



News Release

March 3, 2010

Community comes together to build accessible playground equipment at Holly elementary school

New play equipment with features as diverse as the community it serves has been opened in a festive ceremony involving community leaders and the students of Holly elementary.

A total of \$109,094 was raised to design and construct the facility that reflects the needs and wishes of the Guildford-area neighbourhood families, including children and caregivers with mobility-related impairments.

"This new play area is a great example of what community spirit can accomplish," says Surrey Board of Education chair Laurae McNally. "I congratulate Holly elementary principal Mary Gibbons and the school community that had the vision to pursue this special and important play facility for not just their school, but the whole neighbourhood, and thank-you to all who contributed."

More than 200 neighbourhood children and parents/caregivers with physical mobility challenges will benefit from the new, accessible play facility. Consultations with neighbourhood residents, city staff, child development experts and community organizations informed the design of the equipment that includes special play-area surfaces and equipment design to maximize accessibility.

Almost half of the funding for the specialized equipment, \$49,976, was provided by the *Let's Play* initiative, a partnership of the Rick Hansen Foundation and the Province of British Columbia.

"Thank you to everyone who contributed to making this project a reality," says Rick Hansen Foundation president and CEO Rick Hansen. "The play space at Holly elementary school is a terrific example of a committed group of people coming together to make our communities more accessible and inclusive for all. I am excited to see the creation of this play space and others like it across British Columbia that will benefit children and caregivers in our communities for many years to come."

Another \$20,000 was provided for the project through a provincial government gaming grant.

"From the input of our residents to the contributions of local donors, this project is great demonstration of the strength of our community," says Surrey-Tynehead MLA Dave S. Hayer. "The new playground is a great addition to the area, providing an opportunity for families with mobility limitations to better interact and play."

Other cash or in-kind donors include; Surrey school district, City of Surrey (Parks & Recreation), Guildford Town Centre, Holly Community-School Society, Royal Bank of Canada, RecTec Industries, Super Save Group and the Rotary Club of Surrey/Guildford.

"This new playground equipment has generated a whole new level of play," says Holly principal Mary Gibbons. "As one student said, 'it is like Disneyland; we love it'."

-30-

For more information, please contact:
Communications manager, Doug Strachan
604-599-7468

Holly Elementary School New Playground Equipment: Backgrounder

Holly Elementary is an inner-city school in the Guildford area of Surrey. Many residents in Holly's community live in apartment complexes – without backyards or engaging outdoor play opportunities. Holly is a Community-Schools Partnership Program school; a place where children and their families can learn and build relationships and neighbourhood networks. Holly's new playground will provide access to children and caregivers with mobility-related impairments through a variety of surface and design elements; allowing children and caregivers to move freely throughout the entire site and have access to play areas.

The play space at Holly elementary school is one of 47 across the province supported by the *Let's Play* initiative. *Let's Play* offers grants for the creation of accessible, public play spaces for young children and their caregivers with physical disabilities and builds awareness about accessible play and related best practices. *Let's Play* works closely with Schools In Motion; part of the Rick Hansen School Program that is now in 575 schools in B.C., including Holly Elementary School.

- ✓ Among the special features for the new Holly playground facility are:
 - A double-arched swing provides opportunity for a caregiver to swing with a child on the saucer. Also, saucer height at rest meets the requirement for transfer height for wheelchair users.
 - A multi-spring seesaw allows adults to sit on either side and interact and play with their child. The seesaw also has a foot and backrest used on one side for added support for young and special needs children.
 - Two spinner bowls provide a gentle rocking, spinning sensation as children learn to move their body or receive a push from a friend. Using the angled spinner bowls helps to balance the inner ear and can benefit children with autism and behavioural issues.
 - “Fibar Safety” surfacing provides a soft resilient landing.
 - Bench seating is strategically placed for comfort and convenience.
 - The school has designated handicap parking stalls.
- ✓ Some equipment assists sight-impaired children (raised geckos on end caps, extra handrails and incremental steps and touch/texture changes). The playhouse, raised play table, binoculars, playshells, hammock and climbing net sparks imagination and role play.
- ✓ The play space design does not look like it is designed for special needs. The appearance of a “traditional playground” is very intentional and made to ensure the space will attract all abilities while benefiting the social and physical aspects of play and encouraging universal integration.
- ✓ Children can use the fibar surface material as a play element in combination with the added sand bowl with spout, bowl in the play counter and sand wheel to encourage creativity and tactile senses.
- ✓ The perimeter of the playground is surrounded by large trees that contribute to the beauty of the playground and help to provide shade during the hot season and protect children from sun exposure, especially during peak periods of the day. The trees separate the school grounds and playground from neighbouring apartment buildings and the busy street to add a sense of grandeur and escape.
- ✓ Level grass areas will provide shade where mats or blankets can be spread for babies and children where they can crawl in comfort and watch the movement of wind in the trees.
- ✓ Students and the younger preschool-aged children who attend programs at Holly will create their own ceramic stars—Holly's symbol—to be placed on the school fence adjacent to the new playground to add visual appeal and develop a feeling of ownership.