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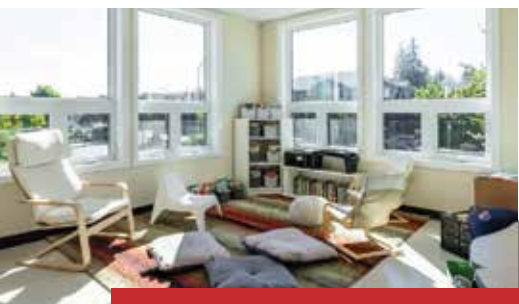


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ON THE COVER

A new accessible playground for K-5 for David Stoddart School in Clinton (SD#74). Though size (1400 sq. ft.) is small this playground provides some alternative to the other playgrounds on site and is accessible. Thanks to the Ministry for supporting this and to Green Roots Play Equipment for the install this past Spring.

Photo by Chuck Morris.



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MESSAGE FROM THE EFMA PRESIDENT

Megan MacDonald



Dear Members,

As we settle into the rhythm of another school year, I want to take a moment to reflect on the incredible energy and dedication I've witnessed across our membership. From conversation with many of you, it's clear that this September was one of the busiest starts we've seen in years. Your commitment to ensuring safe, functional, and welcoming learning environments does not go unnoticed.

We recently hosted a workshop that brought together facility managers from across the province to share insights, challenges, and innovations. The turnout and engagement were both outstanding, and it reaffirmed the strength of our community and the value of learning from one another. A heartfelt thank you goes out to our Education Committee for their tireless work in organizing and delivering such a meaningful event. Your efforts made it a true success.

We are also pleased to share some exciting news. The B.C. Public School Employer's Association (BCPSEA) has invited the Educational Facilities Managers Association of B.C. to join the Exempt Compensation Working Group. This is a significant opportunity to ensure our voices are heard in shaping compensation frameworks across the sector. We are proud to have Heather Simm representing EFMA BC in this important work, and we know she will bring thoughtful leadership and insight to the table.

While we celebrate this progress, we also want to acknowledge the challenges some of our colleagues are facing. Our thoughts are with the Alberta Educational

Facility Administrator's Association (AEFFA) as they navigate the complexities of the teachers' strike; we understand how such events can place additional strain on school operations, and we offer our full support during this time.

Closer to home, we are thinking of our friends in Kamloops following the recent fire at one of their elementary schools. These moments remind us of the resilience and responsiveness that define our profession. Times like this are when we rise to meet what can be devastating circumstances, working quietly in the background to safely restore stability and continuity for our school communities. Please know that your EFMA BC community is here to support you however we can.

Across the province and beyond, we are all facing similar challenges, tight timelines, aging infrastructure, staffing pressures, and evolving expectations. Please note that you are not alone. EFMA remains committed to fostering a strong, supportive network where we can share knowledge, lift each other up, and navigate these complexities together.

As we move forward into the school year, let's continue to lean on one another, celebrate our wins, and offer help where it is needed. Together we are stronger and together we continue to have a lasting impact on the educational environments we serve.

With appreciation and respect,

Megan MacDonald ■

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2025-2026 EFMA EXECUTIVE

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Return-It School Program is Back From Summer Break!

Return-It School is the free beverage container recycling program offered by Return-It, the not-for-profit product steward that makes recycling in BC easier for everyone. The Return-It system diverts used beverage containers from the landfill and makes sure they are properly recycled. You probably know us best through your local Return-It depot.

By participating in BC's **FREE Return-It School program**, you get access to our online Teacher's Dashboard with exclusive educational resources and fundraising tips, our online activity book as well as free recycling bins for your school. Your school keeps all the deposit refunds from recycling, so you can use the program to supplement your school's fundraising efforts. We want to help students learn how to do their part to help keep the planet green by recycling their beverage containers and more.



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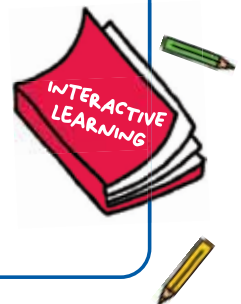
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PETE GODAU & KEN JANZEN

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Thank you Zone Chairs

We are sincerely pleased to acknowledge the work and dedication of our EFMA Zone Representatives. They are simply the first line of defense and the last line of offense for our Association when it comes to working closely with all our members. Their efforts to organize and directly support EFMA Facility Managers around the province of British Columbia is not only appreciated but fundamental to ensure members have the contact and help when needed.

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MESSAGE FROM THE AEFAA PRESIDENT

Robert Krahn



Dear EFMA Friends and Colleagues,

Since attending my first EFMA Spring Conference in 2018, I've had the privilege of attending numerous EFMA events. Over the years, I have made many friends and worked alongside the EFMA executive to strengthen the relationship between our two organizations. I look forward to continued growth as we both continue to grow and learn from each other.

In 2024, AEFAA celebrated its 50th anniversary as an organization. Now, at the 2026 spring conference, we will celebrate the 50th anniversary of our partnership with our vendors. As in EFMA, our vendors are an integral part of who we are, and we are grateful for their continued support of our organization.

We are excited to return to Jasper this fall for our annual workshop. Last year, we had to pivot and hold our workshop in Lake Louise due to the wildfires that devastated the Jasper area.

The AEFAA executive has been focusing on bringing more value to our membership. We have been focusing on facility-related PD sessions and connecting more often throughout the year with our peers to continue our

professional growth. Now that we have navigated the first 50 years, we look to the future and plan for what is to come.

As an organization, we have a mission and values. Our mission is "to work in partnership with Alberta school divisions in providing safe and caring learning environments." To achieve this, we must provide professional and ethical service, continue our education, create safe and efficient environments, collaborate and network with our colleagues, and promote industry excellence. These are the values of AEFAA that inspire me to create an environment that supports the education of our next generation.

Thank you to all the members of EFMA for your hospitality during our attendance at your events. We cherish the relationships we have built with you and look forward to a long future of collaboration. I look forward to our next visit and hope you all have a great year. We look forward to seeing you in the spring.

Best Regards,

Robert Krahn ■



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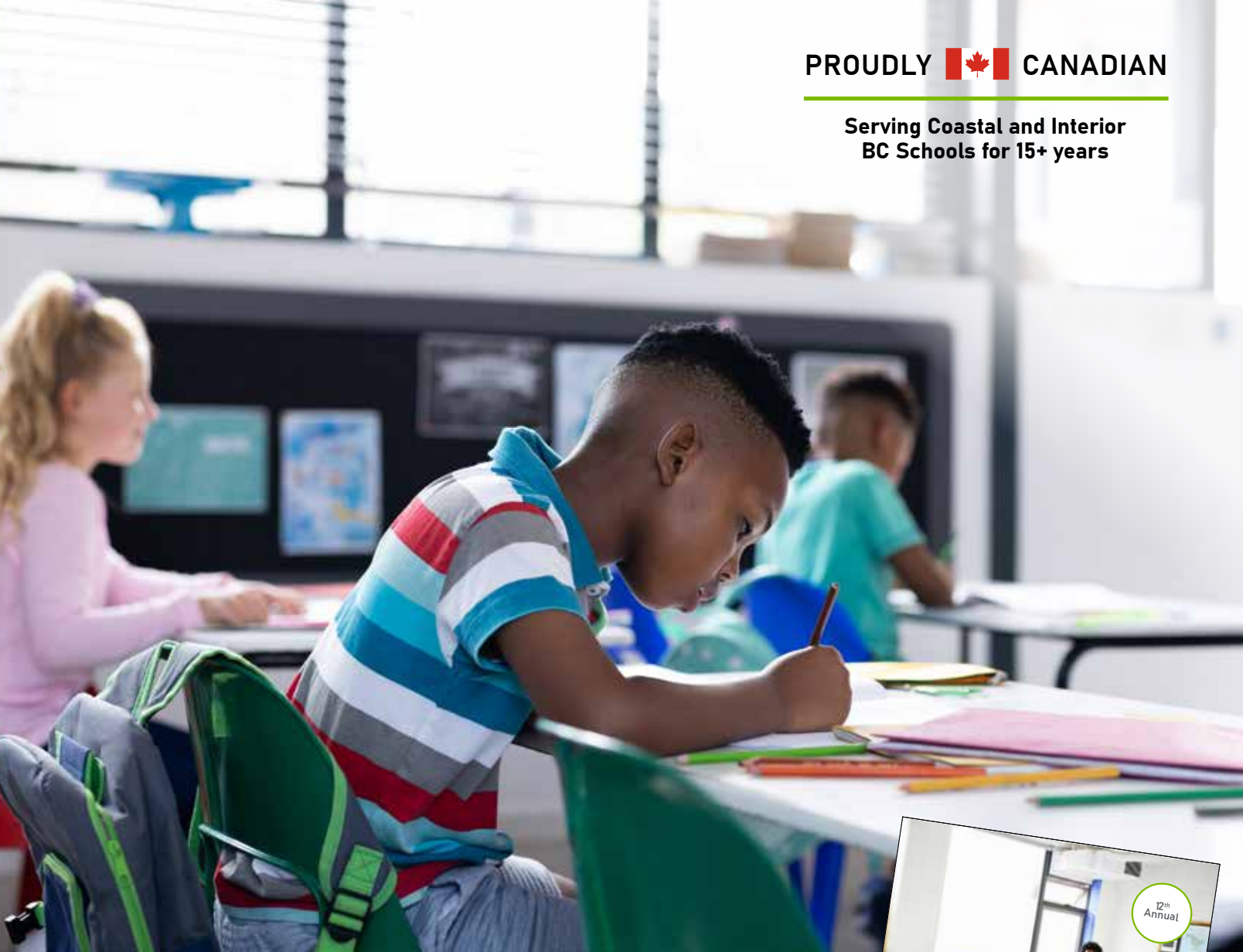
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2025 FALL WORKSHOP

Managing today and tomorrow

As the leaves turn colour and the temperature cools the air, FALL arrived in Tsawwassen on October 8 and 9, 2025.

