

For Immediate Release
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CITY EMBARKS ON NEW PLAN FOR RECREATIONAL WATERWAY

The City of Welland is moving forward with a plan to maximize the potential of its recreational waterway by merging the Welland Recreational Canal Corporation (WRCC) with City operations. City Council passed a motion last night to endorse a proposal from the Interim Board to dissolve the WRCC and allocate management, programming, and event responsibilities to City of Welland staff. Once the plan has been implemented, governance and oversight will return to Welland City Council.

The WRCC, which is a separate legal entity owned by the City of Welland, has been governed by an Interim Board of Directors November 2015 when the former Board of Directors and Executive Director resigned. It has since been managed by an Interim General Manager and the City's Corporate Leadership Team (CLT).

During the transitional period, WRCC management, the Interim Board of Directors and CLT adhered to the following principles and priorities to guide operations and decision-making:

- financially self-sufficient - no impact to taxpayers
- accountability and transparency in decision-making
- operate as a business enterprise
- increased financial reporting and accountability, and improved business plan
- key economic driver - positive economic impact for local business
- maximize potential of recreational waterway
- maintain, protect, and enhance canal lands
- strategic partnerships with City, community, and stakeholders
- keep Council, community and stakeholders informed
- ensure broad representation on the board

In August 2016, Council approved the recommendation of the Interim Board to install a permanent hybrid model of management and governance for the WRCC. However, after further discussion and analysis of the current transitional model and the proposed hybrid model, the Interim Board and the City's Corporate Leadership Team recommended a revised model that builds on the success of 2016 and 2017, supports public expectations, and is better aligned with the strategic priorities of Council and the direction of the City.

Key Points:

- the Manager of the City's Recreation and Culture Division will oversee the programming and events on the recreational waterway
- City staff from Recreation and Culture, and Public Works and Parks will be assuming responsibilities previously undertaken by WRCC staff
- the consolidation will result in net savings of close to \$100,000 annually

- a Canal Advisory Board, with broad representation, will be established to provide advice and recommendations to Council
- WRCC offices located on Merritt Island will be closed and rented for commercial use to generate additional revenue
- the Canal Trust Fund will remain intact and the interest earned will continue to be used to offset operational expenses in maintaining the canal
- a charitable “Canal Foundation” will be established to raise public donations and apply for government grants
- the WRCC realized an operating surplus in 2016 and is on track for a balanced budget in 2017
- there were 35 events in 2016 on the recreational waterway, 34 events confirmed for 2017
- there are national and international championships planned for 2017, 2018, and other major competitions are confirmed from now until 2024

“Over the past 15 months, the City and WRCC forged a collaborative partnership that resulted in a positive transitional year, organizational stability, the successful delivery of 35 on-water events last year, a budget surplus in 2016 and balanced budget in 2017. These changes have enhanced communications, public engagement, strengthened relationships with user groups, and improved financial accountability and transparency in decision-making,” said Welland Mayor and Interim Board Chair Frank Campion. “By merging the WRCC with City operations, we can build on the success of 2016 and 2017 and support Council’s strategic priorities, which includes canal redevelopment and maximizing the potential of our recreational waterway.”

“We have the organizational capacity and the staff expertise to assume the responsibilities of the WRCC and integrate these to support the strategic direction of the city and vision for the canal,” said Chief Administrative Officer Gary Long. “This consolidation will create synergies, costs savings, and a focused and integrated approach to how we maintain and promote our canal lands, our trail system, and the Welland International Flatwater Centre. It will also support residential and commercial development along the canal.”

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