

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

March 22, 2007

TO: Board of Trustees  
FROM: B. Holt, Acting Superintendent  
SUBJECT: Possible Closure of Mill Creek School  
ORIGINATOR: C. McCabe, Executive Director

RESOURCE  
STAFF:

Jenise Bidulock, Randy Billey, Mike Brown, Josephine Duquette, Michael Ediger, Leanne Fedor, Andrea Furness, Kerry-Ann Kope, Roland Labbe, Sandra Mason, Bob Morter, John Nicoll, Larry Schwenneker, Cindy Skolski, Darryl Sutherland

RECOMMENDATION

1. That closure of the regular elementary program at Mill Creek School at the end of the 2006-2007 school year be approved.
2. That the closure of Mill Creek School at the end of the 2006-2007 school year be approved.
3. That a capital request for a full general modernization of the Ritchie School building, including the 1913 building, be included as a district priority in the next Three-Year Capital Plan submission to the province be approved.
4. That emergent fit-up costs to complete essential work at Ritchie School to accommodate elementary students for September 2007 if required be transferred from the Capital Reserve be approved.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Recommendation**

Based on the information received by the administration from the public and the Board of Trustees, it is recommended that Mill Creek School close and that the students be designated to Ritchie School for International Spanish Academy bilingual programming. Should Mill Creek School close Ritchie School would be designated as a district centre for the International Spanish Academy Bilingual program for elementary and junior high.

### **School Closure Process and Public Meeting**

On October 10, 2006, the Board of Trustees approved an *Annual Implementation Plan* which identified 10 district schools where the viability of the school or a specific program was of concern. Sustainability and Program Fit Reviews were undertaken at these schools which included Mill Creek/Ritchie School. On January 16, 2007 the Board of Trustees received information on the results of the sustainability reviews and initiated the provincially mandated process to consider Mill Creek School for closure (Appendix I). The recommendation to close Mill Creek School was considered in accordance with the criteria outlined in Board Policy FL.BP – School Closures (Appendix II).

A public meeting was held on February 7, 2007 to hear public representations regarding the potential closure of Mill Creek School. The following arrangements were made prior to the public meeting. These meet or exceed requirements as set out in the *Closure of Schools Regulation*:

- Parents/guardians of students registered at the school received a letter notifying them of the public meeting and a Q&A that answers questions set out by the *Closure of Schools Regulation* (Appendix III)
- Parents also received a Question Submission Form to submit their individual inquiries, in addition to using letters and e-mails. The district did not respond to individual inquiries prior to the public meeting. Submissions were reviewed by the administration and representative questions were answered at the public meeting, following the opening presentation. This approach allowed all participants to benefit from the responses to the individual questions that were submitted.
- Notice of the public meetings appeared in The Edmonton Journal, Edmonton Sun, and the Edmonton Examiner.
- Public meeting notices were posted in five or more conspicuous places in the area or areas of the school or schools affected by the closure.
- Posters advertising the public meetings were e-mailed to principals and administrative assistants of schools identified for closure and receiving schools as well as any other schools that may be affected by closure to post.
- A letter was sent to the City of Edmonton providing notice of the public meetings and requesting that the municipality provide a statement to the board of the impact the closure may have on the community.
- The president of the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues and presidents of the local community league received notification of the meeting and an invitation to attend.

The purpose of the February 7, 2007 public meeting was to share information and receive input from parents and community members about the possible closure of Mill Creek School. Of those people who attended the meeting, there were 45 parents, 12 community members, one principal, five school staff and seven other individuals, who included MLA Gene Zwozdesky, City Councillor Michael Phair, and Tim McCarger and Debi Anderson from Community Services, City of Edmonton. The following trustees were in attendance; Board Chair Esslinger, Trustee Hansen, Trustee Fleming, Trustee Gibeault, Trustee Gibson, Trustee Keiver, Trustee Nicholson, and Trustee Williams. District staff from the Superintendent's office and Planning Department were also in attendance.

The minutes and results of the public meeting are posted on the districts website at [www.epsb.ca](http://www.epsb.ca), as well as information regarding the possible closure of Mill Creek School including the Notice of Meeting sent to parents/guardians, and the PowerPoint presentation made at the public meeting.

Through the closure process some parents or community members expressed a desire to keep Mill Creek School open for the following reasons:

- condition of the current Ritchie School facility and its ability to house students prior to a full modernization
- a long-term plan must be put in place for a Kindergarten to Grade 12 Spanish Academy
- concern with the relocation of elementary students before Ritchie School is modernized
- daycare and preschool are an integral part of the Spanish Bilingual program and need to be housed with the elementary program

### **Rationale for Recommending Closure**

#### **Enrolment, Programs and Grade Organization**

Mill Creek School was built in 1946. A two classroom addition was completed in 1950, and a two-storey addition with seven classrooms was completed in 1958. The School has a capacity of 357 student spaces based on provincial calculations. However, based on the Alberta Learning Commission's class size guidelines the capacity would be 320 student spaces. It should be noted that Ritchie School has a capacity of 887 student spaces based on provincial capacity and has 720 student spaces based on the Alberta Learning Commission's class size elementary guidelines at this time.

Enrolment at Mill Creek was 148 students as of September 30, 2006, which results in a provincial utilization rate of 38 per cent. Of the 148 students, 18 are enrolled in the regular program and 130 students are enrolled in the International Spanish Bilingual program, also referred to as the International Spanish Academy.

Mill Creek School's student enrolment by grade as of September 30, 2006 are as follows:

	Kindergarten	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Total
Regular	0	0	0	0	5	3	10	18
ISA	34	26	25	15	17	12	1	130

#### **Educational Impact on Students**

The International Spanish Academy (ISA) is in its sixth year of operation and is poised to expand into junior high as the program enrolment numbers grow. Parents of students in the program are clear in their expectation that the International Spanish Academy bilingual program would be expanded to the junior high level and ultimately into high school. The International Spanish Academy program will be expanded to Grade seven for September 2008. There is strong interest in the concept of developing an International Spanish Academy Centre that could ultimately house pre-school through adult Spanish programming. Ritchie School provides the best opportunity to achieve this vision, as it has sufficient space to accommodate the Kindergarten to Grade nine program within the operating portions of the schools. There is also the ability to expand the program into the 1913 Ritchie School

building as the program expands. The 1913 building affords the best opportunity to accommodate program partners in a comprehensive setting, where Mill Creek School will be limited within the next three to five years.

Generally the comments and feedback that was received supported the scenarios to combine the programming from Kindergarten to Grade nine at one of the sites within a renovated building. There is overwhelming support to develop a Spanish language centre which could facilitate child care, preschool, Kindergarten to Grade nine and adult education within the centre. There is a desire to market the program more aggressively, expand transportation service and consider developing a late entry program for Grade four and Grade seven. Further review concluded it is not feasible to facilitate late entry into bilingual language programs.