It was also the days of our Fall Workshop – Managing Today and Tomorrow. With 49 facility managers from school districts across our province that took time out of their busy schedules to get together and LEARN, and THAT we did!

Not just to learn, but to think and learn about how to use new tools, concepts, and policies to reshape how we do business with the most important asset we have: PEOPLE.

Once again, a HUGE THANK YOU to our EFMA Executive for supporting and assisting our Education Committee in putting together this years Professional Development program.

One of the pillars of this year's program is the partnership that we have created with Okanagan College. While we are still in the early stages of developing a longer-term plan, we are excited and

grateful to Mike Champigny of Okanagan College for putting in so much of his time to bring to this year's event.

Welcoming remarks and opening comments

President Megan MacDonald welcomed our members, presenters, and sponsors. Megan gave a special welcome to our new members of EFMA that attended this two-day program. This workshop will have significant benefits to our new members as many of them either are new to our education sector or new to the roles and responsibilities that they have taken on in their school district. WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

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THURSDAY DAY 1

Emergency Response Planning

Alan Kavanaugh

Noratek Solutions Inc.

Alan discussed various types of emergencies that schools may be exposed to, where the responsibilities lie in developing a response program for emergencies, as well as the codes and standards that need to be followed. There was also an in-depth conversation on existing exposures and hazards in schools and how they should be controlled.

Thank you, Alan, for this. It has been some time since EFMA has held a session regarding emergency response planning. Well done, Alan.



Members who completed the EFMA Facilities Leadership Series Program were presented with plaques at the EFMA Fall Workshop.

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David Molenero

Vice President Business Development

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Thank you very much David for taking the time out of your busy schedule to provide up to date information to our members. Greatly appreciated.

Maintaining Playgrounds, Sidewalks, and Parking Lots **Alan Kavanaugh**

Noratek Solutions Inc.

In this presentation, Alan discussed the various standards that apply to playgrounds. The importance of maintaining standard fall surfacing and of course the recommended practices around inspections and maintenance. As an added feature, Alan also discussed the importance of maintaining and inspecting sidewalks,

walkways, and parking lots, as well as putting together inspection and maintenance policies to help mitigate potential injuries.

There are some people that always put in so much time and effort to help others because they are passionate about what they believe in and do every day without hesitation – Alan is there for you if you need help! Thanks so much again Alan for doing double duty on our first day of the workshop and for the extra time you always give to our members, if my memory serves me correct, since 1992 when we first met.

Capital Asset Management Strategies

Michael Nyikes

Director

Education & Child Care Capital Branch

Ministry of Infrastructure

Michael presented on the benefits and key aspects of capital asset planning, provided an overview of the Ministry's capital programs and procedures, and discussed financial planning along with the preparation of annual budgets.

Michael completed the presentations and sessions of the day with lots of questions and answers from and to our facility managers. Thanks once again Michael for taking the time and effort to put together a detailed and informed presentation. Always nice to hear from our Ministry partners.

FRIDAY DAY 2

Shane Spraggs

Okanagan College

Day two of our workshop was devoted to the program that our Education Committee and Okanagan College worked hard in preparing over the last number of months to create a session that would give EFMA members new ideas, tools, understanding, and concepts on a number of new fronts.

The training covered fundamental project management for facilities work in schools and post-secondary institutions. It also explored AI-driven writing tools as well as techniques for improving public speaking and presentation skills.

As we review the feedback and hear from our attendees, they were very much intrigued and

appreciative of topics and details of today's program. Shane delivered his presentation with a down-to-earth and confident approach which really helped our attendees feel curious and comfortable to ask questions.

A huge thank you Shane and Mike Champigny for all your efforts to date. We are ready to back to work on "next steps" of our program. Cheers!

A whole lot of THANKS

A huge shout out to Molly for her all her work orchestrating all the things that needed to be done and people necessary to make our workshop a big SUCCESS. Thanks again Molly!

Thank you once again to our Executive for your continued support of our Education Program.

A big thank you to all the sponsors of this year's Fall Workshop who as always puts their hand up when support is needed. Your enthusiastic and generous partnership is a huge component in helping us attract quality presenters and speakers which ultimately benefits EFMA members who attend our workshop. THANK YOU!

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact myself, Molly, or any member of the EFMA Executive.

We stay committed to your success!

The EFMA Education Committee

Jim McFadden

Alan Blohm

Tyson Sauser

***Glenn Miller* ■**

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From a manager's perspective

Reflections on attending the EFMABC Conference

FROM ALLEN BLOHM, MANAGER OF OPERATIONS, KAMLOOPS-THOMPSON SCHOOL DISTRICT #73

Praise of the value of EFMA is highlighted by the jewel of the organization's annual conference held in Penticton every year. I have been an attendee since joining the organization in 2020 and this has proven to be the highlight of my year every time.

EFMA works incredibly hard to support all of us with great training offerings, year-round support through our network connections, and spending thousands of cumulative hours brainstorming ways to improve our skills and

abilities as managers and directors. This support helps us better fulfill our roles in our respective districts and offers insights and solutions to challenges we have been dealing with.

With well-organized learning opportunities, new training courses and best of all, in my opinion, the mastermind brainstorming sessions we have in our round-table discussions for each department. In this forum we get to share our successes, challenges, and compare systems of operation. I have taken

away some incredible insights and wisdom from some of the best solution seekers I have ever met.

Every district has their own system which has naturally evolved meeting the demands of that unique environment either rural or urban. This valuable information sharing helps me to broaden my thinking and expands my understanding of the various ways we can deal with issues.

At the custodial manager's round table held on Thursday afternoon, we had a very valuable information sharing session that provided



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elementary
schools
can look like.

Connect with us at the EFMABC Annual Conference, AGM, and Trade Show from June 3 - 6, 2025 in Penticton, BC!

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insights behind the scenes of other school boards thinking and priorities set forth by their superintendent and the board directing them.

Some of the topics included how the various districts dealt with rentals, staffing challenges, disciplinary issues, HR connections, cutbacks, relief and support staff, plus dealing with the school administrations and all the personalities we see in our day-to-day environments.

This incredible depth of knowledge shared enriches our knowledge and abilities to better help us overcome new challenges as they appear. EFMA is the facilitator coordinating these opportunities for all of us to have access to the valuable takeaways from the conference.

As the custodial managers, we typically have the largest support staff employee group of the facilities department. This highlights the need for interpersonal relationship training, which our education director Jim McFadden has found one such training through a course offering called, "Coaching For Commitment". This will be coming in one of our upcoming training sessions.

Other items we discussed at our roundtable was to focus specific sessions tailored more for custodial managers. Ideas offered at the meeting to look into were:


- EFMA name cards Identifying custodial department managers with a light green colour or title so we can easily identify our counterparts.
- Roundtable bookend sessions, one at the beginning of the conference and one close to the end of the conference.
- More custodial specific training sessions at the conference, such as equipment care and maintenance supplied from one or more vendors.

- Chemical mixing stations and chemical identification for specific cleaning applications.
- Identify custodial supplier vendors on the vendor map for ease of location for those with short timelines to visit the booths.
- Staff Building Service Worker training discussion determining the benefits of in-house training versus the formal external supplier

training.

As you can see the value of this one-hour roundtable discussion is incredibly helpful and productive. As many of our directors in the province also wear the title of custodial manager perhaps we could stagger the roundtable times so these folks could join both discussions.

Another important aspect of the annual conference is the connections



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and live interpersonal conversations we enjoy. Meeting with our colleagues live at least once a year helps me stay grounded in the importance of the work we all do at our jobs supporting

our districts the best way we can.

