financing Questions:

What will the new aquatic centre cost to build?

Up to \$16.5 million.

What will the new facility cost to operate?

Annual net operating costs for the new pool facility are budgeted to be about \$900,000. Current net costs to operate the Aquannis Centre are \$819,000 per year. The majority of increased operating costs will be recovered by higher usage and increased revenue from the new facility.

How will these costs be paid for?

The District of North Cowichan is asking for voter support to borrow up to \$15 million and the City of Duncan is asking for voter support to borrow up to \$1.5 million for a total amount borrowed of \$16.5 million to pay for capital costs of construction for a replacement aquatics facility.

The City and the District are also committed to pursuing grant programs including Canada/BC Infrastructure and 2010 Olympics Legacy to offset the capital costs. Further, sponsorships and donations will be pursued. Success in securing additional funds will allow for either adding more facilities, such as the “flow rider (surf machine)”, reducing debt, or a combination of both depending upon the amount of funding added from these sources and public opinion received at the June 24th referendum.

Borrowing for major capital projects is paid through tax increases. Tax increases for both the District of North Cowichan and City of Duncan will be required to allow for borrowing up to a maximum total amount of \$16.5 million and to accommodate the increase in annual aquatic centre operating expenses over the next 20 years.

North Cowichan

- Amount to be financed: \$15,000,000
- Total increase in taxation to cover debt and operating costs: \$ 1,310,926
- Annual tax increase for a \$200,000 home: \$ 96
- Annual tax increase for a \$200,000 business: \$ 204

Duncan

- Amount to be financed: \$1,500,000

- Total increase in taxation to cover debt and operating costs: \$ 101,268

- Annual tax increase for a \$200,000 home: \$ 45

- Annual tax increase for a \$200,000 business: \$ 74

How much would the “flow rider (surf machine)” cost?

To construct the “flow rider (surf machine)” would be about \$1.5 million. Although the present budget does not support the costs of the “flow rider (surf machine)”, it may be possible to finance this from grants, sponsorships, new partnerships or other sources, but that decision will depend on the outcome of public input through a separate opinion question on June 24th, 2006.

What would operational costs for the “flow rider (surf machine)” be?

About \$122,500 per year.

Why should I pay toward a facility I will never use?

General taxation funds a full range of services available to our citizens. Most of the facilities funded through taxes are only used by a portion of our citizens, like schools, fire services etc., but all homeowners and business owners pay taxes to support the provision of these services. The philosophy behind this general taxation is one of “for the good of all”.

Why are people in the City of Duncan paying less in taxes than those in the District of North Cowichan for the same facility?

The City of Duncan is paying less toward the facility than is the District of North Cowichan because they are borrowing less money to fund it. The City of Duncan made a commitment to support the construction and operation of a new aquatics centre in recognition that their citizens will use the facility. The City of Duncan determined the level they were willing to contribute, and the District of North Cowichan supported this amount.

Why are the District of North Cowichan and City of Duncan the only areas paying for this, when everyone has the opportunity to use the new aquatics centre?

Since 1984 attempts have been made to engage all communities within the Cowichan Valley Regional District to support regionally used sports and recreation facilities. Efforts in this regard have not been successful. Specifically, since 1994, initiatives to upgrade and / or replace the existing Aquannis Centre have been undertaken together with an attempt to engage more funding partners. These efforts have also been unsuccessful. The District of North Cowichan and City of Duncan are committed to continuing to work toward bringing other partners on board for the new aquatics facility

project. In addition to the present delayed registration system, aquatic users of the new aquatics centre from non-tax-paying areas will be subject to significant fee differentials as part of a two-tiered user pay system. For example, residents outside of Duncan and North Cowichan will pay more for:

- General admission;
- Aquafit and other exercise programs;
- Fitness centre use;
- Fees to teams, like swimming, diving and synchronized swimming teams; and
- Swimming lessons.

Aquatic users from areas agreeing to enter into capital and operating cost sharing agreements for the new aquatics facility will not be subject to these higher user fees.

Who paid for the Aquannis Centre in 1974?

The District of North Cowichan and City of Duncan paid to have the Aquannis Centre built in 1974. They also pay for its operation under a management contract with the Cowichan Valley Regional District.

How will my annual taxes for the new aquatics centre be affected if additional sources of funds are secured?

Success in securing additional funds will allow for either adding more facilities, such as the “flow rider (surf machine)”, reducing debt, or a combination of both depending upon the amount of funding added from these sources and public opinion received at the June 24th referendum.

