



THE CAMPUS RESIDENT

JUNE 6, 2024
VOLUME 14, ISSUE 2



A Reimagined Museum

The Museum of Anthropology at UBC is preparing to welcome visitors after undergoing necessary structural upgrades. *The Campus Resident* takes a look at what has (and hasn't) changed at this campus attraction. **Pages 4-5**

Controversial Crosswalk to Be Converted to Pedestrian Signal



The current pedestrian crossing, pictured here last month, at West 16th and Binning Road. (Photo: Emmanuel Samoglou)

BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure says change will occur before 2024-2025 school year commences.

BY ADA BUCUR

Schoolchildren and parents using a pedestrian crossing on West 16th Avenue that has long drawn safety concerns may soon be able to cross the street in much safer conditions beginning next September.

A spokesperson for the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure told *The Campus Resident* the pedestrian crossing at West 16th and Binning Road will be converted to a standard traffic light.

The crossing links Wesbrook with Hampton Place and is heavily used by students at Norma Rosa Point elementary who walk from the Wesbrook area. The current arrangement at the crosswalk has a flashing light activated by pedestrians that prompts motorists to stop. Following the upgrade, the crossing signal activated by pedestrians will give pedestrians a Walk signal and motorists will get a red light.

The ministry says it expects that the change will be completed before school starts after Labour Day.

A UNA official said UBC staff and the ministry are working together to re-design the crossing, and the project is being financed with provincial money.

The announcement follows a long-standing request by the University Neighbourhoods Association (UNA) and university officials for change at the crossing, following repeated safety complaints from residents.

“Our community has been voicing their concerns about this crossing for a very long time,” UNA operations manager Wegland Sit wrote in an October 2023 letter to the ministry.

The crossing is used by as many as 900 pedestrians a day, Sit added.

The ministry’s announcement comes six months after Sit’s letter. Krista Falkner, UBC’s transportation manager, and Jen McCutcheon, the elected director of Metro Vancouver’s Electoral Area A—which includes UBC’s Point Grey campus—also supported the request for a safer pedestrian crossing at the location.

“It was never a quick process to begin with, and it certainly required some degree of patience to see it through,” Sit told *The Campus Resident*.

Falkner said UBC welcomes the announcement. “We will leave it to the ministry to commit to the changes and the timing of implementing them.”

Separately, City of Vancouver councillors voted unanimously on April 10 in favour of exploring a reduction in the city-wide speed limit to 30 km/h on residential side streets.

The speed limit on the UBC campus including the residential neighbourhoods is 30 km/h.

ADA BUCUR IS A CAMPUS RESIDENT, POSSESSES A GRAPHIC DESIGN DIPLOMA, A PHOTOGRAPHY CERTIFICATE, AND OVER TWO DECADES OF JOURNALISM EXPERTISE GAINED IN HER NATIVE ROMANIA.

UBC Farmers’ Market Returns

UBC’s popular farmers market has returned for the 2024 season, offering locally-grown organic produce and featuring local vendors and entertainers. **Page 3**



Are Local Schools Overcrowded?

Our end of the academic year feature looks at the issue of overcrowding in local schools, the education funding model, and whether a new school is coming to campus anytime soon. **Pages 6-7**



Public Garden Plots Are Wildly Popular

As the wait list continues to grow, UBC is planning to expand the public community garden program with new plots. **Page 8**



Sunshine and Smiles at Norma Rose Point Spring Fair



Students and community members came out in full force for this year’s Norma Rose Point Spring Fair. The event, which took place in mid-May, included a wide range of attractions including carnival rides, food carts, gymnastics and karate demonstrations, a craft sale, and performances from school groups and professional entertainers, such as Emcee / DJ Rock’n’Beau (pictured above). The duo were one of many acts that delighted students with lively performances. And it was done for a good cause, with funds raised going toward building a new intermediate playground for students and community members. (Photo: Hannie Chia)

UNA Office Lease Up For Renewal

With staff spread out over several locations, UNA searching for expanded office space

BY DANIEL LI

Directors discussed the issue of renewing the lease for the UNA's administrative office during May's board meeting,

The UNA currently holds a lease from UBC Properties Trust at 5923 Berton Avenue, where the non-profit society's operations, finance and IT staff work. The lease expires on July 31, and the UNA has asked the board to approve a five-year extension.

