

**PRINCE RUPERT PORT AUTHORITY INVESTS IN
NEW ACCESSIBLE PLAYGROUND**

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PRINCE RUPERT, BRITISH COLUMBIA – Lax Kxeen Elementary School's playground is now safer and more inclusive with newly installed accessible equipment, thanks to the Prince Rupert Port Authority's (PRPA) Community Investment Fund. The new space provides a place for children of all ages and abilities to explore and play, while also offering unique opportunities for occupational therapy in a fun, informal environment.

The playground was built through a partnership between the Prince Rupert Port Authority's (PRPA) Community Investment Fund, Lax Kxeen Elementary School Parent Advisory Committee, School District 52, and other local supporters, with the goal of creating an accessible outdoor asset for the benefit of the school, as well as families in the community. The school's existing playground equipment was not suited to people of all physical abilities and the Committee took the initiative to create a more inclusive space.

"Having a safe and accessible outdoor space is imperative to making all members of our school community feel welcome and included. Thanks to the support of the Prince Rupert Port Authority's Community Investment Fund, we are able to give children of all physical abilities a place to play," said Natalie McLean, Lax Kxeen Elementary School Parent Advisory Committee Vice Chair.

"We recognize that learning through play is an essential part of childhood development and by building safe spaces like the Lax Kxeen Elementary School accessible playground, we are creating chances for kids to strengthen their bodies and minds alongside their peers," said Shaun Stevenson, President and CEO of the Prince Rupert Port Authority.

The playground was designed with guidance from School District 52's Occupational Therapist James Wintle, who selected equipment that could be used by people with a range of physical abilities. The play space includes a carousel with features that allow people with different mobility issues - whether they require a wheelchair, walker, or cane - to enjoy the equipment in the same way as those who do not require support. Likewise, the recycled rubber material used on the surface of the playground can be navigated on foot or on wheels, meaning strollers can easily roll anywhere.

"During the pandemic, we've seen children experience more sedentary time because many activities have been cancelled. This playground is getting kids back outside, excited to move their bodies and providing them with opportunities to target different muscles and develop their motor planning skills," said Wintle.

PRPA committed \$70,000 from its Community Investment Fund to support this nearly \$250,000 project. School District 52 will manage and maintain the playground. PRPA has invested

\$430,000 in six playgrounds in the Prince Rupert and Port Edward areas through its Community Investment Fund.

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ABOUT THE PRINCE RUPERT PORT AUTHORITY'S COMMUNITY INVESTMENT FUND:

The Community Investment Fund is financed by a share of the Prince Rupert Port Authority's annual net income that has been dedicated to improving the quality of life for residents of the North Coast. By investing these funds into community projects, led mostly by dedicated local volunteers, the Port Authority has been able to share its financial success with the communities that enable it. Since 2009, more than \$12.5 million dollars have been committed to the Fund, helping to make 83 local projects come to life. Each of these projects has filled an important role in supporting arts and culture, recreation, health and wellness, youth, education, the environment, and other needs in the community.

FOR MEDIA INQUIRIES CONTACT:

Monika Cote
Manager, Corporate Communications
Prince Rupert Port Authority
250-627-2550
mcote@rupertport.com