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**Item No. 13.1.2**  
**Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee**  
**February 15, 2024**

**TO:** Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

**SUBMITTED BY:** Original Signed

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Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** January 18, 2023

**SUBJECT:** Centennial Pool Replacement Planning

**ORIGIN**

June 28, 2022 Regional Council motion ([Item No.15.4.2](#)):

**MOVED by Councillor Mason, seconded by Councillor Smith**

THAT Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer begin planning for replacement of Centennial Pool pending the outcome of a staff report which outlines:

- a. Process to undertake the development of a new 50-metre pool that meets Canada Games requirements for competitive swimming and diving and is consistent with the Long-Term Aquatic Study direction;
- b. Potential disposal of 1970 Gottingen Street pursuant to Administrative Order 50, Respecting the Disposal of Surplus Property, for Economic Development including recommendations to include an affordable housing component;
- c. Review of the prioritization of the Needham Community Centre to ensure continuity of municipal pool access on the peninsula; and
- d. Analysis of revenue sources including the pending application for the Needham Community Centre within the Green Inclusive Community Building Program, and other appropriate Federal and Provincial funding sources.

**MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

***Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, S.N.S. 2008, c.39***

**Purposes of Municipality**

**7A** The purposes of the Municipality are to

- (a) provide good government;
- (b) provide services, facilities and other things that, in the opinion of the Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the Municipality; and
- (c) develop and maintain safe and viable communities.

**Powers of Municipality regarding property**

**61 (3)** the property vested in the Municipality, absolutely or in trust, is under the exclusive management and control of the Council, unless an Act of the Legislature provides otherwise.

### **Municipal expenditures**

**79A (1)** Subject to subsections (2) to (4), the Municipality may only spend money for municipal purposes if  
(a) the expenditure is included in the Municipality's operating budget or capital budget or is otherwise authorized by the Municipality;

### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee recommend that Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer to advance a Training and Competition Aquatic Facility Study as outlined in this Report and report back to Regional Council with its findings and recommendations for the development of such a facility.

### **BACKGROUND**

There are two 50 metre training and competition pools within the municipality: Centennial Pool, which is owned by the Municipality, and Dalhousie University's Dalplex Pool. Both are aged, have been closed in the past for prolonged periods of time, and do not meet modern requirements for training and competition pools. Such requirements include a 50-m pool with eight lanes, a separate 25 metre warm-up pool, spectator seating, and deck space for dryland training.

In 2019, the Municipality developed an Aquatic Strategy to consider the service delivery of a spectrum of aquatic facilities ranging from beaches and splash pads to major indoor pools that may include training and competition facilities. It cites that the primary role of the Municipality is to provide broad-based recreation, rather than specialized training and competition facilities; however, it is recognized that there may be a municipal role in such facilities when they are also used for general recreation purposes.

The 2019 Aquatic Strategy identified that the Municipality should begin planning for a new training and competition aquatic facility within 3 to 15 years. On June 28, 2022, Regional Council requested a staff report to begin the planning of a training and competition pool. Regional Council also requested information about the potential disposal of the Centennial Pool property and the redevelopment of Needham Centre, a recreation facility in North End Halifax.

### **DISCUSSION**

While the various elements of Regional Council's motion are all related, the development of a new training and competition aquatic facility is a major component and should be considered prior to consideration of decommissioning and disposing of the Centennial Pool.

#### **New Training and Competition Aquatic Facility**

Training and competition centres are specialized facilities that are designed to international standards for a variety of aquatic sports. In almost all cases, they are part of a larger pool complex that is also used for recreation and leisure activities that might include elements such as slides and play amenities. As the municipality's primary emphasis is on recreation and leisure, the primary municipal interest in a training and competition facility would be as one component of an overall aquatic centre that serves the broad needs of the public. On this basis, a training and competition facility can be considered within three scenarios:

##### **Scenario 1 - Renovation to an Existing Aquatic Centre**

A renovation and addition to an existing aquatic centre is a complex exercise, both by way of design and construction. Such an endeavour would require additional available land and extensive building and site modifications that not only includes added pool areas, but also all related building and mechanical equipment upgrades.

