



**Vulcan County**  
**Regional Recreation Facility**  
**Strategy**

December 20th 2010

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## Introduction

Vulcan County has for many years supported a range of Recreation Boards and community groups within the County boundaries, which in turn maintain and operate recreation facilities. The work of these groups is invaluable, and the County wishes to continue supporting them.

However, future financial and funding constraints must be recognized. Therefore, there is a need for a more strategic approach to recreation facility funding throughout the County. Therefore, the County requires a Regional Recreation Facilities Strategic Plan, to ensure that investment in recreation in the region is based on economically, socially, and environmentally sound rationales and a long term vision. This vision will ideally be shared amongst the County and the urban municipalities and Recreation Boards within its boundaries.

The scope of the Plan is limited to recreation facilities in three categories; namely indoor skating arenas, indoor curling rinks, and outdoor swimming pools. Within this scope, there is room for potential change including maintaining and upgrading or expanding existing facilities, building new facilities, and phasing out existing facilities.

The objectives of the Plan are as follows:

1. To provide recommendations on the most appropriate number and location of facilities within the three categories on which to concentrate public funding,
2. To provide direction and guidance with respect to planning and support,

To assist in creating the Regional Recreation Facilities Strategic Plan, the County retained Professional Environmental Recreation Consultants Ltd. (PERC) in July of 2010. PERC engaged in a thorough planning process that is summarized in *Figure One*.

Based on that process, PERC is pleased to provide herein the final results of the planning process for consideration by County Council and other owners, users, and supporters of recreation facilities within the County.

### Figure One Summary of Project Methodology

Step	Activity
1. Start up meeting	With staff committee and steering committee on August 5th
2. Background data collection	Collect information about uses, users, demographics, operating budgets, and plans for changes August and September
3. Facility tour	Visited and visually inspected all eleven existing facilities and all six communities in August and September
4. Demographic analysis	Reviewed existing and projected population demographic characteristics and the implications of future changes on recreation behaviour patterns in September
5. Trends analysis	Reviewed national trends in use of arenas, curling rinks, and outdoor pools in September
6. Stakeholder interviews	Interview 35 individuals representing 25 user groups, operators, and community agencies to determine what they believe to be future facility requirements and to gather data on the existing situation in September and October
7. Public survey	Opportunity for members of the public not involved in user groups to have input to the facility requirements – inserted into newspaper and located on County website October and November
8. Planning workshop	With County Council and senior staff on October 27 <sup>th</sup> to ensure issues they know about and believe need to be incorporated into the process are identified
9. Determine optimum capacity	Independent of where facility capacity should be located, how much of each type of facility will be required to meet long term needs October and November
10. Determine location of that capacity	Determine the most cost effective strategy for providing the optimum capacity to meet those needs in November
11. Prepare draft report	Prepare and submit all work in a report format for discussion by the staff and steering committees November 20th
12. Review of draft report	Review of the draft report and comment on how it could be improved November and December
13. Final report	Consider all comments, finalize, submit and personally present the report December 15th

## Background

Vulcan County is a rural municipality with six small urban municipalities within its boundaries, in which there are plenty of opportunities for recreating. Along with several service groups, there are six Recreation Boards (which match recreation areas) in the region:

- Carmangay Recreation Board,
- Champion Recreation Board,
- Lomond Recreation Board,
- Milo Recreation Board,
- Northwest Recreation Board,
- Vulcan & District Recreation Board.

Five villages and one town within County boundaries own and support eleven recreation facilities within the three categories to be studied within this project. The facilities and the population served are summarized in *Figure Two*.

**Figure Two  
Population and Existing Facilities**

<b>Community</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Recreation Facilities</b>
Village of Arrowwood	224	Natural ice small skating rink
Village of Carmangay	261	Artificial ice curling rink
Village of Champion	384	Natural ice skating arena Outdoor swimming pool
Village of Lomond	175	Artificial ice skating arena Artificial ice curling rink
Village of Milo	122	Natural ice skating arena Artificial ice curling rink
Town of Vulcan	1940	Artificial ice skating arena Artificial ice curling rink Outdoor swimming pool
Vulcan County	3820	
<b>Total Area</b>	<b>6936</b>	<b>5 skating arenas, 4 curling rinks, 2 outdoor pools</b>

The County provides some grants directly to public recreation facilities in the region in some years. A summary of these grants is provided in *Figure Three*.

**Figure Three  
Summary of Recent County Funding for Public Recreation Facilities**

<b>Facility</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
<b>Champion Swimming Pool</b>	6,000	8,000	8,000	8,000	15,000
<b>Lomond Arena (Community Centre)</b>	6,000	8,000	8,000		
<b>Milo Arena</b>	1,200	1,400	1,400		
<b>Vulcan Arena</b>	24,000	48,000	48,000	148,000	
<b>Vulcan Swimming Pool</b>	10,800	14,800	14,800	14,800	35,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$48,000</b>	<b>\$80,200</b>	<b>\$80,200</b>	<b>\$170,800</b>	<b>\$50,000</b>

As *Figure Three* shows, the grants vary year by year and range from \$40,000 to \$170,000 depending on need and the County's ability to respond to it.

Also, the County has provided financial support for the six Recreation Boards for many years, which in turn support many of the eleven existing facilities through Recreation Board grants to the Societies or municipalities which operate the facilities. A summary of county spending grants to Recreation Boards is provided in *Figure Four*.

**Figure Four**  
**Summary of Recent County Funding for Six Recreation Boards**

Community	Transfer Type	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
<b>Carmangay</b>	Requisition	2,217.00	2,100.00	2,100.00	2,100.00	2,100.00
	Linear Levy	3,604.00	4,044.45	5,205.72	2,986.00	5,592.29
	Additional Transfers			7,306.00	7,305.00	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>5,821.00</b>	<b>6,144.45</b>	<b>14,611.72</b>	<b>12,391.00</b>	<b>7,692.29</b>
<b>Champion</b>	Requisition	13,398.00	13,400.00	13,400.00	17,400.00	17,400.00
	Linear Levy	5,107.00	5,731.07	7,521.25	7,670.84	8,079.77
	Additional Transfers			20,921.00	20,920.00	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>18,505.00</b>	<b>19,131.07</b>	<b>41,842.25</b>	<b>45,990.84</b>	<b>25,479.77</b>
<b>Lomond</b>	Requisition	16,609.00	16,600.00	16,600.00	19,090.00	19,090.00
	Linear Levy	8,482.00	9,517.36	10,817.08	15,199.76	11,620.34
	Additional Transfers			27,417.00	27,420.00	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>25,091.00</b>	<b>26,117.36</b>	<b>54,834.08</b>	<b>61,709.76</b>	<b>30,710.34</b>
<b>Milo</b>	Requisition	2,967.00	2,600.00	2,600.00	2,600.00	2,600.00
	Linear Levy	7,362.00	8,261.00	6,929.69	10,629.39	7,444.28
	Additional Transfers			9,530.00	9,530.00	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>10,329.00</b>	<b>10,861.00</b>	<b>19,059.69</b>	<b>22,759.39</b>	<b>10,044.28</b>
<b>Vulcan</b>	Requisition	33,711.00	33,000.00	35,500.00	38,000.00	38,000.00
	Linear Levy	19,326.00	21,685.13	21,110.21	17,902.21	22,677.82
	Additional Transfers			56,610.00	56,610.00	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>53,037.00</b>	<b>62,800.00</b>	<b>113,220.21</b>	<b>112,512.21</b>	<b>60,677.82</b>
<b>Northwest</b>	Requisition	4,579.00	4,500.00	4,500.00	4,500.00	4,500.00
	Linear Levy	14,065.00	15,781.96	13,149.52	12,254.75	14,125.97
	Additional Transfers			17,650.00	17,650.00	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>18,644.00</b>	<b>20,281.96</b>	<b>35,299.52</b>	<b>34,404.75</b>	<b>18,625.97</b>
<b>Total</b>	Requisition	73,481.00	72,200.00	74,700.00	83,690.00	83,690.00
	Linear Levy	57,946.00	65,020.97	64,733.47	66,642.95	69,540.47
	Additional Transfers			139,434.00	139,435.00	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>131,427.00</b>	<b>137,220.97</b>	<b>278,867.47</b>	<b>289,767.95</b>	<b>153,230.47</b>

