

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

June 17, 2003

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: District Capital Priorities 2003 - 2005

ORIGINATOR: A. Habinski, Executive Director School and District Services

RESOURCE

STAFF: Jenise Bidulock, Robert Craig, Michael Ediger, Brian Fedor, Andrea Furness, Gary Holroyd, Roland Labbe, Randy Leal, Ron McGowan, Deanne Patsula, Larry Schwenneker, Cindy Skolski

RECOMMENDATION

That the district capital submission for 2003-2005, as identified in Appendix II, be approved.

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This report provides a review of district capital priorities as requested by Alberta Infrastructure in a letter dated May 29, 2003 (Appendix I). The Minister acknowledges that needs may not have changed significantly from the last submission process, and therefore an update of priorities is requested. Subject to board approval, the updated priorities for 2003-2005 will be submitted to the Minister of Infrastructure by June 30, 2003 (Appendix II).

In his letter, the Minister of Infrastructure identifies three priorities for capital projects from his perspective: to improve the condition of schools to provide good teaching and learning environments for students; to effectively utilize available school space; and to provide additional space due to enrolment growth, when warranted. The Minister also requests that the district consider P3 arrangements in their capital projects and indicated that provincial guidelines will be available in the near future.

The administration's review and update of district capital priorities has confirmed that they are consistent with the Minister's priorities as follows:

- The update focuses on improving learning environments through placing a heavy emphasis on preservation projects.
- The update addresses effective utilization through significant space reduction in the form of creative re-use of space and partnerships, pod and portable removal, and selective demolition. Also, several proposed preservation projects include a capacity reduction component as a means to ensure that smaller schools can be retained in communities for the long term. In the case of lower utilization schools, the scope of work is reduced to address life, health and safety components until the long-term viability of the school is confirmed. The administration will request Alberta Infrastructure to provide additional funds to support space reduction projects. These additional capital support dollars should not reduce the level of funds available to complete enhancement projects.

- The update responds to the needs of newly developing communities through proposed construction of eight schools that are required and warranted as a result of enrolment increases in the suburban communities and the significant space reduction initiatives.
- The update identifies a partnership opportunity with the Capital Health Authority regarding potential use of space at Victoria School. In addition, a partnership with Edmonton Society for Christian Education could facilitate a construction of a society-owned school for district students.

Effective utilization is a key aspect of this update. In all, the number of student spaces proposed for removal in the next three years is approximately 7,000 and the amount of student spaces to be added is 3,950. This yields a net reduction of 3,050 student spaces.

### Review of Existing Capital Priorities

District capital priorities were identified and approved by the Board in the *2002-2004 Capital Submission* on May 21, 2002. The 2002 submission included requests for funds totaling \$143M for: modernization of 21 schools; construction of 3 new schools; replacement of 30 free-standing portables; funds to relocate 12 portables; and funds to support the lease costs for Woodside.

The review confirmed all projects approved in 2002 in the current priority order, with the following exceptions: the request to replace 30 free-standing portables is deleted as a result of an unexpected surplus of portables in the district; the proposed K-9 school west of 199 Street in the Grange is deferred as a result of slow growth; and some of the confirmed preservation projects are reduced in scope of work pending further study to confirm the long term viability of the schools. In addition, several new priorities were identified in the form of partnership opportunities, capacity reductions through demolition, and requests for new schools in Lake District, Terwillegar, the Palisades, the Meadows, and Pilot Sound and Castle Downs.

#### A. Preservation Projects

Projects that were identified for modernization within the 2002-04 capital submission, in priority order, include: Westmount, Wellington, Kenilworth, Hazeldean, Elmwood, Sherwood, Eastglen, Winterburn (Phase II), Strathcona, L.Y. Cairns, Duggan, Hillcrest, Laurier Heights, High Park, Gold Bar, Forest Heights, Malmo, Capilano, Homesteader, Highlands and Balwin Schools. The total amount of funds requested to complete this work was \$134M.