To date, the Canada Games Centre is the only aquatic centre where a renovation to accommodate a training and competition facility has been analyzed. The Canada Games Centre Board commissioned a high-level study in 2019 that found an aquatic expansion would be a significant loss driver for the facility but could be expected to attract new membership. The study did not go into detail regarding the specifics of the renovation that would be required to add a 50-metre pool to the facility. A renovation may be possible, but there are spatial constraints on the site such as the adjacent Lacewood transit terminal. This warrants further analysis, which should also be undertaken with reviews of other existing aquatic centres, including Centennial Pool. Observations from a preliminary assessment of the Municipality's aquatic centres for expansions is contained in Attachment A.

A renovation to add competition facilities to an existing aquatic centre would increase the service capacity of that centre by allowing more program offerings. This, however, would not address any current or emerging geographic service gaps in the same way as an entirely new aquatic centre would.

#### Scenario 2 - New Aquatic Centre

Preliminary review indicates there is a high demand for aquatic programs and general use among all the Municipality's pools (Attachment B), but this on its own is not the sole measure against which a new aquatic facility should be considered. Forecasted population growth and distribution relative to existing aquatic centres are an additional consideration.

The population served by existing aquatic centres varies. Attachment C identifies the location of all indoor aquatic centres within the municipality, including those owned by the Municipality, and others that are available to the public such as the YMCA in Downtown Halifax. In addition, the East Hants Aquatic Centre is included, as it is available and serves HRM residents. Attachment D identifies the population catchments for each facility based solely on proximity. This preliminary analysis identifies that the Municipality's pools currently serve high populations. As part of the work being done through the Regional Plan review, it is further identified that with population growth each of these centres will serve increased amounts of prospective users. This requires further review, but it appears to support a finding that regardless of whether an existing facility might be well suited for a renovation to accommodate a training and competition facility, one (or more) new aquatic centres should be planned into the future in areas where service gaps are emerging. To operate effectively, aquatic centres should be located within areas with central piped services (within the water service area).

The Needham Community Recreation Centre in North End Halifax is a relatively small recreation centre with a gymnasium, pool, and other recreation amenities. It is planned to be replaced with a similar-sized centre near to its existing site. However, this location is not a sufficient size to accommodate a new competition and training aquatic facility and there are no other lands in the vicinity that are available for this purpose. It is the only aquatic facility that is currently being planned within the municipality.

The Aquatic Strategy observed high rates of growth and service gaps in the Bedford West area. A new aquatic centre in this area would have the potential to alleviate service demands on facilities like the Canada Games Centre, Sackville Sports Stadium, and other aquatic centres across the municipality. However, the availability of land is a challenge that may strongly influence possible locations.

#### Scenario 3 - Institutional Partner

Many training and competition aquatic centers across Canada and elsewhere are owned and operated by municipalities. Institutions such as universities also have such facilities.

Dalhousie University's aquatic centre serves its swim team, university students and faculty, community sports clubs, and the public. This facility is comprised of a single 50 metre pool, its priority use is for a swim team, and a new facility would accommodate a higher degree of public use with multiple pools and additional facilities. Advantages to an institutional partner such as Dalhousie are the potential for both capital and operating cost sharing. A disadvantage could be a possible reduction in programming control as a non-municipal facility however, this could conceivably be overcome through partnership agreements. Dalhousie is considering the possibility of a replacement facility through their campus master planning process.

While there is merit to a partnership with a Halifax peninsula institution such as Dalhousie University, this partnership would result in a concentration of aquatic facilities in this area, when coupled with the development of the Needham Centre and the existence of the YMCA. Therefore, while such a facility would address the needs for a new training and competition facility, it would not necessarily alleviate the demands that may increasingly become placed on existing recreation aquatic centres in other growing parts of the municipality. However, the possibility of developing a new training and competition pool with an institutional partner such as Dalhousie University has considerable merit based on capital and operating cost savings and warrants additional study.

