

SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 57 (PRINCE GEORGE)
DISTRICT SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE REPORT

January 19, 2010

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

School District No. 57 (Prince George) must decide which of two worlds it wants to inhabit. One world ignores enrolment decline, imposed financial challenges and overcapacity. Living in this world is an unacceptable existence of inaction that deprives students of the educational opportunity they deserve. The other world offers the promise of sustainability, as challenges are explained, confronted and addressed so that learning continues to be provided that enriches the life of each student.

In response to the significant financial challenges and the anticipated impact of the structural deficit¹ on school district operations presented to the Board of Education at a special public meeting on September 22, 2009, the following motion was passed by the Board at its regular public meeting of October 13, 2009:

1. *That the Superintendent of Schools establish and chair a District Sustainability Committee to prepare a report to be presented to the Board at a special public meeting on January 19, 2010, with a progress report at an in-camera meeting in December.*
2. *That the report include recommendations and a mid-to-long-term plan to direct district operations with respect to, but not limited to, the following:*
 - a. *Support structures and services*
 - b. *School configurations*
 - c. *School viability, including recommended closures*
 - d. *School and feeder school boundaries*

The District Sustainability Committee (DSC) established the following filters to guide its consultation and work:

1. Effect on student learning
2. Financial viability
3. Equity²
4. Sustainability³

¹ A structural deficit is the negative difference between anticipated revenues from all sources and anticipated expenditures that support current programs, staffing levels and number of schools.

² Equity refers to ability to access programs and services.

³ Sustainability refers to the ability to fund an appropriate level of programs and services over time.

The District Sustainability Committee spent the first half of November gathering input from the following education partners:

- Principals and vice-principals, in an open District Administrators' Meeting.
- The executive of CMAW Local 2106.
- The executive of CUPE Local 3742.
- The executive of the School District No. 57 District Parent Advisory Council.
- The executive of the Prince George and District Teachers' Association.
- Principals, teacher and CUPE representatives and parent advisory council chairs from the three Mackenzie schools.
- Principals, teacher and CUPE representatives and parent advisory council chairs from the two schools in Valemount.
- Principals, teacher and CUPE representatives and parent advisory council chairs from the three schools in McBride and Dunster.

During the second half of November and through December, the DSC analyzed the district's financial situation in the context of enrolment decline and financial challenges. Emerging issues were fully explored. These included the Harmonized Sales Tax, the *Greenhouse Gas Target Reduction Act*, Medical Services Plan premium increases, Teachers' Pension Plan premium increases, employee benefits, including salary increases and increments, and other inflationary increases. The financial challenge facing the Board of Education for the 2010-11 school year is based on a number of underlying assumptions and is estimated to be \$7 million. This would leave, approximately, a further \$4 million of structural deficit to be eliminated in the 2011-12 to 2014-15 school years.

Schools and school operations were closely scrutinized through an analysis of class size, condition of buildings, enrolments and geographical locations. Optimal school size was examined at both the elementary and secondary levels, with the conclusion being that educational programming options and choice were enhanced in larger schools. Larger schools are able to provide greater levels of support, such as learning assistance, library resource teachers, resource teachers and teacher assistants.

School closures, amalgamations and boundaries were considered and debated and a series of recommendations for closures were developed that would result in cost reductions of approximately \$3 million.

The first 14 recommendations are that the following schools be closed:

- Heather Park Middle School*
- Lakewood Junior Secondary*
- John McInnis Junior Secondary*
- Austin Road Elementary
- Nukko Lake Elementary
- Springwood Elementary
- Salmon Valley Elementary
- Shady Valley Elementary
- Central Fort George Traditional Elementary
- Giscome Elementary
- Hixon Elementary
- Peden Hill Elementary
- Dunster Fine Arts Elementary
- Mackenzie Elementary

** School would re-open with different configuration and/or programming.*

School closures alone are not enough to sustain our district. They are, however, a pivotal first step. In order to meet all of the district's challenges, additional steps must be taken, including:

- **School reconfiguration**
- **School boundary relocations**
- **Single-track French Immersion and**



- **Secondary school and feeder elementary school re-alignment**

which are addressed in Recommendations 15-40, and

- **Class size target adjustments**, addressed in Recommendation 41.

Further, **structural right-sizing**, the extent of which will be dependent upon the cost reductions achieved in the previous recommendations, will also be required.

As noted above, the following recommendations address school reconfiguration and boundaries:

Recommendation 15: That Heather Park Middle School be reopened as a K-7 elementary school.

Recommendation 16: That John McInnis Jr. Secondary School be reopened as a K-7 French Immersion elementary school.

Recommendation 17: That French Immersion students currently located in dual track settings at Austin Road Elementary, Spruceland Elementary, College Heights Elementary and Heather Park Middle School be relocated to the new single-track French Immersion Elementary School in the John McInnis Junior Secondary site.

Recommendation 18: That the grade 8 and 9 Montessori Education program be relocated to Prince George Secondary School.

Recommendation 19: That Beverly Elementary students now in grade 10 at John McInnis Junior Secondary continue with the graduation program at Prince George Secondary School.

Recommendation 20: That Beverly Elementary students now in grade 8 and 9 at John McInnis Junior Secondary be moved into College Heights Secondary.

Recommendation 21: That Beverly Elementary catchment be included as part of the College Heights Secondary family of elementary schools.

Recommendation 22: That Lakewood Junior Secondary students currently in grade 8, 9, and 10 be relocated to Prince George Secondary School and Duchess Park Secondary School.



Recommendation 23: That the Peden Hill Elementary catchment subdivisions of Starlane, Charella Gardens and Barnes Drive be amalgamated into the College Heights Elementary Catchment.

Recommendation 24: That the Central Fort George Traditional Elementary catchment be amalgamated into the Harwin Elementary catchment.

Recommendation 25: That the students currently attending Central Fort George Traditional Elementary School be given the choice to attend Harwin Elementary or return to the school in their geographical catchment.

Recommendation 26: That Giscome Elementary catchment be amalgamated into the Blackburn Elementary catchment.

Recommendation 27: That the Hixon Elementary catchment be amalgamated into the Buckhorn Elementary catchment.

Recommendation 28: That Blackburn Elementary, Pineview Elementary and Buckhorn Elementary be included in the Prince George Secondary family of schools.

Recommendation 29: That Foothills Elementary and Quinson Elementary catchments be included as part of the D.P. Todd Secondary family of elementary schools.

Recommendation 30: That the Dunster Fine Arts Elementary catchment be amalgamated with the McBride Centennial Elementary catchment.

Recommendation 31: That the Mackenzie Elementary catchment be amalgamated with the Morfee Elementary catchment.

Recommendation 32: That the Nukko Lake and Springwood Elementary catchments be amalgamated with the catchment of the elementary school to be housed in the current Heather Park Middle School building.

Recommendation 33: That the Pinewood Elementary catchment be redrawn to include Westwood Elementary students who currently reside west of Ospika Boulevard.

Recommendation 34: That the Westwood catchment be redrawn to include the Peden Hill catchment, except for students living in the Starlane, Charella Gardens and Barnes Drive subdivisions and the area west of Ospika Boulevard.



Recommendation 35: That Van Bien Elementary, Westwood Elementary and Pinewood Elementary be included in the Prince George Secondary family of schools.

Recommendation 36: That Spruceland Elementary, Harwin Elementary and Ron Brent Elementary be included in the Duchess Park family of schools.

Recommendation 37: That the Salmon Valley and Shady Valley Elementary catchments be amalgamated with the Glenview Elementary catchment.

Recommendation 38: That students currently in grade 7 and 8 at Heather Park Middle School be relocated to Kelly Road Secondary for grade 8 and 9.

Recommendation 39: That students currently in grade 6 at Heather Park Middle School remain on site for grade 7 in the elementary to be housed in the current Heather Park Middle School building or return to their geographical catchment school.