I am a senior on a fixed income. How can I afford to pay more taxes?

Taxpayers on a fixed income often have difficulty with meeting annual expenses like property taxes. Both the District of North Cowichan and the City of Duncan have monthly payment programs to spread this over a 10-month period. Also, for those over 60 years of age, the Province of BC offers a tax deferral program that allows you to defer (not pay) your taxes. The taxes not paid now will be taken out of your estate (at low interest rates – currently 3%). More information is available by calling 387-0555 or 1-800-663-7867 throughout British Columbia and request a transfer to 387-0555 or at http://www.rev.gov.bc.ca/rpt/property_tax_deferment.htm

What if construction costs rise?

The present budget has built in a contingency for cost increases or other unexpected occurrences. Further, it has been suggested that rather than conduct a traditional tender process for construction, a fixed budget be established and construction management tendered to ensure the project is constructed within budget.

What happens if the results of one referendum are positive and the other are negative?

If North Cowichan voters say “yes” and Duncan voters say “no”, the aquatics centre will proceed with design adjustments to meet the \$15 million budget.

If Duncan voters say “yes” and North Cowichan voters say “no” the new aquatics centre will not proceed.

Design and Project Management Questions:

How long will it take to build it? What are the key timelines for construction?

If the voters in the District of North Cowichan and City of Duncan provide Councils with the go-ahead, planning for the aquatic centre, including the process for public input, would continue immediately and construction is expected to be completed within 18 months, early in 2008.

Will we have an opportunity to have input to the design of the aquatics facility?

Yes, within the scope of the \$16.5 million budget. Public input will be sought through open houses held in conjunction with the referendum process and other opportunities following the referendum.

To what extent will the facility reflect environmental and “green” components.

We will be using the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEEDS) principles wherever feasible.

Will the aquatics centre be accessible to those with disabilities?

Yes.

What is a “flowrider (surf machine)”?

A “flowrider” is described by Architect, Vic Davies, as a “surf machine in a box”. It is a stand-alone wave creation machine that allows users to always surf the perfect wave. The “surf machine” generates a thin sheet of water that flows over the ride surface, creating a wave-like shape. Similar to swimming against a current in a stationary lap pool, riders will be able to surf or body board against the water flow of 30,000 gallons per minute. It will feature a tensioned-fabric surface similar to a trampoline to provide a cushion to absorb the impact of falls. Although there are many installations throughout the world, there are no “flowriders” in Canada at this time. More information is available at www.flowrider.com.

Why have you included a fitness centre when fitness services are already offered in the community?

A fitness facility is a standard feature offered in modern aquatics centres and meets the expectations of centre users.

What will happen to the old Aquannis Centre building?

It will be decommissioned. There are many options for its future use. Further discussions will need to be held to determine the most valuable alternate use(s).

Previous pool design ideas included a 50-metre pool. Why are you now recommending a 25 metre pool?

We would like to have a 50-metre pool, but it is simply too expensive at this time. Construction costs would rise by about \$4 million to expand the pool to 50-metres and operating costs would increase by \$180,000 to \$200,000 per year. Our compromise

solution is to offer a pool design that will allow expansion from 25 to 50-metres at some time in the future if we determine a need for it and are able to afford it.

How deep is the therapeutic leisure / wave pool?

At its shallowest, the leisure pool is .3 metres (1 foot), with access from two stairways and one ramp. At its deepest, it is 1.5 metres (5 feet). The 3 additional lap lanes within the leisure pool have a minimum depth of 1.1 metres (3 feet, 6 inches) and 1.5 metres (5 feet) at the deepest.

How deep is the competition pool?

1.2 metres (4 feet) at the shallow end and 3.8 metres (12 feet 6 inches) at the deep end. All competition dive starts will commence at the deep end of the pool.

Will the change rooms be large enough?

The change room facilities have been designed to a sufficient size to support a 50-metre competition pool facility, so they will be more than sufficient to meet our needs. Further, the family change room will be outfitted to meet the needs of people with a range of disabilities and limitations.

In the “Bold New Proposal” presented in 2004, Cowichan Centre was also to have a new ice arena with about 2300 soft seats. Is this still going to happen?

The option to construct facilities described in the “Bold New Proposal”, including the arena and soft seating area, was not supported by all areas within the Cowichan Valley Regional District, and, as a result, will not be included in the plans at this time. A new and / or refurbished arena can, however, still be accommodated on this site as identified in the “Bold New Proposal”.

Where exactly will the new aquatics centre be located?

