

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **SOOKE SCHOOL DISTRICT SEEKS FUNDING FOR NEW SCHOOLS AND ADDITIONS**

**LANGFORD, BC** – The Sooke School District Board of Education approved the Five-Year Capital Plan submission to the Ministry of Education and Child Care at last night’s public board meeting. The Five-Year Capital Plan identifies and prioritizes major capital projects required in the District.

“The Sooke School District is still experiencing exponential growth with an enrollment projection of another 650 students for the 2023/24 school year,” said Scott Stinson, Superintendent/CEO of the Sooke School District. “Without new school and addition approvals, we are looking at a dire situation in the District in the next few years. A new school build takes roughly three to five years for design, build and to open. By the time our new schools open, they reach capacity very quickly and we are experiencing that with Belmont Secondary, Royal Bay Secondary, PEXSISEN Elementary and Centre Mountain Lellum Middle School.”

The enrolment growth will affect multiple schools across the District for the 2023/24 school year and those schools will see multi-purpose spaces used for such things as art or music transformed back into classroom space. There are currently 55 portables in use for classrooms and \$1.4 million has been allocated to purchase and move portables for the upcoming school year. With no capital funding approvals for new schools or additions from the Ministry in 2022/23, the District is projecting a need to purchase 50 additional portables to accommodate student growth by 2027.

In comparison to another fast-growing school district in the province, the Sooke School District portable ratios per student are 1:234 compared to Surrey School District which is 1:208. Portables are not funded by the Ministry of Education and Child Care through capital funding. It comes of the operating budget, the same budget that is used to pay for teachers, education assistants, technology, books, specialists, social workers, supplies, etc. The average cost to relocate a portable is \$200,000 and to purchase a new portable is \$400,000.

“We have reached a critical point in our growth as a district. Without approvals for new schools and additions, we are projecting a deficit of nearly 1350 seats for the upcoming school year and another 2500 by 2027,” said Amanda Dowhy, Interim Chair for the Sooke School District Board of Education. “Continuing to fund portables as a space mitigation strategy is not sustainable for any growing district, but for one growing as quickly as ours, it could prove detrimental to the quality of education if our Board is forced to choose between spaces for students and educational supports. Our operating budget needs to be focused on supporting the learning journey of our students and not on purchasing or moving portables to accommodate them. We need new schools and increased spaces, and we need those today.”



The Sooke School District has identified the following projects that require major capital investment in the next five years to accommodate enrolment growth:

New schools:

- Elementary school in North Langford
- Secondary school in North Langford
- Elementary school in South Colwood
- Middle school in North Langford or South Colwood
- Elementary school in Sooke

Additions:

- Ruth King Elementary
- Spencer Middle School
- Edward Milne Community School
- David Cameron Elementary
- Millstream Elementary
- Westshore Secondary

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**For more information, contact:**

Kristen McGillivray (250) 686-3750  
Manager of Strategic Communications