Mill Creek Campus offers the International Spanish Academy bilingual program from Kindergarten to Grade six. The school operates a combined Grade five/six class with regular and Spanish program students. There is also a mix of regular and Spanish students in one grade four class. A single class per grade in grades one to three is in place this year, and there are two Kindergarten classes. This will lead to two grade one classes next year, indicating that the program is growing at lower grade levels.

Regular student programming will be discontinued in the next two years, and future elementary students will be directed to Hazeldean School or other proximate schools for regular programming. Local resident elementary numbers are low and many choose the Spanish program. It is unlikely that resident numbers would return to levels that would sustain a regular elementary program at the Mill Creek School Campus. The amalgamation of the Mill Creek – Ritchie School regular program with another regular program in a nearby school will provide more opportunities for single grade classes.

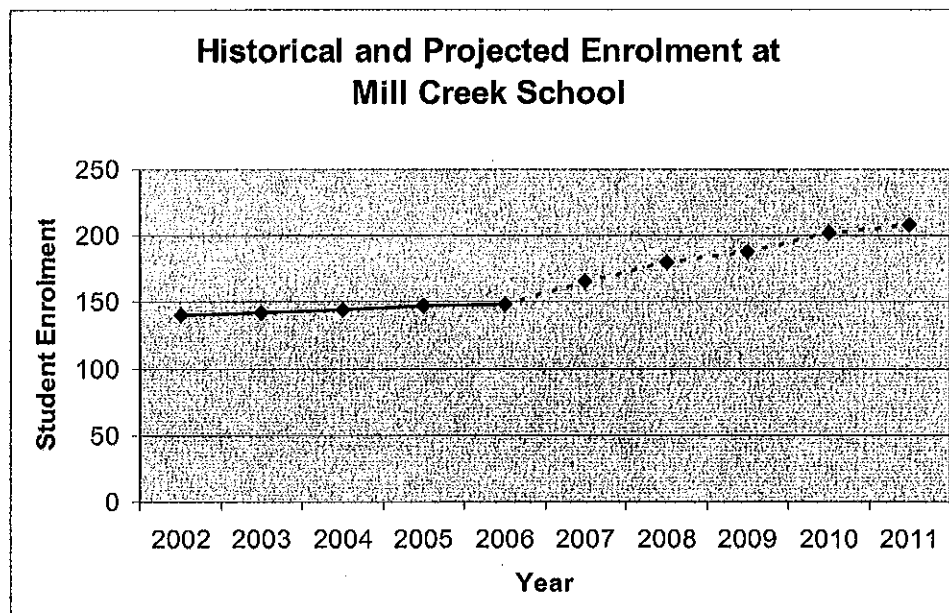
### **Neighbourhood Population and Demographic Information**

The Edmonton Public School district utilizes numerous demographic data sources to review, analyze and project student enrolment. Sources include federal census data, City of Edmonton census data, and public student information data derived from the district's own Student Information System. Data for non-census years includes federal government data (typically made available through Statistics Canada), provincial government data and the district's own Student Information System data. Federal census data is collected every five years by the federal government and is approved by the House of Commons as the population for Canada. The last federal census was in 2006, this data has not been approved or released, so the current federal census is 2001. Municipal census data is also collected every five years and approved by City Council. The current municipal census is 2005.

The City of Edmonton acquires any civic, provincial or federal data, and formats it to match City defined neighbourhood boundaries. It is then distributed to various regional demographic data users including school districts, health regions and other community services groups or organizations. This ensures that all users receive the most current demographic data available in a consistent fashion.

The district's own Student Information System data provides historical and current public school student residency information by neighbourhood. This provides accurate data on trends and choices of Edmonton Public School students.

As part of its budgeting process, the district conducts an annual enrolment projection for the district as a whole and on a school-by-school basis. All external demographic data is used in addition to a review of historical and current student information data. External data is used extensively to monitor pre-school populations and residency patterns, while internal data is used to project enrolments up to five years into the future. Both external and internal data are used in congruence with one another in any district projection. The historical and projected enrolment at Mill Creek School is as illustrated on the following chart:

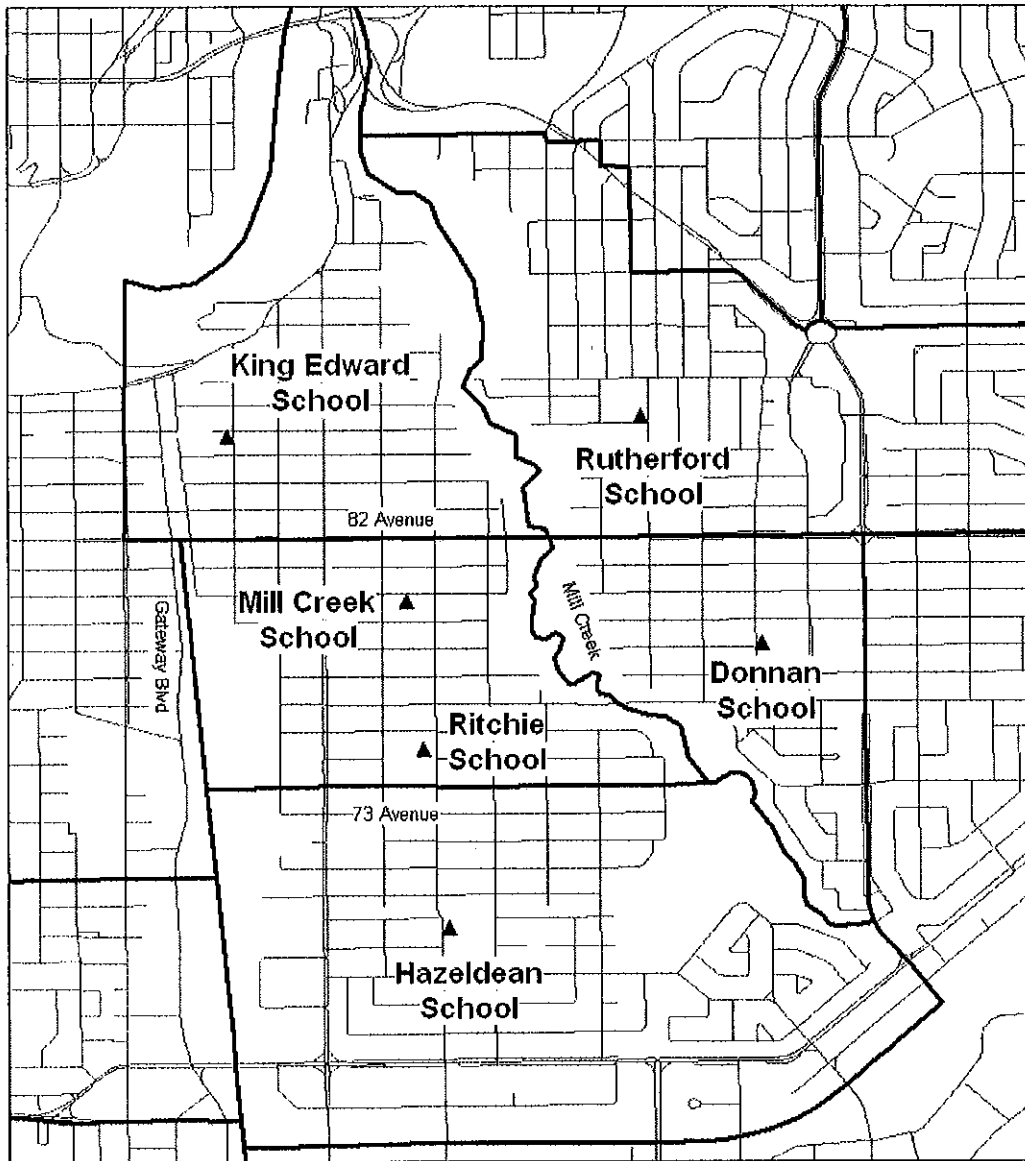


The District also utilizes a number of other sources when considering demographic data. These include but are not limited to:

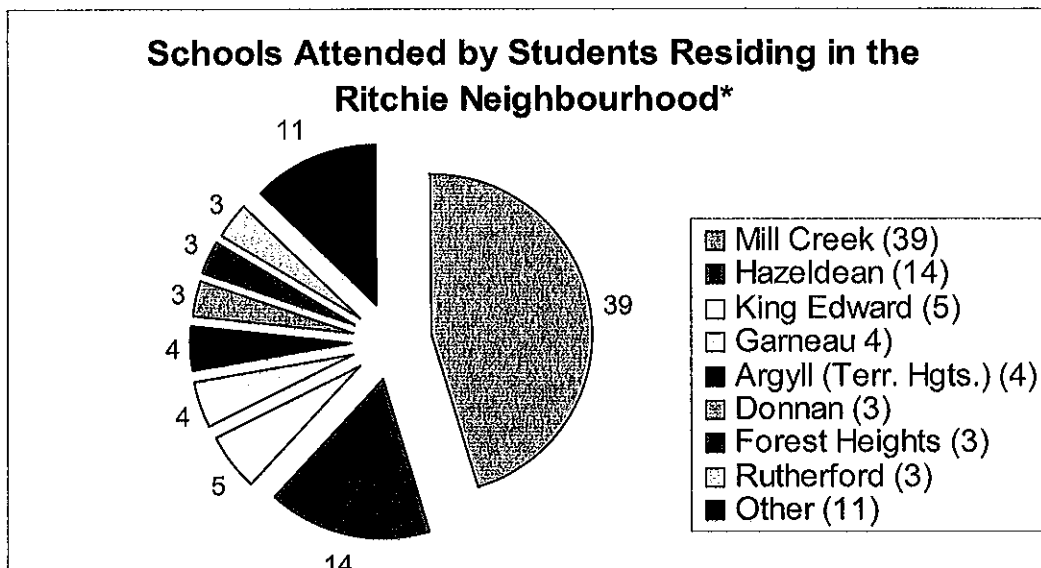
- The study of current population growth and attrition to a school on a community basis;
- Population and housing construction (City of Edmonton Building Permits);
- Annual analysis of demographic and economic forecasts (national, provincial and civic) from Canadian Housing and Mortgage Corporation;
- Direct input from principals on school enrolment and local conditions on a school by school basis.

The attendance area for the regular program at Mill Creek School consists of the Ritchie neighbourhood.

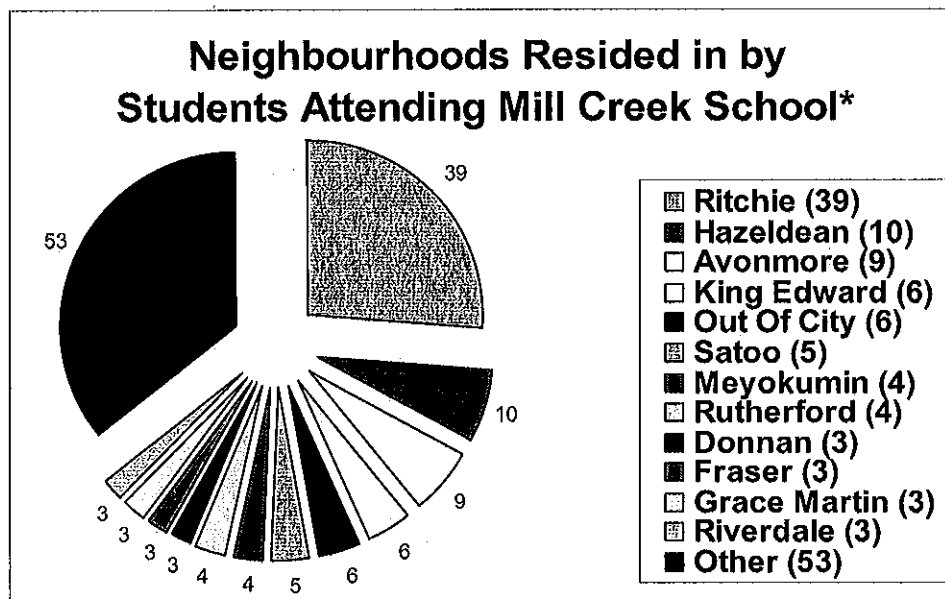
**Mill Creek Attendance Area 2006-2007**



There are 86 students residing in the Mill Creek School attendance area. As shown in the following pie chart, 39 of the resident students attend Mill Creek School and the remaining students attend several other district schools. This information is based on September 30, 2006 enrolment.



The following chart indicates the neighbourhoods in which current Mill Creek School students reside. This information is based on September 30, 2006 enrolment.



#### Accommodation of Mill Creek School Students

If Mill Creek School were to close, the 148 students currently registered would be designated to:

- Ritchie School for International Spanish Academy elementary programming (130 students);

- Accommodate regular program students currently attending Mill Creek School in grades four and five with the International Spanish Academy program students until they complete their elementary years (18 students) ;
- Designate all new Ritchie neighbourhood regular elementary program students in Kindergarten to Grade six to Hazeldean School.

Currently there are 12.0 full time equivalent staff positions at Mill Creek School, consisting of 8.5 certified teaching staff including principal, one teacher aide, one administrative assistant, and 1.5 custodial workers. Closure of Mill Creek School and relocation of students to Ritchie School would result in fewer combined grade classes, and other educational benefits would be available through enrolling students in a larger school setting.

In the event of relocation of students, opportunities would be explored to ensure continuity with current staff, in particular for those students in district center programs for students with special needs and the International Spanish Academy.

Should parents request a registration in a school other than Ritchie School, students would be able to register in that school, provided the school provides the appropriate program.

#### **Cost to Staff and Operate the Educational Programs at Mill Creek School**

The total operating and instructional allocations provided to Mill Creek / Ritchie School for 2006-07 was \$2,000,362. Instructional and Plant Operational and Maintenance funding is distributed by the province on a per student basis. There are 209 unfunded student spaces in the building at a cost of \$102,446.