By the end of the conference my cup is full of great ideas, renewed enthusiasm to bring new ideas and solutions to the various situations

we deal with on a daily basis. Now that the conference is wrapping up and we travel back to our school districts it is with mixed emotion. On the one hand I am happy to have seen my colleagues and friends from other districts and sad that it may be another year before seeing some of you fine people again.

I look forward to this coming year of new ideas, innovations and training EFMA is offering and will attempt not to miss any opportunities to join any sessions they have.

Until we get together again, take good care of yourselves first so you have lots to share with others when they are needing your help. A special thank you for all of the executive team at EFMA and especially Molly for making sure everything always works out in excellent fashion.■



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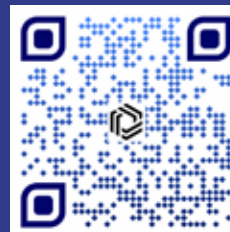
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Chad Nichol

Building Automation and Optimization Manager,
Greater Victoria School District #61

AUTHORED BY HILARY RUSSELL, MANAGER OF NETWORKS, COMMUNICATIONS, AND SECURITY SYSTEMS, SD#61



Chad Nichol and Domenic Ferrarelli (also from SD61) at a past EFMA Conference.



“Morning peeps!” That’s the familiar greeting you’ll hear when walking into the office of a man who has quietly become an effective force within the Greater Victoria School District’s facilities team.

Chad Nichol, the Building Automation and Optimization Manager for SD61, a role that puts his two decades of experience into action every day. His work focuses on improving the performance, reliability, and energy efficiency of the district’s systems.

With over 21 years of experience spanning electrical, HVAC, maintenance, controls, and building automation, Nichol is focused on optimizing what’s already in place. “I’ve always believed in making what you have work better. You don’t always need to replace equipment. Often, you just need to understand it, fine-tune it, and let it do what it was designed to do,” he says. “Or something like that,” he adds with a grin.

Nichol’s path into facilities leadership has been built on a strong foundation of hands-on experience. His career has included roles as a project manager and operations manager in the private sector, where he

developed a big-picture view of system integration, lifecycle planning, and energy strategy.

“Being part of facilities, rather than working from the outside looking in, has given me a whole new appreciation for how everything connects, from budgets to timelines to maintenance realities,” he says. “I really enjoy being part of the long-term strategy, not just the project sprint.”

In his current role, no two days look the same. Nichol could be reviewing trend data, troubleshooting building automation issues, meeting with contractors, or walking through a school with a maintenance team. He balances strategic planning with day-to-day problem solving. “Sometimes it’s about solving a controls issue, sometimes it’s just putting it on the radar,” he says.

Having worked extensively with school districts, Nichol understands the challenges they face – aging infrastructure, tight budgets, and a need for sustainability. He’s made his mark by focusing on low-cost operational improvements such as adjusting schedules, resetting setpoints, and optimizing

Having worked extensively with school districts, Nichol understands the challenges they face – aging infrastructure, tight budgets, and a need for sustainability.

sequences. These changes may seem minor, but they've driven real energy savings and extended the life of existing equipment.

"I look at what we have and ask, 'How can we make this better?' That's where the real value is, especially in schools, where every dollar matters," he says.

Collaboration is at the heart of Nichol's approach. He's known for friendly check-ins that start with, "Did I catch you at a bad time?" and end with, "Everything else is good?" These quick chats, dubbed "good talks" by his coworkers, highlight his focus on people as much as process.

"Sometimes someone mentions a new tool or an upgrade idea," one teammate jokes, "and you'll just hear Chad go, 'Don't tempt me with a good time.'"

The work isn't without its challenges. Legacy systems, evolving regulations, and coordinating across departments all require patience, planning, and flexibility. But Chad sees these as opportunities, not obstacles. "It's not always easy," he admits, "but you know, it is what it is and we stay flexible, work together, and figure it out."

When he's not optimizing building systems, Nichol's focus shifts to another team. A big baseball fan, he coaches his children's baseball team, finding joy in supporting their growth and staying active in the community. "It's a different kind of team dynamic," he laughs. "But the fundamentals are the same: support each other, stay flexible, and have fun while doing the work."

What keeps him motivated is the sense of impact, both on systems and on people. "This is where I want to be; working with a team, finding smarter ways to run systems, and supporting the people who keep our buildings going every day." ■



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Jeffrey Goode

Assistant Director of Operations Pacific Rim School District #70

At just 29, Jeffrey Goode is one of the youngest leaders in the Pacific Rim School District's operations department, bringing a tradesperson's precision and a hometown perspective to the leadership table in his role as Assistant Director of Operations.

Goode started with the district at just 22, after earning his Red Seal in carpentry. His first position was on the West Coast, based in Ucluelet and Tofino, where he worked as a

ticketed carpenter and team lead responsible for the three schools in the area.

After two and a half years on the coast, Goode moved inland to Port Alberni continuing his carpentry career with the district for another four years. In 2024, he traded his tools for a desk, stepping into his current role as the Assistant Director of Operations where he helps guide custodial and grounds operations across the district.

"Some days I really miss the tools," Goode says of the change. "But excelling in my career has felt like a big accomplishment, and I don't miss working outside in the Westcoast weather"

Today, much of his work is focussed on daily operations, planning, and overseeing health and safety protocols. "About 75 per cent of my day is office based," he says, "And I try to get out to the schools regularly to be visible and stay connected."



At just 29, Goode is part of a new generation of leaders, working together with team members who have decades of experience.

The Pacific Rim School District is as west as the west coast gets, and it consists of 12 schools across the region, with facilities located in Port Alberni, Ucluelet, Tofino and Bamfield.

Taking on a leadership position after years of working alongside many of the same colleagues has been an adjustment, but one Goode approaches with respect. "Being hired internally meant learning to navigate established relationships," he says.

At just 29, Goode is part of a new generation of leaders, working together with team members who have decades of experience. "I'm one of the youngest in our operations department, so I try to focus on maintaining high standards and showing that I'm here to support the team."

Outside of work, Goode takes full advantage of coastal living as an avid fisherman, hunter, and camper. He and his wife, Kendi, a teacher in the district, love to travel and spend time with their dog, Hank.

"And since I've dropped the tools at work, I've picked them up at home."

Goode says that since buying

their Port Alberni home four years ago, the couple has been steadily renovating including the kitchen, bathroom, and most recently, the basement. "I'm just about finished the basement, so I need to find my next project here," he says.

As an apprentice carpenter and now an operations leader, Goode

has built the foundation of his career much like his home: skillfully, steadily, and with care in every detail. With a hands-on understanding of what keeps schools running smoothly, he represents a new generation shaping the future of school facilities management on Vancouver Island. ■

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Our Vision is to be the Centre of Excellence that empowers the student transportation industry.

Our Mission is to be the Center of Excellence that empowers the student transportation industry by setting the highest standards in safety, reliability, and sustainability. We drive innovation, foster collaboration, and promote best practices to enhance the school transportation experience for every

student. Through advocacy and professional development, we aim to support a system that ensures the well-being and educational success of all students

ASTSBC plays a vital role in strengthening and empowering school districts, First Nations bands, and independent schools throughout the province. Through a strong network of industry expertise, ASTSBC provides

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essential resources, tools, and professional support that enable transportation leaders to operate efficiently, make informed and data-driven decisions, and embrace innovation in service delivery.

By fostering collaboration, sharing best practices, and promoting continuous improvement, ASTSBC ensures that its members are well-equipped to meet the evolving challenges of student transportation while upholding the highest standards of safety, reliability, and service excellence.

One of our recent milestones is the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) and the Association of School Transportation Services of British Columbia (ASTSBC). This agreement formalizes our commitment to collaborate on driver training and to address shared priorities in safety and operational efficiency. Through this partnership, we are empowering our First Nations partners by providing access to professionally trained drivers, ensuring safe and reliable school bus transportation services for their communities.

School bus electrification is gaining significant momentum in British Columbia, supported by provincial and federal initiatives such as CleanBC and the Ministry of Education, which provide substantial funding for the acquisition of electric buses and the development of charging infrastructure. This transition underscores the long-term benefits for our children's health and the environment.

To date, twenty-seven school

districts in B.C. are operating a total of 117 electric school buses. With ongoing support from the B.C. Ministry of Infrastructure, as well as provincial and federal incentives and funding, the number of electric school buses is expected to continue growing in the coming years, reflecting a strong commitment to sustainable

and environmentally responsible student transportation.

In support of the School Bus Electrification project, ASTSBC has partnered with the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) to deliver the province's first School Bus Electrification Training for Technicians and Mechanics. This program represents a critical first

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step in equipping school districts and their maintenance teams with the knowledge and skills required to safely operate and maintain electric buses, empowering a skilled workforce prepared to support the growing adoption of electric school transportation across B.C.

The Association of School Transportation Services of British Columbia (ASTSBC) offers a wide range of programs, services, and best practices designed to empower school bus transportation teams and school districts across the province.

