



-- Press Release -- 25th May 2006 -- Range closure update --

PSA, the North Shore shooting range, which was closed at the beginning of the year because of safety concerns, eagerly awaits the GVRD's decision on their range upgrade proposal. The GVRD's decision on whether they will allow the range to be reopened is expected to be announced at the end of this week.

Last month PSA submitted a comprehensive upgrade proposal to the GVRD for the reopening of their North Shore shooting range. The proposal incorporates the same overhead baffle system used by many world class city based ranges in Europe, Australia and the US, which are designed to prevent bullets leaving the range. The club spent several thousand dollars putting the proposal together and hired an architect to draft the technical drawings of the baffle system. The club has also lined up contractors to start the work in June in anticipation of the GVRD giving them the go ahead to reopen the range. Mike O'Neill, President of PSA, said, we've been closed since December, everyday since has been a lost day for our athletes who are now training for the Beijing Olympics in 2008.

In March three PSA member athletes were forced to train in the US to make up for lost training time prior to attending the Commonwealth Games in Melbourne, Australia. Despite the closure, two of them won four medals at the Games. While the overhead baffle system is more than what is required for this type of range, due to its topography and given its relatively remote location, it's worth the price tag if it means we get to reopen the range soon, said O'Neill.

The baffle system is going to cost the club in excess of \$100,000, which although is expensive is substantially cheaper than constructing a new 100 metre outdoor range. Shooting athletes require natural light and natural wind conditions in order to practice for international events which are held at outdoor ranges. The North Vancouver range is also an obvious site for biathlon athletes; not only does the club have an extensive biathlon program in place, but its close proximity to the North Shore ski hills makes it an ideal training range for visiting overseas athletes who are looking to acclimatize themselves to local conditions before the 2010 Games.

The club recently underwent an environmental inspection, which was a condition the GVRD insisted on in addition to the safety upgrade. The club passed its last inspection in 1999. O'Neill attributes this to the club's policy of adhering to the best practices employed by all top range facilities by retrieving spent bullets and by being good environmental stewards.

The club has been located on the North Shore since the 1960s and is the only range within a 15 minute drive of downtown Vancouver. Today not only is it used as a training facility by a number of Team Canada's top able and disabled shots and provincial shooting team members it is also used by a growing number of junior biathlon hopefuls and local cadet teams. At the Commonwealth Games in March, BC athletes won 40% of Team Canada's shooting medals. If you look at this Province's recent record in this sport, BC has contributed a disproportionately high number of shooting athletes to Team Canada, and has the medals to prove it, said O'Neill.

In addition to the club's Commonwealth Games medalists, it was a British Columbian, Jim Patton of Chilliwack, who won the coveted Queens Prize Cup (considered to be the equivalent of winning Wimbledon in the competitive target shooting world), at Bisley in the UK last summer.

We have some of the best shooting athletes in the country living in this Province, and they deserve the same acknowledgement and access to facilities we give our other top sports athletes. Allowing PSA to reopen will go along way to ensuring we continue to win medals for Canada in this sport, concluded O'Neill.

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