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Seymour's plan won't help Northlands much

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Dear Editor:

I have grave concerns about the proposal currently being advanced by Seymour Golf and Country Club and Northlands Golf Course. I do not believe that it will solve their respective problems and I think

Seymour is unfairly promoting a cause that has bothered them for 60 years.

Each entity has revenue problems: Northlands due to a lack of play; Seymour due to a lack of members. The proposal is that by eliminating play by the public, (planned for 2016) Seymour will solve its problem of attracting new members and, by driving public rounds from Seymour to Northlands, it will solve Northlands' shortfall of rounds played and golf revenue.

Seymour has existed for 60 years as a private golf club with public play on Fridays and Mondays. It is this way because the land is owned by the District of North Vancouver. The deal is that by devoting more than 100 acres of land to a private golf club, the public golfers should be entitled to access it two days a week while paying a reasonable fee for it. As it has turned out that land has now become worth more than \$100 million.

Northlands was built at the urging of the public golfers of the North Shore through the amazing efforts of the North Shore Public Golf Course Society. After careful study and professional advice, council devoted another 130 acres of valuable land to golf that was designated to be for public golfers. Thus another \$100 million of land is now available for golf. This seems to suggest that district council has a responsibility to see that each of these two entities work toward a long-term solution to their stated revenue problems.

The fallacy of the current proposal is that Seymour will still have a problem replacing members leaving due to a general decline in private country club memberships in North America. High initiation fees make it expensive to join a club and even more painful upon having to leave it. Expansion of quality public golf courses, especially in the Lower Mainland, enables the golfer to have a variety of enjoyable alternatives for a game of golf without a large commitment up front. Northlands on the other hand will not benefit from very many rounds from disenfranchised golfers from Seymour. Golfers will drive up to one hour to play a golf course of their choice. Northlands will be too challenging for many of those Seymour public players who will have a myriad of choices elsewhere. Large events currently played at Seymour, if discontinued, will also go elsewhere. If Northlands is short 10,000 rounds they can only expect a few hundred to come from the Seymour changeover and this will not solve their problem.

What is needed now is a serious study of appropriate financial modelling of public golf by Northlands and of private club golf by Seymour. There are a multitude of changing habits forming in the spending of casual time. The likelihood is that there will need to be some serious adjustments made to present marketing techniques based on the changing needs of golfers. District council has entrusted more than \$200 million in real estate value to these two golf entities. They each owe it to district taxpayers to provide appropriate and self-sustaining golf facilities to the golf community of the Lower Mainland in general and to district residents in particular.

I have an everlasting love and admiration of Northlands and I very much enjoy periodic visits to the Seymour Club. I sincerely hope that they can each find ways to their respective successful futures.

Laurie Craddock, former general manager, Northlands Golf Course

(Editor: The valuation Mr. Craddock places on the golf courses is dependent on the type of zoning and development placed on the land.)