These include:

- School Bus Driver Training Program – Comprehensive training to ensure the highest
- standards of safety and professionalism.
- Professional Development – National Association for Pupil Transportation (NAPT) courses adapted for British Columbia.
- School Bus Technician Training – Skill development programs for maintenance personnel.
- Mechanic Scholarships – Financial support to foster skilled technicians in the industry.
- Annual Conference – Opportunities for networking, knowledge sharing, and professional growth.
- Recruitment Support – Assistance with hiring drivers through advertising campaigns and job postings.
- Advocacy for school bus safety – Promoting policies and initiatives

that prioritize student safety on every journey.

ASTSBC is dedicated to shaping a safer, smarter, and more connected future for student transportation across the province. By tackling industry challenges head on, raising standards of service, and fostering collaboration among school districts, we empower communities to provide reliable, efficient, and safe transportation for every child.

At the heart of our work is a simple yet powerful commitment: “Your child’s safety is our business.” Every journey we support is an investment in the next generation of leaders, innovators, and change-makers.

For more information please contact us at info@astsbc.org. ■



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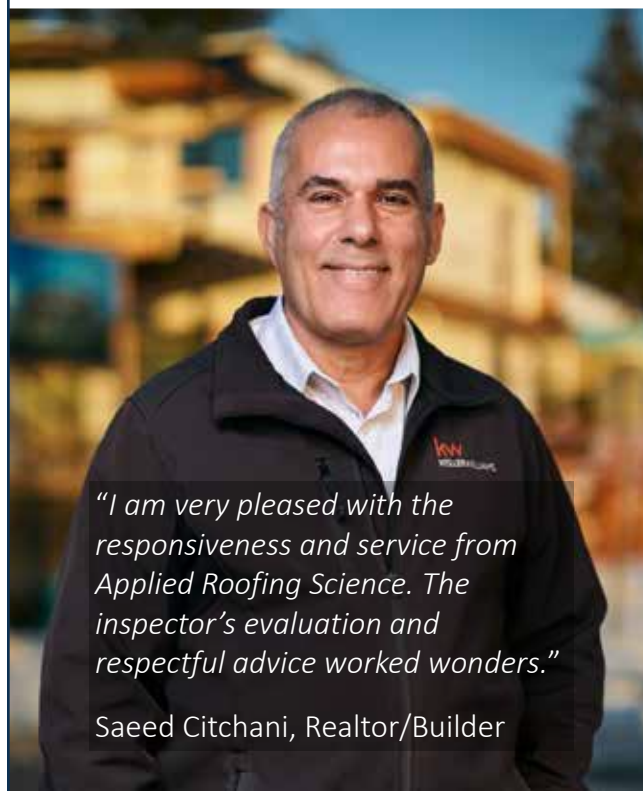
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B.C. prefabricated classroom initiative: Rapid, cost-effective growth in education

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Richard Bulpitt Elementary prefabricated addition exterior of addition (background) matches existing school.



Interior of classroom, accessibility platform, and student washrooms.



B.C. has experienced unprecedented growth since 2017, with student enrolment increasing by over 50,000. This growth has resulted in a significant school capacity shortage in many communities. To address this, the Ministry of Education and Child Care introduced a prefabricated classroom initiative that rapidly delivers classrooms to facilities facing the greatest pressures.

This initiative was created to provide much needed capacity for students more efficiently.

Prefabricated classrooms are more cost effective than traditional builds and can be delivered twice as fast while offering similar lifespan and comforts.

These prefabricated spaces include cooling for occupants, accessibility measures (such as elevators), washrooms, etc. There is also the ability to create multi-storey prefabricated additions. Some of these prefabricated classrooms have been volumetric modulars while others are panelized components.

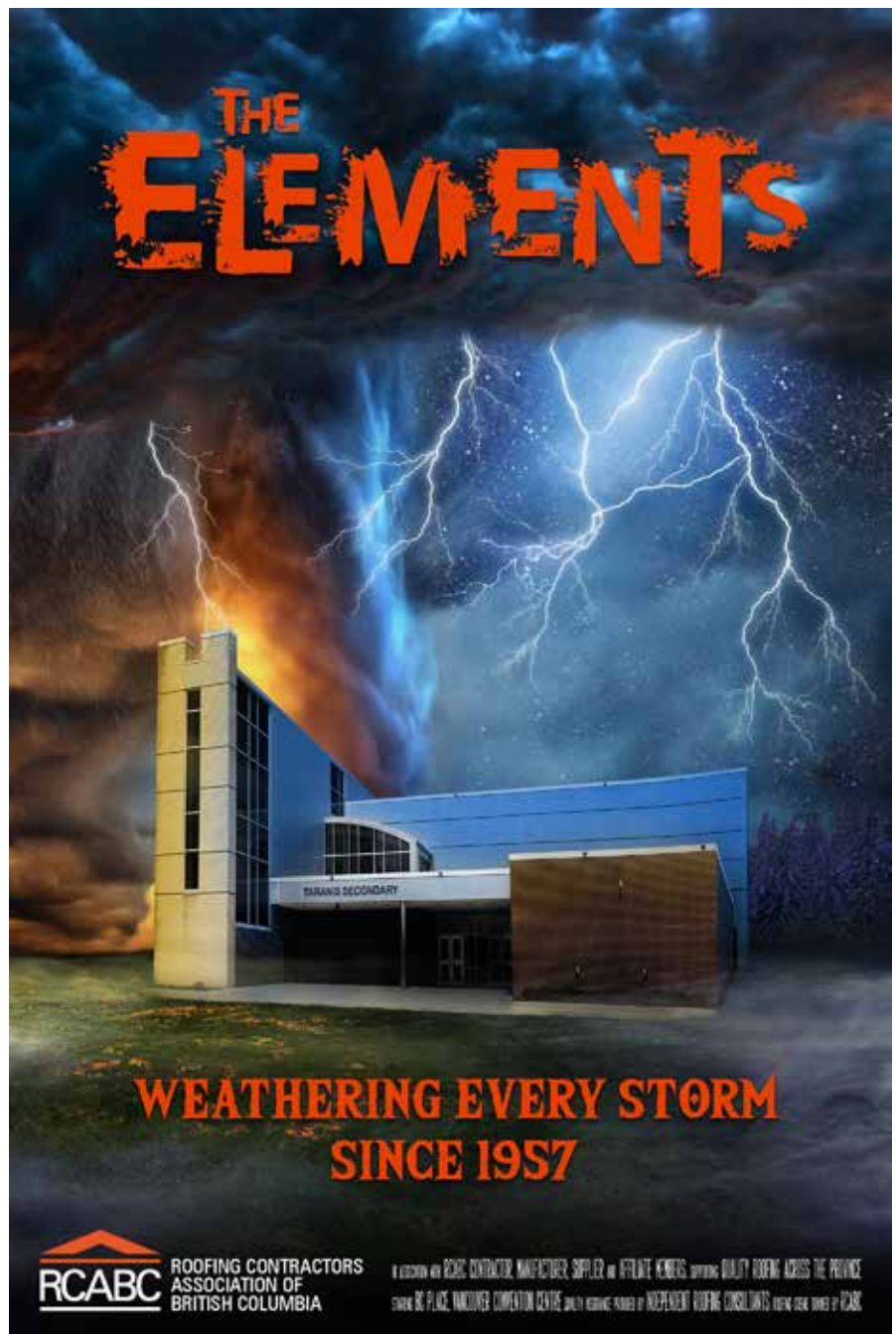
Since inception of the initiative in September 2023, the government has funded 37 prefabricated projects creating almost 7,900 new student seats at a cost of \$475.5 million. School districts are delivering these projects within one to two years. A number of these projects are now complete and receiving very positive reviews from stakeholders.

School districts can request prefabricated additions in their annual capital plan submission.

Please contact the Education and Child Care Capital Branch at the Ministry of Infrastructure if you have any questions:

https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/resource-management/capital-planning/cmb_contact_list.pdf ■

Since inception of the initiative in September 2023, the government has funded 37 prefabricated projects creating almost 7,900 new student seats at a cost of \$475.5 million.



FIRE CODE CHALLENGES IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS (Part 4)

Addressing hallways, stairwells, special-use areas, and storage



In part 4 of our Fire Code Challenges series, we turn our attention to hallways, stairwells, special-use areas, storage practices, and fire safety planning—critical details that ensure safe evacuation and compliance with the B.C. Fire Code.

Hallways

All hallways must be kept clear in the event of an evacuation situation. Protruding items such as display cases or tables must not reduce an exit pathway less than required by

BCBC requirements. Fire doors must not be blocked, and items should not be stored blocking egress.

Stairwells

Stairwells are means of exits and must be maintained. Storage and/or combustible material must not be displayed in stairwells and exits.