The new aquatics centre will be adjacent to the Multi-Purpose Hall on the east side of the existing Cowichan Centre. It will be a stand-alone structure separated by a outdoor courtyard from the Cowichan Centre. To have the buildings physically joined would have required the relocation of both a major water line and the main power source for the Cowichan Centre complex and would have disrupted access to the Heritage Hall and Multi-Purpose Hall.

Why has this location for the pool been chosen?

The District of North Cowichan and City of Duncan own the land for the new aquatics centre site. Also, synergy, opportunity and efficiency are achievable by building on complementary current or planned services and facilities at or around Cowichan Centre. It will also help with the revitalization vision for the area around James Street.

What are the plans for replacing the parking that will be lost by building the pool in the existing parking lot?

About 75 to 100 parking spaces will be lost through the construction of the new aquatics centre. 200 new parking spaces will be built as part of the new aquatic facility. These

will be built first in the construction process to minimize inconvenience to Cowichan Centre users.

Will this location impact any existing sports and recreation facilities?

Yes, construction of the new aquatic centre will require the removal of the tennis courts and one ball field, known as the “Wally Thorne Field”. We are confident that present users of the tennis courts will be accommodated at other existing tennis courts such as Rotary Park. Current users of the Wally Thorne Field will be accommodated by other ball fields like those at the Cowichan Sportsplex and those planned for the “Cliffs over Maple Bay” neighbourhood. Further, the Thorne family has been assured that a new field will be dedicated to Wally Thorne in the near future to continue to honour his contributions to the game in the Cowichan region.

Will there be any impact on the skate park?

None.

Will this affect the concept of Cowichan Place?

No. All facilities currently being considered as part of Cowichan Place can still be constructed. In fact, a new aquatic centre would be a great addition to the Cowichan place campus.

How will traffic on James Street, which is already very busy, be affected?

Both the District of North Cowichan and City of Duncan are aware of issues on James Street such as traffic, parking layout, street lighting, access locations and cross walks. An in-depth traffic study will need to be done in conjunction with developments such as the new aquatics centre and proposed Cowichan Place.

Impact of Construction Questions:

How will user groups be affected by construction?

During construction of the new aquatics centre, the existing Aquannis Centre facility will continue to operate. Further, replacement parking spaces will be constructed first in the building process to minimize the inconvenience to Cowichan Centre users.

Current and Future Operations Questions:

What will it cost to use the new aquatic facility?

Rates for the new aquatic centre have not been determined yet. We know we need to be competitively priced with other aquatic facilities on Vancouver Island. We are also committed to a two-tier fee system for users to reflect the fact that, although aquatics centre users come from all over the Cowichan Region, only taxpayers in the District of North Cowichan and City of Duncan are contributing financially through a tax increase for capital costs and increased operating costs of this new facility.

What does a “Two-Tier Fee System” mean?

Residents living outside of Duncan and North Cowichan will pay more to use the facility to make up for this difference in tax contributions. This differential will be significant and likely more than what the annual tax increase would be to help fund the construction and operation of the facility. For example, residents outside of Duncan and North Cowichan will pay more for:

- General admission;
- Aquafit and other exercise programs;
- Fitness centre use;
- Fees to teams, like swimming, diving and synchronized swimming teams; and
- Swimming lessons.

Residents whose elected representatives agree to partnership agreements to provide contributions to capital and operating costs will be exempt from a two-tier system.

Will our passes for the existing Aquannis Centre still be honoured there?

We plan to honour any outstanding passes.

New Pool Services and Operations Questions:

What Food and Beverage services will be included in the new pool?

The design for the new aquatics centre includes a food and beverage area. Specific details are still to be determined.

What will the hours of operation be?

To be determined.

Voting Questions:

Can I vote if I own property in the Municipality of North Cowichan and / or the City of Duncan, but do not live in either North Cowichan or Duncan?

You may vote in this referendum if you own property in the Municipality of North Cowichan and / or the City of Duncan and live in another municipality. Please contact the Elections Office for more information. District of North Cowichan: 250-746-3100; City of Duncan: 250-746-6126.

Do I have to own property, a residence or business in order to be eligible to vote?

No. You are eligible to vote if you:

- Are 18 years of age or more on general voting day;
- Are a Canadian citizen;
- Have lived in British Columbia for at least six months before you register to vote;
- Have lived in the City of Duncan or District of North Cowichan for 30 days or more before you register to vote; and
- Are not disqualified from voting in an election, or otherwise disqualified by law.