

100 Jensen Avenue East, PO Box 430
Parksville, BC V9P 2G5
Phone 250-248-4241
Fax 250-248-5767

For Immediate Release:

Message from the Board of Education: Consultation Process Regarding the Review of Enrollment and Facilities Use

Parksville, BC – October 26, 2010

The initial presentation of the consultant’s work on a review of our school facilities and projected enrolment has generated much debate and discussion in our community. That presentation projects a significant decline in enrollment up to and beyond 2024. As secondary enrolments steadily decrease, it will be increasingly difficult to offer the range of educational opportunities our secondary students need and expect. Further, our District’s fiscal resources are based on enrollment - as enrollment declines, revenues fall.

What is evident to the Board through the annual budget process is that there is a cost to all students in the district created by the tension between declining enrollment and current fixed costs. When developing the budget the Board is acutely aware that community expectations for services and supports provided by schools and the district continue to expand. The reality is that reduced budgets will impact programs, staffing, operations and maintenance of every school in our district.

Since the beginning of October, the Board has received a variety of responses from schools and from the community. The option of closing schools, particularly a secondary school, has generated many objections, questions, concerns, and ideas. We have heard and acknowledge the worry and concern about the potential impacts of school closure – expressed by parents, students, local business and community members.

A final report of the initial phase of the facility review is expected from Matrix Planning Associates in December. Staff is in the process of collating the responses from consultation sessions that have already occurred and are developing a process for suggestions that can be submitted on-line. The Board has instructed staff to research other options and ideas that have been generated by the consultation to date.

The Board issued a media statement on October 7, 2010, which outlined several phases of a consultation process in the coming months that would lead to the development of a long-range facilities plan by late spring of 2011.

We are announcing today that the timeline for consultation and research will be extended into the next school year, and that a long range facilities plan will not be completed this school year.

For further information please contact:

Eve Flynn
Board Chair
250-240-2845

or

Candice Morgan
Superintendent of Schools
250-248-4241

The issues are complex. We are in uncertain times. The Province is suggesting that there may be significant changes to the public education system in the near future. These changes were initially outlined in the Throne Speech of February 2010, and included references to a focus on engaging learners through personalized learning in the 21st Century. Discussions with provincial partners held since the Throne Speech are expected to culminate in announcements during the spring legislative session in 2011. One change confirmed yesterday was the appointment by the Premier of a new Minister of Education.

Any changes to public education programs may have an impact on our facilities and the Board will consider the possible implications of those changes later in the spring and into the next school year as more specific information becomes available from the government.

In the interim, the Board will continue to consult locally, conduct further research, and review the implementation effects of any change in configuration of the schools in our district. We commit to keeping the district and community informed of the ongoing process.

We intend to consult with each school community on the issues outlined in the Matrix review, and to consider the implications of potential changes to our schools current programs and services.

Trustee and staff teams have started meetings with Parent Advisory Councils, and will request opportunities to meet with each one in the upcoming months. The Board is in the process of scheduling opportunities to meet with local representatives of various levels of government, the Chambers of Commerce, and other affected groups.

We reiterate that no decisions have been made and that we intend to take the time needed to study all aspects of the difficult decisions that are facing us.