Recommendation 40: That the Valemount schools consider a configuration change which assigns kindergarten to grade 6 students to the elementary school and grade 7-12 students to the secondary school.

Recommendation 41: That cost reductions of two million dollars be achieved by using provincial class size limits in setting district class size targets and reducing school organization allocations to schools.

The measures taken with school closures and class size adjustments directly impact the scope of district infrastructure cost reductions. If structural savings from school closures and class size adjustments total \$5 million, then it follows that the savings needed from reductions in district infrastructure would be \$2 million. If the total of \$5 million is not met through school closures and class size adjustments, then the target for infrastructure reduction would need to be re-adjusted to a higher level.

It is difficult to separate the process of right-sizing district infrastructure without the identification of specific jobs and individuals. As a result, the work of right-sizing infrastructure will need to take place through a series of recommendations that would be addressed within the privacy of an in camera environment. Areas of targeted reduction will include all departments in the central administration office.



Cost reductions in these areas will come about because of service restructuring, efficiencies associated with sharing a centralized location, and personnel reductions. A recommendation that can be proposed at this time is:

Recommendation 42: That a District Service Centre be established at the Lakewood Junior Secondary site. Services relocated to this building would include, but not be limited to, the Centre for Learning Alternatives, District Resource Centre, and Special Education Area Support Teams.

The financial challenge faced by School District No. 57 is undeniable, unprecedented and enormous. The Board of Education, in forming the District Sustainability Committee, asked for a thorough dissection and examination of all aspects of district operation to find cost reduction strategies that could be utilized to solve financial shortfall and structural deficit. At the same time, the Board expects that the learning needs of our students need to not only be met, but, wherever possible, enhanced.



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January 19, 2010

INTRODUCTION

Designing a plan and process for the survival of our school district is a daunting task. The District Sustainability Committee approached this task with the full understanding of the financial and educational implications of inaction. The fiscal challenges facing the district, together with underutilization of space in our buildings leave no choice. Many neighbourhood schools and schools in small communities have been allowed to remain open despite the obvious economic disadvantages of doing so. It is clear this is no longer viable. Continuing to offer class size options at levels smaller than those mandated by the province is also no longer possible.

BACKGROUND

School District No. 57 (Prince George) last faced significant financial challenges in the 2002/03 and 2003/04 school years. In March 2002, the Ministry of Education changed its method of funding school districts from one that recognized a variety of unique factors, such as student enrolment, student programming, building space and district administration, to one where the prime driver for funding became simply the number of students enrolled. As a consequence of this funding formula change and the impact it had on School District No. 57, the district closed a total of 14 schools in this period. Seven schools were closed effective September 1, 2002 and a further seven schools were closed effective September 1, 2003. This closing of schools was the first step in rationalizing the school district's operating budget with its declining student enrolment.

During the years since that first round of school closures, and in spite of a continued sharply declining enrolment, the school district has been able to provide an enviable and enhanced level of service to students. Average class sizes in School District No. 57 are well below the requirements of provincial legislation. All employees have received the salary increases negotiated by the provincial government in 2006. In addition, school-based employees, as well as those who provide centralized support, have had their salaries adjusted to recognize the realities of a competitive provincial market. Resources have been made available to ensure school facilities and grounds are maintained to the expectation of the schools and the community. Financial support to special



education, inner city schools and curriculum and instruction has been provided to ensure that the most vulnerable learners are supported. As required by the Ministry of Education, a plan for student success has been established, implemented and monitored.

Structural Deficit

It became evident some time ago that, as a result of continued declining enrolment, the school district was developing a significant structural deficit. A structural deficit is the negative difference between anticipated revenues from all sources and anticipated expenditures that support current programs, staffing levels and number of schools.

In recent years, the school district has been balancing the annual operating budget by using surpluses generated in prior periods. These surpluses are generated when expenditures in a given year are less than anticipated. Surpluses so generated have been appropriated forward to future years to meet anticipated shortfalls. This strategy has been somewhat effective; however, the ability to generate surpluses in operating accounts to sustain future operations is no longer possible.

Recent Developments

April 2009

At a special public meeting of the Board of Education held on April 14, 2009 trustees received a presentation from the Superintendent of Schools. The presentation provided an overview of district enrolment, staffing, and budget information going back to 2005-2006 and projected forward to 2011-2012.

The Superintendent's presentation advised trustees that the anticipated accumulated budget shortfall over the next three years was \$5,561,780. Of three options presented for consideration, support was given to the option which called for the use of \$3,361,780 of prior year surplus and \$2,200,000 of specific measures to balance the 2009-2010 Annual Budget.

September 2009

Another special public meeting of the Board of Education was held on September 22, 2009 at which two items of business were considered. The first was the receipt by the Board of Education of the audited financial statements for the year ended June 30, 2009.



The second item of business was an update on the financial challenges faced by the school district presented by the Superintendent. This update noted the \$3,361,780 financial challenge for 2010-2011 (\$2,400,000) and 2011-2012 (\$961,780) identified in the April report. It also described several new financial challenges identified during the period from July 1 to September 22, 2009. These newly identified financial challenges were the result of announcements by the provincial government during this period including the introduction of the Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) on July 23, the implications of the *Greenhouse Gas Target Reduction Act*, and the September 2009 provincial budget. These items are discussed in greater detail in the Financial Challenges section.

October 2009

In response to the significant financial challenges and the anticipated impact of the structural deficit on school district operations presented to the Board of Education at a special public meeting on September 22, 2009, the following motion was passed by the Board at its regular public meeting of October 13, 2009:

3. *That the Superintendent of Schools establish and chair a District Sustainability Committee to prepare a report to be presented to the Board at a special public meeting on January 19, 2010, with a progress report at an in-camera meeting in December.*
4. *That the report include recommendations and a mid-to-long-term plan to direct district operations with respect to, but not limited to, the following:*
 - a. *Support structures and services*
 - b. *School configurations*
 - c. *School viability, including recommended closures*
 - d. *School and feeder school boundaries*

The District Sustainability Committee is comprised of:

- Brian Pepper, Superintendent of Schools (Chair)
- Bryan Mix, Secretary Treasurer
- Bruce Ballantyne, Assistant Superintendent
- Sharon Cairns, Assistant Superintendent
- Dan Haley, Director of Human Resources
- Allan Reed, Director of Finance
- Wendy De Marsh, Executive Assistant



The District Sustainability Committee established the following filters to guide its consultation and work:

5. Effect on student learning
6. Financial viability
7. Equity
8. Sustainability

November 2009

The District Sustainability Committee spent the first half of November gathering input from the following education partners:

- Principals and vice-principals, in an open District Administrators' Meeting.
- The executive of CMAW Local 2106.
- The executive of CUPE Local 3742.
- The executive of the School District No. 57 District Parent Advisory Council.
- The executive of the Prince George and District Teachers' Association.
- Principals, teacher and CUPE representatives and parent advisory council chairs from the three Mackenzie schools.
- Principals, teacher and CUPE representatives and parent advisory council chairs from the two schools in Valemount.
- Principals, teacher and CUPE representatives and parent advisory council chairs from the three schools in McBride

Each 60- to 90-minute partner input session included a brief overview that set the stage for the discussion. The overview included information regarding enrolment and financial challenges faced by the district. Those attending the meetings were reminded that the school district would remain learner-focused, achievement-oriented and assessment-driven. They were also reminded that the school district would continue to build staff capacity through professional development, to focus on Aboriginal learning and to support early learning and instructional leadership.



After the presentation of this overview, at each input session an open and honest discussion of the challenges took place. The participants provided many suggestions for meeting those challenges.

