



MEDIA RELEASE

Nov. 30, 2010

College and Regional District announce lease agreement to develop \$7.8-million community sports facility

At a joint press conference on Tuesday morning, Okanagan College and the Regional District of the North Okanagan announced a new lease agreement that will allow the partners to move forward with plans to turn 10 acres of College land into a \$7.8-million multi-use sports facility that includes an Olympic size rubberized track, artificial playing field and field houses for use by community groups, School District 22 track meets and municipally-hosted events.

The project will need to be approved throughout a series of stages before development begins. The first stop includes approval by the Council of the District of Coldstream, as the proposed project falls within its jurisdiction. With approval from the District, the partners can then apply to the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) for non-conforming use status – the 10 acres on the College site is currently in the Agricultural Land Reserve but has not been used for agricultural purposes since the ALC was established in 1973. If approved by the ALC, the final decision on the project would be made by Greater Vernon residents via a referendum.

Okanagan College and the Regional District have entered into a no-cost lease of the site, which represents a significant saving to regional taxpayers. Jim Garlick, Mayor of the District of Coldstream, noted the price tag of the project to taxpayers is estimated at approximately \$17 per year for the average household over a 20-year period.

Okanagan College President Jim Hamilton said the project has the potential to provide significant benefits to students and community partners.

“The College has a longstanding history of adding value to the Greater Vernon region and is a major contributor to the regional economy,” said Hamilton. “This project would greatly benefit students and the many users who will access the site. The facility and classroom have the potential to become a hub of activity for the region as well as open the door to new programming opportunities like the diploma program in Human Kinetics, among others.”

The proposed project will be reviewed and discussed at the Dec. 6 meeting of the Coldstream Council.

“We have taken a great deal of care and consideration throughout the process of this partnership to ensure the project meets the needs of its users and the community,” said

Garlick. "We have consulted a variety of potential users and included everyone from the Vernon Hospital's cardiac program to minor football to School District 22. We have received a great deal of support from each of these groups and are pleased to be able to share the plans for this project with the community. The location of the project is ideal for users and will enhance the entrance to the Greater Vernon community."

Several potential users of the facility were in attendance at the press conference to show their support for the project. Among them were executive from the Kal RATS (Running and Triathlon Sports).

"The Kal RATS will fully support the initiative to construct a running track and multiple sports facility in Coldstream," said Kim Young, Kal RATS Community Liaison. "Our objective is to improve the fitness of all members of the community, of all ages, and all abilities. The proposed facility will be a significant improvement over the existing track, and is destined to become a focal point for sport and fitness in the north Okanagan."

Okanagan College's Regional Dean John Lent has been instrumental in facilitating the project and the collaboration that has developed in the three years in which the partners have been working together.

"I am really excited about this opportunity for the Vernon campus because it connects the College more strongly to both communities and the region," said Lent. "Although plans for this project are still being developed, our partnership with the Regional District is a great first step in providing a world-class recreational facility for the community."

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EDS: Please find attached a detailed backgrounder for more information and a jpg image: from l to r (Jim Hamilton, President Okanagan College; Jim Garlick, Mayor District of Coldstream; Herman Halvorsen, Chair Regional District North Okanagan; John Lent, Regional Dean Okanagan College.

For more information:
Christine Ulmer, Public Affairs
Okanagan College
250-470-3633
culmer@okanagan.bc.ca