Of these projects, Hazeldean, Eastglen, L.Y Cairns (Phase I), Kenilworth and Westmount Schools are dealt with under the 2003 capital allocation of \$51M. The following schools are confirmed for full preservation: Strathcona, L.Y. Cairns (Phase II), Laurier Heights, Homesteader, Highlands and Winterburn Schools. The remaining schools are proposed for Phase I preservation addressing life, health and safety components. These schools are: Wellington, Sherwood, Elmwood, Duggan, Hillcrest, High Park, Gold Bar, Forest Heights, Malmo, Capilano and Balwin Schools. Phase II preservation may be considered within the context of future capital submissions.

#### B. New Construction

Two of the three new schools requested in the 2002-2004 submission are re-confirmed: the Lake District school, and the Burnewood/Meadows school. The proposed K-9 school in the Grange area is recommended to be deferred to a future capital submission as anticipated growth has not materialized at the expected rate. Consideration will be given to including this school within a future capital submission. New priorities have emerged in other residential development areas.

## Identification of New Priorities

### A. Space Reduction

The district has identified a need to reduce capacity at a number of schools within the next three years, including removing semi-permanent space (pods) at: Belmead, Brander Gardens, Dan Knott, Ekota, Fraser, Homesteader, Hillview, Meyokumin, Ormsby, Pollard Meadows, Sakaw, Satoo, Steinhauer, Sweet Grass, and Tipaskan Schools. Removal of a pod at Sifton School was considered within the review, however the school's pre-enrolment report indicates enrolment will grow in the coming years. Therefore the pod will be retained at this time. The total amount of space reduction will be 1,750 student spaces. In addition, 30 portable classrooms will be disposed of from various school locations amounting to 750 student spaces. Support is requested to reduce permanent space at Hardisty, Horse Hill, J.A. Fife, McKee, R.J. Scott, Richard Secord, and Ritchie Schools pending confirmation of feasibility. The annex facility at Bevedere School is proposed for demolition and the potential to reduce capacity at Strathearn is being explored. The cost to demolish space is estimated at \$55 per square meter, not including costs relating to the removal of hazardous substances if required.

### B. Additional Modernization and New Construction Projects

A feasibility study in relation to a high school in Castle Downs is presented to the board under separate cover. The study identifies a viable option for including a new senior high school as a district priority. Schools are also required in the following areas: Pilot Sound and Lake District in the Northeast, Palisades in the Northwest, Terwillegar in the Southwest and the Meadows in the Southeast of Edmonton. These schools will ensure that the district meets the accommodation needs of students within their communities.

A four classroom permanent addition, as well as a major modernization, is proposed at Prince Charles School as a result of the school being identified as a receiving school for grades 5 and 6 students affected by the closure of the Awasis program at Sherbrooke School. Major modernization is also proposed for Lawton School, subject to further consultation with the community and potential confirmation that this school will be the receiving school for similarly affected grades 7-9 Awasis students. A modernization to address life health and safety is recommended for Mount Royal School, which was one of two schools identified to receive students affected by the recent closure of Bellevue School.

### C. New Partnerships and Innovative Re-Use of Space

The district has identified two partnership opportunities and two relocations of decentralized administration space in order to reduce district capacity.

A partnership project may be possible with the Capital Health Authority (CHA) in association with the capital upgrading at Victoria School. Support is also requested to explore a partnership with *Le Conseil Scolaire Regional du Centre-Nord No. 4* (the Francophone Regional District) regarding use of space at L'Academy Vimy Ridge Academy. Alberta Infrastructure is supportive of this concept.

The district is exploring the possible use of space at Queen Elizabeth School to accommodate district staff. This will substantially increase utilization at the high school level.

## Background to the Review of the 2002-04 Capital Priorities

Capital projects were identified and approved by the Board of Trustees as the **2002-2004 Capital Submission** on May 21, 2002. The submission was forwarded to Alberta Infrastructure on May 29, 2002. A preliminary response was made public via a media release in conjunction with the provincial budget on April 11, 2003. The release indicated that a block allocation of \$51M would be made to Edmonton Public Schools, and that these funds were expected to meet the needs of Victoria School and other district schools. A plan for expenditure of the \$51M, which addresses Victoria and other schools, is provided as a separate report.

