

SCHOOL
DISTRICT No. 83 SCHOOLS



Early
Learning
Fairs



Robotics
workshop



Jerseys
for
Humboldt



Poetry
Week



April 23, 2018

STAYING CONNECTED

~ A message from Official Trustee Mike McKay ~

To North Okanagan-Shuswap School District Community Members:

As we continue planning for the 2018/19 school year and all of the budget and organizational details that are part of a school district's work, I want to provide you with an update on several key issues:

1) Preliminary budget preparation: Senior staff and the budget committee, which includes partner group representatives, are reviewing the many thoughtful proposals that have come in for program and service enhancements for 2018/19. With anticipated enrolment growth, we expect funding from government to increase by close to \$3 million. A large percentage of that money will be needed to provide direct services to the additional students. We will likely have about \$500,000 of unallocated funds that can be used to support budget requests from staff, our partner group reps and from proposals presented at the public budget consultation session on April 16. A budget process and information overview can be accessed on the district's website at (<https://sd83.bc.ca/budget-process>).

The complete preliminary budget recommendation that is presented for adoption at the public board meeting of May 22 will be attentive to:

- Statutory and contractual requirements
- Linkage to the district's strategic plan (https://sd83.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/SD83_Strategic_Plan_Goals_Outcomes_Strategies-1.pdf)
- Confidence that any new initiatives can be sustained over time
- Additional efforts to meeting the needs of our vulnerable learners

We know there will be some very difficult choices to make and recommendations will be prioritized;

2) Property disposal information:

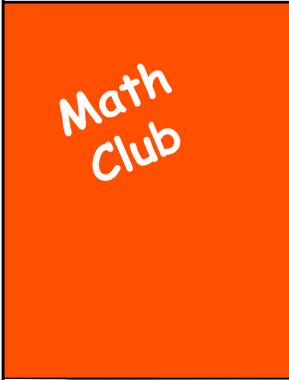
a) **Shuswap Middle School (SMS)** - We continue to work through the necessary steps to facilitate the sale of the subdivided portion of the Shuswap Middle School site. We anticipate significant interest in this property and will use any proceeds from the sale to improve learning environments for our students. Please see (<https://sd83.bc.ca/2018/03/26/upcoming-public-meetings/>) for

~ Continued ~

Exploring Art



Exchange trip to Japan



Math Club



Eagle River trip to Europe



Exploring electronics



previously shared information regarding the SMS property;

b) **Downtown Activity Centre** - In October 2015, the board of the day received updated approval by the Minister of Education to initiate proceedings for the sale of the DAC. At that time, the board decided not to sell the property. Many of you know that this facility was closed as an elementary school in 2003 and has been used for a variety of purposes since then. Currently, much of the building is leased and we have our Salmon Arm Storefront program operating there as well. While it is fully utilized, it is no longer justifiable for the school district to continue using operating funds to keep the building operating. Lease revenues cover many of the ongoing costs, but the district must annually allocate operating budget and time to maintain the property. I believe those funds should be made available to support other budget priorities. Most urgent is that we know there are several pending building and site improvements that would have a significant impact on our district's resources. Please note that to renovate the DAC so it meets current building standards and could possibly be used again as a school has been estimated to cost more than \$8 million.

Our draft plan includes:

- an information and feedback meeting for interested members of our community at 6:30 p.m. on May 2 at DAC;
- reviewing feedback from that meeting and preparing the documents necessary if we are to proceed with a sales process;
- repurposing part of the main floor at DESC to facilitate Storefront School students and staff;
- taking the steps required to make a capital program request to the Ministry for a new elementary school in downtown Salmon Arm. Funds from current property sales would contribute to such a project. You may know that the district owns an appropriate site for an elementary school on the field directly behind the DESC.

3) Transportation Update:

Thank you to all who have attended meetings or provided written commentary regarding the district's plan to revise and "right size" our transportation services. The original report (<https://sd83.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Transportation-Review.pdf>) did a comprehensive job of describing the challenges and the urgency to take significant action now rather than hoping the issues will resolve themselves (they won't). Here are the key points:

- a) our increasing enrolment has resulted in more eligible/registered riders on our buses, thereby limiting the district's capacity to provide services to courtesy riders. There are some days when buses are full to capacity and some students are unable to board the bus. We are not allowed to run beyond capacity, nor would it be safe;
- b) we do not qualify for Ministry funding to purchase any additional buses at this time. Those funds are available based on the data regarding eligible riders. There is no allowance made for courtesy rides;
- c) The many additions to our routes over time which were put into

place to accommodate courtesy riders (when enrolment was flat or declining) have resulted in some eligible riders being on the bus for up to an extra 45 minutes each way per day. That is not a reasonable situation;

d) policy in our district, and in most others, states that students attending programs of choice outside their local school catchment area are not eligible for district transportation. We have accommodated many of those students and will continue to have some space in the future, but much less than people are accustomed to. With the proposed changes, space will be available on existing routes designed for eligible riders. Current route extensions for courtesy riders attending schools or programs of choice will be eliminated;

e) suggestions that we levy a courtesy rider fee have been explored, but that plan would not solve the situation. Such a fee would be challenging to collect in a fair and equitable manner and we would still not have permission and funds for the \$123,000 per bus that would be required to expand our fleet. A courtesy rider fee could help to offset ongoing operating costs, but the biggest challenge is the size of the fleet;

f) following the April 11 consultation meeting and review of parent input, the Transportation Department has continued to work on minor route adjustments that would allow us to maintain transportation for K-5 children who are in our downtown core. The lack of a downtown elementary school results in many young children attending schools that are within walk limits but result in those children facing walking routes that are more than twice as long as the average for other elementary children attending their catchment school.

Doing nothing is not an option. Bus capacities are being reached and would be exceeded next year without a revised plan. We know that one of the key issues will be early and complete information to parents once the final recommendations have been adopted at the May 22 board meeting.

4) Prospective Trustee Information Session:

With the Board elections coming in October 2018, we are pleased to invite members of the community who are considering standing for election to attend an orientation session at DESC on May 7 at 6 p.m. There will be an opportunity to review the duties and authorities of a Board of Education, to discuss our district's Strategic Plan and to receive information and ask questions about the current priorities and challenges.

As always, I appreciate the support, the challenges and the suggestions that come from our communities as we work toward a positive and sustainable school system for our children.

Respectfully,

Mike McKay

Mike McKay, Official Trustee

Questions? Feedback? Please send me an email at trusteefeedback@sd83.bc.ca