



**THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF
SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 58 (NICOLA-SIMILKAMEEN)**

ADMINISTRATION OFFICE

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December 17, 2021

Good afternoon SD 58 Merritt and Princeton Students, Staff, Families and Caregivers:

I am pleased to write you today with information regarding our January school opening targets, as well as to let you know about the work being done to meet them. On November 15th, numerous facilities were damaged in Merritt by flooding, and in Princeton, schools have been unable to open due to the ongoing 'do not consume' status of the water supply after flooding. The Town of Princeton and The City of Merritt, along with numerous agencies and partners, have been working tirelessly to repair and address the infrastructure needed to support our facilities, and on behalf of the District I would like to thank them for their ongoing commitment to our communities.

In addition to the infrastructure repair, School District 58 staff have also been working to allow for temporary face to face learning opportunities for kids. This has included all members of our operation staff supporting a wide range of needs. Examples of this have included facility reorganization, the retrieval and dispersal of undamaged furniture and equipment, the setting up of internet technology and networks, cleaning facilities, and arranging busing schedules.

Based on our most recent conversations with the Town of Princeton, the target date for the opening of John Allison Elementary, Princeton Secondary, and The Bridge schools based on water concerns being resolved is January 4, 2022.

Target dates for school openings in Merritt based on the work being done to repair and reorganize facilities are:

Diamond Vale Elementary – April 4, 2022

Merritt Secondary School – April 4, 2022 (possible that sections may be available prior to April 4th)

Merritt Central Elementary School – September 2022

The work of re-opening schools is complex and therefore we will be doing everything we can to address any emergent issues that come forward during the process. The district currently has approximately 100 staff members from On Side Restoration on site and the work is progressing well. With that said, all opening target dates are best estimates and may need to be adjusted as we move forward. The work to repair schools will continue over the winter break and we are pleased to report that the amount of work completed to date has been substantial.

We understand the importance of face-to-face contact for our students, staff and families, and therefore, the district will continue to work over the winter break to prepare alternate facilities scheduled for January. Please reference the school opening chart located on our website for the details of these locations at www.sd58.bc.ca. Busing information will be provided by the district over the break and school principals will communicate out any necessary school level details prior to January. Once again, we would like to thank our staff and partners who continue to be critical to the progress we have made and the work going forward. We would also like to thank students, staff and families for their patience and understanding while we carry on with this work.

In closing, I would like to wish you, your families and your friends all the best over the winter break.

Sincerely,

Stephen McNiven
Superintendent of Schools