FINANCIAL CHALLENGES AND UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS

The Ministry of Education will announce funding for the 2010-2011 school year in mid March 2010. Because of funding uncertainties, the known structural deficit and expected financial challenges, as well as the legal and contractual timelines required to implement initiatives presented by the District Sustainability Committee, this report is based upon a number of underlying assumptions.

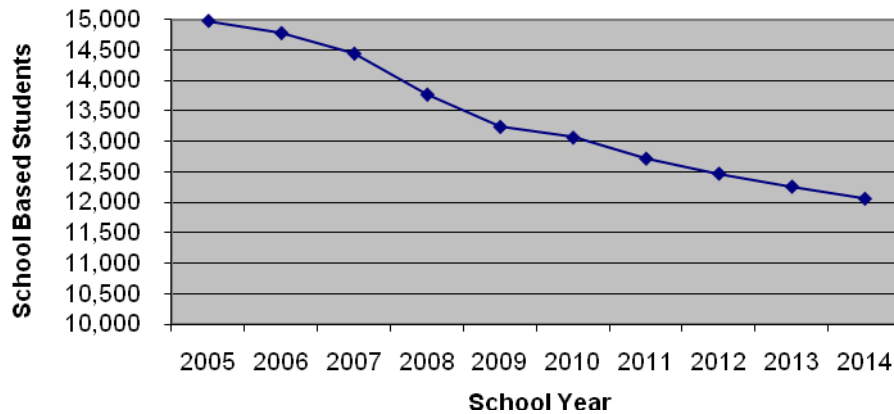
Enrolment Decline

The decline in student enrolment continues to prevent any constructive long-term planning by the school district or any of its schools. The urban area of Prince George north of the Nechako River, the entire District of Mackenzie and all rural areas of the school district have all experienced significant declines in student enrolment. Undoubtedly, a significant contributing factor to this enrolment decline is the downturn in the forest industry. Currently, there are over 5,000 empty student spaces in schools within the district. Five years from now, there will be over 6,000 empty spaces. (An analysis of enrolment projections and excess school capacities is presented in Table 1.)

The unfortunate reality that School District No. 57 faces is that the drop in the number of students in this district has been more pronounced than almost any other in the province. In the 2005-2006 school year, our district ranked 11th provincially in terms of student enrolment. We are now the 16th largest district in the province. There are 1,900 fewer full-time equivalent (FTE) students in this district than there were in September 2005. This means that in four years the district's enrolment decline equals the total enrolment of 12 districts in the province. School District No. 57 is not alone in its enrolment decline. In every region of the province outside of the Lower Mainland, the number of students in the public school sector, Kindergarten to Grade 12, is rapidly declining. Table 2 shows the decline by the regions as represented in the B.C. School Trustees' Association. The hardest-hit school districts are those districts that make up the Northern Interior Branch, which includes School District No. 57, and the Northwest Branch.



School District no. 57 Enrolment History



Enrolment Decline Subsidies

Even though the prime component of the Ministry's funding formula is student enrolment, there are supports within the formula that provide subsidies recognizing the hardship caused by declining enrolment.

Enrolment Decline Grant

For those school districts whose year-over-year enrolment decline is greater than one percent, an "enrolment decline grant" provides 50% funding for each FTE student over that one percent threshold. In the event that enrolment decline in a school district is greater than four percent, the grant for enrolment decline increases to 75% of the basic per-pupil amount.

The dilemma for a school district that receives this type of subsidy is that in a future period, when the rate of enrolment decline falls below one percent, the school district will not receive the enrolment decline grant and will need to make budget adjustments in the school year in which this happens. The impact may not have been predicted in budget forecasts and would have to be rectified in a very short period of time. *Even if the impact had been predicted, budget adjustments would have to be done in the ensuing fiscal period.*

Funding Protection Grant

Currently, under specific circumstances, the Ministry of Education also provides a "funding protection grant." This grant ensures that in spite of enrolment decline and other changes in funding, no district will receive



less funding than they received in the prior year. One of the committee's underlying assumptions is that this grant will be discontinued.

One of the challenges related to this grant occurs when a new program, such as full-day Kindergarten, is added by the Ministry of Education. If a district receives funding protection, it receives no additional funding for the new program. This means that program cuts need to be made in order to fund the program.

An indication of the impact of declining enrolment subsidies on School District No. 57 is that we currently receive the second highest funding protection grant and the third highest enrolment decline grant in the province. For the reasons stated above, on an ongoing basis, the school district cannot rely on the continuation of these grants to support district operations. Therefore, consideration must be given to including these funding issues when determining the magnitude of the structural deficit.

Emerging Issues

Full-Day Kindergarten

Currently, 105 kindergarten students are participating in a full-day program in the district. Commencing in September 2010, the school district must be prepared to provide a full-day kindergarten program for an additional 449 kindergarten students. The staffing cost of this program is estimated at \$ 1.2 million for 2010-2011. In the 2011-2012 school year, all of the anticipated 900 kindergarten students in the district will receive a full-day program.

Harmonized Sales Tax

On July 23, 2009, the provincial government announced that a Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) of 12% would be introduced effective July 1, 2010. The 12% is comprised of the current federal Goods and Services Tax (GST) of 5% and the provincial Social Services Tax (known as the PST) of 7%.

The school district receives a rebate of 68% of the GST that it pays on goods and services. On January 14, 2010 the BC Ministry of Finance announced a rebate of 87% of the 7% provincial portion of the HST. This is estimated to result in an additional \$120,000 expense to the school district, after taking into account the recently announced rebate.



Annual Facility Grant (AFG)

At the time of this report's release, a government-imposed freeze of this important special purpose grant is in place. The school district's portion of the grant has been approximately \$3.2 million annually. The purpose of the grant is to fund routine capital maintenance projects valued under \$1.5 million. Examples of the types of projects that qualify for this grant include roofing repairs and replacement, mechanical and electrical upgrades and parking lot and functional improvements.

An underlying assumption in the development of this report is that the AFG will continue, but will be reduced and be more prescriptive. This will result in less opportunity to upgrade aging buildings. Closure recommendations related to the district's older schools were influenced in part by this circumstance.

Greenhouse Gas Target Reduction Act

The *Greenhouse Gas Target Reduction Act* requires the provincial government and the broader public sector, including school districts, to be carbon neutral by 2010. Achieving carbon neutrality will require carbon offsets to be purchased in early 2011. The current price of carbon offsets is \$25 per tonne of greenhouse gas emissions. The prime sources of those emissions are fossil fuels, electrical energy and the consumption of paper.

The estimated cost for School District No. 57 to achieve carbon neutrality for 2010 is \$200,000. It is expected that this cost may rise in subsequent years, but that anticipated increase has not been included in the estimated financial challenges. Until such time as Annual Facility Grant funding is reinstated, the school district has no funding source available to improve its facilities in order to reduce its carbon footprint.

Medical Services Plan Premium Increases

In the September 2009 provincial budget the government announced that Medical Service Plan premiums were going to increase by six percent effective each of January 1, 2010, January 1, 2011, and January 1, 2012. This increase corresponds to the government's commitment to increase funding for health services by 18% over this three-year period. Medical Services Plan premiums for all employees are fully paid by the school district. This announcement results in an additional \$128,000 expense for the school district in 2010-2011, and an additional \$168,000 in subsequent years.



Teachers' Pension Plan Premium Increases

The Teachers' Pension Plan has announced that member and employer contribution rates will each increase by 1.04 % of salary starting July 1, 2010. For School District No. 57, this will be \$100,000 annually. The Teachers' Pension Board of Trustees approved this contribution increase after receiving an independent actuarial valuation showing the plan had an unfunded liability for basic pension benefits of \$291 million on December 31, 2008. An unfunded liability occurs when the money projected to be available for future pensions (assets) is less than the projected costs of paying for those pensions.

