

north shore news

City of North Vancouver deprioritizes Harry Jerome recreation centre

Council ranks shipyards above recreation centre rebuild in capital plan

[Brent Richter](#) / North Shore News

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File photo North Shore News

Though Olympian Harry Jerome may have been a genuine North Vancouver A-lister, the community centre named after him has been relegated to the B-list.

Each year, City of North Vancouver council votes how to prioritize its capital project spending. Projects are ranked either A (a priority to be completed within the next five years), B (less of a priority but on the list to be completed within 10 years) or C (postponed).

Under the list voted through at the city's budget meeting Monday, design and planning for the Shipyards and waterfront is ranked A, the Harry Jerome rebuild is ranked B and the relocation of the North Vancouver Museum and Archives to the waterfront is ranked C.

In November 2013, [council passed a motion written by Coun. Rod Clark committing the city to have Harry Jerome "shovel ready" by the time the District of North Vancouver's William Griffin Recreation Centre opens](http://www.nsnews.com/news/construction-date-set-for-harry-jerome-1.714417) (<http://www.nsnews.com/news/construction-date-set-for-harry-jerome-1.714417>). Deprioritizing the project would put that at risk, Clark warned.

"We're dithering about on Harry Jerome. At this moment in time, there's no way we're going to have a shovel ready project in time for 2016. No way," he said, adding later, "I will not support some airy-fairy notion of what the waterfront is going to be when Harry Jerome is falling apart and has been part of this community for 50 years."

Coun. Craig Keating said the aging rec facility could be renovated and replaced in parts over time rather than demolished and rebuilt from scratch.

"I don't get hassled on the street about why we need a new Harry Jerome right now. They say 'Maintain that good facility, update that good facility, keep it going, but people want, in the quarter century that I've been in this town, access to the waterfront. I make no bones about the fact that's a priority for me,'" he said.

Council has committed the historic Pipe Shop on the waterfront to be the new home of the Museum and Archives as well as up to \$5 million in matching funds to prepare it for the museum. Museum fundraisers have until the end of this year to come up with their \$5 million. If they fall short, council will have to reassess the plan, Mayor Darrell Mussatto said.

But Coun. Pam Bookham said that giving the project a C ranking would undercut fundraisers' ability to secure donations.

"There is a mixed message that's being sent out. We need the leadership of this council and the leadership of this mayor to get behind this very valuable project.

We have a responsibility for the history of our community," she said.

Council typically reviews its prioritized list each fall.

As part of the budget, council approved an average 3.9 per cent increase to property taxes — one per cent of which is set aside specifically for replacing aging infrastructure and another one per cent specifically for the eventual rebuild of Harry Jerome.

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