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**REPORT NUMBER** 294-2025-Growth-Development Services-Realty Services

**DATE**

**PREPARED**

September 9, 2025

**FILE**

RS 23 301079

**STANDING**

**COMMITTEE**

September 23, 2025

**MEETING DATE**

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**SUBJECT**

Science North Thunder Bay Waterfront Location

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***PURPOSE – Seeking Standing Committee Endorsement***

WITH RESPECT to Report 294-2025-Growth-Development Services-Realty Services we request endorsement of the Standing Committee to forward the following recommendation to City Council:

WE RECOMMEND THAT the property of approximately 1.08 ha (2.68 ac) within the Cultural Campus of Phase 2 of the Waterfront Development as shown on Attachment “A” to this report be the identified site for development of the proposed new Science North Thunder Bay Waterfront location;

AND THAT any necessary by-laws be presented to City Council for ratification.

***EXECUTIVE SUMMARY***

This report recommends that a site within the Cultural Campus of Phase 2 of the Waterfront Development be identified as the site for the potential development of the new Science North Thunder Bay Waterfront facility.

Science North has been working to develop a new Science Centre at the City-owned waterfront. It has advanced significant planning milestones such as visitor experience, operational, and business planning, site evaluations and conceptual design. Future predevelopment milestones include site due diligence, capital funding feasibility, capital funding campaign, operating funding campaign, further design development and lease negotiation and approval.

Science North’s initial preferred location was at Pool 6. However, based on development staging and future considerations, the site immediately south of the Art Gallery site is recommended for the potential Science Centre project and Science North

is supportive. The property is approximately 1.08 ha (2.68 ac) and this proposed site allows for an orderly buildout along Sleeping Giant Parkway, creates an enhanced node of cultural activity, is consistent with the current Phase 2 Master Plan and retains additional future development options and opportunities for Pool 6. The site determination is subject to further site investigation by Science North and future Council approvals.

Should this recommendation be endorsed by the Standing Committee, Administration will continue to work with Science North on negotiating business terms on which the City can facilitate the Science North project and develop a letter of intent inclusive of real estate terms for Council's consideration in closed session. The Science North project would also be illustrated at the recommended site as part of the Pool 6 Visioning Exercise.

To advance the project, future decisions by City Council will include authorization of a letter of intent, lease approval and financial approvals.

## **KEY CONSIDERATIONS**

Science North has identified Thunder Bay's waterfront as the preferred location for its new Science Centre (the "**Project**"). The Project would be a 42,000 ft<sup>2</sup> space, with an estimated total capital cost of \$79M. Construction is scheduled to start in 2027, with an opening planned for 2029. Initial funding support from NOHFC, FedNor, the Green and Inclusive Community Buildings and the Tourism Development Fund is secured. The proposed Science North facility supports Thunder Bay's growth objectives by stimulating economic development, attracting tourism visitors, creating local employment and advancing reconciliation.

Science North's initial preferred location was at Pool 6. However, Administration has discussed with Science North a site for the Project adjacent to, and south of the Art Gallery site (see Attachment "A") and Science North is supportive. The property is approximately 1.08 ha (2.68 ac). Administration's site recommendation is based on alignment with the current Phase 2 Master Plan, the orderly buildout along Sleeping Giant Parkway, an enhanced node of cultural activity and tourism attraction, and retaining additional future development options and revenue generating opportunities at Pool 6.

The City's Waterfront Phase 2 Master Plan identifies the recommended site as part of the Cultural Campus that can become a "major attraction in Thunder Bay". The Campus is envisioned as a cluster of uses consisting of the Art Gallery and potentially an Indigenous cultural center and/or other public uses in the areas of education and the environment combined with compatible recreational uses. The Science Centre project is an exceptional fit with the current Waterfront Master Plan vision for the Cultural Campus

being focused on education, the environment and Indigenous relationships with the environment.

There is demonstrated public support for the development of a Science North facility at the Waterfront. Based on a 2024 Get Involved Thunder Bay survey to provide input into a Waterfront Master Plan update where 62.8% of respondents indicated that they “would like to see an education/tourism campus (like Science North) on the Pool 6 lands”. This is as opposed to 16.2% who indicated they would not like to see this and 21% who were unsure or didn’t know. Additionally, Science North has completed independent confirmations of public support for the new Thunder Bay waterfront facility.

Key benefits of the Science Centre project to Thunder Bay, as presented by Science North, include:

- Addition of a significant educational and tourism attraction with an estimated 73,600 visitors annually and 5,000 overnight stays.
- Significant tourism spending estimated at \$6 million annually, and \$20 million in value added benefits to the local economy.
- Ongoing employment and construction jobs with the build having an estimated construction cost of approximately \$79 million.

Additionally, should the project be located on the waterfront, key benefits may include:

- Additional catalyst to the development of the waterfront.
- Additional trip attraction to a premier tourism destination, including for cruise ships and cruise ship passengers.
- Addition to the range of things to do and see at the waterfront, adding programming density and extended visitor stay.
- Enhanced ability to attract additional revenue producing tenants and activities to the area.

Should the recommendation be endorsed by the Standing Committee, Administration will provide a further update and seek approval from City Council on next steps. At this time, Administration continues to work with Science North on negotiating business and real estate terms on which the City can facilitate the project to develop, operate, and maintain a new Science Centre in Thunder Bay. The development of a letter of intent for City Council’s consideration would come forward at a later time in Closed Session. The Science North project will also be illustrated at the recommended site as part of the Pool 6 Visioning Exercise.