Employee Benefits

The cost of providing extended health, dental, long-term disability and group life insurance benefits to employees increases annually. The financial challenge presented assumes that premiums for these benefits will increase by 1.5% in each of the next five years.

Also, the 2009-2010 annual budget includes a one-time \$264,000 reduction in benefit expense due to a premium "holiday." A premium holiday occurs when premiums paid into a plan exceed the benefits paid in prior periods; the benefit plan coverage continues, but the premiums are paid from this surplus. The school district's benefits consultant will be providing advice on the feasibility of a similar premium holiday for 2010-2011. It is unlikely that such premium holidays will be available beyond 2010-2011 and, accordingly, benefit expenses in 2011-2012 and beyond will include the value of the premium holiday.

Salary Increases and Increments

The provincial collective agreement with teachers includes a 2% salary increase effective July 1, 2010. The estimated annual cost of this increase in School District No. 57 is \$1,200,000.

All employees receive experience increments in their salaries and wages until they reach the top step in their pay category. The annual net cost of these increments included in the financial challenges is \$350,000.

Other Inflationary Increases

The financial challenges include estimated inflationary increases in the cost of student transportation and the cost of utilities. These increases have been estimated at between 1.0% and 1.5%, and compound each



year so dollars required to balance the budget increase at an ever-increasing rate, as follows:

School Year	Student Transportation	Utilities
2010-2011	\$ 89,000	\$ 26,000
2011-2012	\$180,000	\$ 53,000
2012-2013	\$273,000	\$ 80,000
2013-2014	\$368,000	\$108,000
2014-2015	\$465,000	\$136,000

Total Financial Challenge

The actual financial challenge for the 2010-2011 will not be known with certainty until the Ministry of Education's 2010-2011 funding announcement is made. The *School Act*, Section 106.2 indicates that "on or before March 15 or each year, the minister must establish and announce the amount of Provincial funding to be paid to boards in the next fiscal year for the delivery and support of educational programs." As the provincial Spring Break this year is from March 8 to 12, the funding announcement is expected on Monday, March 15, 2010.

Based on the known structural deficit of this school district and previously announced contractual and legislated financial requirements the best estimate of the financial challenge for 2010 -2011 and the subsequent four school years to 2014-2015 is:

	Revenue Challenge	Expense Challenge	Appropriated Surplus Applied	Estimated Total Challenge
2010-2011	\$4,895,000	\$3,199,000	\$(1,066,000)	\$ 7,028,000
2011-2012	\$7,604,000	\$2,079,000	-	\$9,683,000
2012-2013	\$9,350,000	\$242,000	-	\$9,592,000
2013-2014	\$11,248,000	\$(433,000)	-	\$10,815,000
2014-2015	\$12,527,000	\$(1,182,000)	-	\$11,345,000



ENROLMENT AND FACILITY ISSUES

There is no doubt that enrolment decline is at the root of the financial challenge the district is now working through. Not stated to the same degree is the age, condition and the underutilization of many of the district's buildings. A building that is operating at less than capacity costs the same to heat and maintain as one that is near or at capacity. Also, through the obsolescence of mechanical systems and natural depreciation, the cost to keep older buildings operable is certainly more than that of newer, more modern, buildings.

The Ministry of Education's expectation is that a school building will operate for 40 to 50 years. Many of the buildings in the district are that age or older. Over the years, building upgrades and continued preventative maintenance programs have extended the life of many of these buildings beyond that expected. The fact is that since the prime driver for funding is student enrolment, a building that is old and underutilized is significantly more expensive per student and not as operationally efficient as one that is newer and fully utilized (see Table 3).

When considering the number of student spaces in a school building, the ministry has developed two standards of measurement that it uses in considering the replacement or renovation of a building through the ministry capital plan.

The principal standard is nominal capacity. Nominal capacity forms the base line and remains fixed. It is based upon 20 kindergarten students per classroom and 25 students per class, Grades 1 through 12. To recognize adjustments for class size, the ministry has introduced the concept of operating capacity, a modification of the nominal capacity that reduces kindergarten through Grade 3 capacity to 19 students and holds grades 4 through 7 to an average of 22 students. Middle and secondary operating capacities are similar to nominal capacity.

For the purposes of this report, we have introduced the concept of "working capacity." Working capacity acknowledges that an intermediate or secondary classroom can accommodate up to 30 students. Kindergarten and primary classroom occupancy maximums range from 22 to 24 students per classroom. Table 4 shows a comparison of the three measurements of capacity.

Table 4 also shows the year the original or main part of a school was built and the 2003 facility audit score percentage. A facility audit is an internal report completed by district staff, following guidelines prescribed by the ministry.

Table 1 shows that many of the district's older, rural schools are significantly underutilized. This underutilization of space and the age of some of the buildings have influenced the committee to recommend closure in some cases.



SCHOOL CLOSURES, RECONFIGURATIONS AND BOUNDARIES

Previous Reality

Schools were planned and built to accommodate students from the immediate neighbourhood (elementary) or groupings of neighbourhoods (secondary) Elementary school catchment areas were often identical to subdivision areas, and both elementary and secondary schools were filled by students from within the catchment. There was very little cross-boundary enrolment. Declining enrolment has created space in schools, and changes to Section 74 of the *School Act* permit students to enrol in the school of their choice. These two factors have resulted in extensive cross-catchment enrolment, which has exacerbated under-enrolment in some elementary schools and created capacity pressures in others.

Historically, all schools were staffed according to the student enrolment within the school. Student-generated funding allows a school to afford the salaries associated with staffing to support the services that most parents expect a school to provide. It was reasonable to have a staff that included classroom teachers and instructional and non-instructional supports, which included a learning assistance teacher, a teacher-librarian, a principal, a secretary and teacher assistants. The more students enrolled in a school, the more program and learning support options are possible.

Current Situation

As student enrolment decreases, it becomes more challenging to provide the full range of services required to run an effective educational program for students. In order to meet class size/composition legislation and to maximize student-teacher ratios, schools with low enrolment are organized into multi-grade classes. In small schools with few students, providing support beyond the classroom teacher is challenging.

It is also difficult for teachers in small schools to provide the full range of curricular and extra-curricular programming parents and students have come to expect. A school with low enrolment has fewer teachers available to share these activities.

A host of recent trends has also affected space utilization in elementary schools. Full-day kindergarten, school-specific daycare, Strong Start programs, meals programs and, in the near future, pre-kindergarten programming, all impact space availability in a school but do not provide the revenue that would be realized if the school classrooms were filled with enrolling K-7 students.



Increasing societal focus on energy conservation and carbon footprint tracking provides an additional challenge which must be considered in the context of the school district being a responsible citizen. From both financial and ecological perspectives, we can no longer afford to heat, light, and provide custodial and maintenance costs for schools not enrolled to capacity. In partially filled schools, we are wasting natural resources and our increasingly scarce funding.

Rationale for Larger Schools

From an economic perspective, there is no question that larger schools make sense. In this district, small elementary schools have a per-pupil operating cost that is more than double that of larger schools. A similar situation occurs at the secondary level. Table 3 shows the district's cost per pupil for all schools in the district.

A second significant factor is the reality of fixed costs incurred regardless of size. For example, smaller schools incur disproportionately high costs in administration and clerical services. Other fixed costs include items such as photocopy leases and telephone costs.

When smaller schools are amalgamated into larger schools, basic district infrastructure costs are reduced. Utility and maintenance costs are reduced. Ongoing custodial labour and supply costs decrease. Grounds costs, including snow removal and field maintenance, also go down. Itinerant staff, ranging from speech pathologists to maintenance personnel, have reduced travel, resulting in savings of time and money. Additionally, professional development for teachers is more readily affordable.

Most importantly, when smaller schools are amalgamated into larger ones, students have access to improved levels of educational service. This includes increased service levels for library, learning assistance, supervision, teaching assistance and administrative support. Also, there are more resources available for professional development for teachers and other staff.

