



**Qualicum School District  
Finance & Operations Committee of the Whole Report  
Tuesday, April 21, 2026  
Via Video Conferencing  
10:30 a.m.**

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Always growing  
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**Facilitator: Trustee Carol Kellogg**

**Mandate:** *To discuss and make recommendations to the board on financial, facilities, maintenance, technology and transportation matters with a view to environmental sustainability.*

**1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL TERRITORIES**

We would like to give thanks and acknowledge that the lands on which we work and learn are on the shared traditional territory of the Qualicum and Snaw-Naw-As (Nanoose) First Nations People.

**2. PRESENTATIONS (10 MINUTES)**

None

**3. PROJECT UPDATES**

None

**4. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

**a. 2026-2027 Annual Budget Development**

Secretary Treasurer Amos reported on a recent educational partner meeting focused on the district budget and a significant funding gap. The most current estimated shortfall is \$1.4 million, which includes some additional requests from staff. It was shared there is also the potential for additional pressure if international student enrollment declines due to global factors such as geopolitical instability, recent BC school security concerns and higher travel costs. Enrollment projections for the international program are being reassessed and will be incorporated into updated budget scenarios.

A budget survey was widely distributed to partner groups and parents following the partners meeting, generating strong engagement. Approximately 60 new responses were received, bringing the total to 152 respondents, many of them parents. Results are being reviewed for new insights and will be shared with the board when appropriate.

Senior staff are developing options to address the funding gap, primarily through staffing reductions and other measures, which will be presented to the board, likely beginning with in-camera discussions. The goal remains to deliver a balanced budget by June 30.

To reduce pressure on the operating budget, certain expenses (e.g., copiers, laptops, phone systems) may be shifted to local capital planning, supported in part by local capital funds from the sale of French Creek. Trustees also noted future risks from expiring funding sources (e.g., childcare and mental health), and emphasized transparent communication, including posting the partners presentation publicly on the district website.

**b. Transportation**

Director of Operations Munro reported that bus registration is now live and emphasized the importance of early parent registration to allow effective route planning during July and August. Earlier registration has significantly reduced disruptions at the start of the

school year, though challenges remain. Last year, despite improvements, a surge of late registrants in September caused widespread route changes, affecting families who registered on time. Ongoing communications with DPAC aim to reinforce the importance of early registration.

The district has modernized transportation operations by moving from a paper-based system to electronic registration, introducing time-based fee structures that incentivize early registration. While this has improved route planning, a major unresolved issue is “ghost ridership”—students registered for free busing who rarely or never ride. This results in inefficiencies, such as oversized buses, unnecessary stops, and underused capacity.

Route planning software has improved efficiency and safety, reducing ride times by approximately 15 minutes, but data reveals significant numbers of registered students riding inconsistently or not at all. Comparisons with other districts show that QSD buses a higher proportion of students, many within existing walk limits, which are currently not enforced consistently.

Staff are reviewing practices in other districts, including waitlists, minimum ridership expectations, walk limits, and user fees, while emphasizing that no decisions have been made. The focus is on improving efficiency, equity, affordability, and access—particularly for rural students and programs of choice—while managing rising transportation costs within a fixed funding envelope.

**c. Adopting Permanent Daylight Savings Time**

The committee discussed the implications of adopting permanent daylight savings time, with a focus on student safety and transportation impacts. Staff noted that recent investments in bus routing software and schedule optimization have reduced average ride times by about 15 minutes, allowing school start times to shift later. These efficiencies are expected to partially mitigate increased darkness during winter mornings by reducing the amount of time students spend waiting at bus stops in low light.

Superintendent Jory emphasized that later start times benefit student learning and mental health but expressed concern about extended periods of morning darkness under permanent daylight savings time. While appreciating the extra daylight after school, he noted uncertainty about the overall net impact once schedules and routines adjust.