A UNA operations department report submitted to the board for discussion includes details on the extension and the organization's needs for a larger office space than the one currently leased. Staff are currently spread out over three locations: the offices at 5923 Berton Ave., Wesbrook Community Centre and the Old Barn Community Centre.

The proposed lease contains provisions that enable the UNA to move its offices if a larger and more suitable location be found.

In the meantime, the renewal of the lease agreement for the current office could entail a nearly 29 per cent increase in base rent, from the current \$28 per square foot and increasing to \$36 in the last year of the proposed five-year lease term. The common area management expense portion of the lease agreement has also been estimated to rise between 5-10 per cent.

During discussion on the matter, UNA Directors requested additional information regarding the proposed increase in the lease rate and specific provisions of the lease agreement before they move forward with the proposal.

They also made a request for more research into comparable rates being paid by other commercial tenants on campus.

Newspaper expansion

Following a request from the board, the UNA's communications manager Glenda Ollero presented the board with two options on expanding *The Campus Resident's* print edition.

The paper is currently printed on a quarterly basis; however, strong interest from community members prompted directors to ask UNA staff to explore increasing the number of print issues. The paper is also available online, and the website is updated with a new monthly edition on the first Thursday of every month.

The first option proposed that *The Campus Resident* would publish print editions of the newspaper six times per year on a bimonthly basis, while the second option would have the newspaper print twelve monthly issues.

Both options included a recommendation to separate the currently combined UNA position of Newspaper Editor & Social Media Specialist into two distinct roles and expand both into full-time positions to handle the increased workload of producing additional print editions.

The board declined to take any action on the proposal and requested more information on how the UNA's social media would be affected if the newspaper's printing schedule were to be expanded.



The UNA's administrative offices at 5923 Berton Avenue in Wesbrook Village. (Photo: Emmanuel Samoglou)

UNA Guidebook going online

The *UNA Guidebook* – a booklet which includes a summary of information on services and recreation programs – will be offered as an online resource soon and will be available to read in multiple languages.

The move to digitize the *Guidebook* comes as demand for printed versions continue to rise. The UNA also hopes that the new multi-language online *Guidebook*, which is targeted as a resource for residents who are new to the community, will be more accessible to those who prefer to read in a language that is not English.

The printed *Guidebook* will continue to be released, but Ollero said she expects that implementing an online version will help ease demand for it.

It was also noted in the report that having an online *Guidebook* would allow for instant updates and that it could be easily translated via web plug-ins and apps to more languages to improve accessibility. 🌿

DANIEL LI IS A GRADE 10 STUDENT AT UNIVERSITY HILL SECONDARY

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JUNE 6,
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Volume 14
Issue 2

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The Campus Resident is printed quarterly and can be accessed online at THECAMPUSRESIDENT.CA.

Published by the University Neighbourhoods Association
#202-5923 Berton Avenue,
Vancouver BC, V6S 0B3.

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UBC Farmers’ Market Returns

Market sells locally-grown produce, features local vendors and entertainers.

BY ELINA HAILAIJIAO

The popular UBC Farmers’ Market is back. Support local farmers, small businesses, entertainers, and buy goods at vendor stands every Saturday from 10 to 2 p.m., through to November 30 at 3461 Ross Drive.

The market reopened on June 1. During opening day, farm tours were led by market guides and included stops at the Indigenous gardens, which feature over 40 varieties of medicinal plants. Tours also covered the farm’s beehives, tomato gardens, greenhouses, and the apple garden.

Throughout the summer and into the fall, evening markets will also be held at the farm on Tuesdays from 4 to 6 p.m., and a third market offering the farm’s produce will be held Wednesdays from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. outside the UBC Bookstore.

In addition to the farm’s fresh produce – certified organic through the North Okanagan Organic Association – a wide range of vendors will be on-site to offer a wide variety of goods such as coffee, fresh breads and baked treats, organic vegetables and fruits, drinks, crafts and cooked food. There are also live local musicians to listen to while browsing the market.

Like in 2023, staff have made the decision to not keep hens at the farm, which means their popular eggs will not be available again this year. That decision is expected to be reviewed, and staff are hoping eggs will return sometime in the future.