Area of refuge

In multi-story schools' areas of refuge must be identified for students or staff with physical limitations who are unable to use the

stairs to exit the building in a safe and timely manner. The responding fire departments must be aware of the locations and the possibility of any staff and students in these areas. These should be areas where students and staff may safely wait for a specified time due to the fire rating of the doors and walls, often a landing in a stairwell.

Special-needs areas

Any area used for students with special needs must comply with all fire regulations. All combustible equipment must comply with the flame spread rating and documentation must be available at the school.

Locks on doors

Chains or deadbolts are not permitted on any doors as it may prohibit safe evacuations or impede egress in the direction of travel to the path to exit.

Fire doors

Fire doors should not be held open by any device other than appropriate door hardware, i.e. fire alarm-controlled hold open devices. Doorstops, wedges (of any material),





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or any other item used to hold open fire doors are prohibited. Fire doors shall always latch and secure completely. Storage of items cannot block fire doors and impede egress at any time.

Storage Distance to Ceiling

Combustible/flammable material and storage material must be no closer than 450mm (18") below a sprinkler head (from wall to wall) as required by B.C. Fire Code sprinkler requirements. This includes any items on shelves and in storage areas. In buildings with no sprinklers this distance should be increased to one metre. Other areas where ceilings are higher, storage should be no closer than one metre from sprinkler heads.

Storage of combustible and flammable gases and liquids

Storage of combustible and flammable gases and liquids must be in accordance to BCFC requirements. Liquids must be kept in an approved storage cabinet. The amount and location of the above gases/ liquids must be included in the fire safety plan at each school/ location.

Storage in boiler, eElectrical and air-handling rooms

There shall be no storage in boiler, electrical, or air handling rooms unless it is directly related to the operation of the equipment in those rooms.

Outside buildings or containers


Outdoor storage receptacles or

containers, including dumpsters which are used for combustible material shall be located a minimum of five meters (16 feet) away from any buildings so that they do not create an undue fire hazard to surrounding buildings. All buildings shall meet B.C. Building Code requirements. Contact Facilities to

verify any specific requirements for school grounds and/or buildings.

Placement of room evacuation map



The fire evacuation map may be placed on either side of the door (primarily on the right-hand side) and should be eye height for an



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The Fire Safety Plan shall be reviewed and updated at intervals not greater than 12 months to ensure that it takes account of changes in the use and other characteristics of the building.

adult. When the door is open, the map should be visible. The primary evacuation route must be clearly marked. The evacuation map must be orientated correctly to the layout of the building.

Reportable fires

All fires, explosions, or detection of smoke shall be reported immediately to 911 and to the administrator/supervisor. All fires shall be reported to Facilities as soon as reasonably possible.

All fire play, or indication of a fire, even if extinguished, is to be reported to the fire department. Many municipal fire departments are beginning to levy a charge for false fire alarms beyond a limit per year. False fire alarm charges caused by students will be at the expense of the school.

Reportable occurrences

All incidents related to staff and/or building hazards, including fire hazards are to be reported to Facilities.

After hours use of facilities (something to be drafted to hand out)

Anyone using school facilities after hours who is not an employee of the school district, carrying out their job function, must be supplied information regarding the fire plan, where applicable.

Sleepovers in schools

The Administrator of the school shall give the local fire department at least two weeks' notice to facilitate site visit and/or review of plan. If there are concerns; please contact Operations.

The Administrator of the school will ensure the applicable fire detection devices have been changed to correctly correspond with the current use in the area. The Fire Safety Plan must be updated to capture the change in use, and users of the school must be briefed on emergency procedures.

Fire emergency planning

Section 2.8 of the B.C. Fire Code requires that schools develop fire emergency procedures. The development of a Fire Safety Plan, prepared in cooperation with the fire department, and the holding of fire drills at least three times in each of the fall and spring school terms (for a minimum of six per school year), forms part of the fire emergency procedures. One of the elements to be included in the Fire Safety Plan is the control of fire hazards in the building.

Fire safety plans

The B.C. Fire Code states, based on occupancy and building systems, that a fire safety plan shall be prepared in cooperation with the fire department and other applicable regulatory authorities and that it

shall include fire safety systems and their care/maintenance, emergency procedures for staff and occupants, diagrams of building and systems, along with other necessary documents. To ensure that all life safety systems and code requirements are captured in this document it is recommended that fire safety plans be designed by a third party.

Administration — Fire safety plans and other related guidelines

The Fire Safety Plan shall be reviewed and updated at intervals not greater than 12 months to ensure that it takes account of changes in the use and other characteristics of the building. The site Administrator shall ensure that staff members are trained annually on the Fire Safety Plan, and that this training be documented. All fire documentation and records for life safety systems must be kept on the premises.

Fire drills

There must be a minimum of three fire evacuation drills in each of the fall and spring school terms for a minimum of six per school year. It is recommended to contact fire prevention at your local fire department prior to the drill to see if they can attend to offer feedback and recommendations.

NOTE: These were written a few years ago and there have been some minor changes. This four-part series has been presented as a guide. Always double check the B.C. Fire Code for up-to-date information.

Thanks to Alan Kavanaugh for critiquing this and for his dialogue we shared. – C. Morris ■

Through the eyes of a shop inspector: The good, the bad, and the risky

BY ALAN KAVANAUGH



Before I get started on this article, I would just like to point out that not all school shops are ready to catch fire, explode, or implode. Many shops, teachers, and school districts are getting it. Safety is a priority. Housekeeping is important. Inspections are happening. Risks and hazards are being mitigated. We are moving in the right direction. Or are we?

Guards, or lack thereof, are one of the items we see on a regular basis when performing shop inspections and conformance audits. Guards are an engineered means of minimizing exposures to workers and students. A personal pet peeve of mine (and I have many) is when guards are missing from exposed blades on “SawStop” table saws.

Another concern is the lack of designated safety zones for

equipment operators, which increases the risk of exposure not only to the operator but to the students and staff in the area.

We still experience many injuries in the shop environment. Exposures to fumes, gases, and airborne combustible dusts. The long-term effect of these exposures — respiratory disease, cancer, skin and eye injuries — is well noted. If PPE isn’t required in shops based on the exposures or risks inherent to the operation, how can you set up, support, and enforce a full safety program?

And what about the students? They are not employees; they do not fall under WorkSafe requirements. But is the hammer any less dangerous in a school wood shop than on a construction site? Based on current safety standards, it appears to be.

This brief introduction highlights just a few of the ongoing concerns we encounter in school shops. There are many more, but let’s start with the good, the bad, and the ugly. What I’ve experienced throughout the province inspecting and helping to set up programs for all the school districts.

Housekeeping and storage

I began my career in 1986 inspecting industrial sites — sawmills, remanufacturing plants, pulp mills, and logging operations. Working with so many different operations and operators was fun, and it’s where I developed my experience and practices for assessing risks.

Back then, “housekeeping” or a company’s housekeeping/loss-prevention attitude was a scored item on our audits. On a first inspection of a sawmill we’d ask:



How's the housekeeping? What loss-prevention programs do they have — inspections, testing, maintenance? And, most important, are they receptive to any recommendations? As a loss control representative for an insurance company, this was important. If the loss prevention attitude wasn't there or the owner

didn't take prevention seriously, we often refused coverage.

"All shop areas shall be always kept clean and orderly – B.C. Fire Code 5.3.1.1". If I must quote this to someone regarding an inspection I perform, and they still don't understand it, they shouldn't be running the operation. Haha! Just

checking to see if you're paying attention.

Progress through education

We've realized over time that the best way to move forward regarding conformance and loss prevention is to educate people and provide them with the supports they need. Getting

consult the experts.

- » Community surveys
- » Stakeholder workshops
- » Open Houses

design for everyone.

- » Inclusivity
- » Accessibility
- » Sustainability
- » Cultural-sensitivity
- » 21st-century learning
- » Crime prevention (CPTED)


build on time, on budget.

- » Quality control
- » Accurate documentation
- » Digital contract admin
- » Risk management









buy in from senior management and enforce policies and procedures as required is the only way, and we are moving in that direction.

We know what needs to be done. The next step is getting administrators, custodians, instructors, maintenance staff, and health and safety teams to understand their role in keeping our workplaces, including shops, safe.

Mixed use operations

Mixed use operations usually means that a combination of wood working, cutting & welding, and auto repair may be taking place in the same shop. Which means combustible materials, oils, fuels, acids, and lubricants are being exposed to ignition sources, hot work, soldering, forges, and the list goes on.

NOT ALLOWED. This is basic fire triangle stuff. Heat, Fuel, Oxygen. Remove the fuel or remove the heat and there won't be an issue.

Acids in a flammable's cabinet. Torches in a flammable's cabinet. MEK peroxides used in fiber glassing & plastics operations. Methyl Ethyl Ketone Peroxides is one of those doesn't play well with other liquids. Going back to my training. It was one of the first dangerous chemicals I learned about.

