

## EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

May 11, 2004

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Ellerslie Campus Conservation Project

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

### RESOURCE

STAFF: Jenise Bidulock, Darryl Fleming, Andrea Furness, Roland Labbe, Scott Millar, Deanne Patsula

### INFORMATION

#### Background

Ellerslie Campus lies on 10.7 hectares/26.4 acres of land located on 66 Street and Ellerslie Road in rural Southeast Edmonton (Appendix I). The campus consists of grades K-5 at the South Campus and grades 6-9 at the North Campus. The South Campus, has an enrolment of 140 students and has a provincial utilization rate of 80 per cent; and the North Campus has an enrolment 315 students and a provincial utilization rate of 51 per cent. These schools have served rural Southeast Edmonton and the Maple Ridge Mobile Home Community for almost 50 years.

The Ellerslie school site was originally part of Strathcona County and was annexed to the district when the city expanded its borders. The site is larger than typical public school site and provides opportunities to explore different options for the site including environmental programming alternatives (Appendix II).

#### Environmental Project at Ellerslie Campus

The rural landscape surrounding Ellerslie Campus and the unique features of the school site has provided an opportunity for students, staff and community to engage in an environmental project over a number of years. The most unique feature of the school site is a lagoon system that filters waste water from the school. The schools do not have urban water services, therefore, the water is brought to the schools, and is disposed of into the lagoon system. The lagoons create a wetland on the school site and beyond. This feature has brought an ecosystem to the site which includes a number of different species of plants and wildlife. Ellerslie students, staff and community have worked very hard to promote this environmental area by introducing plants, trees and birdhouses.

Ellerslie School is being recognized for it's environmental efforts by becoming finalists for the prestigious Emerald Award, which will be announced on June 9, 2004. To further promote and propagate the environmental focus at the school, preliminary discussions to consider an alternative environmental science program have been initiated.

### Surrounding Development

The impact of the development of land around Ellerslie Campus, will be to transform the rural schools into suburban schools. In 1998 City Council approved the Ellerslie Area Structure Plan for lands directly west of 66 Street and South of Mill Woods (Appendix III). This plan includes 4 neighbourhoods, of which Summerside and Ellerslie Crossing are quickly developing and are home to 100 Edmonton Public School students.

An application for the Ellerslie East Area Structure Plan has been made, but not yet approved by City Council, for the lands east of 66 Street and south of Mill Woods (Appendix II). This plan includes the Ellerslie Campus school site and will have a significant impact on the Ellerslie Campus. The plan proposes to widen 66 Street from a 2 lane rural road to a 4 lane arterial road, and widen Ellerslie road from a 2 lane rural road to a 6 lane freeway. This will result in the need to reorient the parking and the access for both schools, particularly the South Campus which is located at the intersection of these two roads. Urban water service will be available to the campus through this development. The school is current bringing water to the school and disposing of it into a lagoon system located on the school site.

The lagoons support the wetland which supports the ecosystem at the school. Once urban water services are in place there will no longer be a need for the lagoons, and they will be reclaimed and the land will be restored. In order to preserve a wetland, which is the foundation of the ecosystem, the administration has been developing a strategy with the cooperation of the City of Edmonton, developers, and consultants. The Northeast corner of the school site will be used as a storm water management facility in order to preserve the wetlands. This will require that the land be subdivided and disposed of to the developer and the City of Edmonton. Details of this agreement are currently being resolved, however, the storm water management facility will need to be the property of the City of Edmonton to ensure the facility is maintained and future capital investment is the responsibility of the municipality. The storm water management facility will take the form of a naturalized shallow marsh meadow which will be available for interpretive and study opportunities. A natural area management plan will be developed by all stakeholders in order to ensure the needs of the school the community and the municipality are met.

Typically the district resists having storm water management facilities on school sites, but in this case it is appropriate to conserve the established environmental area. Through the natural area management plan buffers will be identified as a necessary feature between the school and the actual water.

The disposition of a small portion of the school site is necessary to preserve a long history of environmental conservation at Ellerslie Campus. The administration will continue to work through the details and is expecting to bring forward a recommendation regarding the land in the fall.

AF/

- Appendix I            Map of the City of Edmonton
- Appendix II          Aerial Photo of Ellerslie School Site
- Appendix III        Map of Ellerslie Area Structure Plan and Ellerslie East Area Structure Plan