

It's not too late to avoid mistake, says engineer

(Re: ?Complex users angry at upcoming closure?, October 26, 2013, ?Youth Centre renos to start Nov. 13, pending approval?, October 23, 2013, & ?Council should change course on Complex renos?, October 23, 2013)

Thank you for publishing the letter by Ralph Jessup last week as well as your article on the Aurora Family Leisure Complex (AFLC) and its pending year-long closure.

I am a structural engineer and I have some experience with this type of project and the procedures involved.

I have reviewed the drawings and the documents deemed relevant by Aurora's Parks and Recreation Director. The history of this project is about providing programme space targeting youth. Over a period of years the town has worked with consultants, including MJM Architects last year, to decide on one of two final options.

I agree with the direction Council took last November approving ?Option Two? which would minimize impact to the people and facility revenues and have less capital cost by \$0.5 million.

However, either of the two options discussed last year would be less costly and disruptive than the current plan. (The current plan is estimated at \$7.4 million, options one and two were \$4.769 and \$4.223 million respectively.)

Renovations, or the need to renovate the AFLC, are not mentioned in the documents I reviewed and yet the current plan is one of renovations.

In the spring, CS&P Architects were hired to follow the town's ?Option Two? plan providing detailed design and drawings for tendering and construction. Instead, the architect working with some P&R staff, proposed the \$7.4 million renovation of the entire AFLC.

There is no Youth Centre/Wing, as in the original design for Option Two. That is to say there is no new gym, having a climbing wall or programme rooms for youth in the addition.

In July, with a long agenda and a late night, Council accepted the recommendations of P&R to approve the new and different work and increased budget. The P&R Report told Council that if they did not accept the new work and budget, the space for youth would suffer.

(See P&R Report for July 16th 2013 Council Meeting, section ?Alternatives to the Recommendations?.)

Tenders have not been awarded and Council approval of contracts is not until November 5.

It is never too late to stop making a mistake. It is never too late to do the right thing. In the future, any necessary work to keep the AFLC usable can be done at a much lower cost and with minimal disruption. Perhaps use money saved to hire youth counsellors or youth workers.

Council needs to instruct the architect to provide the detailed construction drawings that they initially requested based on the town's existing plan, Option Two, ?building an addition? and not allow the architect to totally change the nature of the work.

The impact to close the facility for a year on the people who rely on it, is alone too great. Also the cost, and the manner in which this renovation occurred at such a late date indicates that it was not well considered.

By reversing their decision to accept the architect's plan, Council can put their plan and budget back on track and get it done.

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