

DATE: January 12, 2018

TO: MAYOR AND COUNCIL

NAME AND TITLE: ROB WHITWHAM, GENERAL MANAGER, COMMUNITY SERVICES

SUBJECT: CANADA GAMES PLAZA AMMONIA PLANT

ATTACHMENT(S): NONE

RECOMMENDATION(S):

THAT Council APPROVE the decommissioning of the Canada Games Plaza Ammonia Plant.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with background information concerning the ongoing maintenance of the ammonia plant servicing the outdoor skating rink in Canada Games Plaza and to determine the future operation of the plant.

BACKGROUND:

The ammonia plant in Canada Games Plaza was constructed in 1994 as part of the overall development of the Prince George Civic Centre and Civic Plaza footprint. The plant first became operational in the winter of 1995 to provide seasonal outdoor skating for the general public. Since that time the rink has remained operational on an annual basis, typically 3-4 months, or as weather conditions would permit. The only exceptions were in the winter of 2013/2014 due to the renovation to the plaza and the winter of 2014/2015 due to the hosting of the Canada Winter Games where the plaza was being utilized as a centralized hub for entertainment and vendor activation.

During its months of operation the skating rink is maintained by staff at the Prince George Conference and Civic Centre along with assistance provided by the City's Civic Facilities Division and Parks Department who are responsible for the removal of snow. As part of its annual maintenance program the City hires a third party refrigeration contractor to service the ammonia plant in preparation for startup in the fall and shutdown in the spring or as otherwise required.

In July 2017 Eric Bradley, Bradley Refrigeration Consultants Limited conducted a walk through inspection of the ammonia plant in Canada Games Plaza as part of a City wide inspection of ice plants within the City. At that time it was determined that the equipment in the plant was nearing the end of its life expectancy and that planning for replacement of the refrigeration equipment should begin. This item was included as part of Civic Facilities 2018 Capital Plan with an estimated budget of approximately **\$550,000.**

The 2017 annual fall startup process commenced in mid-October with an inspection of the plant by the City's refrigeration contractor. The purpose of the inspection was to identify any maintenance issues and rectify them in advance of the upcoming winter season. Shortly thereafter, on October 17th, the tragic events in Fernie B.C. took place. As a result of those events, the observations by ice plant operators around the province are that inspections by Technical Safety BC and WorkSafeBC have increased.

The following is a brief synopsis of subsequent activity related to the Canada Games Plaza ammonia plant:

- October 25th – City staff recommended additional testing in addition to the condition report being prepared by the City's refrigeration contractor (mid-October inspection).
- October 27th – Technical Safety BC (TSBC) conducted an informal meeting, outlining the requirements of the pressure vessel with an inspection to follow.
- November 1st – The City's refrigeration contractor provided its condition report outlining a list of deficiencies that needed to be addressed with a cost of **\$10,000**.
- November 22nd – Technical Safety BC conducted a formal inspection of the ammonia plant room.
- November 23rd – The City's refrigeration contractor was contracted to tend to the deficiencies outlined in the TSBC report.
- December 21st – The deficiencies identified by the City's refrigeration contractor and items from the TSBC deficiencies report had been addressed at a cost of **\$17,600**.
- January 3rd – TSBC arrived on site for a follow up inspection. Identified items not completed and requested photo evidence and a report in lieu of another formal inspection.
- January 3rd – WorkSafeBC arrived on site to conduct an interview with staff and a formal inspection of the ammonia plant and vestibule. As a result of the inspection a list of six (6) compliance orders were issued.
- January 9th – The City's refrigeration contractor provided a quote totaling **\$31,300** for the balance of work to be completed to make the plant operational for the rest of the 2018 season.
- January 12th – the plant continues to be non-operational however still accessible for public use as weather conditions permit.

With the **\$27,600** already spent and **\$31,300** of additional expense pending, the expected cost to keep the ice plant operating for the remainder of the 2017/2018 season is **\$58,900**.

The Canada Games Plaza skating rink has been accessible for public use for all but 5 days since the rink was made accessible on November 26th, 2017. During this time staff has tracked its usage with an average count of 5 individuals per day utilizing the rink for recreation purpose. That average is comprised of many days where there is no usage.

The City is facing roughly **\$610,000** in maintenance and capital costs if there is a desire to continue to offer public skating. Administration had hoped to be reporting to Council at the end of the 2017/2018 season with usage statistics for the full season, however as noted above, additional money would have to be spent to confirm the trend that has been evident for some time.

Council's desire since the 2015 Canada Winter Games has been to bring events to the downtown area and to maintain the momentum from that event. Canada Games Plaza is and will be one of the primary venues in that regard. Given the usage numbers for skating that have been observed and measured so far this season, the question is whether the capital funding for a new ice plant would be better spent in improvements to Canada Games Plaza that would enhance the ability to put on events in that space year round.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Council's 2016-2018 Corporate Plan provides a vision where the City of Prince George is committed to citizen-centered service and sustainable fiscal management through the assessment, prioritization and alignment of all capital, operating and maintenance activities.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:

It is recommended that Council approves the decommissioning of the ammonia plant while still preserving the skating rink in the short term so that the facility can be utilized for recreation purposes similarly to the 20 other outdoor weather dependent community based skating rinks that don't require an ammonia plant for their operation. By moving in this direction, the City could still maintain a service to the community while reducing costs and potential risk. This could also provide the opportunity to repurpose the Plaza into a permanent year round outdoor event space.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:



Rob Whitwham, General Manager, Community Services

APPROVED:



Kathleen Soltis, City Manager
Meeting date: January 22, 2018