### **Magnitude of Facility Costs**

Actual facility development costs would be dependent on a variety of factors that include site characteristics and facility size and composition. A review of new aquatic centres that have recently been built in Canada is identified in Attachment E. Facility costs range from \$39,000,000 (pre pandemic) to \$114,000,000. Operating costs for a centre, including staffing, are an additional cost factor.

### **Capital Cost Funding Opportunities**

Given the high capital costs of renovated or new facilities, aquatic centres are regularly the subject of cost sharing funding from other orders of government. This is often associated with an impending major sporting event such as the Canada Games, which is next scheduled to be held in Nova Scotia in 2037.

### **Next Steps**

The Aquatic Strategy recommends a study prior to any decisions being made relative to a new aquatic training and competitive facility being developed. Preliminary assessments, along with a context and approach to consider such a facility, are outlined in this report as a starting point. A focused, Training and Competition Aquatic Facility Study is recommended, given the significant capital investment that is required for such a facility. A prospective outline of the study's components is found in Attachment F.

### **Potential disposal of the Centennial Pool Site (1970 Gottingen Street)**

The Regional Council motion, to advance the training and competition pool, noted that a replacement of the Centennial Pool may result in the potential disposal of this property, which in-turn could offset new facility project costs. It is proposed that any potential disposal be considered as a separate, future consideration, which will include an assessment of the site for uses to support other municipal priorities.

### **Needham Community Centre Prioritization**

The Needham Centre is a municipal recreation centre that includes a 25-metre indoor pool. The Needham Centre, including the pool, is planned to be replaced with a new facility. The project was included in the 2024/25 Capital Budget and is proposed for design work in 2026/27 and completion in 2029/30 at an estimated cost of \$46.8M.

The Municipality had made application for funds for the Needham Centre recapitalization project to the Green Inclusive Community Building Program but have been advised that the application was not successful. Staff will continue to pursue other potential funding opportunities as they arise.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Consulting funding, to supplement the staff work that will be undertaken on developing the Training and Competition Aquatic Facility Study, is available in the current capital budget (CB210019 Community Recreation Facilities Recap), to be carried forward into 2024/25 as necessary. As of November 28, 2023 CB210019 has an available balance of \$1,149,119. Study cost is estimated at \$ 50,000. In addition to municipal funding, inquiries have made for outside funding to support the study.

Replacement of a 50m pool is currently included in the 10-year capital outlook. The funding identified in the 10-year capital plan is a total of \$ 76 M starting in 2028/29. This will be further refined pending completion of the proposed study and development of a further cost estimate.

## **RISK CONSIDERATION**

The aim of completing the proposed Aquatic Training and Competition Facility Study is to adequately plan for the replacement of the Centennial Pool. As Centennial and Dalplex continue to age the likelihood of future issues and service disruptions will increase. Additionally, without a facility capable of hosting national events, Halifax will miss any future hosting opportunities that may arise.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Initial stakeholder engagement was done in the preparation of this report. This included initial discussions with Dalhousie University, Swim Nova Scotia, Sport Nova Scotia, and the Nova Scotia Department of Community Culture Tourism and Heritage. Engagement was also conducted previously during the preparation of the Aquatic Strategy. Additional engagement will be conducted as part of the proposed Aquatic Training and Competition Facility Study, to include stakeholders such as representative of HRMs current aquatic facilities and aquatic provincial sport organizations.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

Environmental implications will be considered part of the recommended study and will be discussed in future reports.