As **Figure Four** shows, the grants range from \$131,427 to \$289,768 per year, so the total County financial support for recreation services and facilities can be quite significant. Some of the support for facilities is for ongoing operation and some of it is for capital projects.

The next section provides a review of the eleven facilities supported by the Recreation Boards.

## **Review of Existing Facilities**

The consultants visited all eleven facilities and interviewed all operators. They also asked for and received details of operating budgets and usage. The existing facilities are summarized in this section.

### ***Arrowwood Skating Arena***

The land and building on which the arena is located in Arrowwood is owned by the Village, which has an agreement with the Lion's club to operate the building. The metal building, built in 2002, is quite a modest structure with minimal insulation. The skating surface is about 70' by 110' and is therefore quite small; about one third the size of a regulation sized hockey rink, with dasher boards and Plexiglas surrounding the rink. The building also includes two small washrooms, an entry foyer in which skates can be changed, and a storage room. The asphalt floor is usable year round, and is covered with natural ice for about three months each winter depending on weather. Sometimes the ice is put in more than once in a winter.

All uses are free. When the ice is out, it is used for some special events (e.g. sports day, school year end program) and social events, and some summer recreation programming. It is also used by the adjacent school as a surface for some physical education classes. When the ice is in, it is used almost daily for at least a month by the school for its physical education classes. After school and evenings, and on the weekends, there is some drop in casual skating, typically averaging 15-20 skates per day.

Usage has stayed fairly constant over the past eight years, but has declined slightly. Overall, the building is in good condition and well maintained. The operating costs are quite modest, and are made up of the utility costs of \$1600 per year (\$700 for gas and \$900 for electricity) and insurance of \$1300. The Arrowwood Lion's Club pays the insurance and the Village pays the utilities. Lions Club members volunteer to do most of the work.

The Lions Club has identified one short term retrofit requirement; replacing the roof on the change-room portion of the building and refurbishing the change rooms. This will likely cost \$15,000 to \$20,000 and will be financed by the Lions Club. Otherwise, the building is in excellent condition.

### ***Carmangay Curling Rink***

This site and building are owned and operated by the Carmangay Curling Club. The three sheet curling rink was built in 1952. In 1985 a two storey addition was added and a concrete floor artificial ice system was installed. In the addition, there is a lounge area, a kitchen and washrooms. The used refrigeration plant, purchased in the mid 1990's, is approaching the end of its functional lifespan, but is currently in operating condition. All maintenance is done by a few volunteers.

There is no longer any league curling in Carmangay. The facility is used only for about four bonspiels each year; mens', ladies', mixed, and junior. The largest of these is the mixed bonspiel at which there are often 20-25 teams. On Wednesday nights there is some casual curling for anyone that wants to come and play or practice. In some years a few hours are used by the Champion School for physical education classes. Ice is usually put in at the end of December and the plant is turned off in March; after which local children are allowed to come in and skate until the ice melts.

The building is in reasonable condition. However, the mechanical refrigeration system (including the chiller) will have to be replaced or retrofitted in the near future. Also, the west wall requires new siding and the carpet upstairs needs to be replaced. The brine system was recently overhauled, and this has resulted in savings to the utility bills.

The building and site cost approximately \$38,000 per year to operate (including about \$6000 for gas and electricity). Some of that is recovered by user revenue (the four bonspiels) and the shortfall is made up with casino revenues, which are also used for occasional retrofits, and a grant from the local Recreation Board. The Club has the equivalent of one year's operating costs in its bank account to help finance future retrofits and subsidize annual operations.

### **Champion Arena**

This site is owned by the Village of Champion. In the last few years, the Village has created a Champion Skating Rink Association to operate the arena. While the Village still pays the utility costs directly, and does all major maintenance work on the building, the Association manages the day to day revenues and expenses.

This old building has a natural ice sand floor non-standard sized ice surface (narrower and shorter than standard) with plywood rink boards below chain link fencing. It has a glue-lam wood arch roof system, with an older asphalt roof covering, and three rows of bleacher seating on one side for about 250 spectators. The two dressing rooms and entry foyer/skate changing area are in need of retrofit.

The facility operates in the coldest three to four months of the winter, which vary from year to year. Therefore total usage varies with the duration of the ice and consists of:

- Some school use on many days as the physical education teacher incorporates skating into the curriculum (up to six hours each day for 4 days each week for about one month),
- Some after school and weekday evening 4pm to 8pm drop in skating and weekend daytime drop in skating 10am to 4pm (often 10-20 skaters and occasionally up to 30 in one day),
- Two to four one hour rentals each year for skating parties.

No record is kept of the number of users. However, winter use likely averages in the neighbourhood of about 70 school uses and 20 drop in skates each day. Usage has been relatively stable over the past few years, but in the more distant past, there was a great deal more use made of the arena. There is very limited dry floor use in the summer because of the sand base.

A new water heating system was installed a few years ago. However, the building is generally in poor condition. It requires:

- A new roof,
- New electricity supply,
- New lighting,
- Renovations to the dressing rooms and entry foyer,
- New doors.

There is also some discussion about installing artificial ice in order to add to its capacity for use by extending the ice season and making its use more reliable. It is hoped that some ice can be rented to outside user groups to bring more visitors into the community. It is also hoped that artificial ice would possibly bring some local children back to this facility that are currently playing hockey or figure skating in Vulcan.

Users are charged either in the form of family memberships (only two families purchased memberships), donations for drop in skating (total \$200), and a rental charge for a group wishing to have an event. Operating costs incurred by the Association in 2009 totalled about \$1250 for a supervisor during evenings and weekends. Revenue from grants from the local Recreation Board (\$4000) and a donation from the Lions Club (\$5000) augmented the user fees of \$315 so that the total revenue more than offset the Association's operating costs. However, the Village directly paid for some work on the facility (\$1955) and all utilities (\$2000).

