

School District 72 Board News

MEETING OF
SEPT 15 2026

September 16, 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.
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You can watch a recording of this meeting on the district's YouTube channel at:
https://youtu.be/37xA5_0ZuxA

Chairperson Remarks

Chairperson Craig Gillis welcomed students, families and staff to the first public board meeting of the 2026-2027 school year. He thanked trustees and district employees for the opportunity to serve the approximately 5,700 students attending schools across the district.

Reflecting on visits to several schools during the first week of classes, Chairperson Gillis described the excitement, anticipation and nervousness that often accompany the start of a new school year. He highlighted examples from across the district, including new secondary students learning about their school community, kindergarten students exploring their new schools and middle school students beginning classroom activities and assessments.

He also recognized the significant work that occurs before schools open their doors each September. Chairperson Gillis thanked employees for the planning, preparation and decision-making required to welcome students back. He offered special encouragement to staff beginning work at a different school, grade level or position, noting that change can be challenging but can also create opportunities for learning and growth.

Looking ahead, Chairperson Gillis acknowledged questions facing the district, including enrolment, budget pressures, the Carihi Secondary rebuild and how schools can help students develop the skills and confidence needed for their future. He said the board's strategic plan will continue to guide its work through three priorities: honouring Indigenous worldviews and perspectives, creating student-centred learning environments and evolving for tomorrow.

Chairperson Gillis concluded by recognizing the district's continued commitment to truth and reconciliation as schools prepare to mark Orange Shirt Day and the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30. He also congratulated the district's Director of Indigenous Education Anne Tenning on the publication of *I Am Indigenous*, which will be celebrated with a book launch at the school board office on September 29.

Watch this segment: [0:01:56](#)

Superintendent Remarks

Superintendent Geoff Manning also welcomed students and staff back for the 2026-2027 school year and thanked employees who worked throughout the summer to prepare schools and support summer learning programs. He noted that the district has approximately 184 instructional days to make a difference for students and encouraged staff to make the most of each one.

He highlighted the district's first professional development day of the new three-year school calendar. Staff across the district took part in learning focused on literacy, numeracy, social-emotional learning, mental wellness, inclusion and outdoor education.

Superintendent Manning also shared an early enrolment update. The district has registered 365 kindergarten students, exceeding its projection, and expects Grade 1 to 12 enrolment to be slightly above projections. Overall enrolment is still expected to decline. Official enrolment numbers will be confirmed following the September 30 student count and reported at the October 6 board meeting.



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He advised that the district will provide monthly updates on the restoration of Carihi Secondary, including the gym rebuild and the future replacement of a school wing.

Superintendent Manning also announced that Will Henderson has been hired as the district's full-time Knowledge and Cultural Keeper. Greg Henderson has joined the district in an additional part-time role, and a language teacher has been hired to support the Indigenous language program at Ripple Rock Elementary.

In closing, he also recognized Anne Tenning, the district's director of Indigenous education, on the publication of her book, *I Am Indigenous*. The book features work by Indigenous illustrators and explores a range of Indigenous identities and experiences.

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Board Heard Public Presentation Supporting Second Artificial Turf Field

The Campbell River Board of Education heard a public presentation supporting a proposed second artificial turf field at Robron Park but made no new decision on the requested land lease.

Presenter Brian Westdorp asked the board to approve a lease that would allow school district land to be used for the field. He said the project would increase year-round access for school and community sports and described the existing artificial turf field as operating at approximately 93 per cent capacity.

The presenter said the district was not being asked to fund, construct, operate or maintain the proposed field and that those responsibilities would rest with the city and its partners. He said the request to the board was limited to approving a land lease.

Trustees said they support recreation opportunities but need more information before making a long-term decision involving school district property. They noted that the proposal arrived late in the previous school year and

involves legal, land-use and planning considerations that could have effects for decades.

The board had previously decided that the matter should be revisited after the next board takes office. Correspondence received about the proposal, Pinecrest Park and related traffic issues will remain available to the current and incoming boards.

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Board Approves Audited Financial Statements, Reserve Transfers and Long-Term Financial Priorities

The Board of Education has approved School District 72's audited financial statements and reserve transfers for the year ending June 30, 2026, following a detailed financial review presented by Kevin Patrick, secretary-treasurer, and external auditor Graham Roberts of MNP LLP.

