

Friday, June 4, 2021

Greater Victoria School Board Approves Budget for 2021-2022 School Year

VICTORIA, BC – The Greater Victoria Board of Education passed the Preliminary Budget for the 2021-2022 school year in the amount of \$254 million at last night’s Special Board Budget Meeting.

The Board of Education is required by law to submit a balanced budget to the Ministry of Education. The budget process is ongoing and extensive. Planning for this preliminary budget commenced in January 2021. Although the preliminary budget was approved June 3, 2021, the Board will continue to work with this budget until the final amended budget is submitted to the Ministry in February 2022.

“The District would like to express our appreciation to Rightsholders, students, stakeholders, staff and families for their overwhelming engagement in numerous meetings, impact statements, written submissions, presentations and debate,” said Superintendent Shelley Green. “Engagement in the budget process assisted the Board in balancing its budget and in addressing an \$8.7m shortfall, a difficult task amidst a pandemic when we know so many of our students and staff are experiencing challenges.”

While reducing services as far away from the classroom as possible, the Board was able to balance its budget, establish a reserve and provide new spending for important innovation and learning initiatives.

Budget highlights include:

1. \$4.8m projected surplus dollars were utilized to balance the budget
2. A reserve of \$821,000 is established
3. Total new spending of \$780,000 includes:
 - Continuation of Early Learning Framework Pilot Project \$240,000
 - Strong Start Learning Centre Supplement \$32,000
 - Enhanced Wrap Around Supports (COMPASS) \$86,000
 - Balanced K-5 Literacy \$427,000
 - Reconciliation & Anti-Racism Initiative \$50,000
4. Services upheld and maintained by the Board:
 - Counsellors
 - Education Assistants
 - Youth & Family Counsellors
 - Indigenous Education Department Clerical
 - Music, Band, Choir, Strings, Ukulele, Drumming at 95%

- Reading Recovery Coordinator Contract
- Reading Recovery District Staffing Continuation at Craigflower and Tillicum Elementary Schools
- Collaboration Time

5. Total Reductions of \$4,714,040 include:

- Board Office Administration \$484,227
- Benefits Premium Holiday \$297,600
- Equity of Opportunity \$718,268
- Student Device Technology Refresh \$329,279
- International Student Program \$611,419
- Vice-Principal Administration \$496,364
- School and Board Office Clerical \$439,843
- Teachers – Gifted \$350,501
- Music \$80,230
- Community LINK Food \$300,000

“The 2021-2022 budget did not come without its challenges. In this COVID-19 budget year, the Board was not able to fulfill all of the very important initiatives and staffing levels it has in the past. Top priorities for the Board during this budget process were: maintaining as many services to students as possible, responsiveness to the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations, Métis and Urban/off-reserve Indigenous voices, establishing a reserve and investing in the strategic plan,” said Secretary-Treasurer Kim Morris.

“These were very difficult decisions, which I know all members of our Board agonized over. Rightsholders, stakeholders, staff, students, parents and the wider community contributed a depth and breadth of perspectives we’ve not seen before and this helped us make better decisions,” said Board Chair Jordan Watters. “We are all learning and improving as we better understand the budget and how to improve our process. We have a lot of work to do going forward as we continue budget discussions this Fall. Prioritizing direct services for students comes at a cost. This conversation would be different if government put a higher priority on education. The Board’s advocacy for increases to public education funding is a top priority.”

The Greater Victoria School District has more than 20,000 students and 47 schools across six municipalities (Victoria, Oak Bay, Esquimalt, View Royal, Saanich and Highlands). We also recognize that we serve more than 1,500 self-identified Indigenous students that come from four different houses, two local Nations: Esquimalt and Songhees, and the Métis and Urban/off-reserve Indigenous Communities.

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One *Learning* Community

