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NEWS RELEASE

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OLIVER UNVEILS PLANS FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD LEARNING CENTRE

OLIVER - Boundary-Similkameen MLA John Slater was joined by parents, students and school district officials to unveil plans for a Neighbourhood Learning Centre that will be part of the \$29-million rebuild of Southern Okanagan Secondary school.

"This is a major and much-needed upgrade for our school," said Slater. "And with the addition of a Neighbourhood Learning Centre, the new school will be a resource that can be used by the whole community."

Southern Okanagan Secondary was built in 1948 and currently has an enrolment of close to 500 students. The addition to Southern Okanagan Secondary will be built to LEED Gold standard and will include a new library, computer lab, science classrooms, super science lab and a new gymnasium. The renovated portion of Southern Okanagan Secondary is expected to open in the fall of 2012.

All school districts in B.C. have been encouraged to find unique and innovative ways to design schools with community use in mind, and create places where people have better access to educational and community services. Neighbourhood Learning Centres respond to community interest and may include a wide variety of programs and resources including child-care programs, office space, health clinics, sports programs, seniors' centres and family resource centres.

"Neighbourhood Learning Centres are an essential part of the Province's vision for the future of education in B.C.," said Education Minister Margaret MacDiarmid. "Projects like this one in Oliver give us the opportunity to build green, state-of-the-art schools with space designed specifically to accommodate community use."

The Neighbourhood Learning Centre at Southern Okanagan Secondary will be incorporated into a school wing formerly scheduled for demolition. The centre will support the heritage theatre connected to the wing by providing an enhanced entranceway and additional washrooms.

Community programs and services in the Neighbourhood Learning Centre will include:

- \* Day-care centre
- \* Community counselling centre

- \* Community performance space
- \* Adult learning centre

"Southern Okanagan Secondary will be more than simply an excellent school and a key part of our district's education system, it will be a hub for families in the area," said Okanagan Similkameen board of education chair June Harrington. "The new school will encompass a wide variety of programs and services for ages ranging from the early years to adults. This will address learning and other related needs of our community."

[www.neighbourhoods-of-learning.gov.bc.ca](http://www.neighbourhoods-of-learning.gov.bc.ca), the Neighbourhood Learning Centre website, includes examples of some of the community services and programs already offered in schools around B.C. As well, website visitors can create their own virtual centres using an interactive program.

Since 2001, the Province has invested more than \$4.8 million on the replacement of Osoyoos Elementary and an addition to Okanagan Falls Elementary. During that time, the Province has spent more than \$1.7 billion to complete 80 new and replacement schools, 148 additions, 26 renovation projects and 22 site acquisitions across B.C.

All new and replacement schools have been constructed to meet the latest seismic standards. By the end of 2009-10, the Province will have committed more than \$3.8 billion in school capital and maintenance projects throughout B.C.

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