This popular attraction is described by UBC Farm staff as the only multi-vendor



Workers at the UBC farm have been getting their fields ready to grow produce for their popular farmers’ markets, which run all summer. (Photo: Vivian Su).

farmer’s market in Vancouver on a working farm. Because of this, it’s important for visitors to adhere to certain rules: pets are not allowed except for service animals, visitors are not allowed to walk on cultivated fields and pick or destroy any vegetation,

and visitors should refrain from being too close to farm and research equipment. 🌿

ELINA HAILAIJIAO IS A STUDENT AT UNIVERSITY HILL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

UNAUNIVERSITY NEIGHBOURHOODS ASSOCIATION

COMMUNITY FIELD TEMPORARY CLOSURE

The UNA Community Field will be closed for maintenance and resurfacing for 4-6 weeks beginning June 26, 2024.

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A Reimagined Museum

The Museum of Anthropology at UBC is preparing to welcome visitors after a year and a half of necessary structural upgrades that will offer protection from earthquakes. A familiar but invigorated museum awaits.

BY ROBYN STARKEY

MOA staff are looking forward to re-engaging with their volunteers, many of whom are local residents, and they also promise a variety of workshops and activities over the summer.

With its rich collection of First Nations art and other exhibits, the Museum of Anthropology at UBC is set to re-open to the public on June 13 after being closed for 18 months.

The closure was necessary for seismic upgrades to the Great Hall to protect the museum and its works from earthquakes. MOA remained open for community and for research requests, but saw few visitors during that time.

The Great Hall has now been rebuilt — 25 base isolators have been installed under the concrete columns to provide seismic protection. The upgrades used the original design by Arthur Erikson, “to retain the appearance of the original space to preserve its architectural character.”

MOA also worked with Musqueam in the planning of the upgrades. The project is described by MOA as ensuring “the preservation and safety of this cultural heritage for future generations.”

The Campus Resident spoke to museum director Susan Rowley about the closure and the upgrades. Rowley said that while the construction itself posed a lot of challenges and unexpected hiccups, the most challenging aspect of the closure for the museum staff was not having the opportunity to interact with the public.

“We thrive on visitors,” Rowley said, adding that interaction with the public is a vital part of MOA’s educational mandate, and that museum staff are excited about re-engaging with visitors.

Rowley also said that the closure provided the oppor-

tunity for MOA to rethink and reimagine the museum and its exhibits. The museum worked with an advisory committee, as well as with First Nations communities and families to think about themes, aiming to “provide more context” for the permanent collection of works and to “wrap them in community.”

It’s clear that MOA staff are aware that the arrangements of objects within a space can affect the way they are perceived by visitors. A lot of their “reimagining” is focused on the presentation and explanation of works, and how that relates to the viewing space.

The upgraded Great Hall will display monumental works, such as carvings and poles, with additional context. The space has also been enhanced with new skylights and additional light sources.

Changes have been made throughout the museum and regular visitors will be able to note significant modifications to the displays of familiar works. Some larger pieces that were outside have been moved inside the building. The “Whaler’s

Pole,” formerly located outside the Douglas T. Kenny Building, will now be on display in the Great Hall, along with some other works that were previously outside on MOA grounds. Visitors can also look forward to new displays at the Great Hall including an 8.7-metre canoe, carved by Stz’uminus artist Qap’u’luq—John Marston.

The Great Hall at the Museum of Anthropology at UBC, lit up at night prior to demolition for seismic upgrades, December 2020. (Photo: Michael Elkan)



Changes have been made throughout the museum and regular visitors will be able to note significant modifications to the displays of familiar works.



The Great Hall at the Museum of Anthropology at UBC, pictured here last month. (Photo: Ada Bucur)

MUSEUM CONTINUED ON PAGE 5



Skwxwú7mesh and Kwakwaka'wakw leaders and community members on their float in the Diamond Jubilee Parade, Vancouver, 1946. Photographer unrecorded. (Photo: Courtesy of City of Vancouver Archives [371-34])

MUSEUM CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

New Exhibitions

As part of the reopening, the museum will be showcasing a new multimedia exhibit titled *To Be Seen, To Be Heard: First Nations in Public Spaces, 1900–1965*. This exhibit features archival photographs and film to present Indigenous self-representation during a time of assimilation, documenting First Nations efforts “to be seen and heard at a wide range of public events.” Photographs will be “accompanied by audio commentaries by Indigenous community members who reflect on the images from their perspectives today.”