School Closures

Developing options for closure and re-configuration of schools in the district is a complex task. The committee approached this task in the context of the financial and educational implications of inaction. The fiscal challenges facing the district, combined with declining enrolment and surplus space in our buildings, leave little choice.

The committee is aware of the impact that school closures and re-configuration would have on many children, families and communities. The choice before us is very clear: either close buildings, creating financially efficient schools, or lay off



large numbers of teachers and support staff, thereby significantly affecting the quality of education provided.

School Closure Expectations

The following criteria were considered when considering closure and re-configuration:

- School size should allow for a suitable range of educational options and supports.
- Cost savings should be anticipated in each case.
- Schools should be consolidated into larger buildings and these buildings should be filled as close to capacity as possible.
- There should be sufficient building capacity to meet anticipated space requirements of full-day kindergarten and the provincial plan for a pre-kindergarten or early learning program.
- Buildings in better condition should be retained. Not only do they offer a better physical environment, but they also reduce ongoing capital costs.
- Building capacity over time should lead to the elimination of portables.

District Reconfiguration

The committee believes that the students in School District No. 57 will be best served, both fiscally and educationally, in a district configured K-7 and 8-12. Students throughout the district would then face only one building transition: the move from elementary to secondary school.

The following recommendations address school viability through closures, reconfigurations and adjustments to catchment areas.

Kelly Road Zone

Kelly Road Secondary

In the period 2009 to 2014, enrolment is projected to drop from 885 to 697 students. The enrolment drop will result in fewer program options and learning supports for students. Returning grade 8s to the school would mitigate this situation.



Recommendation 38: That students currently in grade 7 and 8 at Heather Park Middle School be relocated to Kelly Road Secondary for grade 8 and 9.

Heather Park Middle School

In the period 2009 to 2014, enrolment is projected to drop from 626 to 457 students.

Closing Heather Park Middle School would increase the Kelly Road enrolment.

The Heather Park building would become an elementary school. The students currently in grade 7 and 8 at Heather Park Middle School would be relocated to Kelly Road Secondary for grade 8 and 9. The students currently in grade 6 at Heather Park Middle School would remain on site for their grade 7 year, at the elementary school, or return to their geographical catchment school.

Cost reductions, including the dual-track supplement, are estimated to be \$300,000.

Recommendation 1: That Heather Park Middle School close.

Recommendation 15: That Heather Park Middle School be reopened as a K-7 elementary school.

Recommendation 17: That French Immersion students currently located in a dual track setting at Heather Park Middle School would be relocated to a new single track French Immersion Elementary School at the John McInnis Junior Secondary site.

Recommendation 38: That students currently in grade 7 and 8 at Heather Park Middle School be relocated to Kelly Road Secondary for their grade 8 and 9 years.

Recommendation 39: That students currently in grade 6 at Heather Park Middle School remain on site for grade 7 in the elementary to be housed in the current Heather Park Middle School building or return to their geographical catchment.

Austin Road Elementary

The committee recommends that this school be closed. Students would relocate to an elementary school at the Heather Park site. The elementary school would be a single track K-7 school. It would also be the receiving school for students from Nukko Lake Elementary and Springwood Elementary. This large elementary school would provide improved learning supports for students.

The relocation is considered a school closure.

French Immersion students would be relocated to the single-track French Immersion school.

The cost reductions are estimated to be \$203,000.

Recommendation 4: That Austin Road Elementary close.

Recommendation 17: That French Immersion students currently located in a dual track setting at Austin Road Elementary School be relocated to a new single track French Immersion Elementary School in the John McInnis Junior Secondary site.

Hart Highlands Elementary

Hart Highlands would return to a K-7 configuration. Students currently in grade 5 would remain at the school until completion of grade 7.

Students currently in grade 6 at Heather Park Middle School may return to their geographical catchment school which results in grade 7 inclusion for the 2010-2011 school year.

Nukko Lake Elementary

In the period 2009 to 2014 enrolment is projected to drop from 81 to 63. Financial cost reductions would be achieved by closing Nukko Lake Elementary.

Cost reductions are estimated to be \$211,000.

Nukko Lake students would be relocated to the elementary school on the Heather Park Middle School site.

Recommendation 5: That Nukko Lake Elementary School close.



Recommendation 32: That the Nukko Lake catchment be amalgamated with the catchment of the elementary school in the current Heather Park Middle School building.

Springwood Elementary

In the period 2009 to 2014 enrolment is projected to drop from 137 to 112. Financial cost reductions would be achieved by closing Springwood Elementary.

Cost reductions are estimated to be \$209,000.

Springwood students would be relocated to the elementary school on the Heather Park Middle School site.

Recommendation 6: That Springwood Elementary School close.

Recommendation 32: That the Springwood catchment be amalgamated with the catchment of the elementary school in the current Heather Park Middle School building.

Glenview Elementary

Glenview Elementary would return to a K-7 configuration. Students currently in grade 5 would remain at the school until completion of grade 7.

Students currently in grade 6 at Heather Park Middle School may return to their geographical catchment which results in grade 7 inclusion for the 2010-2011 school year.

Salmon Valley Elementary

In the period 2009 to 2014, enrolment is projected to drop from 31 to 25. Financial cost reductions would be achieved by closing Salmon Valley Elementary.

Cost reductions are estimated to be \$183,000.

Salmon Valley students would be relocated to Glenview Elementary.

Recommendation 7: That Salmon Valley Elementary close.



Recommendation 37: That the Salmon Valley catchment be amalgamated with the Glenview Elementary catchment.

Shady Valley Elementary

In the period 2009 to 2014, enrolment is projected to drop from 22 to 7. Financial cost reductions would be achieved by closing Shady Valley Elementary.

Cost reductions are estimated to be \$170,000

Shady Valley students would be relocated to Glenview Elementary.

Recommendation 8: That Shady Valley Elementary be closed.

Recommendation 37: That the Shady Valley catchment be amalgamated with the Glenview Elementary catchment.

Summary of cost reductions achieved in the Kelly Road Zone:

School	Cost Reduction
Heather Park Middle	\$ 300,000.
Austin Road Elementary	203,000.
Nukko Lake Elementary	211,000.
Springwood Elementary	209,000.
Salmon Valley Elem.	183,000.
Shady Valley Elem.	170,000.
Total	\$1,276,000.

College Heights Zone

College Heights Secondary

For the period 2009 to 2014, enrolment is projected to drop from 779 to 627. The enrolment drop will result in fewer program options and learning supports for students.

Adding Beverly Elementary to the College Heights Secondary family of schools will increase enrolment in the secondary school. The school will also benefit from the enrolment moving from Starlane, Charella Gardens and Barnes Drive into College Heights Elementary for the elementary years before moving to the secondary program at College Heights Secondary.



Recommendations that impact College Heights Secondary are:

Recommendation 21: That Beverly Elementary catchment be included as part of the College Heights Secondary family of elementary schools.

Recommendation 20: That Beverly Elementary students now in grade 8 and 9 at John McInnis Junior Secondary be moved into College Heights Secondary.

Recommendation 23: That the Peden Hill Elementary catchment subdivisions of Starlane, Charella Gardens and Barnes Drive be amalgamated into the College Heights Elementary catchment.

College Heights Elementary

Enrolment for the period 2009 to 2014 is expected to remain at 460 students. College Heights Elementary has reached its enrolment capacity. Given the current configuration, this dual-track school cannot accommodate additional students in either the English track or the French Immersion track. This has implications for French Immersion, full-day Kindergarten and the proposed pre-Kindergarten program.

Punitive enrolment restrictions will be the result of this situation for the French Immersion program. A growing French Immersion program would best be served through relocation to the single-track French Immersion school.