## **SOCIAL VALUE**

The Social Value Framework will be considered in any procurement activity resulting from this report.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

CPED could recommend that Regional Council direct the CAO to:

1. advance the proposed Aquatic Training and Competition Facility Study with a different scope than that which has been outlined within this report.
2. defer the proposed Aquatic Training and Competition Facility Study until later in the timeframe recommended by the aquatic strategy to a maximum of 10 years (2029).
3. take no action with respect to Centennial Pool replacement planning at this time.
4. postpone the prospective development of the new Needham Centre until the completion of the proposed Aquatic Training and Competition Facility Study is considered by Regional Council.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A	Preliminary Assessment of Municipal Aquatic Centres
Attachment B	Existing Program Demand within Municipal Aquatic Centres
Attachment C	Location of Aquatic Centres
Attachment D	Population Catchments
Attachment E	Recent Aquatic Centre Costs
Attachment F	Training and Competition Aquatic Centre Study Components

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A copy of this report can be obtained online at [halifax.ca](http://halifax.ca) or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

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## Preliminary Assessment of Municipal Aquatic Centres

Centennial Pool	1970 Gottingen Street, Halifax
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Built in 1967</li> <li>• Size of site is appx. 14,000 m<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Opportunities: Site is located within the Regional Centre and is the current training and competition site.</li> <li>• Constraints include: Limited ability to expand without impact to Gottingen Street; Site is being used for a housing and homelessness initiative; the age and condition of the facility may require a complete reconstruction.</li> </ul>	
Canada Games Centre	26 Thomas Raddall Drive, Halifax
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Built in 2010</li> <li>• Size of site is appx. 40,000 m<sup>2</sup> within an overall parcel that is 15 hectares in size.</li> <li>• Opportunities: Site is proximate to a transit terminal; age and condition of the facility would more readily facilitate a renovation.</li> <li>• Constraints include: Limited ability to expand without impact to the Lacewood transit terminal.</li> </ul>	
Captain William Spry Centre	16 Sussex Street Halifax
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Built in 1985</li> <li>• Size of site is appx. 49,000 m<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Opportunities</li> <li>• Constraints include: Presence of watercourse and watercourse buffers may impact ability to site competition and training facility components. Parking needs would need to be analysed to determine if capacity exists on site, and in the vicinity, to support the overall programing of the centre.</li> </ul>	
Cole Harbour Place	51 Forest Hills Parkway, Cole Harbour
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Built in 1988</li> <li>• Size of site is appx. 43,000 m<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Opportunities: Presence of rinks that could potentially offer energy efficiencies for operation;</li> <li>• Constraints include: Presence of watercourse and watercourse buffers may impact ability to site competition and training facility components. Parking needs would need to be analysed to determine if capacity exists on site, and in the vicinity, to support the overall programing of the centre.</li> </ul>	
Needham Community Centre	3372 Devonshire Avenue, Halifax
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Built in 1972</li> <li>• Size of site is appx. 29,000 m<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Opportunities: Site is located within the Regional Centre;</li> <li>• Constraints include: site is not a sufficient size to accommodate competition and training facility components.</li> </ul>	

Sackville Sports Stadium	409 Glendale Drive, Lower Sackville
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Built in 1989</li> <li>• Size of site is appx. 69,000 m<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Opportunities: Presence of rinks that could potentially offer energy efficiencies for operation;</li> <li>• Constraints include: presence of watercourse (First Lake) and watercourse buffers may impact ability to site competition and training facility components. Parking needs would need to be analysed to determine if capacity exists on site, and in the vicinity, to support the overall programming of the centre.</li> </ul>	
Zatzman Sportsplex	110 Wyse Road, Dartmouth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Built in 1982</li> <li>• Size of site is appx. 24,000 m<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Opportunities: Site is located within the Regional Centre; Site is proximate to a transit terminal; Presence of rinks that could potentially offer energy efficiencies for operation;</li> <li>• Constraints include: Limited ability to expand without impact to Thistle Street.</li> </ul>	
All sites are within the Water Service Boundary	

## Existing Program Demand within Municipal Aquatic Centres

Table 1. Aquatic Waitlist Report for Winter 2023

Facility	Participant Capacity for Waitlisted Programs	Actual Participants Booked	Spaces	Number On Waiting List
Canada Games Centre	77	78	-1	71
Captain William Spry Community Centre Pool	521	491	30	215
Cole Harbour Place	201	186	15	211
Needham Community Recreation Centre Pool	214	194	20	84
Sackville Sports Stadium	509	477	32	239
Zatzman Sportsplex	506	498	8	290