Curators at the museum are working to enhance the opportunities for collaboration and expression by the artists and makers. Rowley says the exhibit is an example of this collaboration and of the museum’s ongoing work on decolonization. Rowley and head museum curator Carol Mayer both said that explanatory text and educational materials are co-created with artists and community members, and that this change in practice is one reflection of the way the MOA’s approach to its collections have evolved over time.

MOA’s History is a Journey

The opening weekend marks a number of significant landmarks in MOA’s history, including the 100th birthday of

the original MOA architect, and the 75th anniversary of the MOA’s founding.

MOA originally opened in the basement of the UBC Main library in 1947, displaying objects from anthropologist Frank Burnett’s collection. Burnett travelled widely in the Pacific, visiting outposts of empire. By the time the current building opened in 1976, the collections had grown through acquisition and donation. Audrey Hawthorn, the museum’s first curator, wanted to build a “worldwide collection,” notes Mayer.

Mayer, who has worked under every MOA director and wrote a history of the museum with former director Anthony Shelton, spoke to *The Campus Resident* and provided some insight on the museum’s development. She has seen a lot of changes since the museum was first established with Burnett’s collection. When asked if she saw the museum as responding to changes in anthropology, or driving it, Mayer said, “Well, you start by observing change, but then you hope to participate in it.” Mayer also said that MOA continues to transform its understanding of its relationships with the objects in its collection. “We used to talk about being owners, then stewards,” Mayer said. “But now the museum is more of a resting place.”

She talks about the journey of the objects in the museum. “It’s important to our reputation that people regard us as respectful of the collections,” she said. “They may be here for a time, but this is not necessarily the end of the journey.” One of the biggest changes over time has come with the museum’s collections being available online, which Mayer describes as an important development for both transparency and accessibility. “People come from all over the world to visit objects they have seen online.”

Additionally, curatorial staff work to care for and display objects in ways that display their unique beauty, as well as keep them intact. It’s a long way from the dusty cabinets in the basement in the 1950s.

Pacific Connections

Another new exhibit opening on June 13 is the

Western Canada premiere of Māori artist Lisa Reihana’s panoramic video and sound work, *in Pursuit of Venus [infected]*. The exhibition tells the story of Cook’s journey from a variety of perspectives, juxtaposing images with a variety of voices and commentary. According to MOA, the work presents “Māori and Pacific Indigenous people’s relationships with their cultural knowledge” through a complex set of viewpoints.

This work continues the tradition of MOA’s relationship with cultures from the Pacific, which started with Burnett’s collection.

Mayer says MOA’s relationship with the Pacific makes sense in terms of its location.

“Outside the museum, looking out, the first thing you see is a Pacific island,” says Mayer, who is working on a book about the Pacific and has been responsible for collecting a number of MOA’s works from people of the Pacific Islands. “They see this as their museum.”

Reopening Weekend: June 13-16

MOA reopens to the public with a free admission event at 5 p.m. on Thursday, June 13. Opening night runs from 5 to 9 p.m. and includes speeches and a Coast Salish song and dance by Tsatsu Stalqayu Coastal Wolf Pack at 7 p.m.

Friday’s events will include a centenary celebration of the original MOA architect, Arthur Erikson, and a special tour of the building.

The Harry and Audrey Hawthorn Library and Archives will also be hosting an open house on Saturday and Sunday.

The popular MOA Shop will also reopen for in-person shopping. UNA Card holders get a 10 per cent discount on purchases. MOA staff are also hoping that the new Cedar Café will be up and running by opening weekend.

Additional activities, tours and performances are scheduled throughout the weekend, with details available on the MOA’s website.

For the public, admission will be free on June 13 and half price from June 14–16. For UNA Card holders, UBC students and employees, admission is free.

Beyond Opening Weekend

MOA staff are looking forward to re-engaging with their volunteers, many of whom are local residents, and they also promise a variety of workshops and activities over the summer.

ROBYN STARKEY IS A WESBROOK PLACE RESIDENT AND A MEMBER OF THE CAMPUS RESIDENT NEWSPAPER EDITORIAL COMMITTEE.