### ***Champion Outdoor Public Pool***

The site and building are owned by the Village of Champion and the pool is operated by a Pool Committee. The pool, built in 1967, is located adjacent to the arena, has a single tank which is three lanes wide by about 54 feet long (about 1134 square feet of water surface area), and varies in depth from about 1m at the shallow end to 2.4 meters at the deep end. Dressing rooms and the mechanical spaces are in the arena building, as is the control point, and storage area. On the deck, which is surrounded by a wind protecting transparent wall, there is a spray "fun" shower and a seating area for spectators. The mechanical systems are reasonably sound. The facility is open from the May long weekend to the end of August, from 7:30am to 7pm daily.

The pool is used by all school classes in the nearby school during the month of June, and by the general public during June, July and August for a wide variety of aquatic services including recreational and fitness swimming and swim lessons. In a typical recent year, there are about 5000 swims. Total usage over the past five years has been reasonably stable.

Until last year, all operating costs were recovered from users and grants. Last year, the Village subsidized the facility by paying for the utility bill directly, which was about \$4560. The operating costs net of utilities for the last summer were \$49,318. They are recovered in part by user fees (\$10,209), in part by grants from the Recreation Board (\$18,000) and other agencies (8,000), and in part from donations. In most recent years the Pool Committee has incurred small operating deficits each year.

There are confirmed plans to replace the pool tank and enlarge the deck enclosure this fall. The new tank will consist of three lanes of swimming over a length of 54 feet, plus a transition at one end to a beach area with a two spray geysers, as well as a zero deck entry for young people and people with frailties and disabilities. The total water surface area will be about 1533 square feet. This project is expected to cost about \$170,000 for the new tank and deck, plus some ancillary mechanical and electrical work for a total of about \$190,000. It is expected to be complete by May of 2011.

### ***Lomond Community Centre Skating Rink***

This site and building are owned and operated by the Lomond Community Centre Agricultural Society. The wood frame, metal clad arena building was built in 1955 and is operated by the Society. It has a regulation sized ice sheet with new concrete floor and high quality dasher board system below Plexiglas. It also has a semi-commercial catering kitchen serving a banquet hall seating 100 people, and a dance hall with hardwood dance floor which seats 240. The facility is

well maintained and well used for a wide variety of ice uses in winter and dry floor uses in summer.

The ice is installed in mid-October each year, and comes out in mid-March. During that time, the ice is used for minor hockey (36 players), senior and recreational adult hockey (30 players), and figure skating (30 skaters). It is also used for one month each year for high school physical education classes, and a few elementary school skates. There is also some public skating but there is no record of the numbers. While it isn't as busy as it used to be, the facility serves a broad catchment area, and hosts tournaments (three per year) and a skating carnival. Five years ago there was more ice use than there is presently.

The annual operating costs vary considerably with the annual repairs and maintenance budget, but were about \$279,000 in the most recent fiscal year. This includes about \$45,000 for gas and electricity. The consultants note that the total operating cost is kept much lower than expected through the high level of volunteer effort. About \$71,000 is recovered from users in the form of rentals, public skating fees, hall bookings and kitchen catering. The remaining \$208,000 was derived from donations, grants (including \$22,000 from the Recreation Board), casino revenues, and advertising. Four different casinos are operated by user groups and the LCCAS Board.

The refrigeration system was refurbished two years ago, and a lift for people with disabilities was installed recently.

While the facility is generally in quite good condition, it requires a new electrical panel, washroom upgrades, work done on two dressing rooms, and some other smaller lifecycle maintenance work. Planned maintenance projects include:

- Electrical panel replacement for ice plant (estimate of \$25,000),
- New brine filters required,
- All lighting in the arena needs to be replaced,
- Rubber flooring in two dressing rooms needs to be replaced, and new shower stalls in those dressing rooms built (estimate of \$20,000),
- Renovations to the existing locker area, one dressing room and first aid room to create a larger dressing room,
- Upgrade public washrooms on the main floor,
- New lobby flooring required,
- New ceiling tiles in the hockey viewing area required,
- Insulation to increase the temperature within the arena.

The costs for all these projects will be quite significant. They will be undertaken as resources and volunteer labour permits using casino revenues, grants from the Lions Club, from senior levels of government, and from fundraising.

### ***Lomond Community Centre Curling Rink***

This two-sheet, artificial ice, metal pre-engineered building was rebuilt in 1990 adjacent to the Lomond Community Centre. The site is owned by the Lomond Community Centre Agricultural Society which has an agreement with the Lomond Curling Club to operate the facility. It has a high quality concrete floor, second floor curling lounge, public washrooms, and storage facilities.

There are currently 38 members of the club including 32 adults curling in two draws on one night in mixed league play, and 6 junior members who curl on one additional weekly draw. The local high school also uses the facility five times each week for one month each winter for high school physical education curriculum teaching. There are also 2 bonspiels each year and one or two other rentals each winter. The number of curlers and the frequency they curled used to be much greater. Total use has declined in recent years. The Club spends about \$10,000 each year to support curling efforts. It generates more than that from user fees and casino revenues, which all go back into the overall Community Centre and Curling facility budget.

The building is generally in good condition. The list of required upgrades is incorporated into the Lomond Community Centre bulleted points above.

### ***Milo Arena***

The site is located within the Village of Milo. It is owned and operated by the Milo Agricultural Society which built the arena in 1973. The facility includes an undersized natural ice surface (about two thirds the size of a regulation hockey sized rink) with a concrete floor. It has some public washrooms and a small entry foyer. Two older dressing rooms are no longer needed and are in the midst of being retrofitted into a 500 square foot fitness studio with conditioning machines over a rubberized floor. The facility is currently left unlocked which has reduced vandalism in recent years, and makes it available for all who want to use it. However, when the new fitness room is complete, there is a plan to sell access passes that will provide an access code to use it.

While there is no formal revenue structure, users are encouraged to be members, and 18 family memberships (at \$65 dollars each) were sold this year along with 9 individual memberships (at \$45 each). Also, donations are welcome from casual users (\$400). The total of \$7,200 in operating costs last year (including \$2,400 in utilities) were recovered from the small amount of user revenue, from the Agricultural Society's provincial grant, and from casino revenue.

The wood frame, metal clad building is quite old and is in fair to poor condition. Recent retrofit to energy efficient lighting was a welcome upgrade, as were the new dasher boards. However, the public spaces are showing their age.

There is no measurement of use. However, anecdotally, it is assumed that there is some casual ice use most days of the winter, by the school system, or by drop in users after school. It is likely not more than one to two hours per day, and likely involves less than 10 users at a time. It is not used much at all during the summer. Overall, use has declined over the past ten years.

### ***Milo Curling Rink***

The site is owned by the Village of Milo, and operated by the Milo Curling Club. The facility is about 54 years old, with a two storey annex replacement built in 1994. The building now consists of two sheets of artificial curling ice with a concrete floor, a two storey support space with lounge and viewing area, kitchen, and washrooms upstairs and entry foyer downstairs. The kitchen is contracted to a separate operator.

Curling is typically from November 1<sup>st</sup> to March 15<sup>th</sup> each winter. There are three weekly draws (mens', womens', and mixed leagues) as well as some junior activity that sometimes makes a fourth weekly use. In addition to regular uses, there are four weekend bonspiels each year. The facility isn't used much at all during the summer.

The curling club uses volunteers to make and maintain the ice, and to do minor repairs and maintenance around the building. It spends about \$8949 per year on all utilities and operates on a “break even” basis, using curling fees from its 75 members to cover costs and occasional casino revenues to cover upgrades and lifecycle maintenance projects. The club has no trouble getting volunteers out for work parties and to undertake weekly ice maintenance.

