



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Old South Community Organization

Disappointed with Plan to Decommission Thames Pool

The Old South Community Organization (OSCO) strongly expresses its deep disappointment in the City of London's proposal to decommission Thames Pool. This proposal is sudden and without community consultation. As a steadfast fixture within the community, Thames Pool has remained a heavily utilized public facility for close to a century providing invaluable supports to the community and serving as a multi-use center. The facility is much more than a pool of water. It is a dynamic community space acting as:

- A classroom where invaluable swimming and first-aid skills are taught.
- A refuge for families without air-cooling options to seek relief during hot summer days.
- A communal space fostering connections between neighbours and neighbourhoods.
- An annual enhancement to many London school programs and day camps.
- A vital training ground for Canada's current and future Olympians.

With Thames Pool providing such a valued service to the community, it is deeply disturbing that the City of London would recommend decommissioning this facility. This sentiment runs throughout the Old South community and the city generally, as many people have relied on Thames Pool for enjoyment, exercise, and escape across multiple generations since its opening in 1927. This continued use has made Thames Pool the most visited outdoor pool within London.

Negative sentiment stems from the sudden release of the Community and Protective Services Committee's plan and the marked absence of community consultation in the plan's development. Not only is the potential loss of this community space devastating to the community, but it is combined with the lack of process and opportunity to voice concerns or examine viable remedial options on this proposal is disheartening. As a result, many people are now expressing a lack of confidence in the City's ability to operate in a fully transparent and consultative manner.

The report outlined by City staff recommending decommissioning Thames pool focuses squarely on short-sighted and narrow financial considerations. Only four of the five options proposed have an attached cost while the cost of decommissioning the pool is glaringly absent from the report. We would assume that decommissioning the facility would also come at a cost of taxpayer dollar. If financial consideration is the sole determining factor of the City, then voting on a report which omits the cost of the recommended option is not appropriate in any capacity.

Further, the report underscores the recent increase in repair costs after the 2010 renovation and this causes reason for concern and investigation. For a structure which has survived on the same grounds for nearly a century, enduring flooding, severe weather events, and repeated human activities, without extensive need for repairs, it raises several questions regarding the 2010 reconstruction. Specifically, we question whether poor design, engineering, and/or construction contributed to the need for greater repairs after the reconstruction of the facility in 2010.

Lastly, the report and its recommendations regard Thames as a singular unit and the recommendations reflect this conception by proposing repairs or reconstruction for all of the facility or none. This linear thinking is unlikely to result in a sustainable solution and is limiting opportunities to seek more appropriate solutions. To support the City in finding a sustainable solution for Thames, the Old South Community Organization is recommending a three-step process.

Step One:

Enact the report's first option facilitating minimum repairs. This would provide a window of opportunity whereby the pool would be re-opened to maintain its service to the community with funding for this component drawn from provincial and federal grants and an adjustment in admission prices. This action would provide three simultaneous actions: one, continue service to the community, two, allow time for community consultation, and three, provide a period of time in which long-term solutions will be identified.

Step Two:

Seek all available financial options at municipal, provincial, and federal levels. We believe there exist opportunities for funding from the three levels of government that address community building, healthy living, and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic which are applicable to Thames pool.

Step Three:

Our organization respectfully requests an examination of the 2010 reconstruction (engineering plans, construction details, initial and final reports) by an independent impartial consulting engineer and subject matter expert. The aim of this inquiry is to determine if issues with the reconstruction are a contributing factor for the pool's current repairs and to identify all possible solutions to potential contributing issues.

The Old South Community Organization has represented the common interests of the Old South community since 1975. As a non-profit, member-run, volunteer organization, we are dedicated to protecting and improving the quality of life in our community and in our city. We look forward to being a part of this discussion and wish to help our elected officials identify the most feasible

solution that would support the needs of the community. We are confident that together we can arrive at a solution that will maintain Thames Pool and continue to help improve the quality of life in our community and across the City of London.

Sincerely,

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(she/her)

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