



REQUEST FOR DECISION

File # 0810-20

Report To: **Mayor and Council**  
From: **Chief Corporate Services Officer**  
Presenter: **Lucas Panoulas**  
Subject: **Administration Report No. 0055/26  
New Aquatic Facility Project Charter**  
Meeting: **Regular Council**  
Meeting Date: **March 9, 2026**

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

“THAT, Council receive Administration Report No. 0055/26 New Aquatic Facility Project Charter for information.”

**CAO'S COMMENTS:**

The project charter for the New Aquatic Facility Project is a guiding document for the planning and implementation of the project that defines the project's purpose, scope, deliverables, timelines, governance structure, and stakeholders.

**ALTERNATIVE RECOMMENDATION:**

N/A

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**KEY ISSUES(S)/ CONCEPTS DEFINED:**

As part of the New Aquatic Facility Project, a project charter has been developed to formally authorize the project and establish a clear framework for its planning and implementation. The charter defines the project's purpose, objectives, scope, key deliverables, timelines, governance structure, and stakeholders. It serves as a foundational document that aligns Council and the Project Team on project direction while clarifying accountability and decision-making authority.

The New Aquatic Facility Project Charter also ensures a structured and coordinated approach to project delivery. It outlines expectations, oversight, and reporting processes, supporting effective resource planning and transparent implementation. This framework helps ensure the project advances strategically and in alignment with Council's priorities and the community's long-term recreational needs.

**RELEVANT POLICY:**

Policy 22/22 - City Purchasing and Tendering

Policy 141/19 - Guiding Principles to Review and Negotiate Development Agreements

Policy 02/00 - Capital Project Planning

<b>IMPLICATIONS OF RECOMMENDATION</b>
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**COMPLIANCE WITH STRATEGIC PILLARS:**

*Vibrant Community – Invest in community safety, social, cultural, and recreational programs.*

*Relationships & Advocacy – Initiate and foster relationships and advocate to decision makers on the issues that impact our community and our neighbours.*

*Organizational Excellence – Provide a healthy workplace that is inclusive and builds on our diversity, engagement, and sense of community.*

*Managing Assets – Build and manage assets that support the current and future needs of the community.*

**COMPLIANCE WITH STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:****Vibrant Community**

- Provide and support robust, affordable, and accessible wellness and recreation opportunities for the whole community.
- Foster community pride and sense of belonging

**Relationships and Advocacy**

- Strengthen relationships with First Nations and Metis communities.

**Organizational Excellence**

- Attract and retain the people that support the current and future needs of the community.
- Provide an environment where the safety, health, and wellness of our employees is prioritized.

**Managing Assets**

- Invest in building, improving, and maintaining physical and digital assets.
- Embrace environmental responsibility through sustainable and effective practices.
- Ensure accountable, transparent, and responsible financial management focused on value.

**GENERAL:**

The City of Fort St. John has prepared a Project Charter to guide planning for a new aquatic and multisport facility to replace the aging North Peace Leisure Pool. The existing facility is experiencing increasing mechanical failures and cannot meet current community demand. The new facility is intended to serve residents for the next several decades with modern, accessible, and flexible recreation spaces.

Phase 1 of the proposed project includes a new aquatic centre with lap, warm water, and leisure pools; a hot pool; sauna and steam rooms; a waterslide; and fully accessible design spaces. It also includes an indoor fieldhouse featuring a full size, configurable turf field, change rooms, and supporting spaces. Shared amenities such as a lobby, multipurpose room, concession space, and parking are incorporated to support long term community use. Phase 2 of the proposed project includes two gymnasiums and a full size exterior synthetic turf field.

This planning phase focuses on developing concept options, cost estimates, site requirements, funding and partnership opportunities, and a comprehensive public engagement process. No detailed engineering or construction work is included at this stage. A public approval process is planned for Fall 2026, at which time residents will decide whether the City proceeds with construction.