Table 2. Aquatic Waitlist Report for Spring 2023

Facility	Participant Capacity for Waitlisted Programs	Actual Participants Booked	Spaces	Number On Waiting List
Canada Games Centre	118	121	-3	85
Captain William Spry Community Centre Pool	1110	1011	99	701
Cole Harbour Place	252	238	14	234
Needham Community Recreation Centre Pool	281	251	30	163
Sackville Sports Stadium	1191	1109	82	776
Zatzman Sportsplex	717	699	18	366

Table 3. Aquatic Waitlist Report for Summer 2023

Facility	Participant Capacity for Waitlisted Programs	Actual Participants Currently Booked	Spaces	Number On Waiting List
Canada Games Centre	51	45	6	57
Captain William Spry Community Centre Pool	426	399	27	162
Cole Harbour Place	86	77	9	62
Needham Community Recreation Centre Pool	48	44	4	27
Sackville Sports Stadium	273	248	25	183
Zatzman Sportsplex	52	47	5	26

**Disclaimers:**

The waitlist reports were generated at season end. There is a lot of movement with waitlists in the first weeks of the program and it should be noted that the data shows how many registrants remained on the waitlist at season end.

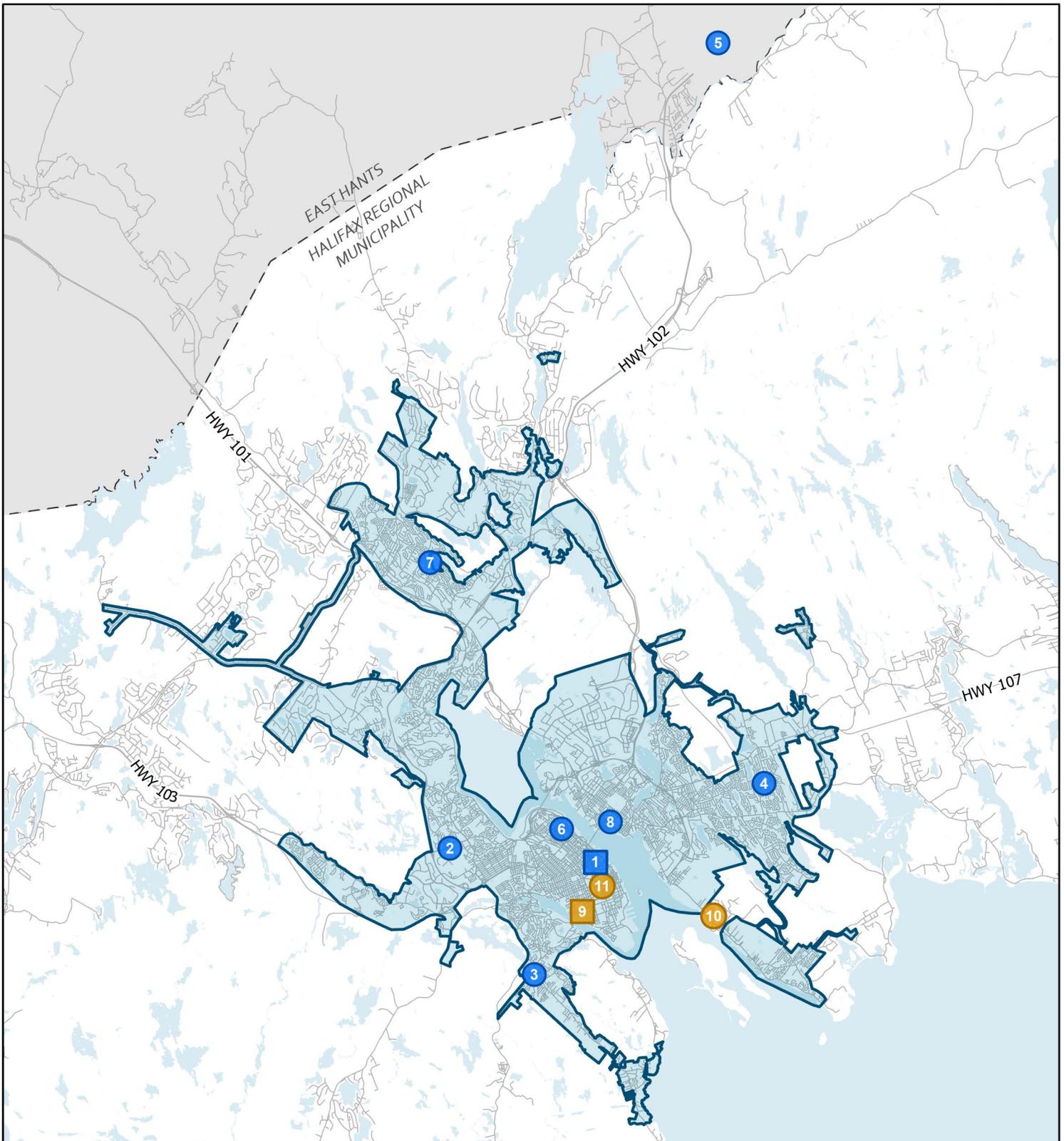
The waitlist reports only included programs that were at capacity and had a waitlist count equal to or greater than 1. This is important to note with the capacity column because this column does not represent the overall capacity available for aquatic programs at these sites, it only includes the overall capacity of the programs with a waitlist.

