

# School District #8 (Kootenay Lake)

Facilities Review Process:  
Slocan Valley

# Overview:

## Facilities Process

- **Board Goal:** To continue to develop a long-range facilities plan for the district.
- Meeting 1 (February 1, 2010- Winlaw)
  - Purpose - To share information and options under consideration; to invite community input for sharing at next meeting
- Meeting 2 (February 16, 2010 - WEG)
  - Purpose - To receive ideas/responses from the communities.

# Overview:

## Facilities Process

- **Board Goal:** To continue to develop a long-range facilities plan for the district.
- **Meeting 3 (March 29 - Location: Winlaw School)**
  - **Purpose** - To respond to proposals/input and engage in further discussion.
- Meeting 4 (April 13- Location TBA)
  - **Purpose** - To make decisions related to facilities in the Slocan Valley based on the consultation process.

# Overview

- A Brief History: School District #8 Financial realities and facilities planning
- Where are we now? Rationale for Board Facilities Review in Creston and the Slocan Valley
- Summary of input:
  - (a) What did we hear/receive?
  - (b) Some responses and identified areas for further research

# Overview

- Where to from here?
  - (a) Options for the Board to consider
  - (b) Community response/questions.

# Thought to Frame the Meeting

There is more than a verbal tie between the words ***common, community and communication.*** People live in a community by virtue of the things they have in common, and communication is how they come to possess those things that they have in common.

John Dewey

Facilities Planning:  
Current Expectations of the Board -  
February/March 2010

- Sustainability for the future - environmental, financial, educational
- Respond to enrolment trends
- Facilities utilization
- Desire for communities to be part of the solution
- The status quo is not seen as an option... ***and this is part of the rationale for a Facilities Review.***

# A Brief History: School District #8 Financial Realities and Facilities Planning

- Amalgamated district (1996) and now recognized as the 2nd most geographically dispersed district in the province.
- Has had 3 reports from Ministry Efficiency and Effectiveness teams/Special Advisors between 1996 and 2006.
- District just paid off a deficit of over \$3.9 million dollars, which has seen a minimum of \$637 000 taken out of the operating budget annually up to this year.

# A Brief History: School District #8 Financial Realities and Facilities Planning

- There has been a focus on facilities planning and review since 2001 (approximately) in an attempt to deal with declining enrolment, as well as proactivity to avoid future problems.
- Examples of proactivity: The Board in a continuous state of analysis of various aspects of the district.

# SD#8:

## Examples of Proactivity

- **The Board has taken charge of its future through:**
  - Debt repayment (June 2009)
  - Reconfiguration to manage declining enrolment: total of 5 schools closed, with two recreated)
  - Focus on organization within schools, with secondary in progress.
  - Board facilities review: Creston and Slocan Valley

# SD#8:

## Examples of Proactivity

- The Board has taken charge of its future through:
  - Review of facilities leases and rental agreements: Cost analysis and expectations re rent to be paid.
  - Special Education Review (internal; external)
  - Transportation Review (external; internal)
  - International Program Review (internal; ongoing)

# Examples of Proactivity: School Closures/Consolidations

- **June 2003**

(a) South Creston School  
closed/consolidated into ARES -  
Enrolment - 228 FTE.

(b) Central Elementary School  
closed/consolidated into South Nelson  
Enrolment - 192 FTE

# Examples of Proactivity: School Closures/Consolidations

- **June 2008**

- a) A.I.Collinson School closed/consolidated into Hume and Trafalgar

- Enrolment - 55 FTE

- b) Gordon Sargent School closed/multi-age program moved to South Nelson

- Enrolment - 59 FTE

- c) Wynndel School closed/consolidated into ARES, Erickson and Canyon/Lister

- Enrolment - 18 FTE

# Examples of Proactivity: School Closures/Consolidations

- **June 2008**
  - Redfish Elementary, South Nelson, Rosemont, Blewett and Hume all reconfigured as K-5 schools; Trafalgar as 6-8 school and L.V. Rogers as 9-12 school
- Thinking “out of the box” and enhancing choice:
  - a) Central Education Center - re-opened with several programs of choice
  - b) Creston Education Center - re-opened with programs of choice and as an early learning hub, which includes Strong Start.