New beams of the Great Hall at the Museum of Anthropology at UBC being installed in February 2023. (Photo: Michael Elkan)



Interior view of windowpane installation in the Great Hall, February 2024. (Photo: Brannen Bell)

UNA

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Pictured here in 2018 and situated on the grounds behind the museum, the Haida Village consists of two houses constructed between 1958 and 1962 by Haida artist Bill Reid and ‘Namgis artist Doug Cranmer. The houses are modeled on a 19th century Haida village. (Photo: Ada Bucur)

schools

Overcrowded Schools?

Vancouver School Board Says Yes and No

Parents are frustrated with overcrowding at local schools, and how board officials are dealing with the problem.

BY WARREN CARAGATA

Parents of UBC neighbourhoods and the endowment lands are increasingly frustrated at overcrowding in the two elementary schools on the peninsula, Norma Rose Point and University Hill.

“The elementary schools are both full and sending kids away,” says Jen McCutcheon, a parent with a daughter at UHill elementary and a son who previously attended the school.

“Norma Point Rose is absolutely full and every single year turns kids away at almost every grade level,” says McCutcheon. “UHill Elementary is also full at most grades.” McCutcheon was on UHill’s parent advisory committee for six years and is also the elected Metro Vancouver director for so-called Area A, which includes UBC neighbourhoods and the endowment lands.

Capacity pressures at the two schools aren’t new.

When McCutcheon and her family moved to the Hawthorn neighbourhood, part of the catchment for Norma Rose Point, school officials told them not to even bother putting their son on the waitlist, so both children attended UHill elementary.

A few years ago, McCutcheon recalls, a child whose parents tried to enrol her in kindergarten at UHill was turned away because there was no room. “The family had just arrived from Egypt, and they had to get the child to Carnarvon school, about 6 km off campus, every day, rain shine, snow.” Carnarvon is on 16th Ave. east of Blenheim Street.

When Fei Liu and her family moved to the area in May 2018, she called Norma Rose Point to enrol their son, who was then in Grade 3. The school said there was no room. “They just said, Oh, we have a long wait list. You’d better try to find another school nearby.” The family persevered and eventually got their son enrolled.

But in the fall of 2018, when their young daughter was old enough to go to kindergarten, there was no room at Norma Rose Point. Their daughter ended up at UHill for a week until there was an opening.

Public schools for residents of the UBC lands and the University Endowment Lands are run by the Vancouver School Board (VSB). That’s the case even though the UBC neighbourhoods and the endowment lands are not part of the City of Vancouver.

While the school board acknowledges there is “enrolment pressure” felt especially at the two elementary schools, its numbers paint a different—and much criticized—picture.

The VSB’s projections show that for both elementary schools, enrolment is poised to actually drop to 1,100 in 2032 from the current tally of 1,155 students.

“That’s ridiculous,” McCutcheon says of the projections. “They make no sense given both the UEL leləm development and of course all of the development within the university neighbourhoods.”

UBC is asking the province to approve a land use plan that would see the campus neighbourhoods more than double in population by 2050. In addition, the leləm neighbourhood development on the endowment lands will add at least 2,500 residents, which doesn’t include a recent application by the developer to add an additional 622 housing units to the existing plan.

“If you build houses,” says Steve Cardwell, the former superintendent and CEO of the VSB, “then you need schools for the people who live in them.” Cardwell is now the chair of the Institute for Public Education BC.

Norma Rose Point now has 740 students, just short of its capacity of 792. By 2032, enrollment is expected to climb further and the board says it will be over-capacity with 824 students.

But the board estimates that enrolment at UHill elementary will decline, dropping to 276 by 2032. The current enrolment of 415 students is over its capacity of 370.

In all, the board is projecting a fall in enrolment by 2032 of 64 students—25 fewer elementary students and 39 fewer secondary students. It’s not clear how these numbers are calculated, or if they take into account the increase in housing capacity.

Michael Hooper is an associate professor of community and regional planning at UBC. He says the VSB’s planning numbers are based on assumptions that don’t make sense.

“My God, I’ve never seen anything, anything, like the VSB’s planning.” The formulas used to arrive at the projections are secret, he says.

Hooper is not alone. VSB trustee Suzie Mah also questions how the board gets its numbers.

“Maybe we’re not taking into account these announcements that are being announced every other day about densification in Vancouver.”

It’s not just on the UBC lands that the board’s projections raise questions. The Ministry of Education and Child Care estimates that schools in the Vancouver School District will see roughly 2,300 more students by the 2033–2034 school year.

