

NEWS RELEASE

April 16, 2008
For Immediate Release

COWICHAN VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT TO IMPLEMENT FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS

Duncan, B.C. – All ten recommendations designed to improve Cowichan Valley School District maintenance and facilities will be implemented by the Board of Education. Recommendations include a level one facilities audit and implementation of a comprehensive facilities plan. The review also recommends finalizing decisions on school configuration and size through the strategic planning process, a proactive plan to repair union/management relationships and the creation of a “culture of shared responsibility.”

Further recommendations call for the Annual Facility Grant from the Ministry of Education to be used only for maintenance and facilities – a requirement that has already been put in place by the Cowichan Valley School Board. Another recommendation is for the District to upgrade and fully utilize the current computerized maintenance system.

The final recommendation calls for the Ministry of Education, with the school district, to engage in a dialogue with the Cowichan Valley Regional District that is looking to amend a bylaw that would ensure school properties remain available for public use even if the schools are closed and properties sold. “Such a bylaw would fetter the district’s ability to dispose of public assets,” the review states.

Rick Connolly, a former B.C. Associate Deputy Minister of Labour, was engaged as a facilities consultant by the Ministry of Education to review and make recommendations on conditions of school facilities in the Cowichan Valley School District. He has recommended decisions be put on hold regarding school closures and the replacement of Cowichan Secondary School until the District has the comprehensive strategic plan in place.

The review notes the Cowichan Valley School District has recently hired a new Superintendent of Schools, a Director of Operations and a Manager of Facilities. Connolly says in the report he is optimistic that problems can be rectified.

“We appreciate the direction Mr. Connolly has given the Board and district administration,” says Cowichan Valley School Board Chair Brian Simmons. “We will immediately take steps to implement these recommendations to ensure continuing full utilization of all school facilities.”

Mr. Simmons says comprehensive facilities planning has already begun so schools across the district are consistently and proactively maintained and integrated with a long-range capital plan and that this year’s \$2.3 million Annual Facilities Grant allocation is being used specifically to maintain district schools.

There are a total of 34 schools in the Cowichan Valley School District educating approximately 8,600 FTE K-12 students. Eighteen are elementary schools, four are middle schools and four are regular secondary schools. The district also operates six alternate schools as well as two adult education facilities. The district has an annual budget of \$72.7 million.

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For More Information:
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1 backgrounder attached

School District website: www.sd79.bc.ca