The good

Most of my shop inspections and audits take place during the summer months, so there are no students making it easy to measure and take photos. The photos I've included here show you the great work performed by school custodial staff.

We are slowly changing people's ideas on what a safe school should look like and, most importantly, who is responsible. We will be discussing ongoing resources, supports, training workshops, and more as we move forward with our future educational programs.

As always if you have any comments, questions, or need support. Contact me at any time.

Alan Kavanaugh

Director of Loss Control & Risk Management

CRM, CCPI, Member of NFPA

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Building successful working relationships



BY VELVET CATES, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER, CANSTAR RESTORATIONS,
EFMA EXECUTIVE, EXHIBITOR REPRESENTATIVE



The Canstar Restorations Team joined EFMA BC (then SPOA BC) in 2004 and never looked back.

Our first introduction to the association was a phone call to their Executive Secretary Molly Shipowich in late 2003. Molly described EFMA as a member-driven, professional association who welcomed collaboration. We got off to a great start with a warm, welcoming conversation and an excellent first impression of the association. Everything Molly said rang true. EFMA felt like a fit.

We became a vendor partner and signed up for the 2004 June conference.

From our first step in the door, we were treated like family. Welcomed with big smiles from Molly and her team, and warm greetings from board members, we headed into a conference like no other.

Among our early EFMA friends were John Vantol, Lisa Johnston, John Garossino, Chuck Morris,

Peter Orjala, and Steve Smoroden. One of our fondest memories is sharing hearty laughter over breakfast with Ken Janzen and Cintha Winters. The other breakfast goes even dubbed our table 'the most fun'!



(L to R) Tim Compton, Project Manager Penticton; Velvet Cates, Business Development Manager; and David Hart, Project Manager Lower Mainland at the EFMA BC Conference in Penticton.

Business didn't come right away. However, we were encouraged that the EFMA members took every opportunity to get to know us and learn about our services. In turn we were given every opportunity to share time with the members and build working relationships.

Unique to EFMA is the seamless integration of members and vendors, with no separation between the two during the conferences.

Twenty-two years, and twenty-two EFMA Conferences later, we are grateful for the relationships we have built and immensely proud to service many school districts in B.C.

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The Canstar Group of Companies has expanded across B.C., and we look forward to continuing our support of EFMA while building successful working relationships with its members. ■

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HVAC design for B.C. schools: The unstoppable energy transition

BY ROY COLLVER

If you review the article I wrote for *Ops Talk* in the fall 2023 edition, you will find it a great introduction to this continued discussion. One quote stands out, “Assorted weather-related disasters around the world over the last few years have made it clear that de-carbonizing buildings should be moved up the priority list to NOW.” Although this is even more urgent today, I am putting the environmental issues aside for this article to explore another very pragmatic reason to electrify our buildings and stop burning fossil fuels – pure economics. The least expensive and reliable methods of generating electricity today and into the foreseeable future are from renewable sources; solar, followed by wind – full stop.

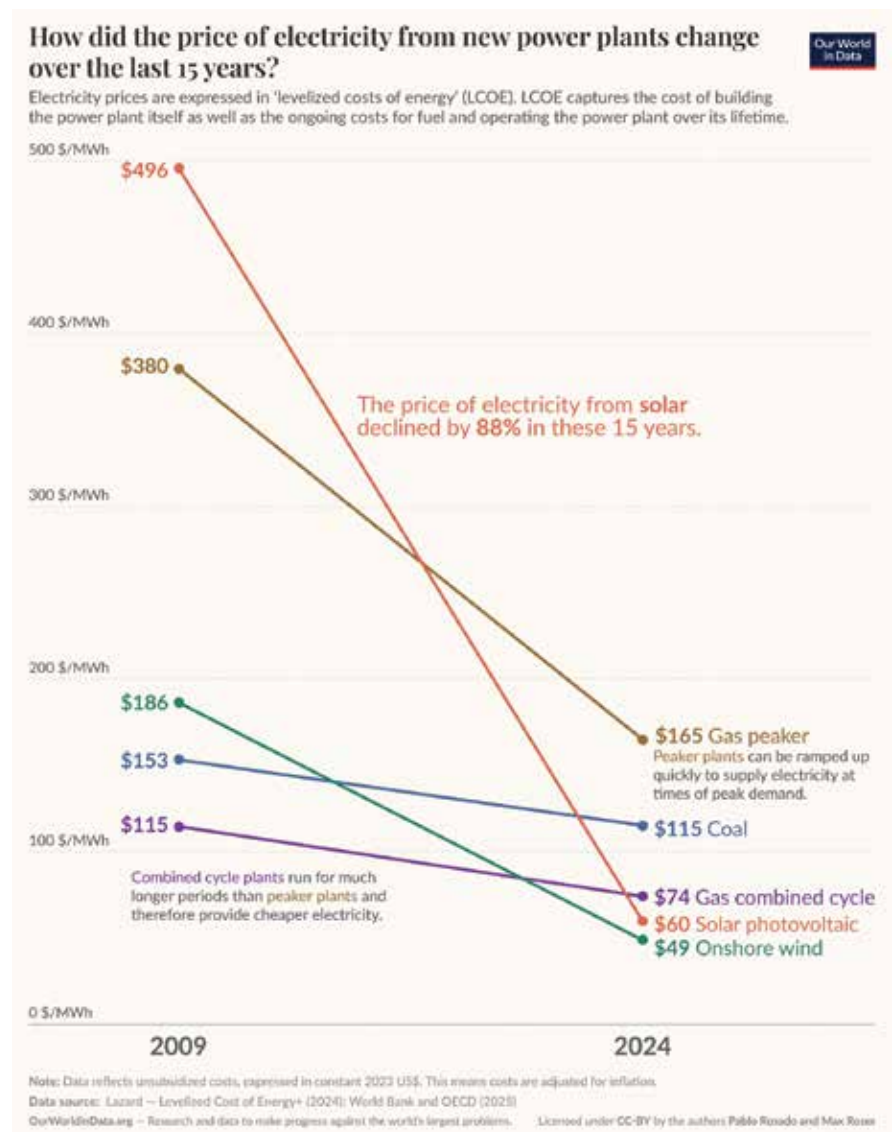
Long-term power purchase agreements (PPAs) between utilities and utility scale solar project developers have seen electricity being sold for as low as 2.5 cents per kilowatt hour, with the current average being around five cents. Energy market experts are certain that renewables prices will fall further than that in the near future, while fossil fuel prices will continue to climb. Electricity demand is increasing rapidly in response to several new technologies, such as AI roll out, electric vehicle adoption, and accelerating de-carbonization of industry and buildings.

To offset some of the angst some people have regarding building-out new electricity generation, is the

happy coincidence that the time and money required to deploy new solar and wind production woven together with back-up and peak load energy storage (mostly batteries), is a fraction of that required to build any type of fuel-burning plant. Add in the fact that the ongoing energy input to solar and wind plants, after

they are built and connected, is actually free. It’s a slam-dunk.

Utility-scale solar generation in particular, was just a fringe concept 20 years ago and now it is here in a big way to help save the day. How did this happen so fast? Many technological developments in solar panels, battery storage, and control



options along with manufacturing innovation and sheer volume of production has driven the price of solar equipment down, and it still has room to drop further.

Why is this clean energy transition happening now and accelerating at breakneck speed in real time worldwide? Elementary my dear readers, follow the money! Looking at operating costs for unlimited and cheap renewables vs. buying, and then burning expensive and dwindling fossil fuel resources, makes this transition unstoppable.

So how do building owners and their facility managers deal with this changing landscape? What is the timing of all of this change? How can school districts pivot to be able to take advantage of the new realities?

Predicting the fine details of the accelerating transition is wide open. The what is clear, but the how fast and the how much depends on technologies, economics, and — the most mysterious variable — politics.

Planning for the future in a way that will make you fast on your feet and open as many options as possible is the best you can do right now to prepare. Changes will be coming in fits and starts and the timing will be fluid. The current geo-political shenanigans fossil-fuel aligned political groups are pushing down on the brakes on as hard as they can. Their efforts will fail long term, but they muddy the waters for everyone trying to anticipate the all-important timing.

I have been studying this topic for years now and these are some of my ideas to steer us through the confusion and help prepare your organization for the big pivot.



