

STATEMENT

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City statement on the proposed data centre and water usage

The City of Nanaimo is aware of public interest and questions surrounding the proposed data centre at 2090 East Wellington Road, particularly regarding water usage.

In 2023, Council approved the rezoning of the property to High Tech Industrial (I3), with “data centre” added as a site-specific use. This decision aligns with the City’s Official Community Plan, which designates the area for Light Industrial use.

The development permit application for the data centre was submitted in early 2025 and is currently undergoing a thorough technical review. This process ensures the proposal meets all City bylaw requirements, design guidelines and the conditions set out during rezoning.

The proponent has indicated that, at full build-out, the data centre will use between 55,000 and 69,000 litres of water per day for cooling and domestic purposes. To put this in perspective, this represents approximately 0.19 per cent of the City’s total daily water use and about 1 per cent of all commercial and industrial water consumption.

For comparison, other facilities in Nanaimo use similar or greater volumes of water:

- A shopping mall uses approximately 100,000 litres per day
- A local food processing business uses about 83,000 litres per day
- A car wash uses roughly 44,000 litres per day
- BC Ferries terminal uses around 56,000 litres per day
- The City’s two water fill stations together use 273,000 litres per day

Some residents have asked how the proposed data centre’s water use compares to a typical apartment building. Using standard engineering practices, infrastructure is designed based on “maximum day demand”, the highest expected daily water use, calculated at 1,135 litres per person per day. The data centre’s projected peak use of up to 69,000 litres per day equates to the water demand of roughly 60 people. With an average of 1.7 people per unit in multi-family housing, this is comparable to a 35-unit apartment building. As with residential developments, actual daily water use is expected to be significantly lower than the maximum design threshold.

Nanaimo’s water system is robust and resilient. The City delivers an average of 36 million litres of water per day to residents, businesses and neighbouring communities. Thanks to decades of conservation efforts, including universal water metering, expanding block rates and full-cost accounting, Nanaimo’s water consumption has decreased significantly. Today, our community uses the same volume of water as it did in 1991, despite an 85 per cent increase in population.

Approximately 10 per cent of the rainfall and snowmelt in our watershed is diverted to the City’s water supply dams. These sources are replenished by storms in the mountains, which receive three to four times the precipitation seen in town.

City staff are working closely with the property owner to ensure the development includes an efficient water cooling system that aligns with the conservation objectives outlined in City Plan.

We remain committed to transparency and responsible stewardship of our natural resources. We encourage residents to review the facts and reach out with questions. The City will continue to provide updates as the development permit process progresses.

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View the online edition for more information -

<https://www.nanaimo.ca/NewsReleases/NR251106CityStatementOnTheProposedDataCentreAndWaterUsage.html>