



BOARD OF EDUCATION TO DECIDE ON LONG TERM SOLUTION TO WESTSIDE CAPACITY ISSUES

May 21, 2021

KELOWNA, BC –At the May 26, 2021 Public Board meeting, the Central Okanagan Public Schools Board of Education will review and decide on a recommended motion from the General Affairs Committee that allows for the Westside to build a second secondary school and supports a long-term solution to address the significant growth in the Westside family of schools.

In 2015 the Board acknowledged that a second secondary school was required on the Westside and in 2016 conducted a comprehensive study of the needs of the Westside school communities.

Provincial approval for a new secondary school was received in 2019, and the Central Okanagan Public School District has been on an exhaustive search to secure land for the secondary school and attempted multiple acquisitions, however there were no opportunities that met the provincial government's criteria for purchase.

The site of the Webber Road Community Centre, which the school district owns, was considered but cannot proceed due to significant challenges with location, topography, and the designated archaeological/historical site where the school would be built. It is urgent that the District move forward with this project since Mount Boucherie Secondary School cannot be expanded further (it is expected to be at 126% capacity in five years with 17 portables on site), and any delays in approval may cause provincial funding to be revoked or redirected by the Ministry of Education. Also other vital projects in the Central Okanagan such as a new Glenmore Secondary and Wilden Elementary may be delayed.

The Board of Education's only solution to securing a site to build a second secondary school on the Westside will be to reopen Webber Road Elementary School and repurpose the École George Pringle Elementary site.

The Board will review the following motions at the upcoming Public Board meeting:

THAT: Subject to funding approval by the Ministry of Education that the École George Pringle Elementary School site be repurposed for a new Secondary school:

THAT: The Board of Education relocates the École George Pringle Elementary School English program to the Webber Road Elementary School site and the French Immersion program to Glenrosa Elementary School and/or Hudson Road Elementary School effective September 2022;

AND THAT: The Board of Education conducts a comprehensive community consultation starting in the Fall of 2021 to establish new elementary, middle and secondary catchments for the Westside family of schools;

AND THAT: The Board of Education develops a clear and measurable plan to address the needs of students transitioning from George Pringle Elementary School prior to the relocation.

This proposed solution would ensure that the Westside community has a new secondary school by September 2025. The new school would be on major transportation and transit routes, accommodate future growth, have two regulation sports fields, two regulation gymnasiums, and neighbourhoods of learning space to support community needs. Elementary French Immersion programs will also be closer and more accessible to families.

Also included in the Board's considerations is a commitment to engage the community in developing catchments and program locations, as well as a clear and measurable plan to support students during their transition.

The Public Board meeting is on May 26, 2021 at 6:00PM and will be available for public attendance via zoom.

Please see the attached backgrounder for further details on the impacts and issues of the Westside Secondary decision.

"Left with only a single feasible solution after years of comprehensive investigation, the Board is faced with an incredibly difficult situation as it strives to ensure that it has the space to serve our students on the Westside," says Board Chairperson Moyra Baxter. "As a Board, we are committed to ensuring that the students and families of École George Pringle Elementary School will be well supported if the decision is to proceed with this plan."

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE WESTSIDE SECONDARY PROJECT
The reopening of Webber Road Elementary and the Repurposing of the George Pringle School Site

History

- Mount Boucherie Secondary School (MBSS) is overcapacity and is expected to continue to grow.
- MBSS currently has eleven portables and only has a parking variance from the City of West Kelowna for an additional two portables, which is projected to only provide enough space until September 2023. This will be further challenged by an upcoming Board decision on whether to establish a French Immersion program temporarily at MBSS.
- The Westside is also experiencing significant capacity issues at elementary schools on the Eastside of the community as well as at Constable Neil Bruce Middle School. Currently, there is available capacity at Glenrosa Elementary and Glenrosa Middle School.
- Due to the significant challenges with the Webber Road site as a secondary school and the significant uncertainties and delays related to the archaeological and historical designation, staff reviewed current land holdings and determined that the existing École George Pringle Elementary School site was the only one that would be feasible for a secondary school.
- It is not feasible to construct a secondary school and to leave a full or partial elementary school on the École George Pringle site. Options that retain the full or half school only allow for one playfield on the site for up to 1,900 students and do not allow for adequate site circulation or parking space required under City bylaws.

Transportation impacts and solutions

- Students who currently could walk to École George Pringle Elementary will require transportation service.
- All redirected English program students will be eligible for transportation.
- Additional 6-10 minute drive to Webber Road from George Pringle.
- Transparent transportation fee waiver program currently established for families with financial difficulties.

Further supports for transitions

- Collaborate with YMCA to continue Beyond the Bell program.
- Maintain Strongstart program at George Pringle site.
- Continue current meal program in Webber Road Elementary.
- Explore Glenrosa Elementary French Immersion program, which would expand accessibility and reduce travel time for South Westside families.
- Explore Hudson Road Elementary French Immersion program, which would expand accessibility and reduce travel time for Eastside families.

Further action to be taken

- The District will modify the agreement that expires this year for the Webber Road Community Centre.
- The school district will work with the City of West Kelowna and the Okanagan Boys and Girls Club to preserve as many of the current Webber Road community centre's operations as possible when the school reopens.
- By January 2024, Central Okanagan Public Schools will terminate its lease with the City of West Kelowna for the Community Gardens and Dog Park located on the École George Pringle Site.