The May 2002 priority list was generally an affirmation of the previous year's (2001) priorities. The 2001 priorities were derived from a comprehensive audit of school facilities in the province conducted in 1999 and 2000. As a result, the district's priorities have reflected the provincial audit scores, with the exception that some low utilization schools having high audit scores were earmarked for concept development studies. For the 2002 capital year, only \$18M in preservation and new construction capital support was provided to districts province-wide, none of which was allocated to Edmonton Public Schools. Due to the level of funding available, Alberta Infrastructure has requested that previously submitted priorities be updated in preparation for their new capital plan.

#### Conditions Impacting on Capital Priorities

A number of conditions have changed since May 2002 when the board approved the 2002-04 priorities:

- The audit information is 4 years old and project costs have escalated well above those originally identified within the audits. It is vital to review the higher cost projects, such as was the case with Victoria School, to ensure that the district's capital support is not consumed by a very small number of projects.
- Enrolment will decline marginally in the next few years. Residential construction activity points to growth in suburban areas, however localized growth will be more than offset by declining school-age populations in established neighbourhoods. Individual school enrolments have also changed as parents and students exercise their choice.
- Alberta Infrastructure advises that utilization rates will strongly influence the Minister's decision to approve projects. For schools that require major modernization investment or "preservation", it must be demonstrated that the school is viable in the long term. To justify new schools or additions to existing schools, a utilization rate of 85% is required within schools in the surrounding area.
- In July 2002, the province changed the funding formula for Plant Operation and Maintenance (PO&M) such that it places significant weight on a jurisdiction's utilization rate. As a result, the district must address the space in schools that is not essential for instruction prior to making significant capital investment in these facilities.

#### Review of Existing Priorities and Identification of New Priorities

The administration focused on planning sectors in confirming or identifying new capital priorities. The sectors affirm that different areas of the city have different facility needs, and recognize the impracticality of transporting students across the city. A factor considered when establishing sector boundaries was the distinction between areas of the city where the primary need is for efficiency in use of space and modernization, and areas where the need is to accommodate population growth through new construction. Utilization rates in sectors vary from 53 to 82 percent with a district average of 68.3 percent as of August 31, 2002. The utilization rate is now estimated at 69.1 percent as a result of the closures of Idylwylde and Bellevue Schools, as well as the relocation of the Awasis program from Sherbrooke School.

Capital priorities reflect sector needs. In inner city sectors, the emphasis is on reducing space and preserving schools. In growth sectors, the emphasis is on improving utilization such that new schools can be built in growing communities.

The administration also identified four principles that will guide capital planning, student accommodation and program distribution in the coming years, and which served as a reference point for the current review.

**A. Equitable Access to Quality Learning Environments**

Students at all grade levels will have local access to high quality, modernized facilities wherever they live in the city.

**B. Creative Re-Use of Surplus Space**

Surplus school space that is viable and has value to the community should be identified for potential partnership use. Agreements would be at no cost to the district.

**C. Efficient Sector Utilization and Retention of Small Schools**

In low utilization sectors, modernization projects will consist of targeted preservation of the school's required instructional space, and this may be combined with demolition of unused and unneeded space within the school. This process will lead to retention of smaller schools in neighbourhoods, although some consolidation or closure may be required where enrolment is no longer viable. In growth sectors, initiatives will be aimed at achieving a sector utilization rate of 85% to enable construction of new schools where they are needed in developing communities. This will reduce the dependency on designated receiving schools and long ride times. Consideration will be given to upgrading receiving schools identified as a result of school or program closure.

**D. Accommodation and Program Needs Met Within Sectors**

Where possible, student needs for regular programming and major programs will be met within the student's resident sector. This principle acknowledges that there is sufficient space within the district so that students should not have to travel great distances to access basic programs and concurrently it affirms the need to provide new schools in growth areas.

DME

APPENDIX I - Letter from Minister Lund Requesting Updated Capital Priorities

APPENDIX II - Review of Existing Priorities and Identification of New Priorities

APPENDIX III - Status of Capital Projects