

# Report

Date

March 5, 2025

File:

Subject

Crofton Outdoor Pool Repair

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## PURPOSE

To provide an update on the feasibility study for the Crofton outdoor pool upgrades and to seek direction on the next steps.

## BACKGROUND

At the December 18, 2024, regular Council meeting, the Director of Parks and Recreation provided Council with a staff report and a copy of a building conditional assessment (BCA) for the Crofton outdoor pool. The report summarized the findings of the BCA, which listed the facility as being in poor condition and recommended several upgrades over the course of the next ten years so that the facility can continue to provide seasonal swimming opportunities to the community.

One of the immediate and high-priority upgrades identified in the BCA was replacing the underground water circulation piping. It was determined that the existing piping is likely to be undersized and unable to meet pool turnover and flow rates established by Island Health. While early cost estimates to replace the piping were approximately \$277,000, MAE Engineering recommended that a feasibility study be completed to gain a more precise cost estimate since North Cowichan does not have any as-built construction drawings on record. At the conclusion of the feasibility study, staff would return to Council with a report and recommended next steps.

\$277,000 was included as part of the 2025 Financial Plan that was presented to Council on February 11, 2025.

## DISCUSSION

Since the December 18, 2025, regular Council meeting, staff have held several discussions with MAE Engineering and internal departments to better understand the feasibility review process and determine the best approach for identifying construction cost estimates. This process was complicated by North Cowichan's lack of accurate as-built drawings of the pool and limited internal knowledge of its construction as it was built by mill employees in 1968. Consequently, the initial feasibility study called for a series of exploratory holes to be dug around the pool to expose the existing piping and determine its size and location. While exposed drainpipes in the pool mechanical room were visibly undersized, the size of the pipes beneath the surface was unknown. Therefore, several dig hole locations were suggested based on visible concrete slab cuts on the pool deck surface that support evidence of historical pipe repairs. It is possible that if some pipes have been upgraded to larger diameters, they could be reused to reduce repair costs. The costs of performing this exploratory work would be significant, leaving noticeable repair marks throughout the pool deck surface. Additionally, this work could not be performed until the late spring months when water table levels typically drop.

This approach was soon abandoned for two reasons:

- (1) Senior parks staff confirmed that the existing concrete slab cuts were a result of safety enhancements made to the pool deck surface several years ago; and,
- (2) Staff were fortunate to meet with Mr. MacDonald, a Crofton resident and former mill worker who helped build the pool. Mr. MacDonald indicated that all underground piping was attached to and ran along the outside wall of the pool basin back towards the pool mechanical room. He also recalled that no previous pipe repairs had been completed, as he was an avid pool user.

Utilizing ground-penetrating radar, engineering staff confirmed the approximate location of the pipe, which corroborated Mr. MacDonald's recollection.

With the newly available information, MAE Engineering and staff have determined that the most cost-effective approach is to proceed directly to the design and tender process. MAE has provided North Cowichan with a design fee proposal of \$35,000, including schematic/detailed design, tender preparation, and construction management. A Class D cost estimate of \$325,000 (this includes a 30% contingency) was also included for completing all necessary repairs. However, that estimate could be refined further once the project enters the design stage. The scope of the repair project includes:

- (1) Replacement of the deep end main drain;
- (2) Replacement of all underground drain piping; and,
- (3) Resurfacing of the pool deck surface.

Given the time required for the design and tendering process, it is doubtful that the necessary repairs will be completed in time for the scheduled opening of the Crofton outdoor pool on July 1. Therefore, operational considerations must be made in advance regarding whether the pool will remain open or closed for the 2025 summer season.

If the Crofton outdoor pool remains open for the 2025 summer season before repairs are completed, staff will likely face similar operational startup and maintenance challenges as experienced during the 2024 season. The probability of service disruptions and equipment failures will be high, leading to increased operational costs. Staff recently consulted Island Health regarding the low water flow rates experienced last year. They expressed concerns about a recurrence if repairs are not completed before the upcoming season. However, acknowledging the pool's long-standing operation in the community and the planned repairs, Island Health indicated they would permit the pool to operate, provided that enhanced maintenance procedures are documented and regularly performed. A key component of this procedure involves daily backwashing of the pool, typically done weekly. While feasible, this will increase water consumption, place additional stress on the pool filtration system due to undersized piping, and require extra staffing resources, raising annual operating costs above budgeted levels. If this option is chosen, pool repairs would commence after the outdoor season.

Alternatively, if the pool is closed for the 2025 season, staff could expedite the repair process during the summer, taking advantage of favourable weather conditions and low water table levels. Although this approach may disappoint many users of the seasonal facility, alternative swimming opportunities would still be available at the Cowichan Aquatic Centre, and staff would aim to extend lifeguarding hours at Fuller Lake Park. Closing the pool for the 2025 season would result in net operational savings of \$64,165 and mitigate the risk of ongoing equipment failures and additional operational costs.

The increase of \$83,000 (\$360,000 – \$277,000) will be mitigated through the current capital budget, and there will be no impact on taxation in the 2025 budget. It is important to keep in mind that this is a Class D estimate, and staff will not know the full extent of the supplier bids until the tender is closed. Staff are working with the best information available at the time of writing this report. If the bids come in higher than anticipated, staff will return to Council with a report and recommendations for the next steps.

Regardless of the chosen option, staff plan to complete the repairs to the Crofton outdoor pool to ensure the facility returns to normal operations in 2026.

## **OPTIONS**

1. **(Recommended Option)** THAT Council directs staff to proceed with:
  - (1) the design and tendering process for the repairs to the Crofton outdoor pool;
  - (2) increase the project funding to \$360,000; and,
  - (3) closing of the Crofton outdoor pool for the 2025 season to permit the completion of necessary repairs.
2. THAT Council directs staff to proceed with the design and tendering process for the repairs to the Crofton outdoor pool, increase the project budget to \$360,000 and that the Crofton outdoor pool remain open for the 2025 season with completion of repairs after the 2025 operating season.
3. THAT Council provide alternative direction.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

Should the Crofton outdoor pool remain operational for the 2025 season, it is likely that additional operating and equipment repair costs will be incurred due to status quo operations. Operational costs have increased by 31% since 2021 and will likely increase by similar amounts in 2025.

Should Council choose to close the Crofton outdoor pool for the 2025 season, repairs can be expedited while a total net savings of \$64,165 will be realized, which will nearly offset the increase to the capital budget.

It should be noted that some level of procurement risk is associated with Class D estimates. This includes cost overruns, scope changes, supplier commitment to Class D estimated projects, and regulatory compliance, as these estimates are preliminary and do not consider potential compliance issues.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

THAT Council directs staff to proceed with:

- (1) the design and tendering process for the repairs to the Crofton outdoor pool;
- (2) increase the project funding to \$360,000; and,
- (3) closing of the Crofton pool for the 2025 season to permit the completion of necessary repairs.

Report prepared by:



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Report reviewed by:



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**Approved to be forwarded to Council:**



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