# Organization within SD#8

- **Creston zone**
  - 4 elementary schools and 1 secondary school
  - students travel from Yahk (40 km+) to PCSS
- **Crawford Bay** - 1 K-12 school
- **Kootenay Lake zone**
  - 1 elementary school (Jewett)
  - 1 K-12 school, with students from Jewett, Argenta and Howser (40 km+) to JVH

# Organization within SD#8

- **Nelson zone**

- 5 elementary schools feed into Trafalgar Middle School, with students travelling from as far away as Harrop, Procter. Balfour area (over 40 km) to school

- 1 secondary school, again with students travelling from Harrop, Procter, Balfour (over 40 km) to school

- **Salmo zone**

- 1 elementary and 1 grades 7-12 school

# Organization within SD#8

- **Slocan Valley**

- currently 2 K-6 elementary schools (Brent Kennedy and Winlaw)
- 1 K-10 school (WEG) with choices limited at grades 7-8 and 9-10 levels to programming with an outdoor education focus (OELP and VWP)
- Mt Sentinel Secondary School (7-12)

# Patterns across the district and province

- More elementary schools than secondary
- Students consolidated into middle and high schools from either grades 6 or 7 on
- Goal of secondary programs: A comprehensive set of offerings to enable students to pursue interests in:
  - academics
  - fine arts, sports, technology and, increasingly, social responsibility/service
- Alternate programs - usually 1 per zone

# Patterns across the district and province

- Academies/specialty programs at the school level need to be self-sustaining.
- Student transportation to school-initiated specialty programs has only been provided if there is room on the bus
- French Immersion is classified as a district specialty program
- Valhalla Wilderness Program (WEG), Quest for Community (Mt. Sentinel), and ATLAS (LVR) are school-initiated programs. No additional district funds are provided to support these programs.

# Key Messages:

## Role of the Board/supported by staff

- Board is elected to provide leadership for the K-12 system, with a major focus on managing resources/budget.
- The Board has an obligation to optimize the use of resources, which involves a “systems approach” and consideration of all 5000 students
- This Board has both a demonstrated and public commitment to choice.

# Rationale for Facilities Planning Review in Creston and the Slocan Valley:

## Considerations re the Status Quo

### a) **Educational**

- enrolment decline in the Valley, especially at W.E. G.
- widely spread multi-age classes (eg. K-5)/history and requests for additional staffing at W.E.Graham
- funding of very small alternate program (3 students in September) - removed to consolidate into 1 program
- school population in Winlaw has grown, including new enrolments, as well as Strong Start (25 registrants)

# **Rationale for Facilities Planning Review :**

## **Considerations re the Status Quo**

### **b) Environmental**

- There is concern regarding low utilization of space, especially in W.E. Graham.

### **c) Community Impact**

- It is recognized that the loss of a school would impact a community, both currently and potentially in the future.

### **d) Financial**

- There would be some savings from closure of either W.E. Graham or Winlaw.

# What did we hear? (February 1- present)

- Facts: Summary of amount of input
- Key messages
- Questions raised

# Input Received (as of March 23)

- 11 presentations (February 16)
- 8 letters
- 19 emails
- 34 responses (Valley School questionnaires from Winlaw PAC)
- 70 people (February 1) and 125 people (February 16)
- Responses from parents, politicians (current and former), business owners, others

# Key Themes from Input

- We care about our schools, view them as vital to our communities and, in many cases, have chosen a program based on what is offered through public education in the Slocan Valley.
- We support the Board and understand their need to manage the budget and educational issues.
- We are willing to work together to find solutions, but...
- We need more time to address educational models in the Slocan Valley.

# Key Themes from Input

- As communities, we need more clarity and have a right to detailed information related to a number of things, including:
  - a) long term enrolment projections
  - b) pre-school population/demographics
  - c) bussing plans and realities, including what various options would mean for students and their families
  - d) capacity of other schools in the Slocan Valley (Slocan systems approach)
  - e) catchment and choice policies and directions.

# Key Themes from Input

- There is support for the Valhalla Wilderness Program and the grades 7/8 program at W.E.Graham to prepare students for the program.
- There is also recognition that this program is limited in terms of who is served and that many parents want the comprehensive options provided in a school like Mt. Sentinel.
- The Board presented 3 options but there may be others, which could include:
  - a) organizing schools in the Slocan Valley to match what is happening in Nelson (e.g. K-5; 6-8, etc.)
  - b) leasing a portion of W.E. Graham to enhance revenue
  - c) enhancing choice through programs such as Homelinks (Creston, Kaslo, Nelson), Wildflower, expanded VWP, etc.
  - d) creation of Neighbourhood Learning Center, which could include afterschool care (e.g. use of the Strong Start room after hours)

# Key Themes from Input

- There were at least some supporters of all 3 options presented, with rationales given for why various options made sense.
- There was recognition that, if a school needed to close, W.E. Graham was the better physical facility with more space.
- There were many questions raised re why the Board would be closing Winlaw as a thriving school, whose population is growing.
- Many parents indicated that they would not send their children “north” if Winlaw were to close for various reasons, but mainly because they worked in Nelson or Castlegar, their doctors and dentists were there, and they would want their children closer to them rather than further away.
- There were some suggestions made regarding how to realize the potential savings from closures, recognizing that the community impact would be huge compared to the amount of money saved.