Overall, the metal building is in good condition with recent investments in mechanical systems and no other projected needs for upgrades in the next five years.

### ***Vulcan Curling Club***

The property is owned by the Town of Vulcan, and the curling portion of the building is 32 years old and is owned jointly by the Vulcan Agricultural Society, the Vulcan Kinsmen Club, and the Vulcan Curling Club. It is operated by the Vulcan and District Agricultural Society during the summer months, and by the Vulcan Curling Club from November 1<sup>st</sup> each fall to the following March 31<sup>st</sup>. The pre-engineered metal building with concrete block walls houses 4 sheets of artificial ice over a concrete floor. At one end of the curling ice there is a lounge area with public washrooms and an entry foyer with food and beverage outlet. The refrigeration system is currently separate from the arena’s system, and is approaching the end of its functional lifespan, and there are plans to replace it with one new system to serve both the curling rink and the arena. The projected cost of the new integrated ice refrigeration system is about \$290,000. The lighting system also needs to be replaced, and carpeting needs renewal, but that will be considered once the refrigeration system has been replaced.

There are currently about 90 adult curlers in league curling, another 60 seniors curling in the afternoon, a junior program with 28 curlers, and a further 50 high school students that use the facility occasionally during physical education classes. The facility is used weekly for seven draws (four evening draws over three nights, and three afternoon draws) plus some school use in some weeks. The number of curlers has been gradually declining over the last decade.

In the most recent year, the Curling Club paid out operating costs of about \$119,800 which included about \$27,600 in utility costs. Operating revenues of \$105,900 were made up primarily of casino revenues (\$27,200), food and beverage surpluses (\$18,500), membership dues (\$21,500), and bonspiels (\$12,700); leaving an operating shortfall of about \$13,900. The club has used previously retained earnings to subsidize operation of the rink in each of the past several years.

The facility is generally in good condition, with no significant problems. The operating costs are fully recovered by users.

### ***Vulcan District Arena***

The site is owned and operated by the Town of Vulcan. The arena is a concrete block structure with a wood truss roof system built in 1969. It includes a regulation sized hockey rink with a 13 year old concrete floor, new dasher boards and Plexiglas. Bleacher seating for about 450 people along one side is provided. It also includes a public skate changing foyer, public washrooms, four dressing rooms, mechanical and ice machine areas, storage and a new lift for people with disabilities. Recent renovations have included upgrades to the spectator seating area, the over ice lights, the roof insulation, the lift, and an asphalt shingled roof.

The building is used for a wide variety of ice related events weekdays 3pm to 11pm (except Friday which is 1pm to 11pm) and weekends from 8am to 11pm, from October to March of each year. It also accommodates a very few dry floor summer activities. There are currently about 90 children and youth enrolled in minor hockey, and another 60 adults playing hockey. There are also about 60 youth registered in figure skating. There are about two dozen recreational skaters dropping in for the public skate sessions. In addition to regular weekly activities, there are a few tournaments and special events each year. School uses are frequent during weekdays. Over the last season there were 1012 hours of use by local rental groups, 259 hours available for drop in public skating, and 95 hours of school use, for a total of 1,367 hours of use. This represents almost all available prime time hours, and a small portion of non-prime use.

The total operating cost for the arena each year is about \$172,000, which includes \$18,000 for gas and \$24,000 for electricity. About \$52,000 is recovered from users in the form of ice rentals and public skating fees. The remaining \$120,000 is derived mostly from local taxpayer support (County \$53,000 and Town \$65,000).

Overall, the building is in very good condition. It is well maintained and operates well. However, the 32 year old refrigeration system should be replaced in the near future, and there is potential for one new system to serve both the arena and the curling rink. The new integrated ice refrigeration system is anticipated to cost about \$290,000. Additionally, other general lifecycle maintenance will continue to be needed, including renovations to dressing rooms.

### ***Vulcan Outdoor Pool***

The site is owned and operated by the Town of Vulcan. The 33 year old outdoor pool tank is six lanes wide by 25 meters long and has a depth from 3'6" at the shallow end to 9' 6" at the deep end. There is a one meter diving board in the deep end. The original facility included a changing/administration building with dressing rooms, a control point, a first aid area, mechanical room, and storage. There is also a newer hot tub with its own associated support building which includes a mechanical space and additional storage.

The facility is open from 6am till 9pm from the end of May to the end of August each year. It is primarily used for recreation swimming, fitness swimming, and swim lessons. There have been no swim meets in recent years. Total usage equates to about 18,000 swims per year.

The cost of operating the pool is about \$139,000 per year, including about \$20,000 in gas and electricity. About \$45,000 of this total is recovered from users (\$28,000) and grants (\$17,000). The Town (\$79,000) and County (\$15,000) subsidize the remaining operating deficit of about \$94,000 per year.

Overall, the facility is in fair condition considering its age. Water purification systems have been replaced, and a new domestic hot water system has been installed. The pool water heating boiler is currently being replaced, and there is some loss of water in the system that needs to be fixed. Much of the facility is likely coming to the end of its anticipated lifespan in the next five to ten years. However, no decision has yet been made on whether to retrofit what exists, or build a new replacement facility.

## Demographic Review

According to a review of the most recent three census results, the total population of the County is currently almost exactly the same as it was ten to fifteen years ago. However, there has been some shift in the makeup of those residents in two minor ways as follows:

- The population is getting older – there are fewer children, fewer young adults and more older adults,
- There are an increased number of non-farm residents (mostly water front resort residents) and a rapid decrease in the number of farms in the County coupled with an increase in the average size of a farm (with a large increase in the number of very large farms),

When compared with the Alberta averages, it is also clear that County residents:

- Are less educated than the average Alberta resident,
- Have lower net income than the average Alberta resident,
- Have a higher ratio of males to females than the Alberta average.

Results of the same three census figures show some changes in the makeup and size of the six incorporated municipalities within the County. The most significant of these characteristics and shifts include:

- Vulcan is the fastest growing municipality, although growth may have stalled in the most recent few years,
- Also growing over the past ten to fifteen years are Arrowwood and Carmangay,
- Milo has experienced a declining population over the past ten to fifteen years,
- Lomond and Champion appear to have the same population now as they did ten to fifteen years ago,
- The incorporated municipalities are less likely to have a decline in school aged residents than the County overall, but Milo would be the exception with fewer school aged residents.

One of the issues that could potentially have an impact on use of public recreation facilities in the long term future is the development of resort communities on some of the water reservoirs and lakes in the area. These communities may have a combination of full time and part time residents in them. The full time residents are more likely to be older “empty nester” households which have retired to the area, while the part time residents will be more likely to be households within children in them, using the resort in the summer months. Neither is expected to have a really significant effect on use of public recreation facilities over the next ten years.

The consultants obtained information from the two school districts responsible for public education within the County. That information shows that there are currently about 949 school aged children within the County that are enrolled within the public school system. There are also a significant number that are being taught in other ways. However, that number is not known. A breakdown of the current public school enrolment is provided in **Figure Five**.