Duplicates may exist in the data as an individual could be waitlisted for multiple aquatic programs of the same type (e.g. An individual is waitlisted for multiple Swimmer 1 programs in the hopes of getting into one of them).

In the recreation software (Legend) there is no limit to the number of waitlists an individual can register themselves for (e.g. An individual can register for the same aquatic program at the same day/time at multiple sites).

Some MDF facilities do not publish all of their available aquatic programs. Extra programs are filled with waitlist applicants.

Location of Aquatic Centres



- |  |  |                                       |  |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Municipal Indoor 50m Pools</b>              | <b>4</b> Cole Harbour Place                  | <b>7</b> Sackville Sports Stadium     | <b>Non Municipal Indoor 25m Pools</b>  |
| <b>1</b> Centennial Pool                       | <b>6</b> East Hants Aquatic Centre*          | <b>8</b> Zatzman Sportsplex           | <b>10</b> CFB Shearwater Fitness & Sports Centre   |
| <b>Municipal Indoor 25m Pools</b>              | <b>5</b> Needham Community Recreation Centre | <b>Non Municipal Indoor 50m Pools</b> | <b>11</b> John W. Lindsay YMCA   |
| <b>2</b> Canada Games Centre                   | <i>*Located in East Hants Municipality</i>   | <b>9</b> Dalplex                      |  Water Service Area |
| <b>3</b> Captain William Spry Community Centre |  |                                       |  |

**HALIFAX**  
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 Kilometers

## Population Catchments

Facility	Population Closest to Pool Facility	Projected Population Closest to Pool Facility Based on Projected Units
Canada Games Centre	93,057	144,153
Captain William Spry Community Centre Pool	31,740	41,630
Centennial Pool	22,921	25,796
Cole Harbour Place	84,745	120,643
Dalplex	14,894	14,894
East Hants Aquatics Centre	8,423	8,423
John W. Lindsay YMCA	16,330	16,330
Needham Community Recreation Centre Pool	24,627	62,715
Sackville Sports Stadium	89,982	114,493
Zatzman Sportsplex	52,735	118,469
Total:	439,454	667,546

