

Opening a New Window or Two...

May 2, 2018

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - The Board of Trustees was pleased to recently take part in a facility review, (Value Scoping) session facilitated by Alberta Education and Alberta Infrastructure, along with representatives from local community stakeholder groups in Evansburg. The session centered around informative discussions on the different options and possibilities for school facilities in both Evansburg and Wildwood, communities located in the division's east end, Lobstick Zone. Representatives from school councils (parents), school administration (Wildwood School, Evansview School and Grand Trunk High School (GTHS)), and Mayor Gerald Soroka from Yellowhead County, met with GYPSD's Board Chair and local Lobstick trustee, Brenda Rosadiuk, GYPSD senior administration, Alberta Education, Alberta Infrastructure, architects, and cost consultants to look at a total of four options over three days, March 20, April 24, and 25, 2018.

The discussions led to the following options for the GYPSD board and communities to consider:

1. Full modernization of all three schools, including right-sizing each school to align with declining student enrolments. *Note: Only one school would be approved at a time.*
2. Consolidate all three schools to existing GTHS, and fully modernize the facility for K-Grade 12 with a 500 student capacity.
3. Consolidate Wildwood and Evansview Schools at existing Evansview, and fully modernize Evansview and expand to 250 students. Move Wildwood Grade 7-9 students to GTHS. Fully modernize GTHS and right size facility to correct enrolment. *Note: Only one school would be approved at a time.*
4. As #3 above but replacement school for Evansview instead of modernization.

All options were explored and evaluated using a number of performance attributes such as:

- Program offerings and options
- Building and site organization
- Future flexibility should enrolment change
- Declining student enrolments and community populations in both Wildwood and Evansburg
- Possibility of multiple grade classrooms due to low enrolments
- Ongoing operation and maintenance costs
- Students' learning impacts during construction phases, and
- Costs, including unforeseen risks of modernization

"These three aging school facilities are currently identified as the board's top three priorities for our capital plan," commented Board Chair Brenda Rosadiuk. "Wildwood School is an aging wood frame facility that is close to its end of life, and over 70% of the student population is bussed in. Evansview School also has infrastructure deficiencies, and GTHS, although a very solid building, has no windows in its classrooms, and is under 30% utilized with a small student population. All three schools also do not meet 21st Century learning needs, and with such small student populations in each building, makes it extremely difficult for our Board to offer quality and diverse programs. In addition, they each have very high operating and maintenance expenses due to their aging infrastructure, and smaller populations increase the possibility of multiple-graded classrooms, which is not the preferred solution by anyone."

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GYPSED's board submitted their Three Year Capital Plan to the Province on April 1, 2018, requesting the full modernizations of Grand Trunk High School and Evansview School in Evansburg, and Wildwood School in Wildwood. The board's capital plan submission is due annually each spring; the next one is due in April of 2019.

"Although our current plan is to modernize all three schools, it is important that our board investigates all the options possible to ensure the best learning environments for our students especially as only one school would be selected at a time to modernize," Chair Rosadiuk continued. "The information generated from this session, including stakeholder perspectives, as well as engineering and costing reports were very helpful. But this is only one step in the process. Our board will be continuing discussions with all community stakeholder groups over the next year before making any decision or possible changes to our capital plan. This past session was organized by the Province and the division was asked to bring a few representatives. GYPSED board's will now be taking this information and facilitating community sessions that will be open to all those interested, to share the session's findings and facilitate more discussions. Our hope is to start our own meetings in June, and continue into the fall of 2018. We will be posting the final report on our website once received. We have also encouraged our school administration and parent representatives to share their experience at the session at school council meetings."

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