**Figure Five**  
**Summary of Current School Enrolment**

Schools	ECS PS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	TOTALS
Arrowwood		9	8	13	10	8	9	5	12	13				87
Champion	8	12	12	11	11	10	5	8	9	14				100
County Central High								26	36	38	63	51	58	272
Milo	0	1	5	7	8	7	1	12	9	9	0	0	0	59
Vulcan Prairieview Elementary	30	32	28	27	35	39	32							223
Brant Christian	8	5	6	11	6	9	9	6	8	13	7	5	6	99
Vulcan Outreach											4	3	14	21
Lomond (Horizon SD)		55				15				18				88
Totals	46	312				275				316				949

The Palliser and Horizon School Districts that operate schools in the area do not have long term projections for future school registrations. Rather they project year to year on a school by school basis. However, it is clear that there are fewer students now enrolled in public schools than there were ten years ago. There is also evidence from interviews with school principals that the enrolment in the north part of the county (in the Arrowwood and Milo areas) will likely continue to decline, whereas school enrolment in the Vulcan, Lomond, Champion and Carmangay areas will remain relatively stable with some potential for modest growth. The consultants were told that this modest growth potential is due to an influx of Low German Mennonite farm working families; some of which will have their children educated in the public school system. There are also several Hutterite Colonies located within the County. They typically operate their own schools, and are not included in the **Figure Five** totals. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that they are much less likely to use public recreation facilities.

Overall, there is little evidence in the demographic information to suggest major changes in the characteristics of the local area population that will impact the use of recreation facilities significantly. The most important characteristic to track is the number of school aged children in the area that are likely to use recreation facilities as they make up the vast majority of uses of both the arenas and the outdoor pools. If there is a sudden change positively or negatively in that number, there will be a corresponding change in the use of those two facilities. While curling is one sport that can be and often is learned as an adult, there will not likely be much anticipated change to the number of curlers as the population ages.

## Leisure Behaviour Trends in Vulcan County

The trends in use of arenas, curling rinks, and outdoor swimming pools in the County are quite consistent with the trends for use of those three facility types across Canada. They are summarized in **Figure Six**.

**Figure Six**  
**Summary of Recreation Trends in Vulcan County**

Activity	Behaviour Patterns
Swimming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In Canada, there is fairly clear evidence that every generation is more likely to know how to swim than the generation that precedes it</li> <li>• There is also clear evidence that as newer types of public pools are being built (i.e. leisure pools) overall rates of swimming per capita are increasing</li> <li>• However, swim rates correlate more strongly with the number of children in a given population than the population in general, so the actual number of swims in a given population relates to the number of children, not the size of the overall population</li> <li>• In Vulcan, the two existing pools have experienced reasonably stable rates of use over the past decade, and there is no reason to suggest that this will change unless the number of school aged children changes.</li> </ul>
Skating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is clear evidence that the proportion of Canadians that skate on ice (recreational skating, or participating in organized activities like hockey, ringette, speed skating, or figure skating) has been gradually declining over the past twenty years.</li> <li>• However, use of arenas correlates more strongly with the number of children in a given population. So, it is possible that the rate of decline in ice use can be offset with a growing proportion of children in a community. This is not the case in Vulcan County</li> <li>• In the five County-based arenas there has been a gradual decline in ice use over the past fifteen years, with lower membership in sport organizations and reduced participation in public recreational skating sessions.</li> </ul>
Curling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is clear evidence that the proportion of Canadians that curl has been declining for the past two decades.</li> <li>• In the local area, the actual number of curlers and their frequency of curling activity has been declining for the past two decades.</li> <li>• Several curling rinks have been phased out of operation in the county over the past two decades</li> </ul>

## Results of Public Survey

A simple open ended survey was inserted into the local newspaper in mid-October asking readers in the area to comment on what should be done about the three categories of facilities. The survey was also included on the County's website. Two weeks were allowed for response. A total of 46 responses were received, almost all of which were residents of the Town of Vulcan or the immediately surrounding area. While the number of responses indicates no statistical reliability (i.e. the sample is too small) the themes expressed were clear, and are summarized below:

- Residents want to retain as many of the existing curling rinks and pools as possible, suggesting we must keep facilities in each community,
- The pool in Vulcan is very highly supported, with the vast majority of respondents saying that a pool in Vulcan is a very important service to the region,
- There is strong support for an indoor pool to replace the existing outdoor pool in Vulcan.

An indoor pool was not included within the scope of this project, and the consultants have not undertaken any assessment of its viability in this situation. However, they offer the following comments about the development of an indoor pool as a replacement for the existing outdoor pool based on general experience in the past.

1. A new indoor pool would be very expensive to construct. Typically, a new indoor pool would cost roughly three to five times what a new outdoor replacement pool would cost to construct.
2. A new indoor pool would be very expensive to operate; especially within a relatively small market of 6900 residents within the local area. Typically, a new indoor pool would have an operating deficit of roughly three to five times the current operating deficit of the existing outdoor pool. While total annual usage would be higher than an outdoor pool, it would be spread over all twelve months, rendering use in any given month a small proportion of the pool's capacity for use.
3. For the above two reasons, there are very few public indoor pools in communities of less than 7000 residents in Western Canada. The market is simply too small to support sufficient uses to justify a year round pool, and the tax base too limited to support one. The only exceptions to this generality are a few isolated resource communities where one industrial employer makes up a large portion of a very large tax base and therefore underwrites the high cost of development and operation of such a facility.

## Conclusions

The consultants have drawn a number of conclusions about the existing facilities based on the information collected.

1. Existing facilities have served the communities in which they are located and the broader County population very well for many decades. All but the Arrowwood Arena are relatively old and some are approaching the end of their anticipated lifespan (e.g. Carmangay Curling Rink, Champion Arena, Milo Arena, and Vulcan Outdoor Pool). At the point when the end of the lifespan is reached, important decisions must be made. Either significant investment will be required to replace or refurbish and extend that facility's functional lifespan, and possibly add to or alter its capacity for uses. Or, the facility will be phased out of operation. That decision point may occur within the next ten years for those facilities approaching the end of their anticipated lifespan and has already occurred this past year in the case of the Champion pool.
2. Independent of that major decision point for the four facilities, there will be significant lifecycle investment required for ten of the existing facilities; all except for possibly the new outdoor pool in Champion. All ten require some repairs and replacements to ensure they continue to operate at an optimum level until a decision is made about either phasing them out, or investing in major retrofits.
3. Another reason for investing in the facilities may be energy efficiency. However, this does not appear to be a major issue for most of the facilities. Two facilities, the Vulcan Curling Rink, which has not yet had any major energy reducing investments and requires a new energy efficient ice plant, and the Carmangay Curling Rink, which requires a new ice plant sometime in the near future, could reduce energy costs with a significant capital investment. However, most facilities have either already invested in energy saving technologies (e.g. Vulcan Arena, Milo Curling Rink, Milo Arena) and/or have very low energy costs in any case (e.g. Arrowwood Arena, Champion Arena).