Trustees raised significant concerns about student safety while waiting at bus stops or walking to school in darkness, particularly in rural areas. Suggestions included partnerships with ICBC and the Ministry of Transportation to improve visibility through reflective gear, flashing lights, temporary illuminated poles at high-risk bus stops, enhanced signage, bus shelters, and community support such as crossing guards.

Several trustees highlighted the need to balance safety improvements without reopening recent school start-time changes, while leaving open the possibility of revisiting timing decisions after a year of experience. Staff welcomed further collaboration with transportation authorities and community partners to identify practical, short-term safety measures to support students during extended dark winter mornings.

## 5. INFORMATION ITEM(S)

### a. [Lead in Water Report](#)

Director of Operations Munro shared that the district completed mandatory lead testing of drinking water at Nanoose, Springwood, and Oceanside as part of its three-year testing cycle, with results posted on the website. Only one drinking station initially failed both test draws at Springwood. It was promptly addressed, retested, passed, and reopened, and the report will be updated to reflect this correction. All other fixtures met standards and the water is safe. Staff explained that elevated readings can result from fixtures, plumbing, or municipal infrastructure and are mitigated through flushing, fixture replacement, or filtration. Trustees were reassured that school water standards are extremely stringent (5 parts per billion), exceeding typical residential requirements.

### b. **Q3 Financial Summary**

Assistant Secretary Treasurer Hung reported on Q3 financial results, noting the district is about 70% through the academic year and tracking closely to expectations. Overall revenues remain stable year over year, with minor increases from tax recoveries, facility rentals, and higher investment income due to improved GIC rates. Expenditures show significant improvement, particularly in salaries, benefits, and supplies, reflecting stronger cost controls and reduced replacement costs. While benefits as a percentage of salaries are gradually increasing, total spending is well below last year at this stage. Program spending aligns with expectations, and operational savings—driven by mild winter conditions, staffing vacancies, and utility reductions—support a cautiously optimistic outlook for meeting the budget with one quarter remaining.

Staff clarified several Q3 financial items and funding questions. Special purpose funds fluctuate year-to-year because many grants are one-time or time-limited, explaining the appearance or disappearance of certain programs. Trustees received clarification on school district governance costs, including BCSTA fees (annual fee just under \$40,000), board and executive administration, stipends, and newly distributed IEC funds, which is now added to the Governance budget line.

Discussion also focused on the international education program, confirming that tuition revenue and instructional costs are directly linked and that the program typically generates a net contribution to district programs. However, early planning indicates a likely decline in international enrollment due to global instability, rising costs, federal policy changes, and safety perceptions. ROAMS programs are believed to support recruitment, though impacts vary. Additional follow-ups were requested on professional learning expenditures and grant spending.

### c. **Capital (Major/Minor) Program Announcement**

Secretary Treasurer Amos reported on the Minor Capital Program approvals, confirming receipt of the Ministry's letter approving several projects submitted in September. Approved upgrades include Errington roofing, HVAC improvements at Errington, KSS, Nanoose Bay, and Qualicum Beach, HVAC upgrades across various other schools, and Bowser food infrastructure projects. Planning work is already underway on some items, and the committee will recommend the projects to the board for bylaw approval to allow projects to be organized and for funds to be eventually drawn.

### d. **Qualicum Commons Update**

Secretary Treasurer Amos provided an update on Qualicum Commons. Following media releases on April 7 and April 17, the Town has paused lease plans but is actively exploring options to keep the facility open. The School District will respond once the Town's decision is finalized.

**6. ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE BOARD**

Minor Capital Program Bylaw

**7. FUTURE TOPICS**

- 2026-2027 Annual Budget
- Annual Facility Grant (AFG) Spending Plan
- Climate Change Accountability Report (CCAR)
- Feeding Futures Funding Update

**8. NEXT MEETING DATE:**

Tuesday, May 19, 2026, at 10:30 a.m. via videoconferencing

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

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