

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

March 11, 2003

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Idylwylde School Closure Process

ORIGINATOR: Avi Habinski, Executive Director, School and District Services

RESOURCE

STAFF: Jenise Bidulock, Robert Craig, Leanne Fedor, Andrea Furness, Sig Jensen, Roland Labbe, Randy Leal, Cindy Skolski

RECOMMENDATION

That the administration be authorized to undertake the provincial and board mandated processes to consider the feasibility of closure of Idylwylde School.

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Background

With a capacity for 225 students, Idylwylde School is one of the smallest schools in the district, and is located in a small, aging neighbourhood. Enrolment has been declining steadily since 1991 and in an effort to support the school, it was twinned with Rutherford School in 1999 under a single administration.

In the spring of 2001 pre-enrolment for the 2001-2002 school year fell to about 50 students, which meant that children would be in three-grade combined classes for the first time. This was not acceptable to the majority of parents, and it was deemed to be unacceptable by the school administrator who proposed the students be temporarily relocated to Rutherford so they could receive adequate programming.

In August, 2001, École Gabrielle Roy, a Francophone school, leased Idylwylde School. The Francophone district has upgraded the building and has indicated an interest in purchasing it for long-term use as a school.

Rationale

When the temporary relocation of Idylwylde students took place, the district stated that consideration would be given to operating an elementary program in Idylwylde if there are enough students. This does not appear to be feasible in view of demographic trends in the neighbourhood. According to provincial statistics the number of pre-school age children living in Idylwylde has declined since 1996, while the number of elementary age children had remained stable. The Idylwylde neighbourhood is projected to remain stable for the next five years. According to the City of Edmonton's Corporate Planning and Policy Section, Planning and Policy Services Branch, the Bonnie Doon area which contains Idylwylde 'has a smaller share

(19%) of children and teenagers than the City share of 27% and a larger share of people aged 65 and older 19% compared with 11% for the City’.

Idylwylde School is eligible for closure under board policy FL.BP (Appendix I).

Consultation

A public meeting was held on February 26, to receive input from the Idylwylde community about concerns regarding Idylwylde School and options for the future use of the school. Twenty-six people came to the meeting and provided the following feedback:

- The community needs a stable local school.
- If the number of public school students in Idylwylde began to grow that local accommodation could be provided.
- The community is supportive of Idylwylde remaining as an educational facility even if it is leased to another school district.
- How the closure of Idylwylde School would affect Rutherford School.

The Idylwylde neighbourhood can easily be accommodated in Rutherford school for the long term. The September 2002 enrolment numbers show us there are 62 public school students in the Idylwylde neighbourhood, of which 10 are attending Rutherford. Rutherford has an enrolment of 104 students and a capacity for 376 students. For the last two school years Rutherford has received revenue from the lease at Idylwylde School. This practice will be reviewed by the administration. However, the closure of Idylwylde School would not need to affect the amount of lease revenues that could potentially be forwarded to Rutherford School.

If there is substantial population growth in the future, and a neighbourhood elementary school is required, L’Académie Vimy Ridge Academy may be a suitable location since it is located on the same site in the Idylwylde neighbourhood.

Approval of this recommendation would authorize the administration to undertake further consultation with parents and communities, and only at the end of that process would the board make a decision regarding the closure of Idylwylde School. This approach is consistent with the applicable provincial regulation (Appendix II) and the board’s policy.

Timeline and Next Steps

The provincial regulation requires that any school closure process begin and end in the same school year. Central Services staff with support from the Rutherford principal will take the lead in this process. Over the next month, groups and individuals will be encouraged to provide input in a variety of forms, including attendance at meetings, written submissions, individual meetings and telephone calls. A public meeting will be held on March 26, 2003 and the outcome will be presented to the board of trustees on April 22, 2003. The location of the public meeting will be communicated to trustees once it is determined.

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APPENDIX II – Board Policy FL.BP School Closure

APPENDIX II – Alberta Regulation 238/97 – Closure of Schools Regulation