



TOWN OF SIDNEY

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: April 4, 2011

SIDNEY CELEBRATES GROUNDBREAKING FOR IROQUOIS PARK IMPROVEMENTS

Full site work preparations are expected to commence in early May to launch major improvements to Iroquois Park in Sidney. The revitalization is for the 1.8 ha activity park on the eastern section, located at the southwest corner of Fifth Street and Ocean Avenue. Intersection and road realignment improvements are part of the plan which will provide easier and safer access to the park and across Fifth Street and include the installation of a roundabout in 2012.

This project, which is valued at approximately \$2,900,000, is funded through the Building Canada Fund – Communities Component. The provincial and federal governments each contributed more than \$752,800. The significant changes planned for Iroquois Park will make it a high quality community recreation asset for the Town. The improvements include: Multi-use recreational activity area with turf, landscaping and walkways; Water Spray Park (sponsored by Sidney-by-the-Sea Rotary Club); Adventure Playground; Multi-sport Court; Redesigned pond area; Concession/change room/washroom building; and a Municipal building to be leased to the Lions Food Bank.

Mayor Larry Cross noted that after receiving public input, the original design concept was revised to accommodate the retention of several mature apple trees located in the middle area of the park and to rearrange the position of the facility buildings to provide a closer connection, allowing maximum greenspace. He said "we are very excited about this project and are looking forward to having a centrally located park which will provide an attractive community gathering place with activities for all ages".

"This revitalization will make the park a hub of activity for the community, to be enjoyed by kids and adults alike, says Saanich North and the Islands MLA Murray Coell. "It will also ensure the community never forgets both the tragedy and heroism seen on April 10th, 1911."

The event will also commemorate the 100th anniversary of the sinking of the S.S. Iroquois which occurred on April 10th, 1911. The 82 foot Steamship left its dock at Sidney at 9:00 am with approximately 31 crew and passengers aboard and after 15 minutes at sea, while approaching Canoe Pass, the Iroquois took on water and tipped on its side and sank to the bottom. Records indicate that only 10 to 11 individuals survived the ordeal, some were rescued by three members of the Cowichan First Nations in a small canoe. The First Nations members later received medals for their bravery. Between 1900 and 1911, the steamer made over 2,000 runs to and from Sidney and the Gulf Islands and Nanaimo. Mayor Cross commented that "when we break ground to provide a new future for this Park and on the 100th anniversary of the sinking of the S.S. Iroquois, it is a very appropriate occasion to pay tribute to those who lost their lives and to those who put their own lives at stake to rescue others".

The short ceremony is scheduled for Monday, April 11th at 1:00 pm at Iroquois Park (corner of Fifth Street and Ocean Avenue) in the area where the original propeller from the S.S. Iroquois is mounted. All parties involved in the Iroquois Park project will gather to celebrate and officially toast all of the hard work that has gone into making it a reality.

For further information contact:

**Larry Cross, Mayor
Town of Sidney
250-655-1139**