

ADSS All Weather Artificial Turf Field Renewal: Shared Leadership, Shared Solution

Briefing to the
Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District (ACRD) Board of Directors

How Did We Get Here?

- Installed in 2012 and now beyond expected service life (≈10–15 years), a much shorter lifecycle than typical infrastructure.
- Safety and drainage concerns increasing; engineering review recommends replacement.
- At the time the asset was originally provided by the Ministry of Education and Child Care, the School District did not establish a dedicated reserve for its eventual replacement. As asset management practices have evolved, the District is now examining options to fund its imminent replacement while also developing a sustainable financial strategy to support the asset's renewal again in approximately 10–12 years.
- Artificial turf replacement is **not eligible for targeted Major and Minor Capital funding through the Ministry of Education and Child Care.**
- Operating budget is finite and enrolment-driven; ≈90% is allocated to salaries and benefits, leaving no capacity to absorb a \$1M infrastructure replacement.
- Media coverage may have suggested the ATF replacement request is linked to the operating budget shortfall. These are separate matters. ATF replacement is a capital project, and partnership discussions relate only to replacing this asset.
- Community reliance grew without a long-term partnership model; rental rates were heavily discounted and did not build adequate reserves.
- Provincial education funding (through taxation) supports school programming and student use. The turf field also serves significant community recreation use outside school hours, highlighting the need for a shared partnership approach to its replacement.

What's at Stake: A Community Asset



Community Use

Youth Soccer: ~600 participants (Sept–June).

Adult Soccer: ~60 participants (Sept–March).

Youth Field Hockey: 100+ participants (only suitable facility in Port Alberni).

100+ community volunteers supporting programming.

School Use

1,300+ ADSS students (PHE curriculum; daily instructional use).

120–160 student athletes (school based extra-curricular soccer & field hockey).

Community Use / Prime usage and hours are outside the school day. 5:00 – 9:00pm weekdays 8:00 am to 8:00 pm on Weekends

Without replacement, access may need to be restricted to school use only by Spring 2026; Field hockey programming would end and soccer programming would be significantly reduced.

Regional Impact

This is regional recreational infrastructure—not solely a Municipal or School District asset.

- Alberni Athletics Soccer Club (AASC): 39% of ~600 youth registrants live outside the City of Port Alberni—in the ACRD service area, including West Coast communities.
- Loss of Field Hockey Program.
- If the artificial turf field is closed, community soccer limits programming and shifts to using local grass fields instead.
- Fall/winter demand coincides with the heaviest rainfall—raising sustainability concerns for grass fields.
- Increased congestion across regional recreational facilities, reduces soccer programming and predicted reduction in participation.



How School District Funding Works

School districts operate with **three separate funding streams**.

Operating Fund

- Supports staffing and educational programming (≈90% salaries/benefits).

Special Purpose Funds

- Restricted grants for specific initiatives (e.g., playground projects such as the recent installations at Tsuma-as & AES).
- Artificial Turf replacement is **not eligible under special purpose funding**.

Capital Fund

- Supports buildings and major infrastructure.
- Capital funding does not provide a viable funding source for ATF replacement.

Bottom line:

The funding structure does not support this type of project.

Regional Recreation Infrastructure

ADSS Artificial All Weather Turf Field serves:

- School programming
- City residents
- ACRD residents
- Regional sport organizations

Regional use → regional solution

This is why we feel the need to ask that the ACRD consider:

1. Recognizing the ADSS turf field as a regional recreation asset;
2. Including the ADSS turf field within the Regional District's applicable service area(s), where feasible; and
3. Incorporating the ADSS turf field replacement into current and/or future Regional District workplans and capital planning priorities.

Best Practice: Partnership Model

Across Vancouver Island, school-based artificial turf fields are commonly delivered through shared partnerships involving:

- School districts
- Municipal or regional governments
- Community sport organizations
- Grants, sponsorship, and fundraising

Shared investment reflects shared community benefit.

Example - Vanier Secondary Turf Field (Comox Valley)

Partnership between:

- School District 71 (land)
- **Comox Valley Regional District**
- City of Courtenay
- Comox Valley United Soccer Club

The Comox Valley Recreation Commission provides a working partnership model.

[CVRD Sports Field Strategy](#)
[CVRD Artificial Turf Field Budget Options](#)

Across Vancouver Island, artificial turf fields on school property are typically funded through shared partnerships between school districts, local governments, and community organizations.

Replacement Analysis – Updated Findings

Option	Outcome
Synthetic Turf Replacement	≈ \$1.0M – Maintains current play and all-weather community access
Natural Grass Conversion	Not feasible due to geothermal infrastructure and significantly reduced playable hours

Without a replacement plan and shared partnership funding, the field will ultimately face closure to community use.

Illustrative Shared Funding Model

Estimated Project Cost: ≈ \$1.0M

Partner	Illustrative Contribution
Pacific Rim School District	≈ \$400,000 + land and ongoing maintenance
City of Port Alberni	≈ \$200,000
Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District	≈ \$200,000
Community fundraising / grants / sponsorship	≈ \$200,000

Final funding arrangements would be determined collaboratively through a partnership agreement.

Immediate Replacement & Sustainable Future

NOW → ⚠ Immediate Replacement

The immediate need is a shared partnership to fund replacement of the artificial turf field.

The field is beyond its expected service life, and continued operation without replacement is not sustainable.

FUTURE → ✓ Sustainable Model

Future partnership model could include:

- Adjusted rental rates and user fees to support long-term replacement
(Community user groups have indicated this is a reasonable approach.)
- Annual contributions to a joint lifecycle replacement reserve
- Lifecycle planning requirements within joint-use agreements

Lifecycle planning spreads replacement costs over time, keeping annual contributions manageable.

The Ask: Shared Responsibility, Shared Solution

Current Partners:

Pacific Rim School District, City of Port Alberni, Alberni Athletics Soccer Club, and Alberni Field Hockey are at the table.

We invite the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District to participate in developing a shared replacement solution.

Goal: Develop a sustainable replacement plan for this regional recreation asset.

The field has always been a shared benefit; now it needs shared leadership.