

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

March 25, 2003

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Proposed School Closures for 2002-2003

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

RESOURCE

STAFF: Jenise Bidulock, Robert Craig, Seth Crook, Michael Ediger, Leanne Fedor, Andrea Furness, Roland Labbe, Randy Leal, Deanne Patsula, Cindy Skolski

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the administration be authorized to undertake the provincial and board mandated processes to consider the feasibility of closure of Bellevue School.
2. That the administration be authorized to undertake the provincial and board mandated processes to consider the feasibility of closure of the junior high program at Horse Hill School.
3. That the administration be authorized to undertake the provincial and board mandated processes to consider the feasibility of closure of Stratford School.
4. That the administration be authorized to undertake the provincial and board mandated processes to consider the feasibility of closure of the Awasis Program at Sherbrooke School.

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The following schools are eligible for closure in accordance with Board Policy FL.BP (Appendix I), which identifies space utilization (under 40 per cent) and an average enrolment per grade as major criteria for such selection.

**Bellevue School**

Background

Bellevue Elementary School was opened in 1950 and has a capacity for 303 students. The September 30, 2002 enrolment count at Bellevue was 72 students, which represents a 24% utilization rate. Enrolment at Bellevue has been declining steadily since 1995, and as a result, Kindergarten students were relocated to Mount Royal for the current school year. These students will remain at Mount Royal for grade one, resulting in Bellevue accommodating only grades two to six for the 2003 – 2004 school year with a projected enrolment of 55 students.

According to provincial statistics the number of pre-school and elementary school age children has declined steadily since 1996. Based on these numbers it is projected that the population of school age children in Bellevue will continue to decline.

### Rationale

Projected enrolment for next year is 55 students in grades 2 to 6. There are 101 public elementary students living within the Bellevue attendance area. Only 44 of these students currently choose to attend Bellevue, with the remaining 57 students spread among 24 other district schools. If Bellevue were to close, the 44 students would likely choose other nearby public elementary schools: Mount Royal, Montrose, or Newton. The utilization rates of these schools are: Mount Royal, 63%; Montrose, 45%; Newton, 46%. There is ample space available in these schools to accommodate Bellevue students.

### Educational Consideration

There are three teachers on staff at Bellevue School. Closure and relocation of Bellevue students to Mount Royal would result in fewer combined grade classes, and other educational benefits would be available through enrolling students in a larger school setting.

### Consultation

A meeting was held on March 20, at Bellevue School with district staff and parents in order to share information about the current situation at Bellevue School and to answer questions and hear concerns from parents. Results of this meeting were communicated to Trustees through a Transmittal Memo on March 21.

## **Horse Hill Junior High Program**

### Background

The junior high program at Horse Hill School is currently operating with 36 students. The projection for next year is for enrolment of 34 students in grades 7 to 9. There are 70 public junior high students living inside the Horse Hill junior high attendance area. These students currently attend 20 district junior high schools, with the largest number attending Horse Hill. The second and third largest groups of students from the area currently attend John D. Bracco School (9 students) and Steele Heights School (5 students). The remaining students are spread out among 17 other junior high schools.

### Rationale

With a projected enrolment of 34 students in the junior high program, it is difficult for the school to offer the usual range of program choices available to junior high students in the district. Re-location of the program to another district junior high school will ensure that students receive a wider range of options and opportunities for extra-curricular activities.

If the junior high program is closed, the students would be designated to John D. Bracco junior high school. The principal of John D. Bracco has been consulted and has indicated that there is space in the school to accommodate the students from Horse Hill if they all

choose to attend John D. Bracco. Closure of the Horse Hill program would give the students access to many more resources and program options available at the larger junior high school.

### Educational Consideration

There is benefit to junior high students attending a larger facility because they will have access to a wider range of program options and extra-curricular activities that cannot be provided in a small school. Students would be in straight grade classes rather than the combined classes that would result from a junior high program with 34 students.

### Consultation

Students and parents who will be affected by this recommendation were advised of the recommendation to consider the closure of the junior high program. Subject to board approval a formal process will commence including mandated public consultation.

## **Stratford School**

### Background

Stratford was opened in 1965 as a junior high school with a capacity for 710 students. In 1994 a new program emphasis was adopted based on a small-scale, academic-focused senior high school model. This change was implemented due to increasing enrolment pressures at existing west end senior high schools, and adequate junior high school space to accommodate students from the Stratford attendance area. Grades 7 and 8 were phased out, and programming was extended to the senior high grades. New attendance boundaries were adopted such that junior high are now within the Hillcrest and Parkview School attendance areas, although many choose to attend other west end schools.

