

Prince Harry to be invited to open Diamond Jubilee Park playground



By Brock Weir

Queen's Diamond Jubilee Park is set to be Aurora's first multi-faceted, fully accessible playground and with construction slated to be finished by the fall of 2017, Council is aiming to make its opening an event to remember.

And it could be a matter of ?go big or go home.?

Council is set to extend an invite to Prince Harry when he is in the Toronto area in September of 2017 for the launch of the Invictus Games, an international sporting event for injured and wounded service men and women the Prince founded after serving in Afghanistan.

Many of the participants lost limbs as the result or have been confined to wheelchairs and this park opening, featuring not only the accessible playground but sensory features for those living with autism and other activities for people of all abilities, is seen as a perfect fit for the Prince's interests.

?I am looking forward to when it is completed that we have a really huge launch,? said Councillor Sandra Humfryes at last week's General Committee meeting, before making a motion that the invitation be extended to Prince Harry ?or the appropriate representative of the Crown.?

According to the Councillor, as well as Councillor John Abel, the idea was first put on the table by John Lenchak, a member of the Town's Accessibility Advisory Committee, who pointed out the timing of Invictus 2017, which Prince Harry formally launched in Toronto last month.

?I think it is a really great opportunity with the timing of everything,? said Councillor Humfryes.

Added Councillor John Abel: ?It coincides with Invictus, so we should celebrate [the Grand Opening] at that time, for our jewel.?

While the motion was approved by Council at the Committee level last week and is set to be ratified by Council this week, Councillor Paul Pirri wanted to make sure that, after several starts and stops since he first proposed the accessible playground before the Queen's Diamond Jubilee itself in 2012, that it would indeed be complete by the time Prince Harry is back in Ontario.

?We should be up and operational by then,? assured Al Downey, Aurora's Director of Parks and Recreation.

Aside from the name, the royal history of Queen's Diamond Jubilee Park already runs deep.

Signage and plaques now on display at the John West Way park were formally dedicated by Prince Andrew, Duke of York, in 2014, following a fundraising lunch for Aurora's Queen's York Rangers.