



## NEWS RELEASE

June 24, 2021

### **RDN to Lease and Convert South Wellington School for Community Centre Use**

The Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) and Nanaimo Ladysmith Public Schools (NLPS) are pleased to announce that the RDN has committed to a 25-year lease for the South Wellington School and adjacent lands and recreational infrastructure. Upon all lease conditions being met, the RDN will be converting the former elementary school into a community centre. Once operational, Electoral Area A residents will have access to additional indoor community space, public meeting rooms, outdoor spaces and a variety of programming for all ages closer to home. In addition, individuals and groups will be able to rent the facility and grounds for private functions, sports tournaments and other activities.

Upgrades to the building and surrounding grounds are anticipated to commence in late 2022 with a target opening date in 2023. Construction costs are estimated at just over \$1.2 million and include seismic upgrades, a new roof, new fixtures and hazardous material abatement. These costs will be covered by reserves as well as Electoral Area A Community Works funding. Operational costs will fall under the Electoral Area A Recreation and Culture and Community Parks budgets.

The preferred operational model for the facility is through a community association, such as the South Wellington and Area Community Association (SWACA). In depth discussions with SWACA will be undertaken in the coming months. As part of this operational model, a limited amount of RDN resources would be allocated to ensure successful and sustainable operations.

Conditions of the lease include an Alternative Approval Process to obtain the approval of the residents in Electoral Area A (Cedar, South Wellington, Yellow Point, Cassidy) as well as public consultation required by the Board of Education and approval by the Minister of Education prior to repurposing of the lands.

South Wellington School was constructed in 1969 and sits on approximately 3-acres immediately west of the Trans Canada Highway in Electoral Area A. The building was last used as an elementary school in 2013 and offers 9,108 sq. ft. of functional, indoor space with an additional 5,932 sq. ft. lower level storage area and 2,207 sq. ft. of covered, outdoor space.

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## Quotes

“Through recent stakeholder engagement, the local community has indicated that they are supportive of this project as indoor recreation opportunities are limited and can be challenging for many individuals to access in this area. The new community centre will fill this need and be a welcome addition to South Wellington.” Keith Wilson, Electoral Area A Director – Regional District of Nanaimo

“One of the RDN’s strategic goals is to improve the social well-being of residents, with a focus on children and families. By converting the school to a community centre, we are providing more opportunities for residents of all ages to be active and socially engaged through a wide array of programming delivered in a multifunctional facility.” Tyler Brown, Chair – Regional District of Nanaimo

“The Board of Education strives to be a leader in environmental stewardship and sustainability. This new project aligns directly with that goal. Thank you to the community and the RDN for coming together on a plan to reimagine a closed school district facility to one that will benefit the community for years to come. The proposed lease supports the Board’s commitment to partnerships with our community as outlined in the school district’s Long Range Facilities Plan. We are very excited that the facility will be revitalized and maintained as a community asset for many years to come.” Charlene McKay, Board Chair – Nanaimo Ladysmith Public Schools.

### For more information, please contact:

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