#### **Cost to Maintain the Facility in Operable Condition or to Restore the Facility to Operable Condition**

Mill Creek School received a provincial facility audit score of 210 in 1999. Edmonton Public Schools internal District Capital Inspection rated the facility as 'poor'. The following factors contributed to the poor rating. The mechanical system, washrooms, flooring (1946 and 1950 areas) and exterior doors have reached the end of their usable life and require replacement. In addition, the steam heating requires conversion to hot water heating for greater efficiency, and the washroom fixtures, electrical system and exterior building finishes are in need of upgrading. Mill Creek School poses no immediate threat to the health and safety of students. Since 1990, records indicate that Facilities Services and the school have cumulatively spent \$264,871 on modifications and upgrades. Major expenditures include: \$71,592 spent on flooring in 2001 and \$50,309 on installing weeping tile in 2001.

#### **Cost to Modernize Ritchie School**

The district retained ACI Architecture to produce a building concept report for Ritchie School. The full modernization of Ritchie School would specifically address program and instructional space needs, and the final design plan would include the 1913 building being completely refurbished to accommodate growth for the International Spanish Academy Bilingual program. Capital investment would be directed toward creating capacity requirements for a two to three classes per grade arrangement from Kindergarten to Grade nine. Upgraded mechanical systems, electrical systems, exterior and interior finishes, walls and roofing would also be included in the modernization. Methods to provide better identification and visibility of the main entrance to the school as well as re-organization and



resolution of parking issues would be addressed. The cost of the proposed modernization project is projected at \$16.5M, including inflation and cost escalation.

The concept report indicates that renovations to the 1913 building could be implemented separately and in advance of renovations to the remainder of Ritchie School.

#### **Location and Accessibility of the School and the Proximity of Other Schools**

There are five schools within a 1.6 km radius where student learning space is available. They are: Rutherford, King Edward, Queen Alexandra, Hazeldean and Ritchie schools.

#### **Transportation**

Mill Creek School is located in transportation Zone 2. Currently there are 41 students receiving yellow bus service, not including students who are receiving parent provided transportation. Thirty-four students being transported to Mill Creek School are being bussed in from outside transportation Zone 2.

Yellow bus service would be available for elementary students to their receiving elementary school. The transportation fee would be subsidized by the district at the rate set for students who attend their designated receiving school.

#### **Impact of Closing the School on the Community**

There is currently no community use of Mill Creek School outside of school hours by youth and adult groups through the *Joint Use Agreement* or by paid user groups. The district owns the land where Mill Creek School and adjacent playfields are located. Under the *Joint Use Agreement* with the City of Edmonton, the sports fields are maintained and administered by the city, which would continue as long as the district retains property ownership. There is a district playground located on the site which was funded by parent-generated funds. The equipment could potentially be relocated to the Ritchie School site or retained if desired by the community or tenants.

If Mill Creek School were to be closed, the district would look at continuing with existing tenancies and/or identifying other potential tenancies with community and not-for profit groups. There are currently two tenants at Mill Creek School: Caminitos Preschool Society and a privately owned daycare and after school care centre (Country's Finest Child Care Centre Ltd.). These tenants provide service to parents and families at Mill Creek School, and their tenancy would be maintained until appropriate space in the Ritchie School building could be accessed. The district would also consider other potential district uses for the property.

Discussions would be held with the Ritchie Community League regarding the short and long term use of Mill Creek School building and site. Any potential disposition of the property would be subject to the Joint Use Agreement with the City of Edmonton and provincial *Disposition of Property Regulation*.

If Mill Creek School were to be closed, the district would work closely with the Mill Creek parent council to explore the options available in regards to the playground currently situated on the Mill Creek School site. An analysis would be undertaken to see if the equipment could be relocated or if new equipment at Ritchie School would be more cost-effective to overcome this challenge.

**Input from the City of Edmonton**

The City of Edmonton was invited to provide a community impact statement on the potential closure of High Park School as required by the *Closures of Schools Regulation*. The community impact statement is scheduled to be presented to City Council on Tuesday, March 20, 2007. When received a copy of their response will be forwarded to trustees.

**Written Submissions Regarding School Closure**

Throughout the consideration for closure process, written submissions were posted on a weekly basis in the trustee's on-line reading room. This is done in accordance with the *Closure of Schools Regulation* such that a board shall give due consideration to any written submissions on the proposed closure that it receives after the public meeting.

CS:cp

- Appendix I Closure of Schools Regulation
- Appendix II Board Policy FL.BP School Closure
- Appendix III Notice of Meeting – Wednesday, February 7, 2007
- Appendix IV Response to Mill Creek is Growing Delegation

(Consolidated up to 170/2004)

ALBERTA REGULATION 238/97

School Act

## CLOSURE OF SCHOOLS REGULATION

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## Definitions

1 In this Regulation,

(a) "closure" means any action referred to in section 2;

(a.1) "Ministers" means, for the purposes of sections 6 and 7, the Ministers determined under section 16 of the *Government Organization Act* as the Ministers responsible for Part 7 of the *School Act*;

(b) "school year" means the 12-month period beginning on September 1 and ending on the following August 31.

AR 238/97 s1;223/2002;257/2003

## Non-application of sections

1.1(1) Sections 4 to 7 do not apply to a closure that occurs

(a) in connection with the transfer by one board to another board or to the operator of a charter school of the ownership of real property on which a school building is located and the school building will continue to be used for the instruction or accommodation of students,

(b) as a result of the Minister's having directed the board to dispose of the school building pursuant to section 200(3) of the Act, or

(c) pursuant to section 2(b) if

(i) the school has more than one education program,

(ii) the students in the grades being closed are all in the same education program, and

(iii) the education program referred to in subclause (ii) is to be transferred to another school.

(2) Where a board plans to transfer an education program pursuant to subsection (1)(c)(iii), the board shall organize and convene an information meeting for the purpose of informing the parents of the students affected by the transfer of the transfer and the alternative arrangements for continuing the education program at another school.

AR 135/2003 s2;257/2003;170/2004

## Exemption from requirements

1.2(1) The Minister may, on the written request of a board or on the Minister's initiative, exempt a board from the requirements of sections 4 to 7 in respect of a closure that occurs

(a) as a result of the board's inability to comply with section 57(2) of the Act, or

(b) for health or safety reasons.

**(2)** The Minister may, on the written request of a board, exempt the board from the requirements of sections 4 to 7 in respect of a closure if the Minister is satisfied that the board has consulted with the community regarding any change in grades and programs in one or more of the schools operated by the board.

AR 257/2003 s4;170/2004

Closure of schools, etc.

2 A board may

- (a) close a school permanently or for a specified period of time,
- (b) close entirely 3 or more consecutive grades in a school, or
- (c) repealed AR 257/2003 s5,
- (d) transfer all students from one school building to one or more other school buildings on a permanent basis.

