



**The Board of Education of School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria)
Special Board Meeting
AGENDA**

**Wednesday, April 8, 2026, 6:30 p.m.
Broadcasted via YouTube
<https://bit.ly/3czx8bA>**

A. COMMENCEMENT OF MEETING

This meeting is being audio and video recorded. The video can be viewed on the District website.

A.1. Acknowledgement of Traditional Territories

The Greater Victoria School District wishes to recognize and acknowledge the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations, on whose traditional territories, we live, we learn, and we do our work.

A.2. Approval of the Agenda

Recommended Motion:

That the April 8, 2026 Special Board Meeting agenda be approved.

B. 2026-2027 ANNUAL BUDGET

Attachments will be posted on the website after the feedback period closes on April 6, 2026.

B.1. 2026-2027 Annual Budget Report

B.2. 2026-2027 Annual Budget Ministry Template

B.3. Draft Multi-Year Financial Plan 2026-2029

B.4. Budget Bylaw Readings

Recommended Motion:

That the Official Trustee of The Board of Education of School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria) agree to give all three readings of The Board of Education of School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria) 2026-2027 Annual Budget Bylaw at the Special Board Meeting on April 8, 2026.

Recommended Motion:

That The Board of Education of School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria) 2026-2027 Annual Budget Bylaw in the amount of \$330,693,988 be:

Read a first time on the 8th day of April, 2026.

Recommended Motion:

That The Board of Education of School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria) 2026-2027 Annual Budget Bylaw in the amount of \$330,693,988 be:

Read a second time on the 8th day of April, 2026.

Recommended Motion:

That The Board of Education of School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria) 2026-2027 Annual Budget Bylaw in the amount of \$330,693,988 be:

Read a third time, passed and adopted on the 8th day of April, 2026;

And that the Secretary-Treasurer and the Official Trustee be authorized to sign, seal and execute this Bylaw on behalf of the Board.

C. CORRESPONDENCE

C.1. March 30, 2026 Greater Victoria Teachers' Association (GVTA) to Official Trustee Bell – 2026-2027 Annual Budget Feedback

D. ADJOURNMENT

Recommended Motion:

That the meeting be adjourned.



Greater Victoria Teachers' Association

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March 30, 2026

Sherri Bell
Official Trustee
Greater Victoria School District No. 61
556 Boleskine Road
Victoria BC V8Z 1E8

Dear Official Trustee Bell,

The GVTA strongly opposes the cuts proposed in the 2026–27 SD61 budget. These reductions will have harmful impacts on student learning and well-being, particularly for students who rely on specialized supports to succeed in school.

We are providing the following information to outline the real and significant effects these proposed cuts will have on students in Victoria schools.

Continuing Education

The Continuing Education Department serves over 650 adults each year who were unable to complete high school in a traditional setting and have returned to finish their education. These students are often from at-risk and marginalized populations, including those in recovery, post-corrections, unemployed, newcomer and refugee students, and individuals experiencing homelessness. The program also serves a high proportion of Indigenous students.

The counsellor—currently staffed at only one and a half days per week—provides critical support by connecting students to community mental health services, recovery centres, housing, and women's shelters. The counsellor also supports transitions and liaises with external organizations that refer students directly to the program. This role is essential in giving adults who have struggled in school a meaningful second chance. It is neither realistic nor responsible to suggest that these supports could be absorbed by an equivalently overstretched counsellor in the Alternative Education program.

Middle School Music

Cuts to middle school ensembles such as choir, jazz band, and musical theatre would have impacts far beyond the loss of classes or performances. These programs foster creativity, collaboration, confidence, and a strong sense of belonging. They also provide enrichment to students who require additional opportunities to explore their potential. Jazz band offers a unique opportunity for deep musical engagement, while connecting students to an art form carrying deep historical and cultural significance. Choir and musical theatre are perhaps the most equitable and accessible programs, providing accessible entry points for music participation for students of diverse backgrounds, abilities and experience levels without any perceived financial barriers.

Participation in music programs supports student mental health and well-being through social connection and shared identity, and is linked to positive social outcomes. For many students, these programs are not extras—they are the reason school feels joyful and worth attending. Their loss would diminish student well-being and weaken school communities.

Pathways and Partnerships Career Centres

The Pathways and Partnerships program is a lifeline for many students, supporting successful transitions from school to the workforce. The teachers in this program work hard to connect students with local employers, work experience placements, mentorship, and dual credit opportunities, the program helps translate student interests into tangible pathways.

Students who benefit most from this program are often those who have struggled in traditional academic settings and thrive through hands-on, relational learning and one-on-one guidance. Reducing this support will severely limit access to meaningful opportunities and make it more difficult for students to see a clear connection between their education and future careers.

Pathways and Partnerships

The proposed restructuring of this three-person department—reducing a teaching position while maintaining the administrative role—raises significant concerns about the alignment of resources with student-facing services. Given the direct impact teachers in this program have on students across the district, we urge the Board to prioritize maintaining instructional capacity. Consideration should be given to alternative administrative structures that preserve frontline programming.

Speech and Language Pathologists

Current base funding for speech and language pathologists is already insufficient to meet student needs. With staffing at 11.2 FTE, services are stretched thin, leaving SLPs in a constant state of triage. A reduction of 0.2 FTE represents the loss of approximately one full day per week of assessment and intervention time, further limiting access for students who rely on fundamental communication supports.

Psychologists

A reduction of 0.1 FTE in school psychologists equates to the loss of capacity to assess approximately three to five students. Recruitment and retention are already significant challenges, given that psychologists can earn substantially more in the private sector. With waitlists for assessment in many schools already exceeding two years, further reductions risk both worsening delays and driving qualified professionals out of the district—leaving vulnerable students without timely support.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing

The current 3.2 FTE allocation is already stretched to support students with increasingly complex needs across 36 school sites, while also liaising with community agencies. A Ministry (POPDHH) audit conducted in the 2024–2025 school year concluded that the department is understaffed. Current staffing levels are the minimum required to maintain even a basic level of service.

Early Childhood Educators and Youth and Family Counsellors

Proposed cuts to early childhood educators and youth and family counsellors will leave teachers and other frontline staff struggling to fill critical gaps. These roles provide essential supports for students who require additional care, connection, and intervention. Their removal will disproportionately affect students with the greatest needs.

In the months prior to the presentation of the budget, the GVTA repeatedly requested information regarding the District’s approach to the anticipated deficit. Earlier transparency and meaningful consultation would have better supported informed decision-making.

When the proposed budget was finally presented, there was no meaningful opportunity to provide feedback or ask questions in a way that could influence outcomes. A process of this significance must include transparent and accessible opportunities for public

engagement, where decision-makers are accountable to the communities they serve. While roundtable discussions may support early information gathering and sharing, they are not a substitute for a formal, public, and responsive consultation process.

We urge the Board to reconsider these proposed cuts and to prioritize maintaining direct supports for students—particularly those who are most vulnerable. The decisions made in this budget will have lasting consequences for student success, well-being, and equity across the district.

We also call for a more transparent and inclusive budget process that allows for meaningful engagement before decisions of this magnitude are finalized. Our students deserve a system that reflects a clear commitment to access, support, and opportunity for all.

Please include this letter in the correspondence section of the April 8 Board Meeting Agenda Package.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carolyn Howe', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Carolyn Howe

President

Greater Victoria Teachers' Association