Step #1

Someone in every organization will have to take point on this. If you do not have an in-house energy manager or a retained consultant who can parse through all of the important trends and details with a long-distance spyglass, start looking for one as soon as possible because the good ones are already very busy. Playing the long game is required for this transition, but short-term actions will help give it a necessary

kick-start. Those close to retirement should not bow-out thinking they can't make a difference — they hold the knowledge to help set this up for the fast track. Given the amount of money that will be needed to implement the measures required to implement this transition, it is crucial that invested associations and other groups lobby the provincial government to come up with ways and means to finance it. Lobbying the federal government can't hurt,

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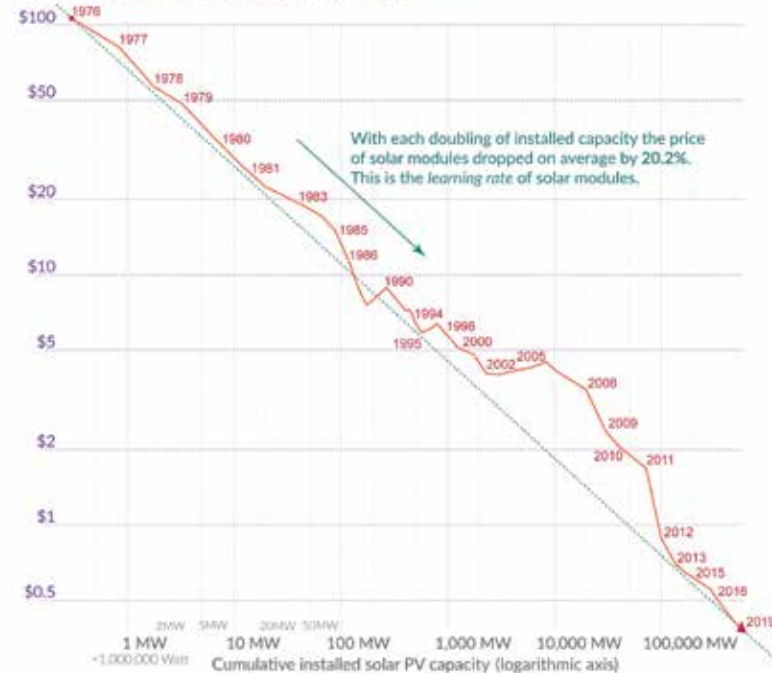
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Our World in Data

Price per Watt of solar photovoltaics (PV) modules (logarithmic axis)
The prices are adjusted for inflation and presented in 2019 US \$.

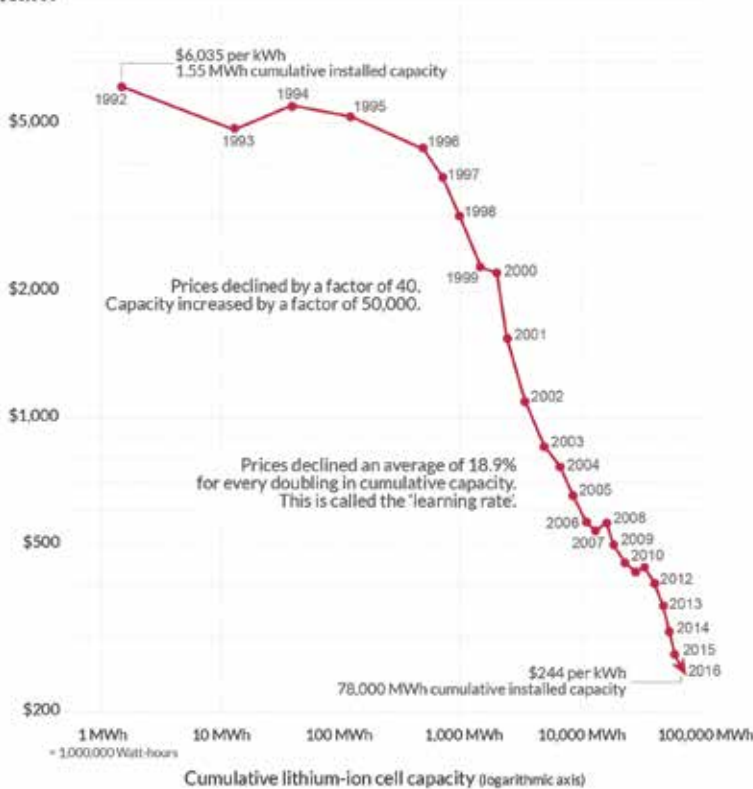


Data: Lafond et al. (2017) and IRENA Database; the reported learning rate is an average over several studies reported by de La Tour et al (2013) in Energy. The rate has remained very similar since then.
OurWorldinData.org - Research and data to make progress against the world's largest problems. Licensed under CC-BY by the author Max Roser

Price and market size of lithium-ion batteries since 1992

Our World in Data

Price per kilowatt-hour; kWh (logarithmic axis)
\$10,000



Prices are adjusted for inflation and given in 2019 US \$ per kilowatt-hour (kWh).
Source: Naph-Ziegler and Jussila-Trankle (2021). Re-examining rates of lithium-ion battery technology improvement and cost decline.
OurWorldinData.org - Research and data to make progress against the world's largest problems. Licensed under CC-BY by the author Hannah Ritchie

but if you are successful in providing a sound technical and business case to the provincial powers that be, perhaps they will be willing to help convince Ottawa to chip in.

On every level, the stakeholders need to be convinced to put together the in-house expertise needed to understand what is going to be required to stay ahead of the game and be ready to move as opportunities open up. No one should underestimate the amplitude of what is happening here — many billions of dollars are at stake. Your energy managers should be in the vanguard of this effort, because they will be the first ones to be able to read the tea leaves and understand it. The government should welcome your advice, because this is going to drill in far deeper than just school district facilities and you can help them understand and be prepared.

Step #2

Each district should define the scope of their transition, and then the whole group should compile that information to support the lobbying effort. Things like inventory of existing properties and equipment to upgrade, including structural, insulation, windows (all the usual suspects), and projected growth of new facilities. Find the low hanging fruit in your building fleet and build a priority list. High-profile projects should be a priority so you can get some positive publicity. This usually works in politicians' favour, since it helps them win votes and encourages them to see you as allies.

Create a rough project-by-project budget if you have the resources to do so. That is going to be a tough job given the current uncertainties but very useful, especially if you can marry the budget to projected savings. Uncertainties include available contracting base, available consulting expertise, the expertise and availability of trades people in your area, the accessibility of more remote facilities, the availability and costs for new equipment, the capacity of the facility's local

grid to supply sufficient power. Many EFMA members are already deep into researching all of this and there are many great consultants available to help.

Here are the big questions: How rapidly are the utilities going to tool up to build out the grid? What are electricity contract prices going to look like and when? What billing practices will be put in place? Will they cooperate with districts who may choose to build-out their own solar plants (rooftop panels, vehicle to grid, microgrid connection to utility grid)? It is a daunting list. How do you eat an elephant? One spoonful at a time.

Utilities and all levels of government need to get to work on national grid trading strategies. One great example is the grid inter-ties between B.C., Alberta, and points east.

Electrical generation in B.C. is already very low carbon with many practical options to increase grid capacity by adding green renewable sources. With robust inter-ties between B.C. and Alberta we can trade back and forth and play off of each other's strengths. Look at the BC Hydro reservoirs as huge western storage batteries – Alberta is in a sweet spot for cheap solar and wind. We buy Alberta renewables when the sun is shining and the wind is blowing and keep our reservoirs full. At night and on calm days, we sell hydropower back to Alberta. Removing the provincial barriers and building this out should be on the top of Mark Carney's "Big Project" list. It is really low hanging fruit in the overall scheme of things and we have the expertise and technology to rapidly accomplish this if the political will is there.

A simple political reality is that money talks louder than ideas and politics walks towards the money. There are many voices right now working to get the message across to politicians that this is a financial win-win proposition that ultimately benefits all British Columbians in one form or another.

The sources of information used to research this article are too many to list, but I will give you some great places to start. My number one go-to is a Vancouver Island company with a very respected international reputation for understanding the latest trends and facts at high levels. I suggest you check out Markham Hislop at EnergiMedia.com or his YouTube channel, Energi Media. Additionally, I often go to ember-energy.org, ourworldindata.org, and rmi.com. ■

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Smart growth in action: Richmond School District acquires and revitalizes Odlin Crescent School

BY JONATHAN HO, DIRECTOR, CAPITAL PROJECTS AT RICHMOND SCHOOL DISTRICT #38

Exterior Rendering of Odlin Crescent Photos: Trio Architecture



After several months of due diligence and with the support of the Ministry of Infrastructure, the Richmond School District in June 2025 announced the purchase of an elementary school site at 8671 Odlin Crescent. This school was originally the Harry Eburne Elementary School and was built in 1961. With a change in the surrounding neighbourhood from residential to commercial, this school was sold to a private owner in 1989 who added two new wings in 1990 and a gymnasium in 2015. When the private owner wished to sell this property, they approached

the Richmond School District to gauge interest.

Over the past three years, the Richmond School District experienced phenomenal growth in our four City Centre elementary schools: Samuel Brighthouse, William Cook, R.C. Talmey, and R.A. Tomsett. All four schools received modular additions ranging in size from five to nine classrooms to accommodate this growth. The district's Long-Range Facilities Plan and accompanying five-year capital plan identified the need for the district to acquire a new City Centre elementary school

to relieve enrolment pressures. The Richmond School District is working to complete renovations for a September 2026 opening.

