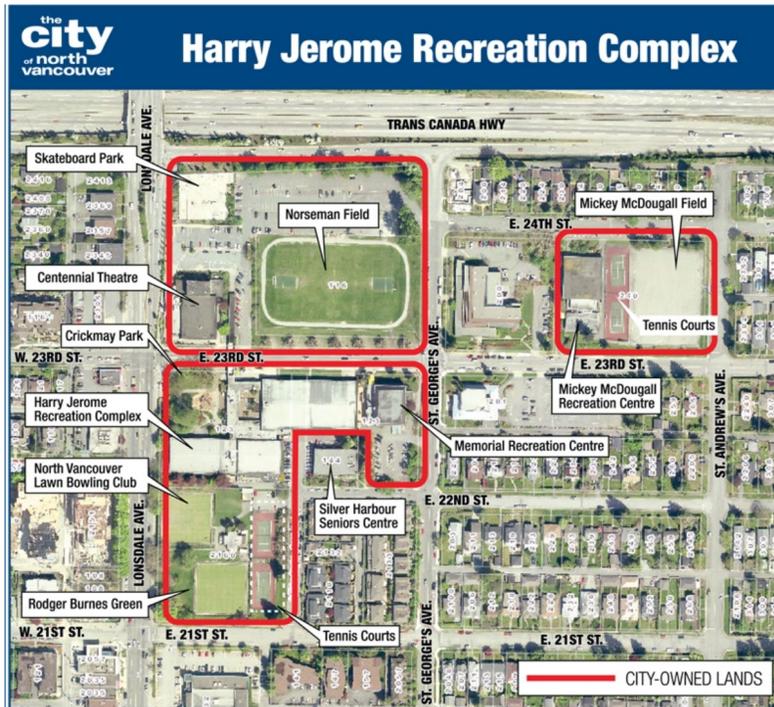


# HARRY JEROME RECREATION CENTRE MAY BE ON THE MOVE

By: Kerry Morris



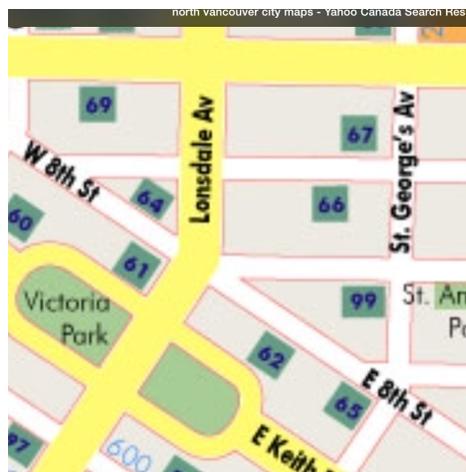
Harry Jerome Recreation Centre was constructed in 1965 as a Centennial Project. The rebuild of Harry Jerome has been a top priority for more than 10 years, but the renewal plans continue to founder.

In the recent election, various mayor and council candidates pledged to rebuild the facility.

Campaign promises ranged from rebuilding the facility on half the existing footprint, selling

the back or eastern half to fund the rebuild, separating the ice-rink from the existing product mix and moving it to a new P3 facility located at Lucas Centre, building a 50 meter Olympic size pool in stead of a 25 meter in addition to a leisure pool, leaving the Lawn Bowling Greens untouched, and building an all new stand-alone Silver Harbour facility at twice the existing size complete with underground parking. But no one spoke of closing and moving Harry Jerome to a new location, yet that is exactly what the Mayor and his 'Slate' are considering doing now.

Staff are hard at work coming up with a design option which would see Harry Jerome moved to the existing Telus site at the corner of Lonsdale in the wedge between 8th and 11th Streets. A move to this site (labeled 99) is problematic as the technology which would allow Telus to close the facility has not yet been perfected, but it may soon be possible.



But such a move has real problems and consequences for the City. First, the Mayor's proposal is believed to include a significant residential tower atop the proposed recreation facility in order to afford this grand plan. Second, parking is already at a premium so access to and from the facility would be pedestrian, bus or bike, but driving would simply not be an option, unlike the expansive parking available at the current Harry Jerome site. And finally, and

perhaps most importantly, a move 12 blocks south to the Telus site would make the new Harry Jerome facility less convenient to District residents who use these City facilities, which is the District's primary justification for maintaining the existence of the Rec-Commission structure. The Mayor, who hates anything that smacks of cooperation with the District because of his fear it will lead to a discussion on amalgamation, wants to see the Rec-Commission die, and this move would most certainly facilitate that objective. But the end may be closer than you might think.

The District is growing tired of the City's procrastination on every topic requiring cooperation, and the word around the District council chamber is that they are going to begin playing hardball with the City on every front. They may just steal a page out of Darrell's play book, and give him, Keating and the City the non-cooperation they have craved for so long. But the taxpayers will be the ones footing all the bills for this stand-alone mentality gamble.

What will this mean for the Harry Jerome facility and the Rec-Commission employees and users? It will mean fewer unionized jobs. It will mean higher membership fees, and it will mean the demise of the universal Rec-Commission membership card, which is North Van's own version of a municipal recreation passport. So if you swim, golf, curl, play soccer, tennis, use exercise rooms or weight training facilities, take swimming lessons or just enjoy any one of the many programs the Rec-Commission offers, you should pay attention to the 'Slate's latest idea. It may just mean you're not welcome at a District owned facility. And since they operate the largest number of North Shore facilities, that threat, if and when it becomes reality, will have real consequences for you.

So pay attention, the City report on the Telus option is due to be presented to council in the next month. Confirmation the plan is taking hold will likely manifest itself when a gaggle of developers and real-estate types are seen wondering the halls of Harry Jerome with tape measures, like vultures fighting over a piece of carcass. Along with the carcass will go all those safe unionized jobs for which CUPE pledged its heart and sole to the Mussatto 'Slate'. CUPE, if you want to blame someone for the job losses which are pending for your members, go home and look in the mirror. The face looking back will be responsible.