Key project goals include delivering a financially sustainable facility, targeting an average residential impact of no more than \$40 per month; securing grant funding and partnerships; ensuring accessibility and climate resilience; and providing clear and timely information to support public understanding throughout 2026. Major deliverables include Class C cost estimates, schematic concepts, a lifecycle cost model, a business case, and a public information package.

The New Aquatic Facility Project Charter also outlines the governance framework, including roles for the Project Sponsor, Project Manager, Working Group, and Council, and identifies risks related to cost escalation, public approval, construction market conditions, and community awareness. Mitigation strategies rely on transparent communication, updated financial modelling, early due diligence, and realistic scheduling.

**ORGANIZATIONAL:**

N/A

**FINANCIAL:**

Development of the Project Charter is funded through the approved 2026 capital budget.

**FOLLOW UP ACTION:**

The New Aquatic Facility Project Team will use the Project Charter to guide the project going forward.

**COMMUNITY CONSULTATION:**

Consultation conducted through the Let's Talk Aquatics Facility public engagement.

**COMMUNICATION:**

N/A

**DEPARTMENTS CONSULTED ON THIS REPORT:**

CAO's Office

Finance

Corporate Services

Communications

Economic Development

Engineering

Planning

Recreation

Aquatics

Facilities

**ATTACHMENTS:**

New Aquatic Facility Project Charter

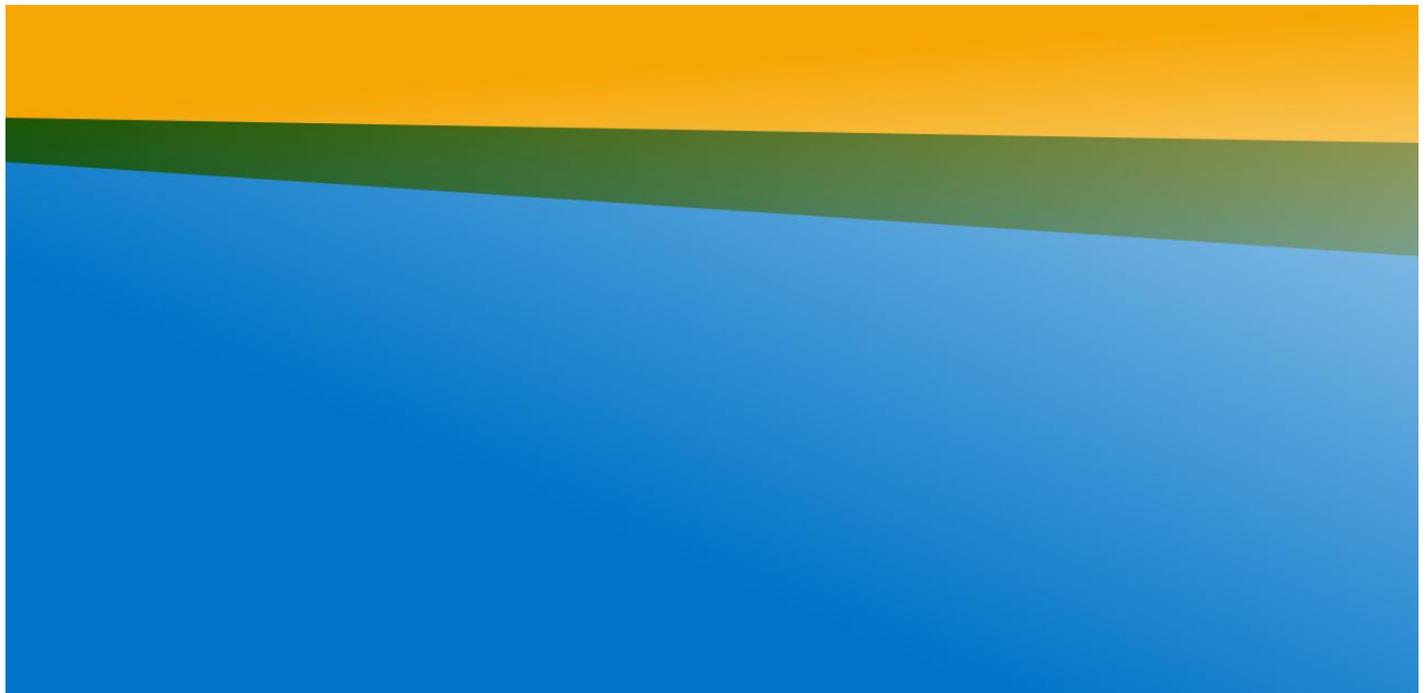
**RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:**

