



MEDIA RELEASE

Council Approves WRCC Plans for Amphitheatre in Merritt Park



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Welland – The Welland Recreational Canal Corp (WRCC) is pleased to announce that Council of the City of Welland has given the WRCC the go ahead for plans to construct amphitheatre seating in Merritt Park. The natural amphitheatre will be cut into the east bank of the Welland Recreational Waterway and serve as a permanent seating facility for theatre, music concerts and the arts.

The design chosen maximizes the number of allowable seats, roughly 900, while minimizing the space required for the seating area within the natural beauty of Merritt Park. The objective, as expressed to Council, is to deliver the amphitheatre in a manner that reduces impacts on gardens, the fountain and other amenities in Merritt Park. A review of useable natural assets revealed that former Aqueduct stones from the historic Welland Canal Aqueduct, which are stored in various locations throughout the City, can be used for much of the actual seating. This tactic will effectively reduce materials costs and creatively use natural items from the Old Welland Canal's History.

The WRCC has been working with TSH Architects, Engineers and Planners to bring the project to fruition as quickly as possible. As the City of Welland's Anniversary Weekend celebrations move ever closer, the WRCC is hoping to have the project completed for the last weekend in July. The plans will allow for additional bleacher seating behind the natural amphitheatre. This additional temporary seating will bring the capacity to roughly 1700 for larger scale events like IlluminAqua which will be produced for the anniversary weekend July 24, 25, 26.

This particular project, budgeted at \$250,000, is part of the ongoing Downtown Improvements undertaken by the City of Welland and funded in part by the Province of Ontario's Municipal Infrastructure Investment Initiative. "The support and development of a physical amphitheatre resoundingly states that we are a community that embraces arts and culture", suggested Mayor Damian Goulbourne. "At this juncture, I would have to applaud the efforts of the WRCC and the support of my Council."

Driven by the 2007 success of IlluminAqua, "the need for more seating, better accessibility and permanent facilities that can be utilized by the entire community is what drove this initiative," stated WRCC Chair, Mr. Bob Mahler. The support of this initiative from City of Welland Council builds upon the support received from the Province of Ontario's Ministry of Tourism. "The enhancement concepts for IlluminAqua funded in part by the Ministry of Tourism will be further augmented by the development of this permanent seating facility" reported Stephen Fischer, WRCC Business & Operations Manager. "We are looking forward to delivering on this objective; a community request that was highlighted in both the Parks, Recreation & Culture Master Plan and the Welland Recreational Waterway Master Plan."

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