4. The operation of most of the existing facilities is subsidized to a surprisingly modest degree. While most enjoy small grants from the municipality in which they are located (or their utility bills paid), and also enjoy support from Vulcan County through the local Recreation Boards, a great deal of volunteer effort and a great deal of casino revenue is used to minimize the amount of public tax support that has historically gone into these facilities to support their operation. Indeed if casino revenue were suddenly suspended for any reason, some of the facilities would simply cease to be sustainable. Volunteer and community support groups (e.g. service clubs) should be very proud of what they have been able to accomplish in terms of the cost effective operation of recreation facilities.
5. There is a great deal of excess arena capacity in the marketplace. None of the arenas are operated to full capacity. While the Vulcan Arena is quite well used, it does not experience the volume of late night demand for ice that it once did, and has quite modest amounts of early morning ice time and school hour use. The Lomond arena is the second artificial ice arena. Use of that facility has been waning for many years and there are currently several hours each week of unused prime time ice. There is also a great deal of non-prime time ice available. The other three arenas have no organized sport ice use. They all get a reasonable amount of school hour physical education class use, and some evening casual ice use. However, all have some evening and weekend hours that are unused completely, and several of the casual hours of use have very few users.
6. There is a great deal of excess curling rink capacity. The eleven sheets of curling ice in four facilities all receive much less use now than they enjoyed a decade ago. The Carmangay Curling Rink currently has no organized league play. For most nights of the week the facility is closed. The Milo and Lomond facilities have organized ice use but don't have sufficient curlers to utilize every weekday evening, and there are some non-bonspiel weekends when the facilities are dark as well as almost no afternoon use. The Vulcan facility is reasonably well used, but could easily accommodate more curlers in almost all of its leagues. It is also dark some weekends, and for several potential weekday draws.
7. While there is some excess capacity at both the outdoor pools, both are reasonably well used. This situation is more difficult to summarize as the Champion pool is currently being redeveloped with additional capacity that will likely stimulate modestly more use. Also, weather plays such a role in annual use that it is harder to clarify the amounts of excess capacity.

From these conclusions the consultants have determined long term requirements in the County for each of the facility types.

## **Long Term Facility Requirements**

In this section the consultants explore total facility requirement in each category in a conceptual way without making recommendations about what facility changes should occur. Long term need is a somewhat theoretical construct. It starts with determining how much use of each facility there is currently, how that total use is likely to change over time, and then translates that total use into an optimum amount of facility space required to accommodate that much use.

Therefore, the long term requirements for each type of facility represent the amount of capacity that is optimally required to accommodate all the uses that are likely to occur in each facility if the quality is at least adequate and the location is sufficiently close to foster that use.

### ***Requirement for Skating Arenas in Vulcan County***

The 6900 residents of the local area clearly don't require all five of the arenas that currently exist in the area. If all existing arena use is added together, it could be accommodated within two full sized artificial ice sheets. And, if two existed, the 90 or more hours of ice time that each one would provide each week of the 30 week winter season would easily accommodate all the ice use that currently occurs each week in the region. The total number of hours of available public skating would not be as much as many of the arenas have now, but all public skating could be accommodated within fewer hours each week.

If, however, only two artificial ice sheets existed within the County, it is likely that some of the existing ice use would disappear, as much existing ice use occurs only because arenas are located very close to a user's home or school. If the five existing ice sheets were replaced with only two artificial ice sheets, and if those two arenas were operated in a manner that would attempt to serve all the requirements of the 6900 residents of the region, some of the school hour physical education use would disappear due to the need for school bussing, and some of the evening recreational skating would disappear because some users would have to travel longer distances to skate. Also, recreational skaters would have to arrange their schedules to fit within the fewer hours of public skating each week in the two facilities. And, each school education program would have to coordinate to optimally use school hour time slots, instead of being able to use an arena any time they wished.

The consultants estimate that if all school education class use of the five arenas were added together, there would be a total of approximately 5000 skates per winter season (i.e. approximately 1000 per arena on average, with more at some arenas and less at others). If three of the existing arenas were no longer available, the total number of skates in this category would reduce by about half, or by about 2500 skates per year.

Similarly, if all recreational skating in all five arenas were added together, the consultants estimate the total to be about 4000 skates (i.e. fewer skates per day, over a longer season each year on average). If the five arenas were replaced with only two artificial ice sheets, and if those sheets were separated so that they would optimally serve the County, the number of recreational skates would likely reduce by at least sixty percent, or by about 2400 skates; leaving only 1600 recreational skates each year.

All existing organized hockey and figure skating in the five facilities could easily fit within a total of two artificial ice sheets along with the remaining 2500 school uses, and the 1600 recreational skates at public sessions. The two arenas would be very well utilized, with most available prime time ice utilized, and some off peak use also necessary, making the operation of the two facilities more efficient than the five existing facilities are now.

In the longer term future, it is unlikely that more than two ice sheets would be needed to accommodate all the future uses of arena ice. Arena use has been declining in the county for many years, and it is very unlikely that this trend can be easily reversed, although it is worth attempting to do so.

If all 6900 residents of the region lived within a single community, it would be somewhat unusual for a community of that size to have more than two sheets of arena ice. Most total markets of that size would have only one sheet of arena ice.

However, it is clear that all 6900 residents do not live in a single community and that they generally enjoy a level of service with respect to arenas which is quite high. In fact it should clearly be characterized as an oversupply of ice. This oversupply allows ice users the luxury of using ice almost anytime they wish, instead of having to adjust their schedules to a fully utilized arena. Almost all existing ice use is in prime time, with no need to provide incentives to encourage users to use off peak ice times, thereby more fully utilizing the arenas.

### ***Requirement for Curling Rinks in Vulcan County***

There are currently eleven sheets of curling ice in four facilities within the county boundaries. In the past there have been more sheets of curling ice, but much curling capacity has been phased out over the past three decades.

There is a current requirement for many fewer rinks of curling ice. If all existing curling were added together from the four facilities, it could be easily accommodated within a total of six sheets of curling ice. In a single six sheet facility, there would be sufficient weekday draw capacity to accommodate all 256 weekly league curlers, as well as all school curling and casual curling practice. There would also be sufficient weekend capacity to accommodate all the existing curling bonspiels that are held in the four facilities.

However, if a single six rink curling facility existed in the County to replace the four facilities, some existing curling activity would likely disappear. Some curlers that curl in existing leagues and bonspiels would not curl in those leagues or bonspiels if the facility were not located very close to where they curl now. Almost 70% of the existing curlers in the region curl at the Vulcan Curling Club. If six sheets of curling ice were located in Vulcan as the only curling rink in the area, some of the other 30% of curlers would likely cease to curl, but the remainder would relocate their curling league play. Even if half the non-Vulcan curlers were to cease league curling, it would only be a loss of 38 curlers in total. Adults are more likely to travel a reasonable distance to curl in an organized league in a robust curling club than children would be likely to travel a distance for a recreational skate. Therefore, there would not likely be a loss of 38 curlers in the local area. It would more likely be 20 to 30. The reduction in bonspiels would be minimal, but there could be at least 20% reduction in the number of uses associated with school curling due to the need to arrange for school buses.

In the longer term future, it is unlikely that more than six sheets of curling ice would be required to accommodate all the future curling activity in the region. Curling has been declining in the county for many years, and it is very unlikely that this trend can be easily reversed, although it is worth attempting to do so.

If all 6900 residents of the local area were located in a single community, such a community would typically have a six sheet curling facility and would utilize that facility to a high proportion of its capacity.