Source: Statscan, ESR Data Enrichment, Environics 2022

## Recent Aquatic Centre Costs

Facility	Completion Date	Features	Cost (\$)
təmәsәwtx <sup>w</sup> Aquatic and Community Centre (BC)	2023; Opens February 2024	10,644 square metre aquatic and community centre. Includes: 50m, 25m, leisure pool, two hot tubs.	114,000,000
Complexe aquatique de Laval (QC)	Opened 2016	13,300 square metres; Includes: 50m, lazy river, leisure pool, 10m diving.	108,444,700
Regina Aquatic Centre (SK)	Approved by Council 2023	2- 50m	108,000,000
Minoru Centre (BC)*	Construction begins 2024	10,220 square metres Includes: 2- 25m, leisure pool with lazy river, hot tub, cold plunge.	71,500,000
City of Yellowknife (YK)	Currently Under Construction	Includes: 50m, 25m, leisure pool, waterslide.	71,000,000
Pierrefonds-Roxboro aquatic complex (QC) *	Currently Under Construction	4,500 square metres; Includes: 25m; one for learning and a recreational paddling pool with water games.	62,400,000
Grandview Heights Aquatic Centre (Surrey, BC)	Opened 2017	9,240 square metres Includes: 50m, leisure pool, 10m diving, hot tubs.	45,000,000
Fort Chipewyan aquatic centre (AB)	Opened 2016	Includes: 50m, lazy river, leisure pool, waterslide.	40,000,000
UBC Aquatic Centre (BC)	Opened 2020	7,897 square metres Includes: 50m, 25m, leisure pool, hot tub.	39,000,000
Average Cost:			73,260,522

\*No 50m tank

*Disclaimer: Data was collected from various sources including media outlets, council reports, council agendas, and through various project websites. These numbers may not represent final financial costs.*

## Training and Competition Aquatic Centre Study Components

1. Background Information and Determination of Facility Needs:
  - Profile information about facility users, including clubs from a range of aquatic sports and recreation users;
  - Stakeholder consultation with facility users to determine facility requirements necessary for their program needs; and
  - Review of the prospective facility requirements based on Swim Canada's strategic directions for National Centres of Excellence and regional facilities.
2. Evaluation of Existing and New Facility Options:

Considering the geographic distribution of the Municipality's indoor pools. Two initial options would be considered:

  - A) Existing Aquatic Facility Redevelopment and Expansion:

This would include a review of HRM's existing indoor aquatic facilities (as shown in Attachment A) as well as Dalplex, and include reviews of factors such as:

    - Building facility capabilities;
    - Site suitability, including factors such as parking;
    - Population distribution and growth. Currently these facilities are geographically well distributed within the municipality, but must be considered relative to recent and anticipated population growth;
    - Transportation access options (including transit and active transportation connections); and
    - Initial cost estimates.
  - B) New Recreation / Training and Competition Facility:

Pending the information gathered about existing facilities, the need for a new facility that would include both a recreational component and a training and competition pool. Its prospective location would be reviewed. This would consider factors such as:

    - Anticipated facility usage;
    - Population distribution and growth;
    - Evaluation of potential general locations and if available, prospective sites, with consideration towards:
      - Availability of central piped services;
      - Site suitability, including factors such as parking;
      - Transportation access options (including transit and active transportation connections);
      - Community context; and
      - Initial cost estimates.
3. Case Studies and Comparisons:

A review of recent studies completed for other competition and training facilities proposals across the country to identify issues and opportunities that may be relevant to the options outlined above.
4. Partnership Opportunities:

At this time, Dalhousie University is the only identified possible partner institution given their varsity swim program. Other partnership would be considered, along with the participation of sport organizations such as Swim Canada, although it is recognized that they are only typically have a presence within national facilities.
5. Funding:

Current and prospective Federal or Provincial funding programs will be reviewed, including those for green building technologies. In the absence of any specific existing program the regional scale of a training and competition facility may attract specialized funding, and the study itself may serve to elicit funding interest.

Engagement

The study will be commissioned and led by HRM but will include engagement with organizations and groups including Sport Nova Scotia, Swim Nova Scotia, other sport organizations, and local clubs and members through the provincial sports organizations.