

## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release  
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### **SOOKE SCHOOL DISTRICT ENROLMENT CONTINUES TO CLIMB**

**LANGFORD, BC** – Enrolment numbers for the Sooke School District continue to demonstrate a pattern of rapid growth. The addition of 680 new students from last year puts the district-wide headcount at 13,767 students.

#### Enrolment Snapshot

- Elementary: 5959
- Middle: 2828
- Secondary: 3914
- Online: 862
- Continuing Education: 204

“While we are pleased that our schools continue to be a destination of choice for families,” said Deputy Superintendent Paul Block, “the sustained growth pattern presents a real accommodation challenge for us now, and in the future.”

The number of students who are supported through our Inclusive Education Services Department grew significantly from 3824 to 4378 students, up 554 from last year. Students who receive English Language Learner support also increased from 1,125 students last September to 1,409 students this September. Students of Indigenous ancestry who receive language and cultural supports increased slightly from 1235 to 1243.

The Sooke School District has had a remarkable growth rate of 40% over the last 15 years and this year is no exception. The addition of 680 students this year represents a growth rate of 5%, putting the District among the fastest growing in the province. “We continue to have students in our District, specifically those in the Westshore who are unable to attend their catchment schools because there is no space,” noted Board Chair Amanda Dowhy. “As residential developments across the Westshore continue to expand, it is imperative that new school infrastructure and expansion funding coincide alongside them.”

The District is already using several growth management strategies such as seeking provincial capital funding for new schools and expansions to existing schools, increased use of portables (although the district’s inventory is already fully utilized) and use of overflow schools when a catchment school reaches capacity.



In heavily populated schools, all spaces, apart from the learning commons and the gym, have been converted back into general classroom space meaning flexible or multi-purpose space for programming like music, art, drama or small group learning is no longer available. This type of solution is a last resort as it negatively impacts the school environment and experience for students, staff, and families.

To understand growth pressures for a school district, visualize a school and its typical capacity. This year and last year, the district grew by the size of a typical middle school. The next new school in the District is not scheduled to open until fall 2025. With the continued development in the Latoria/Olympic View area in the Westshore, it is expected SCIANEW STELITKEĒ Elementary School will open near or at capacity.

“Simply adding more portables to our current infrastructure is not a feasible solution. The purchase and/or movement of portables places extreme pressure on our operating budget. The more operational dollars spent on portables, the less we are able to spend on students,” added Dowhy. For several schools, the physical addition of a portable is not possible.

Last month, the Ministry of Education and Child Care announced two prefabricated additions at Ruth King Elementary and David Cameron Elementary that will accommodate 380 students. The innovative investment outside of the regular budget cycle was a welcome relief to the heavily populated cores of Langford and Colwood. “We are grateful to be part of the Ministry’s prefabricated addition program,” said Dowhy. “These prefabricated additions will bring much needed relief to the downtown cores of Langford and Colwood. While these additions provide a welcome respite in our immediate space challenges, the continued heavy residential growth in newer neighborhoods throughout Langford and Colwood, with no end in sight, means we still need new schools.”

While it is impossible to predict exactly how many new students will join the Sooke School District in coming years, we collaborate with municipalities, review housing trends and statistical data to predict future enrolment trends. We are projecting to grow to over 16,000 students by 2030. Our capital plan submission to the Ministry of Education and Child Care addresses our immediate growth needs and supports the critical infrastructure investments required to support future growth.

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