### ***Requirement for Outdoor Pools in Vulcan County***

The existing six lane 25 meter outdoor pool in Vulcan, and the newly developed replacement facility in Champion (which is somewhat larger than the one it replaced, but still smaller than the Vulcan pool) together represent roughly the correct amount of capacity required to meet current requirements. While use of outdoor pools will continue to vary due to weather conditions each summer, and may change marginally over time, the two facilities appropriately meet the total requirement for summer outdoor pool swimming. They should both be well used in typical years but still have some excess capacity to accommodate potential growth over time.

The new pool in Champion incorporates some leisure pool concepts (e.g. deck level entry, maximum of shallow water, and some moving water in the form of showers) that serve a broader range of aquatic services than the pool it replaces. Experience has shown that such features are attractive to the swimming public, and therefore this new pool will likely generate more uses than the older pool it replaces. Similarly, if the pool in Vulcan were replaced, and if the replacement incorporated features that focussed more specifically on more of the seven categories of aquatic service, it would likely generate additional uses that the current facility does not experience.

While the existing and replacement pool appear adequate to meet most local requirements at present, at some point a replacement in Vulcan should add some additional capacity in a focussed way that will serve more swimming in the future.

For public pools there are typically seven categories of aquatic service as follows:

- Fitness swimming – this rapidly growing market segment includes lane swimming and aquasize classes,
- Therapeutic/rehabilitation – this fast growing market segment depends on warmer water, and often includes moving water so that one can exercise against a current,
- Recreation (fun) – primarily a drop in service, this growing market allows individuals to be active in an inviting and enjoyable fashion,
- Special events – could include swim competitions, which don't occur in the local market, but could also include programmed special events for special occasions,
- Sport training – this could include rental time for speed swimming clubs, water polo leagues, synchronized swimming clubs, and diving clubs; non which exist in the local area at present,
- Leadership training – this is a small but very important segment of the aquatic service market, training future leaders and staff,
- Skill development – the largest portion of this category is the “learn-to-swim” lessons, but can include other skill development (e.g. diving); this market segment is large, but stable, and depends primarily on the number of school aged children.

Any one pool cannot be optimally configured to respond to all seven categories. Therefore trade-offs need to be evaluated when investments are made in pool capacity. The consultants believe that good decisions have been made with respect to those trade-offs, both in original development and recent additions of capacity and redevelopment. Attempts have been made to respond to the growing aquatic market segments (i.e. fitness, therapeutic recreation, and fun) with progressively less emphasis on the shrinking market segments (i.e. competitions – there are none, and sport training- there is none). A sixth category, leadership training, will continue to be a small but important segment of aquatic service as finding qualified staff is an increasing challenge in the local market. The seventh category, learn-to-swim classes, will continue to be the largest segment, but has little room for growth due to a very stable school enrolment projection.

The two outdoor pools in the County now have capacity for about 50,000 swims per year. In a typical year they experience only about 23,000 swims. While that appears to be a low utilization of a swimming pool, most pools operate at only about 50% of their physical capacity for use. This is because total requirement in a community is fragmented into the seven categories of swimming and there is a minimum amount of capacity that can be provided if some of these categories are to be practically served. Also, because outdoor swimming is so weather dependent, there is a tendency to peak load pools during the hottest hours of the summer, leaving the shoulder seasons and cool, windy, rainy hours virtually unused. So, pools need to be sufficiently

large to accommodate peak demand which cannot be attracted into off peak periods. Therefore, the size of the two facilities that currently exist is appropriate to the use they collectively enjoy.

In the long term future, about the same level of capacity will be required. However, as long term pool use trends are positive, the optimum long term capacity in the region is somewhere between the current capacity and an amount less than 10% more than the current capacity.

If all 6900 residents of the region lived in a single community, it is very unlikely that more than one pool would be required. However, that one pool would be about the size of the two pools combined. However, it is clear that the regional population is dispersed and that current swim levels would be reduced if only one larger pool existed. Total use would likely decline from about 23,000 swims per year to less than 20,000 swims per year due to the need to transport school classes in June and swim lesson, fitness and recreational swims for the entire season.

In the long term future, the total capacity should remain at roughly the current capacity, or a little bit larger.

## **A Basis for a Facility Strategy**

If no facilities currently existed, a facility plan would be built on optimally providing facilities that would be almost fully utilized and sized to accommodate not only current but also future requirements. In such a case, the consultants would likely be recommending a single six sheet curling facility or two facilities with a total of six sheets of curling ice. They would also be recommending two artificial ice arenas in one or two buildings located so as to maximize access by all residents of the area, and two outdoor pools with collective capacity of slightly more than the two existing ones currently have.

However, one cannot ignore all the existing facilities and their capability to accommodate more localized uses; at least for the short term future.

A region wide strategy is required to move forward to a situation that is closer to an ideal one, carefully transitioning from the current situation. In doing so, a number of principals or planning assumptions were discussed and agreed to in a workshop with County Council on October 27<sup>th</sup>. They are summarized as follows:

- There is a difference between efficiency (doing things right) and effectiveness (doing the right things). If one looks only at efficiency, one might support only the exact amount of facility capacity that would be fully utilized (with perhaps some short term excess capacity to accommodate growth, if and where it is anticipated). One might also centralize facilities to render them more economically efficient (e.g. two ice surfaces under one roof cost less to operate than two ice surfaces in different communities). That would result in optimum use of public facilities and minimum tax support per use. However, efficiency might be achieved at the expense of doing some of the “right” things, such as providing facilities in each community so that they can contribute to a sense of community, instead of expecting everyone to drive to a single centralized facility; even if decentralizing facilities is a less “efficient” approach to facility provision.

This distinction between efficiency and effectiveness is analogous to the difference between demand and need. Demand has been referred to in three previous sections when using technical analysis to determine how much capacity is required to optimally respond to demand for use of a facility. However, need, which is a subset of demand, should also

be considered. A need is sometimes defined as that portion of demand, where satisfying it, clearly results in some form of collective indirect benefit to all members of a community independent of how much they use a facility and therefore benefit directly. A facility may therefore meet a need in a community and result in indirect benefit to all its members, even if demand for it, and the number that use it and receive direct benefits, is low.

- Facilities which are heavily supported by the local community, and especially which have a great deal of volunteer effort making them more sustainable, should be supported even if they are not fully utilized or otherwise “efficient” in size or location. Volunteer efforts should be supported over and above the need to “right size” the total availability of any facility type in the area.
- There is a distinction between continuing to operate a facility that is too large to meet current and foreseeable needs, and building a new facility that would be too large to meet current or foreseeable needs. If a community already has a facility that is oversized, but can continue to operate it with a modest amount of operating tax support and occasional volunteer supported repairs, there is little justification to phase out the oversupply of capacity. If however, that building ceased to exist, or required a major amount of investment to rebuild or repair, the decision on whether to support this excess, unused capacity could not be supported.

The above listed planning principles and assumptions have influenced the consultants’ recommended regional recreation facility strategy which is laid out in the next section.

## **Regional Recreation Facility Strategy**

The recommended regional recreation facility strategy can be clearly articulated in the following fifteen points.