Rosni Abdullah, Administrative Assistant II Administrative Assistant II

February 27, 2026



**City of Fort St. John  
New Aquatic Facility  
Project Charter**



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## Executive Summary

The City of Fort St. John (City) is planning a new aquatic and multi-sport facility to replace the North Peace Leisure Pool, which is aging and experiencing more frequent mechanical failures. Our community has also grown, and many programs—like swimming lessons, fitness activities, and indoor sports—don't have enough space. This new facility is meant to support residents now and for the next several decades, offering more room, modern features, and improved accessibility for everyone. The City's intent is to work towards a facility that is supported for construction by the majority of residents, recognizing the value it brings current and future residents, and weighted against its tax impact on property owners.

During 2026, the City will continue planning and developing the facility design, estimating costs, and exploring ways to help pay for the project, such as grants or partnerships. The City will also be talking with residents, sport groups, Indigenous partners, and regional neighbours to make sure people understand what is being considered and have opportunities to ask questions and share opinions. This information will help prepare the community for a public approval process in 2026, when residents will decide whether the project should move forward.

The project's overall goal is to create a facility that supports health, recreation, and community life, while also being financially sustainable. This planning phase focuses on developing a clear project plan, a realistic budget, and community information to help people feel confident and informed leading up to and through a public approval process. This planning phase does not include detailed engineering or construction.

### **What's Being Proposed for Phase 1**

#### **Aquatic Centre:**

A new 25 m lap pool with eight lanes and diving boards; a 25 m warmwater pool for lessons and therapy; a family friendly leisure pool with a lazy river and toddler area; a hot pool; sauna and steam room; a waterslide; and a fully accessible design.

#### **Indoor Fieldhouse:**

A full-size indoor turf field that can be divided into smaller fields, space for spectators, and change rooms, and can accommodate a variety of sports.

#### **Shared Spaces:**

A lobby and gathering area, multi-purpose room, food services facility, leased office or retail space, and parking, with room for future expansion.

This stage of work includes developing detailed concepts, estimating costs, reviewing site and servicing needs, exploring possible funding options, and creating a strong public information and engagement process. It does not include final design work or construction. The goal is to

provide a clear and complete picture of the project so residents can make an informed decision on this project in the 2026 public approval process.

### **What’s Being Explored for Phase 2**

Costing is being explored for the following potential Phase 2 elements:

#### **Gymnasiums:**

Two City operated gymnasiums that accommodate a variety of user groups and community programming, available for year-round use.

#### **Exterior Turf Field:**

A full-size synthetic turf field with spectator seating, access to washrooms and field maintenance equipment.

### **Timeline**

**Winter–Spring 2026:** Develop concepts, estimate costs, and engage the community.

**Summer 2026:** Finalize the project design and funding approach.

**Fall 2026:** Undertake public approval process.

## **1. Purpose and Background**

Fort St. John needs a new aquatic and multisport facility. Our current pool is aging, experiences mechanical failures that are unable to be repaired, and major projects are being postponed with the possibility of a new aquatics facility in the future. In addition, many current programs—like learn to swim, family recreation, therapy, and sport training—do not have enough space

The current pool requires extensive repairs and maintenance to remain in operation, resulting in extended closures while the necessary work is completed, further reducing the availability of the facility.