AR 238/97 s2;257/2003

Policies and procedures for closure of schools

3 A board may develop and implement policies and procedures with respect to closure of schools that are not inconsistent with this Regulation.

AR 238/97 s3;257/2003

Notification of proposed closure

4**(1)** Where a board is considering the closure of a school, the board shall

- (a) raise the matter by way of a motion at a regular meeting of the board, and
- (b) in writing notify the parents of every child and student enrolled in the school who, in the opinion of the board, will be significantly affected by the closure of the school.

**(2)** A notice referred to in subsection (1)(b) shall set out the following:

- (a) how the closure would affect the attendance area defined for that school;
- (b) how the closure would affect the attendance at other schools;
- (b.1) information on the board's long-range capital plan;
- (c) the number of students who would need to be relocated as a result of the closure;

- (d) the need for, and extent of, busing;
- (e) program implications for other schools and for the students when they are attending other schools;
- (f) the educational and financial impact of closing the school, including the effect on operational costs and capital implications;
- (g) the educational and financial impact if the school were to remain open;
- (h) and (i) repealed AR 257/2003 s7;
- (j) the time and location of the public meeting referred to in section 5(1)(a).

**(3)** A notice referred to in subsection (1)(b) may set out the following:

- (a) the capital needs of the schools that may have increased enrolment as a result of the closure, and
- (b) the possible uses of the school building or space in the school building if
  - (i) the entire school is being closed, or
  - (ii) 3 or more consecutive grades in the school are being closed entirely.

AR 238/97 s4;257/2003;170/2004

#### Public meetings

**5(1)** Where a board has given notice of motion at a regular meeting of the board that it is considering the closure of a school, the board

- (a) shall organize and convene a public meeting for the purpose of discussing the information provided to the parents under section 4,
- (b) shall provide an opportunity for the council of the municipality in which the school is located to provide a statement to the board of the impact the closure may have on the community, and
- (c) may hold other meetings with respect to the closure at times and places as the board may determine.

**(2)** The date and place of the public meeting referred to in subsection (1)(a) shall be

- (a) posted in 5 or more conspicuous places in the area or areas of the school or schools affected by the closure, for a period of at least 14 days before the date of the public meeting, and
- (b) advertised in a newspaper circulating within the area or areas of the school or schools affected by the proposed closure, on at least 2 occasions as close as is practicable to the date of the meeting.

**(3)** At least 2 trustees of the board shall attend the public meeting referred to in subsection (1)(a).

**(4)** A board shall ensure that minutes of all public meetings held under this section are prepared.

AR 238/97 s5;257/2003

Decision on closure

**6(1)** A board shall not make a final decision on the proposed closure until at least 3 weeks have passed since the date of the public meeting referred to in section 5(1)(a).

**(2)** A board shall give due consideration to any written submissions on the proposed closure that it receives after the public meeting referred to in section 5(1)(a).

**(3)** A board

(a) shall by resolution decide whether to close the school, and

(b) if the decision is to close the school, shall forthwith notify the Ministers in writing of the decision.

AR 238/97 s6;223/2002;257/2003

Closure within school year

**7(1)** All school closure procedures shall be initiated and completed within the school year in which the decision to close the school is made.

**(2)** Notwithstanding subsection (1), on the written request of the board, the Ministers may extend the school closure procedures beyond one school year.

AR 238/97 s7;257/2003

Expiry

**8** For the purpose of ensuring that this Regulation is reviewed for ongoing relevancy and necessity, with the option that it may be re-passed in its present or an amended form following a review, this Regulation expires on November 1, 2008.

AR 238/97 s8;223/2002;257/2003

**9** Repealed AR 223/2002 s5.

## BOARD POLICY FL.BP SCHOOL CLOSURE

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**Edmonton Public Schools  
Board Policies and Regulations**

CODE: FL.BP  
TOPIC: School Closure

EFFECTIVE DATE: 07-11-2006  
ISSUE DATE: 08-11-2006  
REVIEW DATE: 11-2011

The board believes that the closure of schools is an important consideration in ensuring the responsible use of the resources placed in its trust; making efficient use of the district's school space; and safeguarding the health and safety of students, staff, and the public.

A. SCOPE AND AUTHORITY

1. The authority of the Board is derived from the *School Act* and the Alberta Closure of Schools Regulation, which say that the Board of Trustees may:
  - a. close a school permanently or for a specified period of time, or
  - b. close entirely three or more consecutive grades in a school, or
  - c. transfer all students from one school building to one or more other school buildings on a permanent basis.

The process for closure of schools under this authority is explained in section C, Process for School Closure.

2. The board authorizes the administration, under the direction of the superintendent of schools and with consultation as determined by the Alberta Closure of Schools Regulation to:
  - a. close or permanently relocate fewer than three consecutive grades in a school, or
  - b. temporarily relocate any number of grades from one school to another.

The process for this shall be in accordance with the Alberta Closure of Schools Regulation, which says that, the board will convene an information meeting with parents of the students affected by the transfer and the alternative arrangements for continuing the education program at another school.

Discontinuance or relocation of a regular program or an alternative program or a special needs program, is not a school closure. The process for discontinuance or relocation of an alternative program is addressed in HA.BP - Student Programs.

B. CRITERIA FOR RECOMMENDING SCHOOL CLOSURE

Before recommending the closure of a school to the Board of Trustees, the administration



will develop viability benchmarks and school profiles through the Ten-Year Facilities Plan and will consider all of the following criteria:

- the educational impact on students in the school;
- the enrolment of the school and programs within the school;
- the population and demographic data;
- the amount and cost of excess space in the school;
- the cost to staff and operate the educational program at the school;
- the cost to maintain the facility in operable condition or to restore the facility to operable condition;
- the location and accessibility of the school and the proximity of other schools;
- the necessity to safeguard the health and safety of students, staff, and public;
- the need to consolidate or relocate existing programs;
- the impact of closing the school on the community taking into account existing or proposed development plans.

#### C. PROCESS FOR SCHOOL CLOSURE

The process for closure will be in accordance with the *School Act* and Alberta Closure of Schools Regulation

A process for school closure flow chart is provided for reference. In case of conflict between this policy and the flow chart, the policy shall prevail.

