

# School District 72 Board News

MEETING OF  
APR. 14, 2026

April 15, 2026  
INFORMATION RELEASE

*Please note these are not official minutes of the Campbell River Board of Education. Minutes are available from the school district website at [www.sd72.bc.ca](http://www.sd72.bc.ca). Find us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#) under @CRSD72.*

You can watch a recording of this meeting on the district's YouTube channel at: <https://youtu.be/Z6hktZ9mv7A>

## Chairperson Remarks

In his opening remarks, Chairperson Craig Gillis welcomed everyone back following spring break and noted how quickly the pace of the school year seems to pick up once students and staff return to school. He began by recognizing trustees and senior staff who had just returned from the BC School Trustees Association annual general meeting and congratulated Trustee McMann on receiving a 16-year service pin. He also acknowledged Trustee Hagen for his earlier lifetime recognition as an honorary school trustee and thanked both for their years of service and leadership.

Chairperson Gillis took time to explain the purpose of the annual general meeting, noting that it brings together trustees and senior management from school districts across British Columbia. He said the event supports advocacy, policy development and professional learning, while giving boards a chance to work together on issues that affect student achievement across the province. He also noted that the gathering offers valuable opportunities to network, share ideas and learn from other districts.

He highlighted several speakers and sessions from the conference, including an address from Education and Child Care Minister Lisa Beare, who spoke about provincial initiatives affecting school districts. He also reflected on a presentation from author and speaker Monique Gray Smith, who spoke about the importance of partnerships as school districts continue their work toward truth and reconciliation.

Chairperson Gillis also shared the impact of hearing Olympian Clara Hughes speak about mental health,

resilience and the power of support from others, noting her message about the difference one person can make in the life of a child.

Chairperson Gillis said the conference also included learning sessions on topics such as policy development, student safety, Indigenous student success, governance, communications, healthy food and helping children thrive. He said these sessions remind trustees and senior leaders that there is strong practice across the province and that there is value in learning from one another.

He then turned to the challenges ahead, noting that many communities across the province are facing difficult times and that school districts with stable or declining enrolment often face harder decisions than those in growing communities. He acknowledged that Campbell River has faced these pressures before and said the coming months may involve challenging conversations. Even so, he expressed confidence in the district's leadership and in the strength of those who serve students every day.

To close, Chairperson Gillis encouraged community members to consider running for school trustee in the upcoming fall election. He said the district is always looking for people with the time, commitment and moral purpose to help guide public education and invited anyone interested to learn more through the BCSTA website or by speaking with someone who has served in the role.

Watch this segment: [0:01:49](#)



## Superintendent Remarks

Superintendent Geoff Manning opened his remarks by noting the quick pace of the final months of the school year, with only 10 weeks of classes remaining and three board meetings left before summer. He shared that the district has now moved into staffing and budget season, with planning for the next school year already underway. Trustees were recently briefed on several upcoming principal and vice-principal appointments, which will be announced soon.

He also highlighted several upcoming events across the district. Carihi Secondary will present its musical *Something Rotten!* at the Tidemark Theatre starting on April 22. The production follows two brothers trying to write a hit play during the Renaissance and explores themes of creativity and staying true to oneself.

Looking ahead, he encouraged students to take part in the upcoming Interactive Trades Expo at Timberline Secondary on May 1. The event, hosted in partnership with the WorkBC Centre, North Island College, School District 71 and local industry partners, gives secondary students a chance to explore careers in the trades. Students can meet employers, try hands-on activities and learn about training pathways. He noted the strong turnout and range of interactive experiences at last year's event and said he looks forward to attending again.

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## Cortes Island Academy Offers Unique Learning Model for Rural and Remote Students

The Cortes Island Academy is helping students stay connected to learning on the island through an innovative, semester-based program that blends academics with hands-on, place-based experiences.

Principal Michael Datura shared an overview of the program with trustees, highlighting its role in supporting students who may not otherwise attend school, particularly those from rural and remote communities. About half of participating students are new to the district

or returning to formal education after time in homeschooling or alternative settings.

The academy runs as a five-month program from September to February and serves students in Grades 10 to 12. Learning is grounded in the natural environment of Cortes Island and connects science, English and other subjects through shared themes and essential questions. Students also earn credits in areas such as outdoor education, leadership and the arts.