The new facility is a multi-phased approach, with Phase 1 seeing the replacement of the current aging pool and adding an indoor fieldhouse. Considerations for Phase 2 will include two gymnasiums and a full-size synthetic turf exterior field.

The new facility will be designed to be inclusive, accessible, energy efficient, upgradable, and affordable to maintain and operate for the long-term.

A public approval process in 2026 will decide whether the City moves forward with construction and funding.

## **2. Project Goals**

- 2.1. Align the project with community expectations.
- 2.2. Build a modern facility that serves residents today and for decades to come through flexible design.
- 2.3. Operating and capital costs to not exceed \$40/month for the average residential home, which will be tested and refined throughout the process.
- 2.4. Keep operating costs realistic and as efficient as possible.
- 2.5. Seek grant funding and partnerships to lower costs.
- 2.6. Make the facility safe, accessible, and climate resilient.
- 2.7. Support and meet the needs of local and regional users.
- 2.8. Generate economic benefits for the community.
- 2.9. Collaborate with the Peace River Regional District (PRRD) to transition existing PRRD support for aquatics and recreation to the new facility.
- 2.10. Provide clear, timely public information so that people can make an informed decision in 2026.
- 2.11. Earn public approval through a successful public approval process to proceed to the procurement and construction phases.
- 2.12. Ensure the communication of a transparent process that clearly summarizes materials for the community and provides further information and detail for those that seek it.

## **3. Project Assumptions**

- 3.1. The final concept will meet community needs and fit within budget expectations.
- 3.2. Council will move forward with a public approval process in 2026 on the proposed facility.

- 3.3. Residents will decide whether the City will proceed to the construction phase of the project.
- 3.4. Project costs will be realistic, based on feasibility studies and current and future usage needs. Essential features will be prioritized to keep costs as low as possible.
- 3.5. All available funding options, including City funds, grants, partnerships, donations, and borrowing, will be explored to limit the impact on taxpayers.
- 3.6. Plans reflect current and future needs, but do not depend on formal cost sharing agreements.
- 3.7. The facility will be designed to last 50+ years.
- 3.8. The design will suit northern conditions and efficient energy use.

## 4. Project Scope

- 4.1 **Included now (planning and pre-design only):**
  - a. Program development and concept options for **Phase 1** (aquatics + indoor fieldhouse).
  - b. Site review (servicing, access, parking, and circulation).
  - c. Early cost estimates (Class C), including building and operations for **Phase 1**.
  - d. Public and stakeholder engagement throughout 2026 (see Project Timeline below).
  - e. Funding and partnership exploration (e.g., grants, sponsorship/naming, Indigenous partnerships, regional models).
  - f. A public approval process readiness package with clear information for residents.
  - g. Sustainability and energy efficiency options suitable for our climate, focused on sustaining current, or potentially lowering, long-term costs.
  - h. Review of any agreements or bylaws that may need updates, including the PRRD to continue their financial support for the new aquatic and multi-sport recreation facility that benefits regional residents and distributes costs equitably across all beneficiaries.
  - i. Review of governance and delivery models.
  - j. Exploration of cost estimates for **Phase 2** (gymnasiums and exterior turf field).

4.2 **Additional Considerations:**

- a. Choosing the construction procurement method.
- b. Operating agreements with other agencies (unless Council directs).
- c. Extra environmental studies beyond normal site due diligence.
- d. Land donation recognition.
- e. Establish planning timelines for procurement, detailed design, and construction.
- f. Exploration of acquisition and future use of the existing North Peace Leisure Pool facility.

4.3 **What Isn't Included (Exclusions):**

- a. Updating the long-term strategy to make the most of Fort St. John's existing recreation facilities – focusing on what residents said matters most and what's identified as a priority in the Parks and Recreation Plan.
- b. 116<sup>th</sup> Street and Parkwood Drive intersection upgrade.
- c. 116<sup>th</sup> Street and Highway 97 access to the intersection upgrade.
- d. BC Transit routes expanded to service facility.