The school board is predicting population decline in Vancouver, not growth. Under its enrolment projection, the elementary and secondary student population would drop by 4,184 students between 2023 and 2032.

That’s a difference of almost 6,500 students between the province’s estimate and the board’s estimate.

While the board says enrolment in peninsula schools will decline, it also says this: “Forecasts indicate there will be additional enrolment pressure in the area in coming years; however rapid enrolment growth is not anticipated.” The board says it is revising its enrolment estimates with new numbers that are expected to be posted by the end of June.

Hooper, who studied into the board’s forecasts in an unsuccessful fight over the closure of the Queen Elizabeth Annex French immersion school, says he’s not surprised the board can say—at the same time—that enrolment will decline while enrolment pressure will go up.



A plot of land reserved for a new school in Wesbrook Place, just south of Wesbrook Community Centre. (Photo: Emmanuel Samoglou)

Building a New School Isn’t a Simple Process

Amidst intense development and concerns of overcrowding at schools in the university neighbourhoods, the question is being asked: when will a new school be built?

BY WARREN CARAGATA

There is of course a simple answer to the question of overcrowded schools. Build a new school.

And so, as the university has developed plans to double the population of its residential neighbourhoods, it has reserved a plot of land at the corner of Birney and Ross Drive in Wesbrook Place for a new school.

The land is there for the asking.

The Vancouver School Board says there are enrolment pressures at both elementary schools serving residents of the UBC neighbourhoods and endowment lands, even though it projects a decrease in enrolment.

To deal with the pressure, the board’s capital plan for 2022–23 proposes a new elementary school on the south campus—that’s Wesbrook. It would accommodate 350 students and cost \$29.2 million.

The capital plan is sent to the provincial education ministry every year because it’s the province that provides the funds for new school construction. The board says the school has been in its capital plans since 2012.



University Hill Elementary School, located on the University Endowment Lands. (Photo: Nicole Adoranti)

OVERCROWDED CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

BUILD CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

BUILD CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

“The funding has yet to be approved by the ministry,” board spokesperson Jiana Chow said.

But it’s never that simple. First, the capital plan sets out priorities, and the board lists the proposed school as a five-year priority, the lowest priority there is.

It’s understood that UBC is ready to lease the land for 99 years at minimal cost whenever it gets the firm go-ahead from the school board.

That, says the VSB’s Chow, has not yet happened. “UBC would only grant a lease when certainty exists for funding of a new school.”

But the Ministry of Education and Child Care says it only funds new construction once the school board secures a site. “At this time, the project is listed as a Year 5 priority by the VSB and a site has not been secured. Any projects listed in Year 4 and 5 are considered more of a notional nature and may require further refinement in future 5-year capital plan submissions.”

But once schools get built, there’s a question whether they are too small to begin with. Norma Rose Point was only opened in 2014 with a capacity of 792 students. Enrolment now stands 740. So in 10 years, it basically filled up.

“What that tells me is that Norma Rose Point was not built large enough,” says Suzie Mah, a board trustee representing the Coalition of Progressive Electors.

From idea to school construction also takes a while. Steve Cardwell, the former superintendent of schools for the Vancouver board and now of the Institute for Public Education BC, notes that a new school for the Olympic Village went on the planning books in 2013 but was identified even earlier.

This year, the government announced that it is providing \$150.6 million for the school, which will open in 2029.

So, schools do get built and the province does spend the money to get them built. The government says it has provided \$526 million in funding for new construction in the Vancouver School District as well as funding for seismic upgrades and school expansion.

But the process is far from simple. 🌿

Issues at Local Schools Cast Spotlight on Provincial Funding

BC’s education expenditure lagging other provinces, exacerbating overcrowding and staffing problems.

BY WARREN CARAGATA

Frustration over enrolment pressures at the two elementary schools on the peninsula is usually directed at the Vancouver School Board but there is another culprit—provincial funding that doesn’t keep up with growing needs.

“Even though you give more money, you’re not keeping pace in terms of what is the actual cost to deliver a quality education,” says Suzie Mah, a board trustee representing the Coalition of Progressive Electors.

The BC Teachers Federation (BCTF), not normally a critic of the NDP provincial government, noted in 2022 that B.C. was falling behind other provinces when funding education.