Each year follows a rotating theme, such as earth, air or water, which shapes coursework and student projects. Alongside traditional assignments, students complete major creative work including documentary films, podcasts or art installations. These projects often focus on local knowledge, including partnerships with Elders, artists and community members.

Community connection is a key part of the program. Students host a weekly radio show, take part in guest lectures and present their work at a public showcase that draws strong local participation. The program also supports leadership and social opportunities through outdoor activities and events.

The academy was created to address a long-standing gap in secondary options on Cortes Island. In the past, many families left the island when students reached high school. The program aims to improve retention and provide a local pathway for students, including Indigenous learners, to remain in their community while completing their education.

Enrolment at Cortes Island School has grown since the program began, and the academy continues to attract students from across the region. Early results show strong outcomes, with graduating students moving on to post-secondary education.

The program operates with a mix of district funding, grants and community support. Over the past four years, about \$700,000 has been raised to support its operation, allowing the district to offer the program without charging tuition to students to date.



Challenges remain, including limited space, the need for a more stable funding model and securing homestay options for students coming from outside the island. The district is exploring solutions, including a potential residential model and expanded program structure in the future.

Looking ahead, the long-term goal is to grow the program to a balanced cohort of local, district and out-of-district students, helping sustain both the academy and broader school enrolment on Cortes Island.

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## Board Changes Policy on Role and Responsibilities of the Superintendent

The Board of Education has adopted changes to its board governance policy on the role and responsibilities of the superintendent, streamlining three previous policies (General Expectations of the Superintendent, Role and Responsibility of the Superintendent, and Monitoring Superintendent Performance) into one comprehensive policy.

A notice of motion was given to allow for feedback at the board's March 17 public meeting, and the revised policy is now posted on the district's website under Board of Education/Governance Policies & Bylaws.

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## Ministry Approves Minor Capital Projects: Carihi Still Awaits Funding Decision

The Ministry of Infrastructure has approved funding for minor capital projects at Robron Centre, Timberline Secondary, and for district food programs.

Carihi Secondary's permanent repairs following the November 2024 fire are still awaiting Ministry funding approval before construction can proceed, and the board's other top capital project request – construction of a new Cedar Elementary School – has also not been approved.

Approved projects include a partial roofing upgrade at Robron Centre, a heating and ventilation upgrade at Timberline Secondary, and kitchen and equipment upgrades to support food programs across the district.

The Board of Education held all three readings and unanimously passed the required capital plan bylaw, allowing the district to receive the funds and move forward with these approved projects, but not before expressing extreme frustration with the Ministry of Infrastructure's delay in allowing the permanent repairs to Carihi to get underway.

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## Preliminary Budget Highlights Growing Financial Strain

The school district is projecting a preliminary operating deficit of \$1.8 million for the 2026-2027 school year, with trustees raising serious concerns about the long-term sustainability of funding for public education.

Secretary-Treasurer Kevin Patrick told the Board of Education that while the per-student funding amount remains unchanged, it does not keep pace with inflation or rising costs. At the same time, the district is forecasting a decline in enrolment, which will reduce overall funding.

The preliminary budget reflects increasing pressures across the system, including higher employee benefit costs, sick leave, utilities, and contracted services. Technology costs continue to rise well above inflation, and fuel prices remain a growing risk.

Patrick also noted that the ongoing benefit costs of provincially negotiated compensation settlements are not fully funded, leaving districts to absorb a portion of those costs within existing budgets. He said these unfunded costs now represent a larger pressure than inflation alone.

Trustees expressed frustration that funding has not kept pace with the real cost of operating schools. They noted that boards are increasingly being forced to make difficult



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decisions focused on balancing budgets, rather than investing in what best supports students.

Trustees also raised concern about the long-term outlook, noting that continued enrolment decline would create an ongoing structural deficit that cannot be addressed through short-term measures.

While provincial supports such as enrolment decline funding and funding protection will provide some relief, trustees said these measures do not address the underlying issue.

The board emphasized the need for funding that reflects inflation, fully funds negotiated agreements, and supports the actual cost of delivering public education.

Budget consultations have been underway, and recommendations to balance the budget will be shared at the next public board meeting on May 5, 2026.

Under provincial legislation, all school districts must approve a balanced operating budget by the end of June.

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