



# Board of Education

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## **A Message from the Greater Victoria School Board Chair:**

Young people around the globe are calling on all levels of governments to take decisive action on climate change. This should not surprise us, after all, it is their future that hangs in the balance.

Public education is tasked with preparing children for their future, and in so doing we must consider what future awaits them. The Greater Victoria School District declared a Climate Emergency this past June. We recognize that the breakdown of the stable climate and sea level under which human life has developed constitutes an emergency, and we are developing a Climate Action Plan that establishes targets and strategies in alignment with the United Nation's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's call to limit warming to 1.5 degrees.

Our Board of Education is urging other school districts to take similar steps and we are calling on the provincial government to support these efforts with resources. We need leadership at all levels to be working on solutions commensurate with the seriousness of the problem.

Despite the scientific consensus that our climate is rapidly changing due to human activities, there continues to be both a lack of understanding of the phenomena and its potential impacts. The science is complex, and many people face barriers to engaging with the facts. Dread and grief permeate discussions, and while it is tempting to look away we must instead be spurred to action.

Public education has an important role to play in supporting climate literacy in our communities. We need all citizens to have a basic understanding of the relationship between human life and Earth's climate system including the role climate plays in human and environmental health as well as social and economic stability.

While climate change is not always explicit as a core concept in BC's redesigned curriculum, teachers across all disciplines and grade levels are taking the initiative to build environmental education into their lessons. From daily weather logs in kindergarten

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classrooms, to middle school stream-keepers and poets, all the way through to complex computer modeling of climate systems in specialized high

school courses – there is a focus on ensuring students understand the scientific principles of climate and have the opportunity to explore what climate means for their world and their future.

Communities who understand climate science will be better prepared to respond and adapt to the challenges ahead. And we must be clear—there are challenges ahead.

In the face of these challenges, youth in Victoria, like youth across the country, are both frustrated and confused by the lack of urgency they see from the adults around them. This week's youth-led Climate Strike is evidence of their impatience.

Life, as we know it on Earth, is changing and as the window for action closes, the grown-ups seem to be carrying on as if its business as usual. The Climate Strike is a global effort by young people around the world to snap us out of our inaction.

Led by 16-year-old Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg who is capturing headlines around the world, youth are finding their voice on this issue. Locally we have many bright and passionate young activists stepping up to organize and inspire their peers.

With the support of their parents and teachers, these remarkable young people are leading the way. They demand emergency action to avoid climate breakdown. They demand an end to the age of fossil fuels. They demand respect for Indigenous rights.

We would be foolish to dismiss these demands. The children are the future, and we should be doing everything we can to ensure they have one to look forward to.

Yours sincerely,



Jordan Watters  
Chair, Board of Education

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