“The budget shortfalls and other challenges currently facing B.C. education are the cumulative effects of over 20 years of grossly underfunding public education,” the federation said.

In its reaction to the 2024 budget, the federation coupled praise with similar criticism. “The BC Teachers’ Federation was heartened to hear that public education is a top priority of the NDP government,” the federation said in a news release, quoting president Clint Johnston.

However, the federation added that, “Without a significant funding commitment that goes beyond keeping up with the growing population, Budget 2024 won’t make a dent in solving acute staffing shortages in schools.”

The government has an easy response to the critics. “Total annual operating funding for K-12 education is a record \$8.7 billion in 2024/25. Additionally, the province’s capital plan includes a record \$4.2 billion over the next three years.”

Mah says the increases don’t deal with aging infrastructure and growing demand around issues like learning needs. “When you look at the educational need of students and you look at the funding that we get from the ministry, I would say no, it is not enough to go around.”

The issue of funding is felt not just with overcrowding and students

unable to enrol in neighbourhood schools. It’s also felt in funding for children with learning challenges. In February, the Parent Advisory Council at Norma Rose Point raised concerns about staff shortages that see resource teachers called to fill in for absent teachers, taking them away from their duties helping students with special needs.

“The students that should be getting the extra help, they’re not getting it,” Mah said.

The BCTF is critical of a provincial funding model that it says “has achieved its primary purpose of increasing cost control at the provincial level.” It also notes that the legislature’s Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services has recommended a review of the funding process to ensure it covers actual costs and resource needs.

Education accounts for the second largest spending line in the provincial budget after health care. The 2024 budget estimates that education spending in the 2024–25 fiscal year will amount to \$19.48 billion or 21.8 per cent of total government expenses. Health care accounts for 40.2 per cent. But the share of education funding as a percentage of government spending has fallen from 25.3 per cent in 2017–18, even though education spending has risen \$6.4 billion over that period.

Looking at education spending figures compiled by Statistics Canada, B.C. does not fare well.

B.C.’s funding for all levels of education stood at 6 per cent of provincial GDP in 2020–21, the third lowest level among the 10 provinces. Only Alberta and Newfoundland ranked lower.

On funding for kindergarten to grade 12, B.C. came second last at 3 per cent, just a shade ahead of Newfoundland

at 2.9 per cent. By comparison, funding as a share of GDP in top-ranked Manitoba stood at 4.9 per cent.

On per capita funding, B.C. ranked eighth with spending in 2020–21 of \$3,073. Only New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island spent less.

The Statistics Canada data is the latest available for both measures and included both public and private spending. 🌿



Norma Rose Point School on UBC’s Point Gray campus. (Photo: Emmanuel Samoglou)

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Expenditure per capita | 2020–21

Rank	Province	Spending
1	Saskatchewan	\$4,654
2	Alberta	\$4,082
3	Ontario	\$3,598
4	Manitoba	\$3,576
5	Newfoundland and Labrador	\$3,453
6	Nova Scotia	\$3,399
7	Quebec	\$3,146
8	British Columbia	\$3,073
9	Prince Edward Island	\$2,988
10	New Brunswick	\$2,824
	Canada Average	\$3,500

Note: Covers public and private expenditure on education. Source: Statistics Canada, Table 37-10-0025-01

Spending on K-12 as a Percentage of GDP | 2020–21

Rank	Province	Per Cent
1	Manitoba	4.9
2	Nova Scotia	4.4
3	Prince Edward Island	4.2
4	Saskatchewan	4.2
5	Quebec	4.1
6	New Brunswick	4
7	Ontario	3.8
8	Alberta	3.3
9	British Columbia	3
10	Newfoundland and Labrador	2.9
	Canada Average	3.8

Note: Covers public and private expenditure on education. Source: Statistics Canada, Table 37-10-0211-01



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Garden Plots Wildly Popular, Wait List Grows

UBC planning to expand public community gardens with new plots in Wesbrook Place.

BY AMIE BERNAERDT

With planting season in full swing, many residents have begun to focus on their gardens. While some are content with a garden on their balcony, many others around campus have taken an interest in the growing space offered by the community gardens run by the UNA.



A rendering showing the location of 36 proposed new public garden plots in southeast Wesbrook Place, which is currently being developed and known as lot BCR6. (Source: UBC Properties Trust)

These gardens have been incredibly popular among residents. With over 600 people on the waiting list, the wait time is currently around 4-5 years to access one of 246 available plots on five UNA community gardens.

