

# NEWS RELEASE

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## City Developing Parks, Recreation and Culture Reopening Strategy

### Summary

After closing all indoor recreation facilities and cancelling all spring registered programs due to COVID-19 in mid-March, City of Nanaimo staff immediately started working on a reopening strategy. To help with this process, a guiding document "Guideline for Restarting Operations" was released last week to parks and recreation members and stakeholders throughout the province. It was developed by the BC Recreation and Parks Association in consultation with the Province, WorkSafe BC and other professional organizations.

When facilities do reopen and programs restart, they could look very different than what has been in the past to facilitate physical distancing, use of equipment, time for cleaning and disinfecting and other safety measures as outlined by the BC Centre for Disease Control. For example, aquatics staff, usually at Westwood Lake Park, will be at various waterfront areas promoting water safety instead.

Although there are no set dates for reopening, work has been happening behind the scenes when the time comes to be ready. For example:

- All indoor facilities have been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected, including all high touch areas
- Many facility projects, including the annual pool maintenance, have been done while facilities have been closed to avoid future disruptions
- Summer daycamps have been redesigned to follow the safety protocols outlined by the BC Centre for Disease Control, BC's Chief Medical Officer and the BC Recreation and Parks Association (held mostly outside, fewer participants, non contact activities)
- Other adult-based outdoor programs are being programmed to start later this month

As part of the phased reopening that was announced by the Province for the BC Restart Plan, the City opened select outdoor amenities. This included tennis courts, pickleball courts and gated off-leash dog parks. Guideline signage for these areas is posted at each location to help residents understand how to remain safe and healthy during this pandemic.

Parks, trails and grass sports fields have remained open. Individual, not group play, is permitted. The return of group play on all sports field (including artificial turf fields) will resume once recommendations are received from the viaSport Governing Body and the Province. The City will review those recommendations and create a reopening plan specific to sports fields.

Beban Park Complex has been open and remains open for essential services like the Blood Donor Clinics and the satellite tax office.

*Strategic Link:* The City of Nanaimo is committed to the safety and well-being of its residents.

## Key Points

- City facilities and programs closed in mid-March and are reopening in phases as part of Nanaimo's Restart Strategy that is being worked on by City staff. Dates will be communicated once the strategy is complete.
- The City's reopening strategy will use the "Guideline for Restarting Operations" document to help balance the risks, resources, capacity and community demand to determine the timeline and process for restarting recreation programs and reopening facilities in Nanaimo.

## Quotes

"Staff has been working hard behind the scenes since we first closed to develop a strategy for reopening Parks, Recreation and Culture facilities, programs and services. We are eager to come up with a plan that will allow the community to participate at our facilities and in our programs because we know how valued these services are to our residents."

Lynn Wark  
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