The district finished the year with an operating underspend of approximately \$960,000, representing about 1.2 per cent of its overall budget. On a consolidated basis, including all operating, special purpose and capital funds, the district reported an annual surplus of approximately \$933,000. Trustees were advised that the result reflects careful financial management across the organization during a year that continued to include significant pressures related to enrolment, employee benefits and ongoing recovery from the Carihi Secondary fire.

During his Financial Statement Discussion and Analysis presentation, Secretary-Treasurer Patrick said the positive year-end result allows the district to begin rebuilding reserves that had declined significantly in recent years as the board worked to absorb operating deficits and maintain student services. Trustees heard that district reserves had fallen from several million dollars to approximately \$1 million before beginning to recover this year.

The board also approved reserve allocations supporting several priorities, including school carry-forwards, strategic learning initiatives, child care operations and emergency



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contingencies. Some reserves remain restricted for specific purposes, including Indigenous targeted funding and Indigenous Education Council initiatives.

Trustees also received an update on the financial impacts of the November 2024 fire at Carihi Secondary. The district was required to cover significant restoration and recovery costs while awaiting insurance reimbursements. Staff reported that insurance payments worth several million dollars were delayed for months, affecting cash flow and reducing investment income. Although reimbursements have now begun to arrive, the district continues to work through the final stages of the claims process.

The financial review also confirmed that district advocacy efforts related to a provincial teacher benefit funding issue were successful. Earlier this year, School District 72 raised concerns that changes to the provincial funding model could create an annual shortfall of approximately \$400,000. Patrick reported that the district has now received confirmation that funding will be provided, avoiding what would have become a significant ongoing budget pressure.

Throughout the discussion, Secretary-Treasurer Patrick emphasized that one-time surpluses cannot be used to fund ongoing operating costs without creating future financial risks. District policy directs that year-end surpluses be used primarily for one-time investments, reserve replenishment and financial contingencies that support long-term sustainability.

The board unanimously approved both the audited financial statements and reserve transfers, positioning the district to address infrastructure, technology and operational priorities while continuing to strengthen its financial position for future years.

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District Plans Replacement of Payroll and Financial System

School District 72 will begin planning to replace the ageing computer system that supports payroll, human resources

and accounts payable after the board approved a proposed \$500,000 reserve allocation.

The enterprise resource planning system has been in place for approximately 30 years. The district began reviewing replacement options about five years ago, but earlier financial pressures delayed the work.

The urgency increased after the system stopped working for several days during the summer. The interruption affected human resources, payroll and accounts payable functions, although district staff had emergency backup measures available if critical deadlines were reached.

Secretary-Treasurer Kevin Patrick told trustees that the allocation is intended to cover the expected purchase of a replacement system and provide some support for implementation. Final costs will depend on an updated review of available products, annual fees, staff support and the work required to clean and transfer existing data.

The district expects implementation could take about a year but will confirm the timeline after completing a more detailed review. The expenditure will come from reserves because it is a one-time capital or implementation need rather than an ongoing operating program.

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Board Approves 2027-2028 Minor Capital and Food Infrastructure Submissions

The Campbell River Board of Education has approved School District 72's 2027-2028 minor capital plan submission, which includes proposed upgrades to school facilities, renewable energy projects and future playground replacements.

Secretary-Treasurer Patrick told trustees the province has advised school districts that less minor capital funding may be available in future years and encouraged districts to submit smaller, more targeted projects. As a result, some larger initiatives, including work at Southgate, have been divided into phases and submitted through different funding programs.



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Among the projects included in the submission are proposed solar installations at Sayward School and Cortes Island School. The plan also identifies Ripple Rock Elementary and Willow Point Elementary as the district's next playground replacement priorities, based on the age of the existing equipment.

District staff noted that School District 72 typically receives provincial funding for one playground replacement approximately every two years. Approval of the submission does not guarantee that projects will proceed, as all requests remain subject to provincial approval and available funding.

Trustees also approved a separate 2027-2028 funding submission through the provincial Food Infrastructure Program. The program provides support for equipment and facility improvements that help schools deliver student food programs, including kitchen upgrades and equipment such as refrigerators and stoves.

If approved by the province, the funding would support the district's ongoing efforts to improve food program infrastructure and increase its ability to provide meals and nutritional support to students.

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