



May 7, 2026

The Honourable Bowinn Ma
Minister of Infrastructure
Province of British Columbia
Victoria, BC

by email

Dear Minister Ma,

Thank you for the recent phone call on April 29th and the subsequent conversation on May 6th. I appreciated your comments regarding commitment to making the Carihi Secondary School fire restoration a top priority. I am writing to you in my capacity as Chair of the Campbell River School District Board of Education. Our board wishes to emphasize the urgency in seeking your assistance in expediting the replacement of lost facilities – a gym and classrooms – that significantly impact students and the greater community.

Carihi is not simply a school facility; it is a cornerstone of our community and the primary secondary school serving hundreds of students and families in Campbell River. The visibility of the gym adjacent to a main thoroughfare of Campbell River, Dogwood Street, clearly illustrates the lack of action 530 days after the fire. At the public board meeting Tuesday evening May 5, the Carihi PAC and our board expressed grave concerns about the lack of Ministry response. The frustration has now taken the form of a community-led online petition, which has gained significant support in a short period of time. The petition reflects an emphatic call for action underscoring both the urgency of the situation as programming of all students has been impacted. Students and staff have had to shift to a double-block system to accommodate busing and access to a gym three kilometres from Carihi. As a result, all secondary students at Carihi are currently scheduled for two multi-hour classes per day. The strength of the collective voice of the Carihi PAC signals how deeply this issue affects our students' learning environments, well-being, and sense of stability. As one parent noted, her child may likely graduate without ever having seen the inside of his school gym. A detailed overview of the plea made by the Carihi PAC can be viewed at <https://www.rebuildcarihigym.com>.

We note that the Premier's mandate letter to you, as Minister of Infrastructure, clearly emphasizes the importance of timely, coordinated response to school construction needs, particularly where disruptions have an immediate impact on the students and families. The mandate highlights expectations around reducing delays, improving project delivery, and ensuring that critical public infrastructure, especially schools, receives prompt attention. Our board fully endorses the Carihi PAC request for clear rebuild timelines, dedicated funding, and facilities that address student needs.

Yes, the Board of Education recognizes the complexity inherent in major capital projects and understands the challenges government and ministry staff face when navigating competing needs. That said, as a district that has responded to at least 30 requests for additional information often made individually and all of which have been responded to promptly, the time has come for a stated commitment and demonstrated action. We respectfully ask that the Carihi project be treated with the urgency its circumstance warrant, and that all possible steps be taken to accelerate timelines and provide our district and community with a clear next steps pathway.

Our shared goal is simple: to ensure that Campbell River students can learn in safe, stable, fully restored facilities as soon as possible. As parents have so clearly stated, evidence of shovels in the ground during the summer would go a long way to restoring their faith in a process that to date has felt unresponsive. We believe that a focused, collaborative approach between the Province, the Ministry of Education and Childcare, and the Ministry of Infrastructure can achieve that outcome.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look to you as our advocate and champion. We would be very willing to discuss next steps or share any evidence of progress that can be shared with students, parents, and our community.

Respectfully,



Craig Gillis
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Campbell River School District
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cc: The Honourable Lisa Beare, Minister of Education and Child Care
The Honourable Anna Kindy, MLA North Island
The Honourable Misty Van Popta, MLA Langley-Walnut Grove
Mayor Kermit Dahl and Council, City of Campbell River, BC
Carihi Secondary School Parent Advisory Committee