A single-track English program College Heights Elementary would have room for additional students.

The cost reductions, representing the dual-track supplement, are estimated to be \$ 80,000.

Recommendation 17: That French Immersion students currently located in dual track settings at College Heights Elementary be relocated to the new single track French Immersion elementary school at the John McInnis Junior Secondary site.

Recommendation 23: That the Peden Hill Elementary catchment subdivisions of Starlane, Charella Gardens and Barnes Drive be amalgamated into the College Heights Elementary catchment.



Summary of cost reductions achieved in the College Heights Zone:

School	Cost Reduction
College Heights Elem	\$80,000.

Duchess Park/PGSS Zone

Duchess Park Secondary

In the period 2009- 2014, enrolment is projected to drop from 856 to 722.

Duchess Park would remain a triple-track School District No. 93 (Conseil scolaire francophone), English and French Immersion school.

The enrolment drop will result in fewer program options and learning supports for students. In order to mitigate this situation, Harwin Elementary, Spruceland Elementary, Ron Brent Elementary and Edgewood Elementary would make up the Duchess Park Elementary English Track family of schools. The single-track French Immersion Elementary located at the John McInnis Junior Secondary site would become the sole French Immersion feeder school for Duchess Park.

Recommendations that impact Duchess Park Secondary include:

Recommendation 22: That Lakewood Junior Secondary students currently in grade 8, 9 and 10 be relocated to Duchess Park Secondary and Prince George Secondary.

Recommendation 36: That Spruceland Elementary, Harwin Elementary and Ron Brent Elementary be included in the Duchess Park family of schools.

Prince George Secondary

In the period 2009 to 2014 enrolment at PGSS is projected to drop from 1,287 to 1,219. Prince George Secondary has the capacity to enrol more students. Students from Lakewood and John McInnis would be able to attend PGSS (some Lakewood students would attend Duchess Park and some John McInnis students would attend College Heights Secondary)



Recommendations that impact Prince George Secondary School include:

Recommendation 18: That the grade 8 and 9 Montessori program be relocated to Prince George Secondary School.

Recommendation 19: That Beverly Elementary students now in grade 10 at John McInnis Junior Secondary continue with the graduation program at Prince George Secondary School.

Recommendation 22: That Lakewood Junior Secondary students currently in grade 8, 9 and 10 be relocated to Prince George Secondary and Duchess Park Secondary.

Recommendation 28: That Blackburn Elementary, Pineview Elementary and Buckhorn Elementary be included in the Prince George Secondary family of schools.

Recommendation 35: That Van Bien Elementary, Westwood Elementary and Pinewood Elementary be included in the Prince George Secondary family of schools.

Central Fort George Traditional Elementary

In the period 2009 to 2014, enrolment is projected to drop from 170 to 158. The committee recommends that this school be closed.

Cost reductions are estimated to be \$201,000.

Central Fort George Traditional Elementary students would be relocated to Harwin Elementary.

Recommendation 9: That Central Fort George Traditional Elementary close.

Recommendation 24: That the Central Fort George Traditional Elementary catchment be amalgamated into the Harwin Elementary catchment.

Recommendation 25: That the students currently attending Central Fort George Traditional Elementary School be given the choice to attend Harwin Elementary or return to the school in their geographical catchment.



Harwin Elementary

Students leaving Harwin Elementary will move into the secondary program at Duchess Park Secondary.

Recommendation 36: That Harwin Elementary be included in the Duchess Park family of schools.

Ron Brent Elementary

Students leaving Ron Brent Elementary will move into the secondary program at Duchess Park Secondary.

Recommendation 36: That Ron Brent Elementary be included in the Duchess Park family of schools.

Summary of cost reductions achieved in the Duchess Park / PGSS Zone:

School	Cost Reduction
Central Fort George	\$201,000.

Lakewood/DP Todd Zone

Lakewood Junior Secondary

In the period 2009 to 2014, Lakewood Junior Secondary enrolment will continue to fall from 266 to 201. The enrolment drop will result in fewer program options and learning supports for students. The committee believes that Lakewood Junior Secondary should close, as student learning will be more appropriately served by inclusion in a larger school setting.

Cost reductions are estimated to be \$290,000.

Recommendation 2: That Lakewood Junior Secondary close.

Recommendation 8: That the grade 8 and 9 Montessori program be relocated to Prince George Secondary School.

Recommendation 22: That Lakewood Junior Secondary students currently in grade 8, 9 and 10 be relocated to Prince George Secondary and Duchess Park Secondary.



D.P. Todd Secondary School

While students currently attending D.P. Todd Secondary School are not affected by this report there could be some implications from the closure of Lakewood Junior Secondary Students who currently leave elementary school and feed into Lakewood Junior Secondary will need to be relocated to another secondary school.

Recommendations that impact D.P. Todd include:

Recommendation 2: That Lakewood Junior Secondary close.

Recommendation 29: That Foothills Elementary and Quinson Elementary catchments be included as part of the D.P. Todd Secondary family of elementary schools.

Hixon Elementary

In the period 2009 to 2014 enrolment is projected to drop from 25 to 17 students. Financial cost reductions would be achieved by closing Hixon Elementary.

Cost reductions are estimated to be \$190,000.

Hixon students would be relocated to Buckhorn Elementary.

Recommendation 11: That Hixon Elementary close

Recommendation 27: That the Hixon Elementary catchment be amalgamated into the Buckhorn Elementary catchment.

Giscome Elementary

In the period 2009 to 2014 enrolment is expected to remain at its present level.

Financial cost reductions would be achieved by closing Giscome Elementary.

Cost reductions are estimated to be \$119,000.

Giscome students would be relocated to Blackburn Elementary

Recommendation 10: That Giscome Elementary close



Recommendation 26: That Giscome Elementary catchment be amalgamated into the Blackburn Elementary catchment.

Buckhorn Elementary

Buckhorn Elementary would be the receiving school for students from Hixon Elementary.

Recommendation 27: That the Hixon Elementary catchment be amalgamated into the Buckhorn Elementary catchment.

Blackburn Elementary

Blackburn Elementary would be the receiving school for students from Giscome Elementary.

With the closure of Lakewood Junior Secondary, students leaving Blackburn Elementary would move into the secondary program at Prince George Secondary.

Recommendation 26: That Giscome Elementary catchment be amalgamated into the Blackburn Elementary catchment.

Recommendation 28: That Blackburn Elementary be included in the Prince George Secondary family of schools.

Foothills Elementary

With the closure of Lakewood Junior Secondary, students leaving Foothills Elementary would move into the secondary program at D.P. Todd Secondary.

Recommendation 29: That Foothills Elementary catchment be included as part of the D.P. Todd Secondary family of schools.

Quinson Elementary

With the closure of Lakewood Junior Secondary School, students leaving Quinson Elementary would move into the secondary program at D.P. Todd Secondary.

Recommendation 29: That Quinson Elementary catchment be included as part of the D.P. Todd Secondary family of schools.



Spruceland Elementary

Enrolment for the period 2009 to 2014 is projected to climb to 505 students. Spruceland Elementary has reached its enrolment capacity. Given the current configuration, this dual-track school cannot accommodate additional students in either the English track or the French Immersion track. This has implications for French Immersion, full-day Kindergarten and the proposed pre-Kindergarten program.

Punitive enrolment restrictions will be the result of this situation for both English and French Immersion programs. A growing French Immersion program would best be served through relocation to the single-track French Immersion school.

A single-track English program at Spruceland Elementary would have room for additional students.

With the closure of Lakewood Junior Secondary, students leaving Spruceland Elementary would move into the secondary program at Duchess Park.

The cost reductions, representing the dual-track supplement, are estimated to be \$ 80,000.

Recommendation 17: That French Immersion students currently located in the dual-track setting at Spruceland Elementary be relocated to the new single-track French Immersion elementary school in the John McInnis Junior Secondary site.