## 5. Phase 1 Proposal

5.1 **Aquatics**

- a. 8-lane, 25 m lap pool with 1 m and 3 m diving boards
- b. 3-lane warm-water, 25 m pool with accessible ramp entry
- c. Leisure pool with a lazy river, zero depth entry, and a 2lane, 15 m learn to swim area
- d. Hot pool with accessible ramp entry
- e. Sauna and steam room
- f. Waterslide
- g. Splash pad and toddler area
- h. Accessible change rooms, staff and first aid spaces
- i. On and off deck spectator areas
- j. Storage and mechanical rooms

5.2 **Indoor Fieldhouse (Turf)**

- a. Regulation sized 70 m × 110 m indoor turf field
- b. Configurable: 1 full 11v11, or 2 half 9v9, or 4 quarter 7v7 fields

- c. Spectator seating, change rooms, offices, storage, and mechanical spaces

### 5.3 **Shared Spaces**

- a. Shared lobby and common areas for multi-use programs
- b. Reception and staff areas
- c. Multi-purpose community room
- d. Café space
- e. Public washrooms
- f. Storage and mechanical areas
- g. Site access planning for deliveries, vehicles and pedestrians, drop-off areas, and site circulation
- h. Surface parking stalls with access from 116<sup>th</sup> Street and room for future transit (BC Transit and handyDART)
- i. Clear connections for future phases

## 6. Phase 2 Proposal

### 6.1. **Gymnasiums**

- a. Two gymnasiums, change rooms, storage, office space, spectator viewing and sport specific amenities.

### 6.2. **Exterior Synthetic Turf Field**

- a. Full-size synthetic turf field, spectator viewing, access to washrooms and change rooms, easy parking access and field maintenance equipment storage.

## 7. Key Deliverables

### 7.1 **Technical**

- a. Program options and a preferred concept
- b. Early site and building layouts (schematic)
- c. Class C capital and operating cost estimates
- d. A Final Project Definition Report (plain language summary of what we are building and why)

### 7.2 **Financial**

- a. A 50-year lifecycle cost model (plan for long-term costs)
- b. A Business Case with funding and delivery options, debt and tax impacts

- 7.3      **Engagement/Public Approval**
- a.      A confirmation of community needs
  - b.      A Communications and Engagement Plan
  - c.      Engagement summary reports
  - d.      A Public Approval Communications Package (clear public information and key messages)

## 8. Key Stakeholders

- 8.1      **Government Stakeholders**
- i.      City Council (decision making and public accountability)
  - ii.     City staff (Recreation, Aquatics, Finance, Communications, Development Services, Capital Projects, Facilities)
  - iii.    Indigenous partners (Treaty 8 First Nations)
  - iv.     Regional partners (Peace River Regional District; District of Taylor, School District, BC Transit)
  - v.      Funding partners (provincial/federal, agencies)
- 8.2      **Community Stakeholders**
- vi.     Community groups and users (sport clubs, seniors, schools, accessibility advocates)
  - vii.    Public and taxpayers (voters)
  - viii.   Funding partners (corporate, private)
  - ix.     Design and technical consultants (architects, planners, energy advisors, cost consultants)
  - x.      Nearby landowners (e.g., Parkwood)

## 9. Project Timeline

- 9.1      **Develop (Winter–Spring 2026):**
- a.      Project Charter approval
  - b.      Program development and concept options
  - c.      Public engagement opportunities, including trade show engagement (April 2026) to share concepts, costs and tax implications)
  - d.      Construction costing and financial strategy (including carrying costs of operating of existing North Peace Leisure Pool facility)
  - e.      Operating costing and staffing strategy

- f. Council confirms public approval process (May 2026)
- 9.2 **Finalize (Summer 2026):**
  - a. Finalize concepts and identify funding sources (Q3)
  - b. Public education and awareness campaign to provide clear information and key messages in advance of public approval process (Q2-Q3)
- 9.3 **Approve (Fall 2026):**
  - a. Public approval process on funding the project (Q3-Q4)
  - b. Procurement process following public approval process (Q4)