# Key Themes from Input

- The Board is asked to consider the community use of the school through the Slocan Valley Recreation Society and other groups.
- A number of people referred to potential to develop a business plan to consider ways to enhance use, revenue and choice. ***Note: Increasing student enrolment (e.g. drawing in home schoolers) does increase revenue and is aligned with the core work of SD#8.***
- There was mention of the grants which show the value placed on rural education and it was noted that closure of either school would result in loss of grants given specifically for rural schools.

# Key Themes from Input

- There were several points made regarding the variety of choices in the Slocan Valley including a propensity toward home schooling and access to alternate programs, with a concern re loss of students from the public system if Winlaw in particular were to close.
- There was fear expressed about “pitting” communities against each other if the consideration for closure continues.

# Some Key Questions

- What are the rules on choice and catchment?
- What do long term enrolment projections say for the Valley?
- What do you know about birth rates and pre-schoolers in the Valley?
- What would be the length of bus rides for various options?
- Why is there not a bus that goes to W.E. Graham from the south of the district?

# Some Key Questions

- **What are the rules on choice and catchment?**
  - School Act (Part 2 - Section 2(2) enables students to enrol in any school, in any district, provided that space and facilities available.
  - Boards are required to establish a catchment area for each school and parents have the right to have students attend schools in their catchment area.

# Some Key Questions

- **What has been happening with enrolment? – Brian**
  - 2001 – 6651 students in SD 8
  - 2009/10 – 5460 students in SD#8

- WEG – 134 in 2002/03, 63 in 2009/10

The school population has been steadily declining since 2002.

- Winlaw – 53 in 2002/03, 79 in 2009/10

The school population has shown an increase in past 2 years.

## Facts:

- Winlaw has 20 students enrolled that are part of W.E. Graham catchment area.
- There are 11 students who have registered from private schools.
- There are 3 who have previously been home schooled.

# Some Key Questions

- **What has been happening with enrolment? – Brian**
  - 2001 – 6651 students in SD 8
  - 2009/10 – 5460 students in SD#8
  - WEG – 134 in 2002/03, 63 in 2009/10
  - Winlaw – 53 in 2002/03, 79 in 2009/10

The school population has shown an increase in past 2 years.

## Facts:

- WEG has 4 students enrolled that are part of Winlaw catchment area.
- There are 9 students who have registered from private schools.
- There are 7 who have previously been home schooled.
- 7 students from Winlaw (Grade 6) have gone north to WEG for grade 7

# Some Key Questions

- **What has been happening with enrolment?**

VWP enrolment over the last 5 years

- 2009-2010 - 2 students from out of catchment; 2 from out of district
- 2008-2009 - 2 students from out of catchment
- 2007-2008 - 4 out of catchment; 1 out of district
- 2006-2007 - 4 out of catchment
- 2005-2006 - 3 out of catchment; 1 out of district.

Alternate Program:

- chronic attendance issues in 2008-2009, with 6 students and 1 teacher
- Program began with 4 students in September and closed to create Slocan Valley Alternate Program (November, 2009)
- Of the 4 students - 1 at DESK; 1 at Slocan Valley Alternate Program and transitioning to DESK; 2 unaccounted for.

Note: *1 alternate program per zone is standard practice with exception of Nelson (more students)*

# Some Key Questions

- **What do we know about birth rates and long-term enrolment projections?**
  - We have data from the Ministry for the district as a whole.
  - We have data from Selkirk re population projections for the College region.
  - RDCK has helped with some “mapping” showing where student live and this could potentially help in future planning.

*Both are showing a continued decline until approximately 2017. However, our projections for the district have shown a slight increase this year and projected for next year.*

- We do not have birth rate data and only anecdotal information re the number of pre-schoolers, although we do have data from Strong Start.
- It will take time to gather additional data.

# Some Key Questions

- **What would be the length of bus rides for students with various options and how do these compare to other parts of the district?**
  - If all students from Winlaw went north to W.E. Graham, the longest ride would be 1 hour (from Passmore)
  - If all students from W.E. Graham went south to Winlaw and Mt. Sentinel, the longest ride would be 36 minutes to Winlaw and 45 minutes to W.E. Graham.
  - These would not be the longest runs in the district.
- **Costs:**
  - If Winlaw closed, additional cost is estimated at \$32 000.
  - If W.E. Graham closed, additional cost estimated at \$6 000.

