

## Open Committee of the Whole Meeting

### Report to the Board

May 13, 2025

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#### In Attendance at Meeting:

**Committee Members:**

Michelle Waite, Board Chairperson  
Sarah Jane Howe, Board Vice Chair  
Chelsea McCannel-Keene, Trustee  
Shannon Aldinger, Trustee  
Susan Leslie, Trustee  
Janice Caton, Trustee

**Staff:**

Dr. Jeremy Morrow, Superintendent of Schools  
Carrie McVeigh, Secretary-Treasurer  
Vivian Collyer, Associate Superintendent  
Joe Heslip, Associate Superintendent  
Sean Lamoureux, Associate Superintendent  
Jay Dixon, Associate Superintendent  
Jennifer Nelson, Assistant Secretary-Treasurer  
Candice Hilton, Director of Finance  
Josh Porter, Director of Information Technology  
Molly Proudfoot, Director of Operations  
Gwynn Whyte, Manager of Human Resources  
Chelsea Ullstrom, Manager of Human Resources

**Regrets:** Cristi May Sacht, Trustee

**Recording Secretary:** Candace Jesson, Manager Administrative Services & Projects

**Partner Groups in Attendance:**

Comox District Teachers Association (CDTA)  
Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE 439)  
District Parents Advisory Council (DPAC)

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#### 1. WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER

The Board of Education acknowledges that we are on the traditional territories of the K'ómoks First Nation. We would like to thank them for the privilege of living on their land and the gift of working with their children.

The Board Meeting Chair welcomed attendees and called the meeting to order at 7:00pm inviting introductions by Board members, Superintendent, Secretary-Treasurer and partners.

#### 2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Pages 1-2

**Motion: (COWO-2025-05-13-01)**

THAT the Board of Education of School District No. 71 (Comox Valley) approve the May 13, 2025, Open Committee of the Whole agenda as amended.

Howe/Waite

**CARRIED**

School District No. 71 (Comox Valley) Board of Education

*Vision Statement - Compassionate, connected and personalized learning for all.*

*Purpose Statement - To create safe, equitable learning environments that lift each learner to thrive, grow and to share their unique gifts.*

**3. EDUCATION**

- a. None

**4. GOVERNANCE**

- a. None

**5. POLICY**

- a. None

**6. OPERATIONS**

- a. None

**7. FINANCE**

- a. **2025-2026 Annual Budget – Report and Presentation**  
Jennifer Nelson, Assistant Secretary-Treasurer and  
Candice Hilton, Director of Finance

Pages 3-42

Assistant Secretary-Treasurer Jennifer Nelson delivered the presentation on the 2025–2026 Preliminary Annual Budget, stating that the district is on track for adopting a balanced budget by June 30, 2025 (Ministry deadline). Highlights included a projected enrolment of 10,548 FTE, a projected revenue increase of \$3.1 million, and anticipated cost pressures related to teacher staffing, employee benefits, and support services. It was noted that any wage increases for unionized staff are unknown as there is no public sector mandate and bargaining has not concluded. As a result, any related costs/revenue will be reflected in the amended budget.

Included in the proposed budget: Indigenous student support, department heads, increases to school supply budgets, cybersecurity, and continued growth of flexible learning environments. A \$1.47 million transfer to local capital is planned, and the current contingency reserve sits within the Board's policy range at 2.67%.

Public survey feedback will be reviewed at the May 27, 2025, Regular Board Meeting, and the final budget, inclusive of capital, special purpose funds, any required adjustments, and recommended surplus restrictions, will be presented at the June meeting.

Trustees expressed appreciation for the balanced position, while questions arose regarding enrolment projections. The Superintendent noted a projected levelling-off in enrolment following the graduation of larger student cohorts, with growth primarily continuing through online learning. Modest growth assumptions were used in building the budget helping ensure that the district can sustain inflationary pressures.

Trustees requested a breakdown of Staffing FTE for the current and upcoming school year, and a better understanding of the “status quo” being referenced throughout the presentation. There was specific interest in Teacher FTE to be identified as discretionary vs. contractual.

Staff answered a number of questions from Trustees and partner representatives.

The budget report and presentation are attached to the agenda. For additional detailed information, the meeting is recorded and available to the public.

**8. OTHER**

- a. None

**9. ADJOURNMENT – 8:31 pm**

**Motion: (COWO-2025-05-13-02)**

*THAT the Board of Education of School District No. 71 (Comox Valley) adjourn the May 13, 2025, Committee of the Whole meeting at 8:31 pm.*

Howe/Waite

**CARRIED**