

Good afternoon, Mayor Sohi, City Councillors and fellow Citizens.

My name is Holly Baker, and I am a member of the Board of Directors of the Edmonton Kinsmen Diving Club.

I would like to speak about our sport of diving.

It is well-known that sport develops self-discipline, focus, ambition and self-confidence, which we see from our divers as they improve their status in studies at school and socially in the community as well.

There is one additional attribute to our sport of diving, and that is courage.

In 1984 20-year-old Canadian Sylvie Bernier from Québec city won the Olympic Gold Medal in the 3 m springboard diving championship at the Los Angeles Olympic Games.

After the games, there was a ceremony in Montréal to present Sylvie with an award of excellence from the Québec Government.

Sylvie was the first ever Québec athlete to win an Olympic gold medal.

Premier Rene Levesque was to make the presentation.

Premier Levesque was waiting on the stage at the ceremony for Sylvie to join him. Mr. Levesque was well known as “chain smoker”, and was smoking a cigarette at that time.

When Mr. Levesque approached Sylvie to make the presentation, she said “I am sorry Premier Levesque I don’t want to accept my award while you are smoking”.

Premier Levesque put out his cigarette and then approached Sylvie again with her award. However, out of habit Mr. Levesque took out another cigarette and put it in his mouth.

At that point Sylvie reached out and took the cigarette out of his mouth and broke it in two. Instantly, dozens of media flashbulbs caught this picture and it was in all of the media on front pages across Québec and Canada.

By this one courageous act Sylvie Bernier probably saved thousands of lives from death from lung cancer.

Sylvie Bernier went on to have her own TV program and to this day is an ambassador for good health.

Another story of courage, is that of former Alberta diver and 2000 Olympian, Jeff Liberty.

Jeff was living in Calgary.

One day in the winter he was walking his dog by the Bow River, which was partially frozen over, when, all of a sudden, a car broke through a guardrail on a bridge over the river and crashed into the river.

The top of the sinking car was still visible and Jeff could see a woman behind the wheel not moving.

Without hesitation, he dove into the icy water and pulled her out of the car to safety.

Any hesitation would have resulted in the continuing descent of the car to the bottom of the river.

This is just two of the stories of the character development aspect of our sport of diving.

Our Edmonton Diving Program at the Kinsmen Sport Center diving pool has produced four Olympic divers since 1984. Combined losing diving training capacity at the Kinsmen pool because of the doubling of our population with the elimination of the deep pool for diving at Lewis Farms, there will be no more Edmonton Olympic divers.

This makes me very sad, since I am the mother of a 14-year-old girl who is a National level 10 m platform diver, and we will have to make the difficult choice to move to another city so she can follow her dream.

Of course this affects all of our top divers will have their training reduced, as well as those thousands of divers who will not be able to even try our sport.

The elimination of the Lewis Farms deep pool with the 7.5 m and 10 m platforms which is critical for the future 2000 divers expected in the next decade, is totally counter to the Core Principles in our Edmonton Vision and Mission statements.

Which reads, “ Supporting excellence, by fostering an environment committed to excellence, including world-class infrastructure and programs, Edmonton will support people who train and compete at the highest level of their ability”.

To dismiss the needs of our citizens as expressed in polls, focus groups, and meetings with Councillors over the past two Councils does not appear to be democratic.

Using the guise of the inflation crunch for making this decision does not hold up.

The inflation rate is expected to return to normal in two years.

Only the money spent each year on the construction of this facility will be borrowed as construction proceeds.

This means that the full amount of the cost of the facility will not be mortgaged until the inflation rate has normalized.

Also, with the delay for redesigning the pools and the increased interest rates, this will diminish any proposed savings.

So, the only logical decision is to maintain the original approved design which will provide aquatic training for all aquatic sports for the next generation of Edmontonians.

Thank you