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#### Reference(s):

HA.BP - Student Programs

School Act Section 58

Alberta Closure of Schools Regulation

Ten-Year Facilities Plan 2007-2016

Process for School Closure Flow Chart

Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation - School Infrastructure Manual

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### NOTICE OF MEETING

#### MEETING TO CONSIDER CLOSURE OF MILL CREEK SCHOOL

**Date:** Wednesday, February 7, 2007  
**Time:** 7:00 pm  
**Location:** Mill Creek School  
 Gymnasium  
 9735 – 80 Avenue

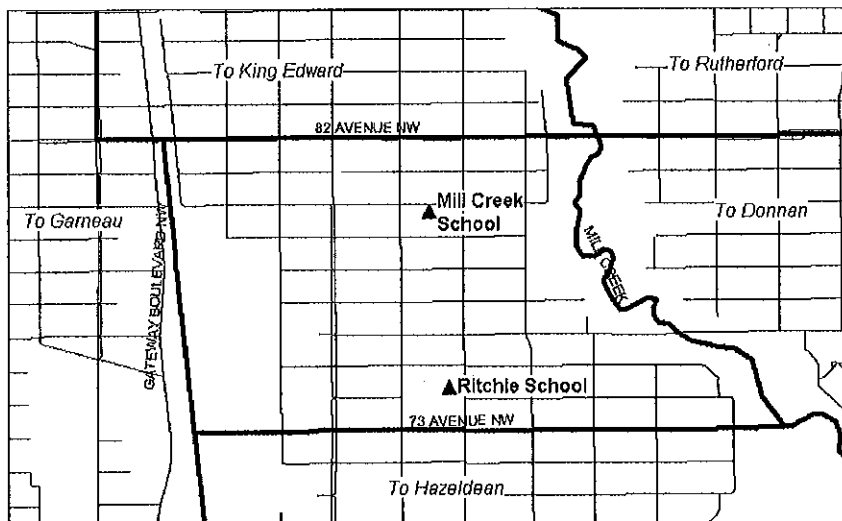
#### INFORMATION REGARDING THE POTENTIAL CLOSURE OF MILL CREEK SCHOOL

*1. How school closure would affect the attendance area defined for Mill Creek School.*

Mill Creek School is part of a multi-campus Mill Creek / Ritchie School which shares one administration. Mill Creek School, located at 9735 – 80 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta offers a Grade four to Grade six regular program and Kindergarten to Grade six Spanish Bilingual Program. The Board of Trustees is considering the closure of both the regular and Spanish Bilingual Program at Mill Creek School.

The attendance area for the regular Grade four to six program at Mill Creek School consists of the Ritchie neighbourhood. Currently for students residing in the Ritchie neighbourhood and who require programming from Kindergarten to Grade three, Hazeldean is their designated school. With the proposed closure of Mill Creek School, Hazeldean would become the designated receiving school for all regular Kindergarten to Grade six students residing in the Ritchie neighbourhood. The Spanish Bilingual program is a district program that accommodates students from across the city. In the event of the closure of Mill Creek School all elementary students residing within the Ritchie neighbourhood in the fall of 2007 would be designated to Hazeldean School located at 6715 - 97 Street, Edmonton, Alberta. The Grade five and six regular program and the Spanish Bilingual program will be moved to Ritchie School effective with the start of the 2007-2008 school year. Ritchie School will become a Kindergarten to grade nine Spanish Bilingual site, providing continuity of instruction through the junior high grades, and will also maintain its regular program junior high attendance area.

Mill Creek School Attendance Area 2006-2007



## 2. *How the closure of Mill Creek School would affect the attendance at other schools.*

### **Mill Creek's enrolment as of September 30, 2006**

	Kindergarten	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Total
Regular	0	0	0	0	5	3	10	18
ISA	34	26	25	15	17	12	1	130

### **Mill Creek's projected Enrolment for September 30, 2007**

	Kindergarten	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Total
Regular	0	0	0	0	0	5	3	8
ISA	35	34	26	25	15	22	15	172

With a provincially-rated total capacity of 543 students, Hazeldean School can accommodate growth in enrolment from the Ritchie neighbourhood. The September 30, 2006 enrolment at Hazeldean School was 138 students (Kindergarten and grades one to six) and 86 students in the Early Education program for a total of 224 students. The projected enrolment for September, 2007 prior to consideration of closure of Mill Creek School, is 227 students (Early Education, Kindergarten and grades one to six).

With a provincially-rated total capacity of 887 students, Ritchie School can accommodate growth in enrolment from the Spanish Bilingual program. The September 30, 2006 enrolment at Ritchie School was 139 students (grades seven to nine). The projected enrolment for September, 2007 prior to consideration of closure of Mill Creek School, is 148 students (grades seven to nine).

If Mill Creek School closes, an additional projected enrolment of 180 students (grades one to six) would be designated to the Ritchie School for a projected enrolment for the 2007-2008 school year at Ritchie School of 320 students (Kindergarten and grades one to nine).

Currently there are 86 public elementary students living within the Mill Creek School attendance area. Thirty-nine of these students (45 per cent) currently attend Mill Creek School. Sixteen per cent attend Hazeldean School, six per cent attend King Edward School, and the final 36 per cent attend 14 different Edmonton Public Schools. On average 47.5 per cent of all elementary students district-wide attend their designated school. Some of the students currently attending Mill Creek School could choose to attend district schools other than Ritchie School.

The current utilization rates for other neighbouring schools are as follows: Donnan School 77 per cent, Hazeldean School 67 per cent, King Edward School 54 per cent, Ritchie School 20 per cent and Rutherford School 37 per cent.

## 3. *Information on the Board's long-range capital plan.*

Edmonton Public Schools has a plan to build new schools in growth areas, renew existing schools in areas where enrolments are sustainable and transform the way facilities are managed into a model of efficiency for the future. Please find enclosed:

- brochure with information on Edmonton Public Schools Ten-Year Facilities Plan (2007-2016) and Three-Year Capital Plan (2007-2010)
- copy of the Ten-Year Facilities Plan (2007-2016)
- copy of the Three-Year Capital Plan (2007-2010)

Mill Creek School is located in the South Central Sector, which has a provincial utilization rate of 35 per cent for Kindergarten to Grade nine. A strategy to decrease the amount of excess space in this

sector will be undertaken, that may necessitate program relocations, program closures and school closures, in order to maximize learning opportunities for students.

**4. *The number of students who would need to be relocated as a result of the closure of Mill Creek School.***

If Mill Creek School were to be closed, the 180 students projected to be enrolled for the fall of September 2007 would be designated to Ritchie School for regular elementary programming (eight students) and Spanish Bilingual programming (172 students). There is space available in Ritchie School to accommodate all Mill Creek School students.

Students have direct access to the designated school for their attendance area as defined by their residence. If Mill Creek School were to be closed, some students may choose other district schools. Should parents of Mill Creek School request to register in a different school other than the designated receiving schools, students would be able to register in that school, even if pre-enrolment deadlines have past, and as long as the school provides the appropriate program and the student meets entrance criteria.

**5. *The need for, and the extent of, busing.***

Yellow bus service would be available for elementary students to their receiving elementary school. The transportation fee would be subsidized by the district at the rate set for students who attend their designated receiving school.

**6. *Program implications for other schools and for the students when they are attending other schools.***

If Mill Creek School were to close, the projected eight regular program students designated to Ritchie School could continue to have the existing arrangement of a combined Spanish Bilingual /regular class grouping. The Kindergarten to Grade four Spanish Bilingual students would have access to single grade class groupings. There would be increased funds to purchase resources, curriculum-related resources, library upgrades, physical education equipment, technology upgrades and mathematics and science manipulative materials. Students would also have benefit from having access to the equipment and resources typically found in a junior high school. Students could also have access to a wider range of options and opportunities to be involved in a wide variety of clubs, and leadership opportunities. All programs would also gain from the financial supports for inclusion in a larger school. As well, specialized teaching for students with special needs can be more readily provided in a school with a larger population.