Stratford and Jasper Place Schools were twinned in 1999. Jasper Place provides programming at Stratford, and the schools are administered from Jasper Place School. Stratford currently accommodates students in the International Baccalaureate Program in grades 9 to 12. Grade 9 students are accommodated at Stratford for the entire school day while grades 10 to 12 are shuttled between Jasper Place and Stratford to take advantage of program options at Jasper Place.

### Rationale

Stratford currently accommodates 149 students in grades 9 to 12. Closure of the school would result in all students being accommodated in Jasper Place School. Jasper Place facility has a rated capacity of 2,783 and a total enrolment of 1,857 including the students using the Stratford facility. There is sufficient space in Jasper Place to accommodate all students.

Jasper Place would realize significant cost savings by operating only one building. Students and teachers are currently shuttled between the two buildings during the day. Jasper Place is scheduled for major modernization work to begin in 2003 that will create modernized classroom space. The modernization would not negatively affect the capacity to accommodate students from Stratford.

### Educational Consideration

All students can be accommodated at Jasper Place and will not need to be shuttled between the two schools. This will allow students to take full advantage of all the program opportunities available. Grade 9 students will also continue at Jasper Place. Through the planned school modernization space will be designed for grade 9 students, which will allow them to be separate from the senior high students, but still allow access to the entire facility.

### Consultation

Students and parents who will be affected by this recommendation were advised of the recommendation to consider the closure of the school building. Subject to board approval a formal process will commence including mandated public consultation.

## **Sherbrooke**

### Background

Sherbrooke School was originally opened in 1954 as a neighbourhood school. In 1984 the school was closed due to declining enrolment. In 1998 Prince Charles School was expanded to include a junior high program, and grades 7 to 9 were accommodated in the Sherbrooke School building under the administration of Prince Charles School. In addition, grades 5 and 6 were relocated to Sherbrooke. An acting principal was appointed to administer the Awasis programming at Sherbrooke for the 2000-01 school year.

### Rationale

The September 30, 2002 enrolment at Sherbrooke included 59 students in grades 5 and 6 and 83 students in grades 7 to 9. This represents a 30% utilization rate. The projected enrolment for next year is 143 students, including 108 junior high students.

Prince Charles School has a capacity of 301 students with a projected enrolment of 206 students. It is anticipated that the grade 5 and 6 students projected for Sherbrooke could be accommodated at Prince Charles School. Discussions are underway to determine alternative locations to accommodate programming for Aboriginal junior high students. These include the possible introduction of a junior high program at Amiskwaciy Academy.

### Educational Consideration

Junior high students accommodated at Amiskwaciy Academy would gain access to a wider range of programs and services, and better facilities for option courses and other activities. The transition from junior high to senior high would be seamless if the students were accommodated in one school.

### Consultation

Public consultation will be carried out according to Alberta Learning's regulations for formal school closure, including a public meeting with parents and the community. Special consideration will be given to the consultation process with the Aboriginal community. The

community consultation regarding Sherbrooke School and the junior high program may not be completed by the end of this school year, and therefore may need to be deferred to the 2003 – 2004 school year.

### **Timeline and Next Steps**

Approval of these recommendations 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 recommendations that the administration will present regarding the closure of Bellevue School, Stratford School, the Horse Hill Junior High program, and Sherbrooke School. After the public consultation process it is possible that the administration may decide to provide the board with an information report regarding reasons for not closing one or more of the schools and/or programs. This approach is consistent with the applicable provincial regulation (Appendix II) and the board's policy.

The provincial regulation requires that any school closure process begin and end in the same school year. In the case of Sherbrooke School, consultation with the community may not be completed by the end of the year, and therefore, the school would not close. Central Services staff with support from the principals 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 formal meetings, written submissions, individual meetings and telephone calls. Trustees will be notified of public meeting dates.

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APPENDIX I – Board Policy FL.BP School Closure <http://www.epsb.ca/policy/fl.bp.shtml>

APPENDIX II – Alberta Regulation 238/97 – Closure of Schools Regulation  
<http://www.learning.gov.ab.ca/educationguide/pol-plan/polregs/5ClosureofSchls.asp>