
Proposed Borrowing for the Purchase of the Former French Creek School and Parkland

On April 8, 2025, the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) Board passed a resolution in camera to purchase the former French Creek School site, a 3.7-hectare (9.15 acre) property located at 2350 Alberni Highway, Coombs, from Qualicum School District (SD69) for \$1,300,000. Part of the purchase would be funded through long-term borrowing which requires elector approval.

On May 27, the RDN Board approved the resolutions required to proceed to referendum to obtain the assent of the electors of the Electoral Area 'F' Community Parks and Halls Local Service Area for borrowing up to \$824,000, plus interest, repayable over a period of no more than ten years, to purchase the property for Electoral Area 'F' Community Parks and Halls Local Service use. A resolution to forward the required loan authorization bylaw to the Inspector of Municipalities for approval was also approved. Ministerial authorization is required before a referendum can proceed.

The purchase of the property is included in the approved 2025-2029 Financial Plan. If the long-term borrowing through a referendum is approved by the electors, the purchase would be funded through \$376,000 of Electoral Area 'F' Community Parks and Halls reserve funds, \$120,000 of Community Works Funds and long-term borrowing of \$824,000 plus interest. In addition to the \$1.3 million purchase price, the funding also includes \$20,000 in closing costs to support this purchase.

If approved by the Inspector of Municipalities, the referendum would take place in the fall of 2025. Eligible resident electors and non-resident property electors of Electoral Area F (the jurisdiction) are the only persons entitled to vote in the referendum.

If the referendum is successful, future use of the property will be determined after public engagement. The property includes a building once used as French Creek Community School, a gymnasium, and a field and playground currently used as the French Creek School Community Park.

For information on the purchase agreement and property details and to sign up to receive project updates on the referendum and potential future use engagement, visit getinvolved.rdn.ca/french-creek-school-and-parkland-purchase-referendum.

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Background

When the School District 69 (SD69) closed operations of French Creek Community School in 2014, the RDN was able to secure a ten-year licence of use for the field and playground. SD69 recently extended this licence of use until December 30, 2025. Parks operations have been inspecting and maintaining the playground, field and trees and surrounding vegetation within the park area.

In 2023, SD69 issued a public notice that they were considering the disposition of this property. The RDN Board directed staff to negotiate a conditional offer to purchase the lands from the School Board. The conditional purchase offer of \$1,300,000 for the property was negotiated and accepted.

Quotes

“We are pleased to have the opportunity to purchase the historic first government school in the district, which opened in 1912. Since 1912 to 2014, many of our pioneer and current families attended the school which was considered the heart of the community. Should the RDN receive elector approval to proceed, the property will provide a much-needed recreation space for residents in Electoral Area F and preserve the park space that continues to be enjoyed by many.”

Leanne Salter, Director, Electoral Area F

“The Board of Education of the Qualicum School District is pleased that it has reached a conditional agreement for the Regional District of Nanaimo to purchase the French Creek Community School site with the goal of keeping the site as a community asset. This would allow the Board to continue to focus on its mandate of providing educational opportunities to the students in the Qualicum School District.”

Eve Flynn, Board Chairperson

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For media inquiries, please contact:

Rebecca Taylor
Communications Coordinator
Regional District of Nanaimo
250-713-2400
engagement@rdn.bc.ca

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