Edmonton Public Schools will continue to implement average class sizes recommended by the Learning Commission for the 2007-2008 school year. In the fall of 2006-2007 the district distributed additional funds to schools designated specifically for hiring additional staff to meet the smaller class size recommendations. Ritchie School can accommodate Mill Creek School students and still meet the reduced class sizes.

Additional educational opportunities and benefits that would be available to Mill Creek School students through the elementary program offered at Ritchie School are outlined below.

<b>School</b>	<b>Ritchie</b>
<b>Staffing</b>	<p>Increased staff numbers to support students throughout building, more chances to collaborate.</p> <p>Opportunity for specialists in art, physical education, computers and music</p> <p>Increased FTE of library support/technology support</p> <p>Spanish teachers used in junior high to support SSL</p> <p>Shared teaching assistants to address student needs from K-9</p> <p>Full time administration (principal and assistant principal) in school</p>
<b>Curriculum and Resource Program Benefits</b>	<p>Balanced literacy</p> <p>Spanish</p> <p>Character Education</p> <p>Library program</p> <p>Opportunity to meet daily phys. ed, requirements, because of specialist and large gym capacity</p> <p>Continuity of ISA program with existing teaching staff in one building</p> <p>Expansion of the ISA program to junior high school.</p>
<b>Support Services</b>	<p>ESHIP support</p> <p>Big Brothers/Sisters Mentorship</p> <p>Capital Health Speech/Occupational Therapy</p> <p>District Social Worker</p> <p>Paired reading and echo reading mentorship opportunities with 7-9 students</p>
<b>Facilities</b>	<p>Industrial Arts room, Home Economics room, large gym, art room, science and computer specialization rooms and stage area</p> <p>Music room</p> <p>Accessible to wheelchairs</p> <p>Requires modernization and expansion</p> <p>Requires modification to elementary (i.e., carpet areas, coat racks, water in classrooms, smaller bathrooms/water fountains)</p> <p>Quiet street for bus loading and unloading with potential to use 1913 Ritchie parking lot as a drop off loop/driveway</p> <p>Ample physical education equipment from both sites</p> <p>Potential opportunity for a bathroom located in the kindergarten room</p> <p>Potential for large kindergarten area</p> <p>Potential for growth into 1913 Ritchie building and expansion of the ISA program</p> <p>Large schoolyard to accommodate movement of playground and playground growth</p>
<b>Extra and Co-Curricular Activities</b>	<p>Enhanced participation and resources for school clubs, choir</p> <p>Arts focus on music and language</p> <p>7-9 students run 4-6 intramural program</p> <p>School store</p>

**7. *The educational and financial impact of closing Mill Creek School, including the effect on operational costs and capital implications.***

***Educational Impact***

If Mill Creek School closes, students in the regular program and Spanish Bilingual program would become part of a larger peer group at Ritchie School.

At Ritchie School, there would be the possibility of access to an increased number of specialized staff members with the combination of the two staffs into one building. Depending on enrolment, Ritchie School may need to hire additional staff. Ritchie School would engage in welcoming and community building activities to support successful transition to the school.

***Financial Impact – Operational and Capital***

The current school budget for Mill Creek/Ritchie School is \$2,106,626, which includes staffing costs of \$1,895,089 and \$211,537 for Supplies Equipments and Services. If Mill Creek School was closed the large majority of the above budgeted funds would continue to be available for use in Ritchie School. Direct savings from the reduction of an assistant principal, head custodian and an administrative assistant would amount to \$176,714 per year. With the closure, approximately \$145,091 in operational and maintenance costs would be available solely for use in Ritchie School, rather than split between the two sites. This will allow for a maintenance program that will more accurately meet the needs of the Ritchie School facility. Based on the 2006 Capital Inspection Report of the facility's condition, the \$778,080 for upgrades at Mill Creek School would not be required.

**8. *The educational and financial impact if Mill Creek School were to remain open.***

***Educational Impacts***

If Mill Creek School were to remain open, its projected student population would be 172 students (projected total for September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2007). Mill Creek School would continue to offer the Kindergarten to grade six Spanish Bilingual program. The school would need to continue to combine grade 5 and 6 students into multi-program groupings with no opportunity for single program groupings at this level. From Kindergarten to grade four students would be able to continue with single class groupings. Further, it is projected that there will be a need for two Kindergarten and grade one Spanish Bilingual classes in the 2007 – 2008 school year. This will require the reclamation of a portion of the leased space in Mill Creek School as there are currently no unused classrooms in Mill Creek School.

***Financial Impact – Operational and Capital***

Based on staffing and operating costs for the projected enrolment of 172 students, the total annual cost to operate Mill Creek/Ritchie School in its current twinned configuration will be slightly above the current budget of \$2,106,626. The increase to the budget resulting from the increased enrolment at Mill Creek School will be offset by the projected decrease in students at Ritchie School as the district's intention is to provide local accommodation for Literacy and Opportunity students currently being transported to Ritchie School from out of Zone 1 (Mill Woods). Approximately \$778,080 would be needed to meet life cycle replacement needs of the facility.

**9. *The capital needs of the schools that may have increased enrolment as a result of the closure of Mill Creek School.***

At Ritchie School, there are minimal fit up costs associated with the potential accommodation of students from the Mill Creek School attendance area. For Ritchie School the 2006 District Capital Inspection Report lists \$741,707 of upgrades or life cycle replacements that are outstanding. In the event that Mill Creek School were to be closed, Ritchie School would be added to the District's Three-Year Capital Plan for an essential modernization. Consideration would also be given to an application to the District's Capital Reserve failing the receipt of funding from the province. Finally, a review of the entire building would be undertaken to determine the costs associated with completing a total modernization, including the 1913 wing. Hazeldean School is modernized and requires no capital investment.

**10. *What is the proposed use the school building if it is closed?***

Should Mill Creek School be closed, the school would first be considered by the district for educational purposes, for example, district operations that are in leased space, leased to non profit organizations or sold. For example, closed schools have been used by the district for the Home School Centre, the Environment Education Centre, and the Rites of Passage Program. A few have been leased on a long-term basis to organizations such as NAIT, the Edmonton City Centre Church Corporation, and the City of Edmonton Community Services Department. A number of closed schools have been sold to: the City of Edmonton for green space, the Edmonton Society for Christian Education, and the Turkish Canadian Cultural Society.

**11. *What are the impacts on Lease Agreements if the school were to be closed?***

Tenants in the building will be provided with four options.