# Some Key Questions

- **Why is there not a bus from the south end of the valley to the north?**
  - As per previous slides, it is typical to have one comprehensive high school program per zone.
  - No where else in the district has busses which run in alternate directions to bus students to school-initiated specialty programs.
  - Examples:
    - a) bus runs from Jewett area to high school in Kaslo
    - b) bus runs from Yahk to Creston
    - c) busses run from a variety of areas to school in Nelson
    - d) busses run into Salmo and Crawford Bay
  - Students who wish to attend specialty programs, with the exception of French Immersion, provide their own transportation unless there is room on the bus.

***Acknowledgement of long letters from PAC recently received and will determine process to answer, pending outcome of Board meeting on March 30.***

# Some quotes from input

- *The school board is certainly in a difficult position facing government funding limitations. It is ESSENTIAL to plan for the long range growth in our valley rather than to succumb to the temptation of choosing short term cuts like school closures.*
- *As a business owner in the Slocan Valley, I support keeping both schools open for the 2010-2011 school year to allow for the community and the school district to create viable solutions to the public financial shortfall.*

# Some quotes from input

- *Council respectfully requests that the Board of School District #8 extend the time for final decision to allow for dialogue to continue to find solutions with respect to facilities review, potential school reconfigurations and collaboration with Winlaw School, and that the Board provide an opportunity for Council to work with School District #8 to find mutually acceptable solutions for both schools.*

» *Village of Slocan Council resolution*

# Some quotes from input

- *I will home school before I will send my children that far away from me when they are that young (ie. to W.E.G. from Winlaw)*

# Some quotes from input

- *My husband's employment is in Castlegar, our family physician and dentist are in Nelson, after school activities, guitar lessons, Tae Kwon Do, swimming lessons are all in the South portion of the valley and beyond.*
- *One of the main issues for those of us who have children in the pre-school age group , is that this age group is not at all being considered as having a great impact on enrolment within the next few years. There has been a much higher than usual birth rate in the past few years, and we feel that is not at all being addressed.*

# Some quotes from input

- *I am sure that you are aware that the Whole School is in the central location in Winlaw as well.*
- *Business owner from outside the Valley:*
  - *I just read the Nelson Daily News: I understand the complexities involved in school closures; however, I myself would be in favour of closing schools in order to maintain concentrated areas of excellence in education rather than diluting the entire system.*

# Input Theme:

## Working together over time

- *There is potential here to create a dynamic education system of choice for the Valley. We are looking at long term sustainable alternatives. This needs time to build and cultivate. I have faith that as our school trustees you lobby for more time to process and develop solutions to this very difficult task...*
- *I recommend that the Board not intervene with a quick fix of configuration or closures for September, but rather establish a process over the next year, to reach conclusion by April 1, 2011. Setting up a task force of district, school, local government and community members to define an inclusive process and collect information would be a positive approach.*

# Input Theme:

## Working together over time

- *The community is willing to collaborate to achieve common educational goals, to overcome diverse opinions and large geographical distances.*
- *I think we have some real possibilities here and with some time, strong parent commitment and the support of the Board, we could create something truly amazing.*

# Where to from here?

## Options for the Board

- Motion to consider closure of W.E.Graham or Winlaw School for September 2010 (carried: February 23, 2010)
- Motion to delay decision to allow communities to work together, with plans to be made for implementation in September, 2011 (tabled: February 23, 2010)
- Alternate motions could be put forward by Board members (e.g. establish Slocan Valley Facilities Planning Committee)
- The March 15 budget announcement may impact decision and this is “new” information since last we met.
- Board meeting on March 30, with Trustee Lindsay motion back on the table.

# Short term:

## Bringing clarity to the communities

- Need to clarify school configurations and catchment areas for the Slocan Valley, especially in light of Transportation Review
- Students have choice of K-6 at Winlaw or WE Graham
  - students attend Mt. Sentinel for comprehensive high school program
  - students stay at W.E. Graham if interested in the OELP and/or Valhalla Wilderness Program
  - transportation provided for those students not interested in the OELP or VWP

# Where to from here?

- Opportunity to:
  - a) share opinions, advice and perspectives with the Board/staff
  - b) raise questions

# Next steps

- Board meeting - March 30 (Salmo)
- Special Board meeting scheduled for April 13 and could also be April 27 if still plans to consider closure.