

\$30 million McMeeken approved (maybe)

By **Dan Gray** - December 7, 2020



The hotly debated topic of the McMeeken Arena was back in front of the council tonight.

Councillors Christian, Gardi, Bruni, Vezeau-Allen and Hilsinger shared concerns about the cost during the October meeting when this was moved to today's date.



Some of those opinions changed this time around as council agreed 8-3 to spend over \$30 million. It will now go through a tendering process. Unofficially, it was broke down like this.

For:

- Vezeau-Allen
- Gardi
- Hilsinger
- Shoemaker
- Bruni
- Scott
- Dufour
- Provenzano

Against:

- Christian
- Niro
- Hollingsworth

Councillor Bruni went from "This is an exciting time to have a twin-pad built ... I don't think it's the right time to have this built" to " I believe we are in excellent shape to take on the long term debt ... The time is right ... I think further delays with this will basically increase the cost."

Councillor Gardi originally said "Hard time thinking about spending \$30 million on an arena right now," His tone changed during this meeting, "The cost of building as we all know goes up year over year, it will be considerably more expensive three or five or 10 years from now."

Councillor Christian gave a heartfelt comment he noted it was a tough decision but in the end was against the build based on many factors including how it weighs against other needs of the community.

All councillors and the mayor had comments for the discussion that lasted over 90 minutes.

The Mayor was on the fence with this decision and warned the council if the tender came back higher than this amount he would be against going forward.

The project now goes to an RFP process and then we will know what the true cost is going to be.

SaultOnline.com will be working to make the whole discussion available to the public for those who may have missed it.

Dan Gray

A native of Centre Wellington, Ontario, I have worked as a freelance journalist all over the province of Ontario. Most recently I ran a local news page in my hometown of Fergus, Ontario. I look forward to bringing my experience covering breaking news, municipal matters and general interest stories to the team at Superior Media and communities we serve.