During the pandemic, there was a massive spike to the waiting list, and with more people moving onto campus, it is likely the list will keep growing.

Some relief may be in sight though, as there are plans to increase the number of community plots. A new community garden, currently unnamed, is planned for the southeast corner of Wesbrook Place as development occurs there.

“There are 36 plots in the development plan, but this may be subject to change,” a UBC Properties Trust spokesperson says. “The current timeline for completion is contingent on surrounding construction.”

Community garden-

ing has many benefits for residents. It provides residents a way to connect with nature and to grow their own food, allowing access to affordable and nutritious produce.

“Tomatoes do really well here,” says Dominic Willson, a member of one of the community gardens. He also recommends growing herbs, as these plants are a good starting place for beginner gardeners. “Stuff like mint is harder to kill than it is to grow,” Willson says with a laugh.

The UBC Botanical Garden and Metro Vancouver have also put together the Grow Green Guide, which is available online to help residents figure out what will grow best in their plots.

Over the spring and summer months, activity will pick up in the gardens as residents plant a variety of different plants in the community plots. Most grow staples, like beans, tomatoes, or peas.

Some have been trying gailan (Chinese broccoli) and corn, although corn is notoriously difficult to grow in community garden plots, Willson says.

“We personally have not tried too much,” he says. “We just want staples that we can eat.”

One of the most appealing benefits of the community gardens, though, is the sense of community that they foster. The



Wesbrook resident Dominic Willson working on his garden plot in late May. Willson says he focuses on growing staples such as tomatoes, zucchini, carrots, and herbs. (Photo: Emmanuel Samoglou)

gardens are a great place to meet new people and connect with neighbours. “Especially during COVID, it was really good that we were bumping into people we wouldn’t get the opportunity to meet,” Willson says. “It was really good for us.”

Within the gardens, there is a great sense of community among its members. “We look after each other,” Willson explains.

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OVERCROWDED CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

At a board meeting he attended about a year ago, one of the first discussions was about asking the province for funding for portables because, as a senior staff member said, Vancouver schools were overcrowded. Later in the meeting, the same official said schools were empty and the board needed to sell schools.

Mah, who represents the Coalition of Progressive Electors and has become an outspoken critic of the board, says Hooper’s experience is nothing new. “It’s like a moving target. One day we are told there’s going to be a decrease, then the next day we’re told they’re going to be an increase.”

Temporary solutions

Overcrowded schools don’t necessarily mean that students are sitting in hallways, and the board says it has several ways of managing schools that have reached their limit.

As Jen McCutcheon and Fei Liu have described, overcrowding can mean waitlists or finding another school, not always one nearby. It can also mean split grades, with two grades of students sharing a classroom. But McCutcheon says the last-minute adjustments needed in September to arrange the splits can mean a week or two before kids can get settled.

There are no portables at the peninsula’s schools and no intention to add them. The board says they are expensive to maintain, and parents don’t like them. McCutcheon says she understands that the board avoids portables because their presence increases pressure to build new schools.

To deal with the problem, the board told directors of the University Neighbour-

hoods Association at a meeting a year ago that, according to one source, it balances enrolment between the high-growth UBC neighbourhoods and slower-growth neighbourhoods in Vancouver proper by having students living in the UBC catchments go to schools down the hill.

The board admits this is the policy. “There is significant available space at schools near UBC/UEL (Queen Mary, Queen Elizabeth, Southlands, Kitchener and Bayview) to accommodate elementary students who are not able to be enrolled in their catchment school (Norma Rose Point Elementary and University Hill Elementary).

“As such, there are no portables in the UBC/UEL area because there is sufficient space at nearby schools to accommodate students.”

Flawed modelling?

Part of the problem with the board’s projections, Hooper says, is that they count only those residential developments where construction has started. “Only projects that are currently breaking ground can be included in the numbers. ... Their model by design precludes most future growth.”

In the UBC neighbourhoods, this means several actual projects have likely not been included in the board’s current enrolment projections, even though officials from the VSB and UBC meet regularly to discuss UBC development plans. Projects like Lots 6 and 26 on Ross Drive with about 1,000 residents in 453 units likely wouldn’t have been included.

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