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# CITY OF KELOWNA

## MEMORANDUM

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**Date:** March 8, 2004  
**File No.:** 6240-20  
**To:** City Manager  
**From:** Recreation Services Manager  
**Subject:** Future Aquatic Facility

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### **RECOMMENDATION:**

THAT Council direct staff to conduct a new statistically valid telephone survey, in order to determine the public preference for a new aquatic facility and public support for property tax increases related to this project;

AND THAT the results of the statistically valid telephone survey be considered by Council to determine whether to proceed with a borrowing bylaw referendum for the future aquatic facility project;

AND THAT Ipsos-Reid Global Marketing and Research be appointed to conduct the new statistically valid telephone survey on behalf of the City of Kelowna at a cost not to exceed \$15,000.

### **Background:**

In June 2003, City Council approved "in principle" a major leisure aquatic facility to be constructed at the Mission Recreation Park site with a target completion date in 2007. At that time, Council also directed staff to conduct a public consultation and input process in 2003, to include a statistically valid survey, as well as a series of presentations at a shopping mall and public facilities, based on four prototypes, including many standard features and options.

Notwithstanding the results of the 2003 survey, during budget discussions in January, 2004, Council expressed concerns regarding the level of public support for property tax increases required to finance such a major project and the preferred aquatic facility design. Council discussed a number of alternatives the City could pursue including;

- to re-survey or re-affirm the opinions of the 633 respondents from the 2003 survey,
- to re-survey the original sample of 2500 citizens from the 2003 survey,
- to conduct a new survey with a new random sample,
- to conduct an opinion referendum (sometimes called a plebiscite),
- to conduct a referendum on a borrowing bylaw.

Considering the questions regarding the future aquatic facility, Council further directed staff to conduct additional research and provide recommendations on the most appropriate way to proceed, including the possibility of a public referendum on this project.

### **Discussion:**

A new aquatic centre facility in Kelowna will be the most significant recreation and sport facility addition for our City. It is critically important that this facility is planned and constructed to meet the future needs of Kelowna citizens. The best opportunity to plan for this major addition is very early in the process; this is our best opportunity to "get it right". Staff are recommending this worthwhile 'extra step' of conducting a new telephone survey, in order to confirm public support for the project.

Following Council's direction for additional research, staff consulted with many municipalities who have undertaken a referendum in the past decade on projects of similar nature and scope. We have also consulted with a number of firms including;

- Ipsos-Reid, a national firm that specialises in market research and public opinion surveys,
- Appleby and Associates, a local firm who provided assistance with the 2003 survey,
- Bruce Carscadden Architects, an architect who has prepared documents for other municipalities for public referenda,
- Market Facts MarkTrend Research Inc., a firm that specialises in market research as compared to opinion research,
- Consumerscan International, a firm that specialises in market research as compared to opinion research,
- PERC (Professional Environmental Recreation Consultants), a firm that specialises in studies and issues in the recreation and parks field, and
- MacLean Group Marketing Inc., a local firm that specialises in market research as compared to opinion research, that directed us to other firms.

The key to a referendum is to ask the public their opinion utilizing a very straightforward and basic question that can be answered with a "YES" or "NO" response. At this point, it is not sufficiently clear to the City, which aquatic facility prototype is supported by the public, so the financial costs and tax implications are not finalized. Therefore, staff believes that the City is not yet prepared for a referendum.

Those firms with public opinion and referendum experience have recommended that the City of Kelowna conduct a totally new statistically valid survey, utilizing a telephone survey method and a new random sample of Kelowna citizens. Ipsos-Reid Global Marketing and Research confirms that the most effective method to determine public opinion is through the random sample telephone survey.

The advantage of a telephone survey over other methods is the substantially higher response rate. Once an interviewer has made personal contact, a very large percentage of people will provide their opinions. Also, the public education and awareness created through the 2003 investigation and survey will enable the new proposed telephone survey to be simpler, with fewer and more basic questions.

The recommended telephone survey will be simple and straightforward, comprising 5 components;

1. mail out of a flyer to the randomly selected participants to provide information to ensure informed opinions and encourage very high a participation rate,
2. collect demographic information,
3. identify level of support for a new aquatic facility,
4. identify level of support for property tax increases, and

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5. identify preference for the aquatic facility design.

Staff is recommending that Ipsos-Reid be appointed to conduct this new telephone survey. Ipsos-Reid is Canada's largest and most well recognized research and public opinion firm. They have extensive knowledge and experience in working on municipal issues, including BC municipalities. Through the staff research mentioned above, Ipsos-Reid was the most responsive and provided the most comprehensive and knowledgeable advice. They have provided a competitive quote, and are prepared to conduct this work according to the timeline established by the City.

Other methods of obtaining further public opinion were considered;

- re-survey or re-affirm the opinions of the 633 respondents from the 2003 survey, or re-survey all 2500 randomly selected citizens from the 2003 survey utilizing a different survey technique. That option was rejected in favour of a fresh and clean approach to obtaining public opinion, and to avoid any perception of bias created by the earlier survey.
- a non-binding, multiple question opinion referendum (sometimes called a plebiscite). This option is substantially more expensive when compared to the telephone survey and does not measure public opinion as accurately. It is likely that an additional second referendum would also be necessary to approve a bylaw to borrow sufficient funds to complete the project.

Other work is being conducted concurrently on a number of items as part of this project including; a) a detailed operating budget, b) opportunities for public private partnerships, c) qualifications for potential proponents, and d) the preparation of public education materials.

The attached chart illustrates the work plan and timeline to complete the new telephone survey, and prepare a comprehensive report back to Council in mid May, 2004.

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JWR Oddleifson  
Recreation Services Manager

P/c     Director of Parks and Leisure Services  
           Director of Financial Services  
           City Clerk  
           Civic Properties Manager  
           Sports and Facilities Manager  
           Deputy City Clerk

attachment

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### **FUTURE AQUATIC FACILITY PROGRAM / SCHEDULE**

	<b>ITEM OR ACTION</b>	<b>TARGET DATE</b>
1	Consultant assistance to finalize operating budget	
2	Consultant assistance to explore P3 opportunities	
3	Prepare public education materials prior to survey	
4	Conduct telephone survey	Mid April
5	Report to Council – to include; <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Results of the telephone survey,</li><li>- Revised operating budget,</li><li>- Finalize direction for referendum,</li><li>- Direction for public private partnerships.</li></ul>	Mid May
6	Council decision to proceed or not proceed toward a referendum	