

Comox school to get prefab addition of 11 new classrooms

Times Colonist

A Comox elementary school is the latest to get a prefabricated addition that can be built in about half the time conventional construction takes.

The 11-classroom addition to Aspen Park Elementary is being built with \$16.5 million in provincial funding, and will add 270 new seats to the fast-grow-

ing kindergarten-Grade 7 school.

"This project is a significant step forward in helping us meet the needs of our growing student population in a timely manner," said Michelle Waite, chair of the Comox Valley School Board.

The project is scheduled to be completed by the fall of 2025.

Prefabricated classroom additions in the Sooke School District

were announced last fall.

Construction is underway on a total of 16 new classrooms at Ruth King Elementary in Langford and Colwood's David Cameron Elementary, which will add another 380 student spaces.

The classrooms are expected to be ready for students by September.

The district has long been one of the fastest-growing

school districts in the province, with a student population that has grown about 40 per cent in the past 15 years, to 12,900 students.

"As B.C.'s population continues to grow, our government is finding the best solutions to get more students into classrooms as quickly as possible," said Education Minister Rachna Singh.

The Comox school addition will have an energy-efficient design and will align with CleanBC targets, the Education Ministry said.

The Comox Valley School District has seen the upgrade and partial replacement of Lake Trail Middle School and construction of a new Hornby Island Elementary School in recent years.

Helicopter rescue for injured hiker near Botanical Beach



A hiker who suffered a back injury on the Juan de Fuca Trail was airlifted to safety on Saturday, says Juan de Fuca Search and Rescue. It said Port Renfrew's volunteer fire department helped with the rescue, near Botanical Beach at the north end of the trail, and that helicopter assistance was required due to trail conditions. Three other Juan de Fuca trail hikers who got lost north of Bear Beach also called

for help on Saturday. Another team was able to locate and lead the hikers to a command post to warm up and dry off. Bear Beach is about nine kilometres from the trail's southern terminus. "These hikers did the right thing once they found themselves in a precarious position by staying in place and calling for help," the search-and-rescue team said. VIA JUAN DE FUCA SEARCH AND RESCUE

Nine Island towns land cash to speed up development approvals

Times Colonist

Nine Vancouver Island municipalities are among 38 towns and cities that will soon receive provincial grants designed to help them speed up the construction of new homes.

The goal of the grants, which range between \$100,000 and \$150,000, is to help communities improve development approval processes.

"We're leaving no stone unturned in our work to deliver more homes for people, faster," said Housing Minister Ravi Kahlon.

The Local Government Development Approvals Program, administered through the Union of British Columbia Municipalities, was created to help local governments implement best practices and develop ways to support non-profit housing organizations, developers and other stakeholders to speed up the delivery of homes.

The Regional District of Mount Waddington, for example, will get \$150,000 to develop a pre-application process so applicants are aware of requirements needed for their applications to reduce delays.

Also receiving \$150,000 are Nanaimo, Port Alberni, Courtenay, the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District and Comox. Cumberland will receive \$122,900, Oak Bay will get \$105,000 and North Cowichan will get \$100,000.

The province has set aside \$4.1 million this year for the program, open to all municipalities, regional districts and the Islands Trust.

Some residents able to move back in after fire at Nanaimo supportive housing facility



Samaritan Place supportive housing facility's residents were temporarily displaced following a mattress fire on Sunday. VIA B.C. HOUSING

MICHAEL JOHN LO
Times Colonist
and The Canadian Press

Some residents of a Nanaimo supportive-housing complex evacuated after a fire early Sunday were able to return Monday to their units on the fourth floor, which was not damaged by fire or water.

All 57 residents of the Nicol Street facility were safely evacuated because of the fire, which was started by a lit cigarette on a mattress.

Corrie Corfield with the Island Crisis Care Society, which operates the facility, said temporary housing has been found for most of the remaining residents who were forced out, including 10 people with mobility or health issues who have been placed in a motel.

"So, that's one of the challenges in this whole situation, is a lot of the people who rely on that building and who live there have significant health challenges, and may be seniors, or [they] may be coping with all sorts of health situations," said Corfield.

She said Island Crisis Care had to bring in food and clothing for residents because many of them left with nothing more than the pyjamas they were wearing. "It was a challenging day, but everyone really banded together and had a good attitude about

things," Corfield said.

Services in the building were back up on Monday, Corfield said.

The fire started shortly before 6 a.m. Sunday in a mattress in a third-floor unit, said Nanaimo Fire Rescue assistant fire chief Troy Libbus.

Crews quickly knocked down the fire and the building's sprinkler system prevented it from spreading further, he said.

An individual admitted to causing the fire while smoking on the mattress, Libbus said.

Displaced residents were initially taken to Bowen Park social centre by bus, he said.

Nanaimo's emergency social services were activated.

The supportive housing facility has smoke damage on the third floor as well as "a lot" of water damage caused by the sprinkler system going off, he said.

Libbus said the building evacuation was orderly and without incident. "Everyone did exactly what they were supposed to do when the alarms go off."

The Samaritan Place building has 52 units of long-term supportive housing and 14 bridge-to-housing beds for women in need, according to B.C. Housing's website.

The building began taking residents in March 2022 and has 24/7 onsite staff support. mjo@timescolonist.com

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Input sought on changes to RapidBus service between UVic and Uptown

Times Colonist

B.C. Transit and the Victoria Regional Transit Commission are seeking feedback on changes linked to an addition to its RapidBus service.

It plans to add Route 96 Blink, the RapidBus line that the transit organizations said is designed to get riders to their destination between Uptown and the University of Victoria "in the blink of an eye."

Preparation for the route, which would travel on McKenzie Avenue, includes a survey about potential changes to the following routes:

- Route 24 Cedar Hill/Tillicum Centre
- Route 25 Maplewood/Tillicum Centre
- Route 26 Dockyard/UVic

- Route 72 Swartz Bay/Downtown

Plans have also been developed to introduce a new Route 16 Uptown/UVic that would travel on Cedar Hill Cross Road and a Route 40 Dockyard/UVic that would travel on Admirals and McKenzie.

Public sessions will be held Wednesday from 10 to 11:30 a.m. in front of the library at Esquimalt Town Square, and from 2 to 3:30 p.m. on the Student Union Building side of the UVic Transit Exchange.

A Thursday session is set for 4 to 7 p.m. at Uptown across from Forto Sushi.

An online survey will be available through July 2 at engage.bctransit.com/tillicum-mckenzie-corridor-transit-plan. jbel@timescolonist.com

Property owners go to court to fight B.C.'s new short-term rental rules

Times Colonist

A group of property owners is in B.C. Supreme Court in Victoria this week challenging the province's new rules restricting short-term rentals.

The West Coast Association for Property Rights launched legal action in response to legislation that came into effect on May 1 and bans most short-term rentals unless they are in an owner's principal residence. A short-term rental unit can only be in a secondary suite or an accessory dwelling unit on the property.

The goal of the new rules is to return the units to the long-term rental market to help alleviate the shortage of affordable housing in the province.

The legislation sparked an outcry from many condominium owners, who said they purchased what many consider retirement homes or income generators before the rules came into effect.

Many were advertising online through companies such as Airbnb.

The court case began Monday and is scheduled to run for five days in B.C. Supreme Court in Victoria.

The association wants to see previous rights to operate legal short-term rentals reinstated. It's asking for an order or injunction prohibiting the City of Victoria from cancelling business licenses for short-term rentals, and a ban on the municipality enforcing bylaws affecting short-term rentals.