Recommendation 36: That Spruceland Elementary catchment be included as part of the Duchess Park family of schools.

Pineview Elementary

With the closure of Lakewood Junior Secondary students leaving Pineview Elementary would move into the secondary program at Prince George Secondary.

Recommendation 28: That Pineview Elementary be included in the Prince George Secondary family of schools.



Summary of cost reductions achieved in the Lakewood/D.P. Todd Zone:

School	Cost Reduction
Lakewood Junior	\$ 290,000.
Hixon Elementary	190,000.
Giscome Elementary	119,000.
Spruceland Elementary	80,000.
Total	\$ 679,000.

John McInnis Zone

John McInnis Junior Secondary

In the period 2009 to 2014 John McInnis Junior Secondary's enrolment is anticipated to fall from 359 to 253. The enrolment drop will result in fewer program options and learning supports for students. The District Sustainability Committee believes John McInnis Junior Secondary should close, as student learning will be more appropriately served by inclusion in a larger school setting.

Cost reduction are estimated to be \$290,000.

Recommendation 3: That John McInnis Junior Secondary close

Recommendation 16: That John McInnis Junior Secondary School be reopened as a K-7 French Immersion elementary school.

This will require a school organization allocation of \$110,000.

Recommendation 17: That French Immersion students currently located in dual track settings at Austin Road Elementary, Spruceland Elementary, College Heights Elementary and Heather Park Middle School be relocated to the new single-track French Immersion Elementary School at the John McInnis Junior Secondary site.

Recommendation 19: That Beverly Elementary students now in grade 10 at John McInnis Junior Secondary continue with the graduation program at Prince George Secondary.

Recommendation 20: That Beverly Elementary students now in grade 8 and grade 9 at John McInnis Junior Secondary be moved into College Heights Secondary.



Peden Hill Elementary

During the period 2009 to 2014 Peden Hill Elementary School enrolment will fall from 197 to 180 students. The committee recommends that this school be closed.

Cost reductions are estimated to be \$208,000.

Peden Hill students would be relocated to College Heights Elementary and Westwood Elementary.

Recommendation 12: That Peden Hill Elementary close.

Recommendation 23: That the Peden Hill Elementary catchment subdivisions of Starlane, Charella Gardens and Barnes Drive be amalgamated into the College Heights Elementary catchment.

Recommendation 34: That the Westwood catchment be redrawn to include the Peden Hill Elementary catchment, except for students living in the Starlane, Charella Gardens and Barnes Drive subdivision.

Westwood Elementary

Westwood Elementary would be the receiving school for the majority of students from Peden Hill Elementary. This will cause enrolment pressure at Westwood Elementary and as a result it is proposed that students living west of Ospika Boulevard attend Pinewood Elementary.

Students leaving Westwood Elementary School and entering the secondary program would now do so at Prince George Secondary.

Recommendation 33: That the Pinewood Elementary catchment be redrawn to include Westwood Elementary students who currently reside west of Ospika Boulevard.

Recommendation 34: That the Westwood Elementary catchment be redrawn to include the Peden Hill Elementary catchment, except for students living in the Starlane, Charella Gardens and Barnes Drive subdivision and the area west of Ospika Boulevard.

Recommendation 35: That Westwood Elementary be included in the Prince George Secondary family of schools.



Pinewood Elementary

From 2009 to 2014, enrolment is projected to drop from 174 to 133 students.

There are no implications for students currently attending except for the proposed addition of enrolment from the area west of Ospika Boulevard who currently attend Westwood Elementary. This enrolment influx will counter enrolment projections and ensure appropriate learning supports.

With the closure of John McInnis Junior Secondary, students who are leaving Pinewood Elementary to begin the secondary program would do so at Prince George Secondary School.

Recommendation 33: That the Pinewood Elementary catchment be redrawn to include Westwood Elementary students who currently reside west of Ospika Boulevard.

Recommendation 35: That Pinewood Elementary be included in the Prince George Secondary family of schools.

Beverly Elementary

With the closure of John McInnis Junior Secondary, students who are leaving Beverly Elementary and starting the secondary program will do so at College Heights Secondary.

Recommendation 21: That Beverly Elementary catchment be included as part of the College Heights Secondary family of elementary schools.

Van Bien Elementary

With the closure of John McInnis Junior Secondary, students who are leaving Van Bien Elementary and starting the secondary program will do so at Prince George Secondary School.

Recommendation 35: That Van Bien Elementary be included in the Prince George Secondary family of schools.



Summary of cost reductions achieved in the John McInnis Zone:

School	Cost Reduction
John McInnis Junior	\$ 290,000.
Peden Hill Elementary	208,000.
Total	\$ 498,000.

Robson Valley

Dunster Fine Arts Elementary

During the period 2009 to 2014 the enrolment of Dunster Fine Arts Elementary will decline from 27 to 11 students. The committee recommends that this school be closed.

Cost reductions are estimated to be \$172,000.

Students from Dunster Fine Arts Elementary School will be relocated at McBride Centennial Elementary.

Recommendation 13: That Dunster Fine Arts Elementary close.

Recommendation 30: That the Dunster Fine Arts Elementary catchment be amalgamated with the McBride Centennial Elementary catchment.

Valemount Elementary and Secondary

Enrolment at Valemount Secondary is expected to remain approximately 85 students during the period 2009 to 2014. In the same period, Valemount Elementary enrolment is expected to decline from 126 to 88 students.

There has been some discussion in Valemount about reconfiguring the two schools to a K-6 and 7-12 configuration to enhance secondary school program offerings and learning supports. The District Sustainability Committee is supportive of this discussion.

Recommendation 40: That the Valemount schools consider a configuration change which assigns kindergarten to grade 6 students to the elementary school and grade 7-12 students to the secondary school.



Summary of cost reductions in the Robson Valley Zone:

School	Cost Reduction
Dunster Fine Arts	\$ 172,000.
Total	\$ 172,000.

Mackenzie Zone

Mackenzie Elementary

During the period 2009 to 2014 enrolment is projected to drop from 163 to 139. The committee recommends that this school be closed. The amalgamation of Mackenzie Elementary and Morfee Elementary would result in a larger elementary school with improved learning supports for students.

Cost reductions are estimated to be \$222,000.

Mackenzie Elementary students would be relocated to the Morfee Elementary

Recommendation 14: That Mackenzie Elementary School close.

Recommendation 31: That the Mackenzie Elementary catchment be amalgamated with the Morfee Elementary catchment.

Summary of cost reductions in the Mackenzie Zone

School	Cost Reduction
Mackenzie	\$ 222,000.
Total	\$ 222,000.

Total cost reductions achieved by school closures:

School	Cost Reduction
Heather Park Middle	\$ 300,000.
Austin Road Elementary	203,000.
Nukko Lake Elementary	211,000.
Springwood Elementary	209,000.
Salmon Valley Elementary	183,000.
Shady Valley Elementary	170,000.
College Heights Elementary	80,000.
Central Fort George	201,000.
Lakewood Junior Sec.	290,000.
Hixon Elementary	190,000.
Giscome Elementary	119,000.
Spruceland Elementary	80,000.
John McInnis Junior Sec	290,000.
Peden Hill Elementary	208,000.
Dunster Fine Arts	172,000.
Mackenzie Elementary	222,000.
Total	\$ 3,128,000.

Single-Track French Immersion

French Immersion programming is located in five schools in the district. Elementary K-7 Immersion programs are housed in dual-track environments at College Heights Elementary and Spruceland Elementary. An Immersion K-5 program is offered at Austin Road Elementary and a Grade 6/7 program is situated at Heather Park Middle School. The grade 8-12 French Immersion program is located at Duchess Park Secondary, a triple-track school that includes School District No. 93 (Conseil scolaire francophone) and an English program.

