

On schedule getting Equestrian Park ready



Sierre Excavating Enterprises of Bolton have their equipment working on the show jumping ring that's going to see most of this season's action.

By Bill Rea

The Caledon Equestrian Park at Palgrave currently looks like a big construction site, because that's basically what it is.

But that's not going to be the case for long, as the facility is less than a month away from hosting its first horse show of the season. A total of 16 are in the works for this year.

But the real work that's in progress to get the park ready to host the 2015 Pan/Parapan American Games.

The changes to the site are being conducted under the supervision of Christian Bauer, a footing specialist listed under the International Equestrian Federation (FEI).

Marc Seguin, senior project manager for the Town, said everything is on schedule. Connections for Hydro, gas and water are in, and storm water management facilities have been installed. The plan is to have the site hooked up to the Peel Region water system this week (meaning it will be off wells).

"We are on schedule," he declared. "Everything we needed to achieve by May 1 is on track."

Bauer, who has worked on projects around the world, including in Spain, Portugal and Mexico, said the footings for the competition areas requires various levels of material (including aggregates) to provide for proper drainage, as well as for a surfaces that will be safe for the horses. The materials include geotextiles, shredded to a size specified in the equine industry with fibres that create a root system in the ground, making it more stable.

"The health of the horse depends very much on this layer," he said.

Seguin said the project is being carried out in a phased approach to make sure the current operation and competition schedule can proceed.

The current phase involves a competition ring for the coming season. It's south of the main ring and pavilion, and work there will be taken care of in the second phase.

Craig Collins, of Equestrian Management Group Inc., said the ring that's currently being developed will be a 30-minute warm-up ring for the main competition area in 2015.

Despite the deadlines, Bauer said they will be able to complete the work in the available time.

"We don't have to rush and do everything unprofessionally," he remarked.

Seguin said one of the good news stories involved with the project is the use of local companies and material. The current work on the site is being carried out by Sierre Excavating Enterprises of Bolton. The aggregate material has come from James Dick Construction.

The main entrance to the site is going to be off Buckstown Trail to the north, which runs between Highway 50 and Mount Hope Road, and Collins said there will be an appealing gate feature there.

He also said a lot of thought and planning has gone into the making the facility functional for both competitors and spectators, both for the 2015 Games and beyond.

"A lot of planning went into making sure the Games are accommodated, along with a legacy venue," he remarked.

Memorial trees have been planted for some of the outstanding horses that have competed at Palgrave. Collins said there is one for Big Ben, Ian Millar's legendary mount, and one will be placed in memory of Hickstead, who Eric Lamaze rode to Olympic gold in 2008. He also pointed out these trees help beautify the area.

Planning the facility for the Games has been something of a puzzle, but Collins said they're confident they have everything worked

out.

?I think we've got all the multiple pieces of the puzzle figured out.

?The Games provide us the opportunity to upgrade the facility,? he said. ?It's going to serve the sport and the community incredibly well for the next several generations of athletes.?

There are other details that need to be finalized.

Seguin said the current plan is to have spectators attending the Games park at Albion Hills Conservation Area, and then take shuttle buses to the park. he said they are hoping to have an operational plan ready to look at in about six months.