

NEWS RELEASE

June 12, 2013

For immediate release

Team work helps to keep sports teams at play on Comox Valley Hospital site fields

COURTENAY - Playing fields next to Lerwick Road will remain in use as long as possible thanks to a multi-agency collaboration including the North Island Hospitals Project, the City of Courtenay Recreation Department, School District 71, the Queneesh Elementary School Advisory Committee and the Comox Valley United Soccer Club.

The playing fields, consisting of two ball diamonds and a soccer field, were purchased from the City of Courtenay to be part of the new Comox Valley Hospital site. The North Island Hospitals Project (NIHP) agreed to keep the fields open as long as possible.

Following discussions with the Queneesh Elementary School Advisory Committee, a plan has been developed to create a landscaped buffer/walkway between the hospital site and Queneesh Elementary School. Hospital site preparation contractor Leighton Contracting Ltd. has agreed to a request from the Courtenay Recreation Department to wait until the spring baseball season wraps up before starting work on the buffer/walkway in July. Bleachers and infield gravel from the ball diamonds will be donated to the city for future ball diamond development.

“We appreciate VIHA’s willingness to work with us to find ways to keep these fields open for the rest of the year,” said Carol Millar, Courtenay Recreation Coordinator. “VIHA was very open to our suggestions. The more we can work together to build meaningful partnerships like this one the stronger our community becomes. Children, families, individuals — we all become better citizens and lead healthier lives if we care for, and look after each other.”

More team work between the NIHP, Leighton Contracting, Courtenay Recreation and the Soccer Club means the soccer field will remain in use until spring 2014. The field lines will be repositioned so that soccer play can continue on the field until spring 2014 when construction of the \$334 million, 153-bed Comox Valley Hospital is slated to begin.

Field play will be re-allocated to a younger age group. The NIHP sign will be relocated to another area of the site to accommodate the repositioned field lines. Leighton Contracting will take over field maintenance, including grass cutting, in July.

There will be restricted access to the soccer field from Queneesh Elementary School from July through September while work on the landscaped buffer is underway. During this time the field will be accessible only from Lerwick Road.

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The school buffer/walkway will feature hundreds of trees including Shore pine, Douglas fir, Western Red cedar, maple and others. Working in partnership with the Comox Valley Nature Garry Oak Restoration Programme, a grove of 50 Garry Oaks will be planted along the buffer between the hospital site and the new medical clinic.

The extensive landscaping work will impact some of the existing pedestrian routes. The paved walking path running between the soccer field and part of the hospital site will be closed to pedestrian traffic starting in July. However, the new walkway/buffer zone situated between the hospital site and the North Island College campus will be opened. This will provide a new walking route to the Lerwick/Ryan road area.

“This is a wonderful example of neighbours working together for the benefit of all, where challenges are faced and solutions found through hard work and a shared commitment to the neighborhood,” said Tom Sparrow, NIHP Chief Project Officer.

The North Island Hospitals Project also includes a new 95-bed, \$266 million hospital in Campbell River. An estimated capital cost of up to \$600 million for the project will be shared by the B.C. government and the Comox Strathcona Regional Hospital District. The project will create approximately 1,900 direct jobs and over 1,400 indirect jobs. All health-care services will continue to be funded by the B.C. government and delivered by VIHA.

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