## 10. Budget Framework

- 10.1 Approved funding for this planning phase covers:
  - a. Consultants (technical, engineering, financial, cost estimating)
  - b. Public and stakeholder engagement
  - c. Early technical studies and site checks
  - d. Concept design and options analysis
- 10.2 Class C cost ranges for capital and operations
- 10.3 Business case and funding options, including affordability analysis
- 10.4 Operating budget impacts for financial modeling, including lifecycle costing
- 10.5 Appropriate planning stage contingencies (a buffer for unknowns)

*(Note: "Class C" is an early estimate with a wide range; precision increases in later phases.)*

## 11. Risk Management

- 11.1 **A risk register will be created and updated at each milestone.**
- 11.2 **Money: Construction cost changes, market conditions, borrowing limits, tax impacts**
  - o *What we'll do: Update estimates regularly, test options, and share clear information.*
- 11.3 **Community/Politics: Public approval process sensitivity, polarization, or delays**

- *What we'll do: Provide simple, factual information; listen and respond to questions and communicate and validate community needs vs. wants.*
- 11.4 **Construction: Labour and supply chain issues, procurement challenges, extreme weather**
  - *What we'll do: Choose realistic schedules and delivery approaches; keep backups in mind.*
- 11.5 **Construction Timeline: Procurement process requirements to break ground in the Spring of 2027.**
  - *What we'll do: Begin procurement process in advance to meet timelines.*
- 11.6 **Technical: Site conditions, geotechnical issues, servicing capacity, climate considerations**
  - *What we'll do: Complete due diligence early and plan for northern climate resilience.*
- 11.7 **Operations: Qualified staffing availability, energy costs, long-term maintenance**
  - *What we'll do: Design for efficiency; plan staffing and maintenance early.*
- 11.8 **Engagement: Misinformation, low awareness, mistrust, opposition**
  - *What we'll do: Communicate early and often; use multiple channels and plain language.*

## 12. Decision Making

- 12.1 **Project Sponsor (CAO/Deputy CAO):** Provides overall leadership and makes sure the project follows Council direction and City priorities; approves major milestones and resources; brings issues to Council when needed.
- 12.2 **Project Manager (Director of Community Services):** Manages day-to-day work, scope, schedule, budget, consultants, engagement, reporting, and public approval readiness.
- 12.3 **Aquatic Facility Working Group** (Senior Administration, Aquatics, Recreation, Economic Development, Development Services, Finance, Communications, Capital Projects, Facilities, Council Liaisons, and external consultants): Offers technical and operational advice, helps with scope, funding strategies, engagement, and risk management.

- 12.4 **City Council:** Approves the project, funding decisions, and whether to proceed to through a public approval process; provides accountability to the public.

### 13. What SUCCESS Looks Like

- 13.1 A concept that meets community needs and fits budget expectations relative to historic and on-going engagement processes.
- 13.2 Informed and broad public participation.
- 13.3 Clear and credible financial models that residents can understand:
- a. Understand tax implications
  - b. Residents understand the project's costs, benefits, and impacts
  - c. Contributions of Federal and Provincial funding
- 13.4 Council confidence to take the project to a public approval process.
- 13.5 Advance planning of procurement process
- 13.6 A smooth hand-off from planning to public approval process.

### 14. Glossary

**Class C Cost Estimate:** An early cost estimate based on conceptual design and a comprehensive list of project requirements. This estimate is adequately detailed and sufficient for making an investment decision. The level of accuracy of a Class C cost estimate includes an approximate 15% contingency allowance for design and construction variations.

**Lifecycle Costing:** Looking at the total cost to build, operate, maintain, and renew the facility over its life (e.g., 50 years).

**Governance:** How decisions are made and who is responsible for what.

**Procurement:** The process of choosing and hiring companies to design and build the project.