- a) The tenant (or tenants) may remain in the building for the remainder of the term of the lease;
- b) The tenant (or tenants) may express an interest to remain in the building for future lease renewal term;
- c) The tenant (or tenants) may terminate the lease at any time without penalty; or
- d) The tenant (or tenants) may express an interest to relocate to another district school.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

For more information regarding the school closure process or to provide feedback, visit Edmonton Public Schools website [www.epsb.ca](http://www.epsb.ca) and select the link to the planning website.

In accordance with the School Act Alberta Regulation 238/97 - *Closure of Schools Regulation* a board shall not make a final decision on the proposed closure of Mill Creek School until at least three weeks have passed since the date of the public meeting. The Board will give due consideration to any written submissions on the proposed closure that it receives after the public meeting and prior to the final debate and decision at the public board meeting on Thursday, March 22, 2007.

Form for Return:  
"Question Submission Form"

*Questions regarding the Board of Trustees' consideration of closure of Mill Creek School may be submitted in writing prior to Thursday, February 1, 2007 to the attention of:*

Jenise Bidulock, Director  
Planning and Student Transportation  
Centre for Education  
1 Kingsway  
Edmonton, AB T5H 4G9  
Fax: (780) 425-0323  
E-mail: [School.Closures@epsb.ca](mailto:School.Closures@epsb.ca)

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It is not possible to respond to individual questions or inquiries prior to the public meeting which is scheduled for **7 pm, Wednesday, February 7, 2007 at Mill Creek School**. At the public meeting, representative questions will be responded to. Should your specific question(s) not be selected for response at the public meeting, you will have ample opportunity to direct questions to administration and you are invited to do so.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

*Your name and contact information is being collected by the EPSB as a record of stakeholder involvement.*



### **Response to Mill Creek is Growing Delegation**

As a result of the School Closure process initiated for Mill Creek School, the “Mill Creek is Growing” delegation made a presentation to the Board of Trustees on Tuesday March 13, 2007. This attachment represents the response to the delegation’s presentation.

At this time, a major concern remains around the timing of consolidating Mill Creek School students into Ritchie School within a Kindergarten to Grade 9 International Spanish Academy centre concept. Through discussion with representatives of the Ministry of Education, the district has been informed that keeping students at Mill Creek School after closure of the school would constitute a school reopening. In other words, if students are kept at Mill Creek School while major renovations are made to Ritchie School, the district would be required to conduct another separate closure process for Mill Creek School. The outcome of a future closure process can not be assumed.

The potential consequences of not closing Mill Creek School at this time are:

- The district has never been successful in receiving provincial capital funding for a proposed general modernization for any school in advance of receiving students from an anticipated closure. The likelihood of receiving provincial capital funding for the general modernization of Ritchie School including the 1913 portion of the building, could be significantly reduced
- It would be unlikely that the district could include Ritchie School as a capital priority for modernization in a context where the future closure of Mill Creek School could not be assumed
- An inability to complete the general modernization of Ritchie School could jeopardize the vision to expand the International Spanish Academy program into the junior high years in one location, a scenario generally supported by the parent community
- If a single program centre is not achieved, the district will need to consider a model of multiple program sites dispersed across the City for expansion of the Spanish language program, which is the approach of the Calgary Board of Education and Edmonton Catholic Schools
- The location of the junior high component of the program could be established at another junior high school location

The following content provides a response to the seven major points presented by the delegation.

#### **1. Ritchie School would be a less hospitable learning environment than Mill Creek School**

Until the Ritchie School building is modernized, there would be fewer elementary classrooms available with windows. Classrooms requiring improved lighting would receive improvements over the summer. Playground apparatus could not be available at Ritchie School for at least one year, however the school grounds are spacious, and include three large sports fields and an outdoor basketball court.

#### **2. Ritchie School would be unsafe during renovations**

The safety of students and staff is of paramount concern for the district. All efforts are made to minimize disruptions to the teaching and learning occurring in district schools undergoing

renovations of any magnitude. The district has strict processes, procedures and requirements for all construction conducted in district schools that are based on regulations and district commitment to health and safety. Attention to hazardous materials issues is rigorous.

### **3. Making this change now will hurt the program**

Changes in program locations can present a risk that some current families may chose to seek alternative schools or programs, however the demand for Spanish bilingual programming is anticipated to continue to rise. The proposal to develop Ritchie School as the location for a Spanish language centre for Kindergarten to Grade nine students would demonstrate the district's commitment to support the program as it grows into the junior high school level, and would demonstrate a commitment to provide a high-quality facility to house such a program long-term.

### **4. Making this change now will jeopardize the regular Ritchie junior high program at Ritchie**

Adding the Spanish language programming to Ritchie School from elementary through junior high years at Ritchie School would support and enhance the regular and special needs junior high programming currently available at Ritchie School by adding resources, teaching staff and diversifying options in a setting with larger numbers of students.

Current special option rooms will not be removed, but may serve multiple functions when not fully utilized, on an interim basis until modernization is complete.

There is no plan to phase out Literacy and Opportunity special needs programs from Ritchie School in their entirety, however new sites in Mill Woods will likely result in a reduction of one to two special needs classes over time.

### **5. Spending a lot of money now for little return**

Some of the temporary expenditures required at Ritchie School would for temporary use, but other fit-up work would be implemented eventually regardless of the outcome of the proposed Mill Creek School closure. Aligning staffing to a single Kindergarten to Grade nine site would allow for a more effective and efficient deployment of human resources for teaching and learning.

### **6. Perception of a lack of district transparency in the process**

The district initiated broader discussions and consultation on the issue of space utilization and resources to operate smaller school settings in 2005, and has specifically been engaged in discussions with the Mill Creek School and Ritchie School parent community since October of 2006.

### **7. The district is not living up to its mandate to ensure all students can achieve success in their chosen programs of study.**

All efforts are being made for students in the district's International Spanish Bilingual Academy program to achieve success, and no information has come to light through the Sustainability Review process or the School Closure process which suggests the students are not achieving success in the program. There is also no dispute that the International Spanish Bilingual Academy program is growing, and that it is currently only housed in Mill Creek School.

### **Additional District Information**

With minor alterations, there can be up to 20 classroom spaces in Ritchie School excluding the 1913 wing. This would include all specialty rooms for art, science, music, computer labs, Food and Fashion and the Industrial Arts Shop. District projections for students and classroom requirements for the next three years does not assume total elimination of special needs junior high programming at Ritchie School, only a reduction by one to two classes. There would be no more than eight junior classes and up to 11 elementary classes within the next four school years. Some specialty rooms can serve as regular classrooms when not required for specialty instruction on a fulltime basis. Junior high students do not require eight full-time regular classrooms at one time, as they attend instruction in option classes, phys-ed, computer labs, and utilize learning resource areas throughout the timetable. The current operating portion of Ritchie School could thus accommodate the entire Mill Creek-Ritchie student population for at least four years in a near capacity environment.

The recommended outcome of the Sustainability Review process for Mill Creek-Ritchie School was not predetermined.

Responses from Edmonton Public Schools  
Planning Department  
March 14, 2007