The purchase of an existing school site offered obvious advantages to the Richmond School District. Renovating the school to meet Ministry of Education and Child Care standards for classroom sizes is faster than a greenfield site that must go through detailed design and geotechnical work. Further, the Odlin Crescent site is 2.52 ha (6 acres), with ample room to support the expansion of the school as enrolment increases.

The district has submitted a building permit application for Odlin Crescent to the City of Richmond, placed construction coverage for the project with the School Protection Program, completed hazardous materials abatement, and engaged Unitech Construction Management for this project. Building permit approval is expected in November 2025.

Discussions are ongoing with the City of Richmond's Traffic Department, as the area around Odlin Crescent must be designated a school zone, along with discussions on how to best manage the busy morning drop-off/afternoon pick-up, and the fact that the new school is in a commercial area with different traffic needs. A focus on providing families with active transportation options to minimize vehicular traffic ("walk and roll") also aligns with the district's emphasis on healthy choices for our school community.

In addition to the renovations, the Richmond School District is changing the catchment boundaries of the surrounding elementary schools to reduce overcrowding and to provide Odlin Crescent with its own catchment area. A boundary review process led by the Facilities Planning Department developed two scenarios for the district community to provide input on. The Board of Education will then decide which scenario will form the basis of the Odlin Crescent catchment in time to begin registration for the 2026/27 school year. ■



From top to bottom: Overhead view of Odlin Crescent showing sports fields; View from outside Library Learning Commons; Typical classroom rendering; and Library Learning Commons.

Learning

BY CHUCK MORRIS

Education is something we all need to work with. Why would you stop learning? It behooves all of us to continue learning in order to broaden our horizons, to open one's eyes even more than they have been up to this point. Learning does not have to be boring or hard or time consuming.

How many of you have watched topics on Ted Talks? Some are short and others longer, but you get to choose the topic you want to see. Most are enlightening and educational. If you choose one about leadership, education, or management you will find good presentations. You will come away feeling better and knowing a little more about what you need to do. (TED: Ideas change everything)

Many of you may have read books by Simon Sinek or watched some of his videos. He speaks on a wide variety of topics, but it is to improve yourself and maybe turn you on to a different viewpoint. You will find this is not a waste of your time for sure. Simon makes a variety of great points that you can put to action right away. (Leadership Training & Employee Development Platform - The Optimism Company)

Another one to watch is Meir Kay as he addresses behaviour and situations where correct responses are presented to help people. His videos are short and easy to watch, and you will certainly understand the points he brings forth. (Meir Kay - YouTube)

These are easy and enjoyable to watch/listen to. You would be remiss if you did not start listening to one of them at least once a week. Years ago, I did and came across good information I incorporated into my work. In fact, I collected URLs to some of the talks and ended up with a major collection of links to all the above and more! In one district I referred to Wednesdays as 'Push Wednesday' and would send a link to a talk out to my staff each week. Why not share it as it will benefit staff

as well as yourself!

I am not saying a more structured learning environment is not necessary. Of course it is, however, these tidbits do fill a gap that we should not be ignoring.

Learning needs to be a lifelong venture and it really is worth the 10 -20 minutes at least once per week. I have spoken about taking a time out for yourself once in awhile to allow yourself to regroup. You could easily watch one of these during that break. Regroup and learn. That is the right sort of break we all need from time to time.

If you have not been to one of our June conferences, it would behoove you to attend. Accolades from members, especially the newer members of the organization, really highlight to us that all the hard work putting these together is well worth it! One needs to sit in on any of the Round Table discussions to find out what they have been missing. These are very important sessions, especially for newer members. Many of the senior attendees have spent years attending various sessions, events, and even behind the scenes to ensure it all comes off without a hitch.

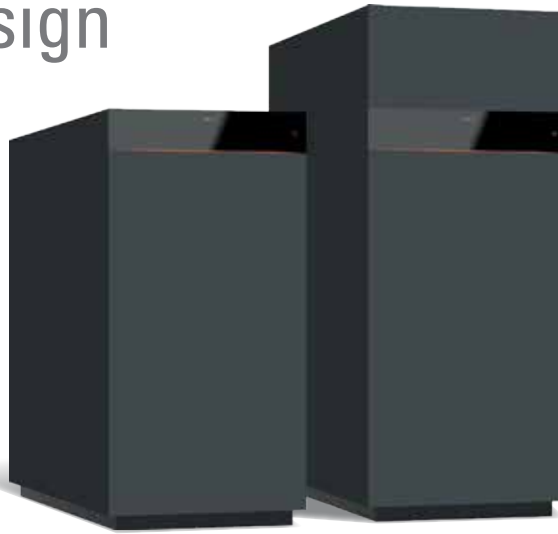
Lifelong learning provides personal growth, including increased self-confidence, a greater sense of purpose, and improved health by keeping the brain alert and potentially delaying cognitive decline. Professionally, it leads to career advancement through new skills and adaptability, and socially, it fosters new connections and strengthens community bonds.

Lifelong learners develop the ability to understand and adapt to new information and changes in their environment, making them more flexible in both their personal and professional lives. Participating in classes or learning groups provides opportunities to meet like-minded individuals, leading to new friendships and supportive communities ■

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Mitch Van Aller was a longtime and deeply respected member of the Educational Facility Managers Association of British Columbia. Over the years, he served several school districts with dedication and distinction, culminating in his role as Director of Facilities for School District #23 (Central Okanagan), from which he retired in 2022.

Even in retirement, Mitch continued to lend his expertise to Station One Architects, supporting projects throughout the Okanagan with the same passion and precision that defined his career.

Mitch was known not only for his professional excellence, but also for his humour and humility. He would often ask — half-jokingly — why anyone would

work more than eight hours a day and then proceed to put in 12 himself. That was Mitch: always leading by example, always giving more than expected, and always doing it with a quiet smile.

His legacy lives on in the buildings he helped shape, the teams he mentored, and the friendships he built along the way.

On behalf of EFMA BC, we extend our sincerest condolences to Mitch's wife, Roxy, and to their family and friends. Mitch will be deeply missed but never forgotten.

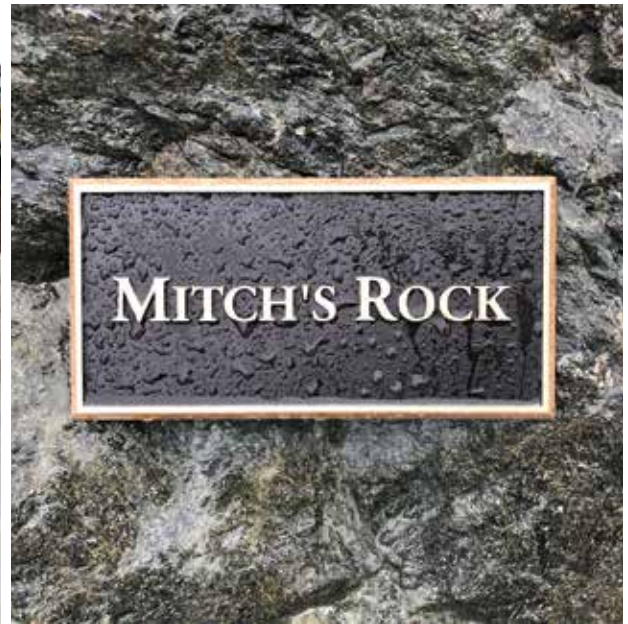
Sincerely,

Megan MacDonald

President, EFMABC



L to R: Matt Brennan and Justin Dyck (both from Station One Architects), Mitch Van Aller, Brian Menzies and Riley Kynoch (both from Greyback Construction)



The story of Mitch's Rock

— *Excerpt from eulogy given by Harold Shock*

During the Canyon Falls construction, the site superintendent uncovered a massive rock and asked Mitch what to do with it. Back and forth the discussions went. Remove it? Move it? Blow it up? Finally, the lead contractor declared, "This is Mitch's rock." Mitch decided to leave it exactly where it was. And on opening day, there it stood — proudly labelled Mitch's Rock.

It's funny how a rock can come to mean so much. But for those of us who worked with Mitch, it's a fitting symbol. Because in many ways, Mitch was our rock.

He stood firm when challenges arose. He brought stability and vision to complex projects. He supported us, inspired us, and quietly shaped the foundation beneath so many of the achievements we celebrate today.

Mitch was deeply committed to making SD23 a better place for students. Every conversation, every decision, every project came back to that core value. His legacy is not just in the buildings he helped create, but in the learning and growth that happens inside them every single day.

Mitch, thank you for your leadership. Thank you for your laughter, your vision, your integrity. Thank you for being our rock. You leave behind spaces that will serve generations of students, and you leave behind colleagues who were made better by working alongside you.

You will be deeply missed, but your impact will be felt for decades to come.

Rest easy, Mitch. ■

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