1. No additional arena capacity should be developed within the local area. To do so would be a waste of resource and a contribution to an already significant over supply of skating ice in the area. In fact, it could also have the negative effect of competing with existing facilities that are struggling to remain sustainable. Investment in additional arena capacity would include development of new ice sheets, expanding existing ice sheets, or expanding the season of existing ice sheets through the addition of artificial ice systems.
2. The five existing arenas should be supported in the short term future, and modest capital projects which cost effectively extend their functional lifespan and effect repairs important to functionality should be supported in an effort to allow these facilities to meet local needs for skating as long as is reasonably possible.
3. The two artificial ice arenas in Lomond and Vulcan and the natural ice facility in Arrowwood all are in good condition, have enjoyed high levels of lifecycle maintenance in the past ten years, and have a great deal of lifespan remaining. They should be supported in the long term future. Projects which cost effectively extend their functional lifespan, effect repairs important to functionality, and increase the quality of long term service should be supported. Collectively the three facilities will meet long term needs, with the two artificial ice sheets located appropriately to meet more than 90% of long term need, and the small natural ice sheet in Arrowwood being ideally sized and located to meet the small amount of need in the northern third of the county for many years to come. If major projects like a new roof, new refrigeration plant, or new concrete floors

- are required, the local community, and local volunteers should be encouraged to implement them, with County support in principal, and with County financial support if and when it is capable of providing it. The two artificial ice sheets will require more resources to keep them functional in the long term future, as they are older and have a great deal more mechanical infrastructure to render sustainable.
4. The arenas in Milo and Champion will come to a point where they reach the end of their functional lifespan, and where modest renovations and repairs are no longer sufficient to keep them operational. At that point, they should be phased out of operation as surplus to overall needs in the area. At this point major investment in a new roof, structural upgrades, or major replacement of electrical or mechanical systems cannot be justified by the amount of direct benefit to users or indirect benefit to the entire community. The uses previously accommodated in these two facilities should be relocated to one of the three facilities noted in the previous point.
  5. No additional curling capacity should be developed within the local area. To do so would not only be a waste of resource, and a contribution to an already significant oversupply in the area, it could also have the negative effect of competing with other facilities in the same category which are struggling to remain sustainable.
  6. The four existing curling rinks should be supported in the short term future, and modest capital projects which cost effectively extend their functional lifespan and effect repairs important to functionality should be supported in an effort to allow these facilities to meet local needs for curling as long as is reasonably possible.
  7. The two curling facilities in Vulcan and Lomond are in good condition, have enjoyed high levels of lifecycle maintenance in the past ten years, and have a great deal of lifespan remaining. They should be supported in the long term future. Collectively they provide six sheets of curling ice which is the amount of capacity that is likely indicated in the long term future. The two are located such that a vast majority of residents of the area are within 30 minutes' drive from a curling facility, which should be sufficient proximity for curlers who typically access a curling rink by private vehicle. Projects which cost effectively extend their functional lifespan, effect repairs important to functionality, and increase the quality of long term service should be supported. If major projects like a new roof, new refrigeration plant, or new concrete floors are required, the local community, and local volunteers should be encouraged to implement them, with County support in principal, and with County financial support if and when it is capable of providing it.
  8. The curling rink in Carmangay should be phased out of operation at the point when the existing ice plant can no longer be easily repaired and requires replacement. The major cost of such replacement simply cannot be justified. At that point, the facility should either be retrofitted to fill another community need, or demolished.
  9. The curling rink in Milo has a great deal of functional lifespan remaining and a great deal of local volunteer support. It should remain in operation until the point where a major investment of capital is required to keep it in operation. At that point such investment will be very difficult to justify and the building should either be retrofitted to fill another community need, or demolished. However, hopefully this will be in the distant future.
  10. In the long term future all existing capacity and a modest amount of additional capacity for outdoor swimming (over and above what is provided in the new Champion Pool and the existing Vulcan Pool) should be supported. Modest capital projects which cost effectively extend the functional lifespan, effect repairs important to functionality and

increase the quality of service to users should be supported in an effort to allow these facilities to meet all local area needs for public swimming as long as is reasonably possible.

11. At the point when the Vulcan Pool reaches the end of its lifespan and major retrofit or replacement is required, a new facility should be supported that will provide modestly more capacity than the existing pool, but more importantly configure aquatic spaces to more effectively meet a broader range of aquatic services than the existing pool meets. The categories of aquatic services that are increasing in importance, and which the new or retrofitted pool could be better configured to respond to, would include recreational swimming, fitness swimming, and therapeutic/rehab services.
12. Whenever the County considers providing support in principle or financial support to a given facility project, it should attempt to link that support to local support and volunteer effort; the more such local and volunteer support, the more the County should be willing to support. County support should always be seen as encouragement for local community and volunteer support and never be seen as replacing volunteer effort or local support.
13. The County should consider supporting any coordinated efforts focussed on increasing uses of arenas, curling rinks or outdoor pools. Such efforts may include:
  - a. Efforts to increase or maintain seasonal public school uses of these facilities during school hours by the public school system,
  - b. Efforts to teach children in the area that don't attend public schools to learn to skate, curl, and swim,
  - c. Strategies for reducing barriers to use of facilities (e.g. an equipment pool at some facilities so that potential users could easily access equipment, like skates, that they might not otherwise have access to)
  - d. Marketing efforts to bring users into the County to make use of capacity where there is no local demand for use in any of the three categories of facilities,
  - e. County wide special events that will encourage uses of the three categories of facilities (e.g. a county bonspiel where a team has to curl at three or more of the four curling facilities, or a hockey tournament that requires teams to use more than one arena),
  - f. Scheduling systems that feature the excess capacity and make it easy for any individual or group to find out about the availability of excess capacity (e.g. available ice time for a team to practice, or space in a learn to swim program in the other pool).
14. If the availability of significant amounts of casino revenue comes to an end and is not replaced with similar amounts of outside revenues or local volunteer support, the phasing out of existing facilities should be accelerated, as it will no longer be possible to sustain the over-supply of infrastructure. Also, in such an eventuality, new forms of revenue sharing will need to be explored and potentially more investment of public tax resources in public recreation facilities to keep them functioning as not only surplus capacity will be hard to support, but also the appropriate levels of existing well utilized capacity.
15. Attempts to centralize all facilities in any category in one central location within the County should be resisted for the next ten years as reducing the contribution that recreation facilities in each of the smaller communities make to community life.

Current and future County Councils can and should use the above listed strategy as a basis for making decisions about which projects to support or not support, either in principal, or financially. It is also hoped that other providers of service, operators of facilities, and financial supporters will utilize this strategy as a guide for a coordinated approach to the effective delivery of all recreation services in the area which is in the best interests of all users and taxpayers in the area.

## **Summary**

While the current supply and location of outdoor pools in the region is appropriate to long term needs, and one pool is new, the other will need to be retrofitted or replaced in the foreseeable future. While existing arenas and curling rinks represent a significant over supply of facility capacity, there is no need to reduce this capacity in the short term future. Facilities that are fully supported locally, and with volunteer effort and casino revenues, can continue on for the short term with modest repairs. However, in the long term, only two artificial arenas, one natural skating surface, and two curling rinks are required, and should be supported. The timing of the transition of over supply to less supply will depend on the condition of the facilities (i.e. when major retrofits are required) and community support, but phasing out of some capacity is definitely indicated in the long term.