To advance the project, future decisions by City Council will be required and include authorization of a letter of intent, lease approval and consideration of any potential financial contribution.

### ***FINANCIAL IMPLICATION***

As the Science North Thunder Bay Waterfront project progresses, the City may include financial commitments within Capital Budgets to facilitate the project including advancing planned capital improvement for the realignment of Sleeping Giant Parkway and the development of additional public parking. The City may also consider making capital and operating contributions to the Project in the future.

Any financial implications would be reported to City Council and the Finance and Administration Standing Committee as applicable.

### ***BACKGROUND***

At the April 4, 2022 Committee of the Whole meeting, Science North presented its Northwest Expansion Project and indicated that the Pool 6 property was short listed as a potential site.

On August 2022, Science North issued a media announcement stating the Pool 6 site as its preferred location for its proposed new Science Centre facility in Thunder Bay.

On February 10, 2025, through report 012.2025 – City Manager’s Office Council received the City Manager’s Workplan that included a Visioning Exercise for Pool 6 for Q4 2026.

### ***REFERENCE MATERIAL ATTACHED***

*List all reference material, in order, that will be attached to the item in escribe.*

- **Attachment “A” – Waterfront Potential Site**
- **Attachment “B” - 2016 Pool 6 Master Plan Drawing**

### ***REPORT PREPARED BY***

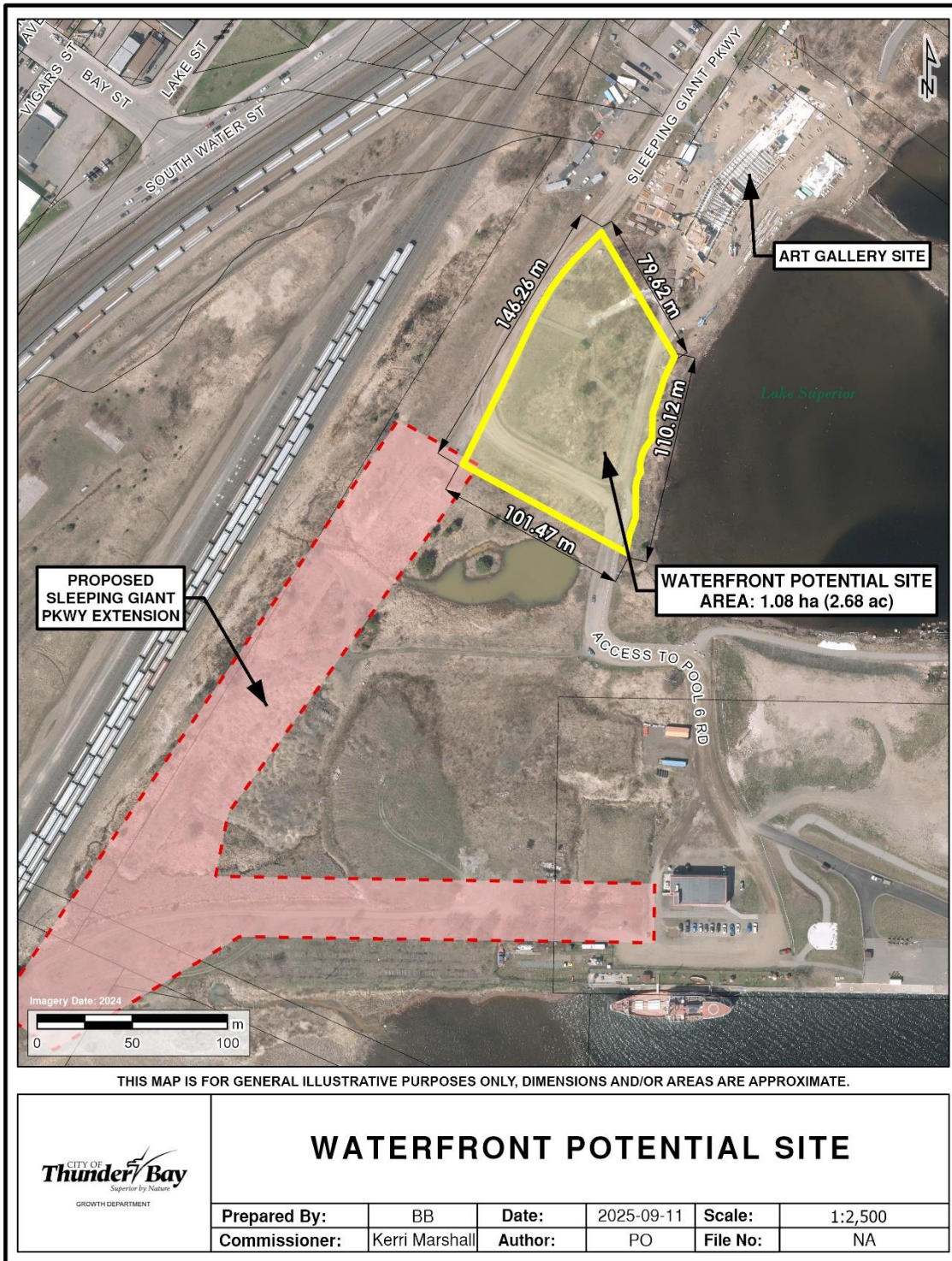
Peder Olsen, Property Agent, Realty Services

### ***REPORT SIGNED AND VERIFIED BY***

Kerri Marshall, Commissioner - Growth

Date (09/17/2025)

Attachment "A" – Waterfront Potential Site





**Attachment “B” - 2016 Pool 6 Master Plan Drawing**