French Immersion is a choice school program and transportation to and from school is a parent responsibility. A postal code analysis of where each student enrolled in French Immersion resides reveals considerable cross-boundary movement.

French Immersion is a growing program at the elementary level. Unfortunately, at two schools, College Heights and Spruceland, the



pressures of full-day kindergarten, StrongStart programs and the ministry's proposed pre-kindergarten program initiative, combined with English-track enrolment, mean that punitive enrolment restrictions must be established for Kindergarten intake.

The proposed closure of John McInnis Junior Secondary means that a building is available that is large enough to house all elementary French Immersion enrolment in the district, allow for program expansion and full-day kindergarten, and still have room available for a pre-kindergarten program should it move from a provincial proposal to reality.

Recommendation 16: That a single-track French Immersion school be established and located at the site of John McInnis Junior Secondary.

This will require a school organization allocation of \$110,000.

Recommendation 17: That French Immersion students currently located in dual-track settings at Austin Road Elementary, Spruceland Elementary, College Heights Elementary and Heather Park Middle School be relocated to a new single-track French Immersion Elementary at the John McInnis Junior Secondary site. This would be a program relocation and not a school closure

CLASS SIZE

The following chart illustrates the current school district reality with respect to class size.

Grades	Provincial Class Size Maximum	District Build-to Class Size, School Organization	Ability to Form Classes Above Provincial Class Size Maximums	Average Class Size SD57 October 2009
Kindergarten	22	19	No	17.4
Gr. 1-3	24	21	No	20.0
Gr. 4-7	30	27	With Consent	25.1
Gr. 8-12	30	30	After Consultation	23.7



Following school closures in 2002 and 2003, the school district realized some operational surplus. A partner group input process led to the establishment of district class-size limits that were lower than the provincial class size maximums. In addition, intermediate (grade 4-7) class size was targeted and given an annual injection of one million dollars to ensure grade 4-7 class size could be maintained yearly with an average of 27 students per class or lower. The district cannot afford to do this any more and must revert to provincial class sizes.

Class size manifests itself as district class size targets and school allocations. A \$2 million reduction in district costs would be achieved by using provincial class size limits in setting district class size targets and reducing school organization allocations to schools. It is important to note that measures taken with class size adjustments directly impact the scope of district infrastructure costs.

Recommendation 41: That cost reductions of \$2 million be achieved by using provincial class size limits in setting district class size targets and reducing school organization allocations to schools.

DISTRICT INFRASTRUCTURE

District infrastructure is the physical and organizational structures needed for the operation of School District No. 57. It includes the people and the services they provide in support of buildings and classroom instruction, as well as human resources and financial functions.

District infrastructure has not been reduced at the same rate as enrolment decline. In fact, during the last decade district infrastructure expanded as district enrolment declined. In order to sustain school district operations going forward, it will be necessary to right-size district infrastructure

It is difficult to separate the process of right-sizing district infrastructure without the identification of specific jobs and individuals. As a result the work of right-sizing infrastructure will need to take place within the privacy of an in camera environment. Areas of targeted reduction will include all departments in the central administration office.

Cost reductions in these areas will come about because of service restructuring, efficiencies associated with sharing a centralized location, and personnel reductions.

Recommendation 42: That a District Service Centre be established at the Lakewood Junior Secondary site. Services relocated to this building would include, but not be limited to, the Centre for Learning Alternatives, District Resource Centre, and Special Education Area Support Teams.



PARTNER GROUP SUGGESTIONS

During consultative sessions with partner groups, many suggestions were shared which in and of themselves would yield minimal cost reduction. When calculated together substantial cost reductions may be realized. The work of calculating cost reductions and considering the implications of operationalizing each recommendation will be part of the ongoing work of the District Sustainability Committee.

The chart below shows a partial list of suggestions put forward. Suggestions were categorized and an initial analysis performed.

In most cases, further analysis will be required before decisions can be made.

Category	Suggestion	Analysis	Action
Technology	Single Platform (do not continue to purchase or support both PC and Mac computers).	Difficult to quantify – substantial cost saving.	More investigation required.
Technology	Lengthen “greening” program (the cycle of upgrading computers).	Industry standard = 3years. SD57 = 5 years. Push out would mean substantial cost reduction.	More investigation required.
Technology	Reduce or eliminate the use of Blackberrys.	Cost reduction likely to total 50%	Implement over time.
Technology	Improve video conference options.	District has access to province's Elluminate licence.	Further investigation required.
Maintenance	Could we achieve cost saving by arranging discounts with suppliers?		Further investigation required. Task assigned to Purchasing.
Curriculum	Could we achieve savings by moving some professional development and inservice to Saturday?	Consultation required with union and association partners. Perception is that many staff do not like being away from their jobs during Monday – Friday.	Further investigation re cost reduction opportunities.
Support Service	Cost savings possible with centralization of special education support service staff.	Administrative savings likely.	Centralize service starting 2010?
District Operation	Move to four-day work week.	Failed student learning and equity filter.	No further action.



District Operation	Eliminate movement of chairs between schools.	A practice once eliminated but now restored.	Further investigation required.
Human Resources	Sick-time payout at retirement would result in fewer sick days taken during career.	Illegal to pay out sick time in the public sector.	No further action.
Human Resources	Initiate wellness program to reduce sick time.		Investigate cost of developing and sustaining program. Task assigned to HR staff.
Travel Costs	Cost associated with service fees re contracted travel agent are excessive and not necessary.	Is the \$25. per flight booking charge cheaper than rebooking charges or implications around cancellation of flights?	Further investigation required.
School Operation	Put two schools into one building, have students on "shifts".	Usual strategy when school space is in short supply. Not appropriate.	No further action.
School Operation	Align timetables to allow course sharing via videoconferencing technology.	May allow for more course choice in rural areas.	Referred to Assistant Superintendents for further investigation.
School Finance	Claw back school surplus	Negates long term savings plans schools have established for computer renewal, playground purchase and installation, etc.	No further action.
Central Administration Office	Admin office only location where coffee is provided free of charge.	School staff pay into coffee fund. Cost reductions to be gained.	Reconfigure CAO coffee machines immediately.
Central Administration Office	Elimination of meals for workshops and meetings in the CAO and in schools would save substantial dollars.	Cost reductions substantial.	Further discussion and investigation required with goal of drastic reduction of meals starting February 2010.
Bussing	Impose charge for bus service across the district.	Fails the equity test.	No further action.
School Operation	Close off unused areas/classrooms and charge schools for use.	Previously instituted. Custodial staffing levels reduced.	Further investigation required.
School Operation	Eliminate district grants to schools for POSRs.	District cost reduction a certainty. Schools may purchase POSR service.	Further investigation required.



CONCLUSION

The financial challenge faced by School District No 57 (Prince George) is enormous, unprecedented and undeniable. The Board of Education, in forming the District Sustainability Committee, asked for an examination of district operations including support structures and services, school configuration, school viability and school boundaries to achieve cost reductions that could be utilized to solve financial shortfall. Investigation, however, revealed the need for a solution that was even more comprehensive and a realization that solutions would touch every classroom, school and department in our organization.

Implementation of the recommendations in the District Sustainability Committee report will result in change that addresses structural deficit and improves access to educational service.

School closures and the resulting school amalgamations and reconfigurations will ensure that schools operate closer to capacity and are therefore more efficient in providing a variety of supports to each student. The reality of ongoing enrolment decline, however, is that surplus space could be a concern again in the near future. This ongoing dynamic works against the very stability the committee is trying to establish.

School closure, though disruptive and unsettling for communities and for staff, is necessary and, in fact, a catalyst that enables service levels to be adjusted downward and central operations to be appropriately sized to reflect enrolment decline. The actual savings from school closures are difficult to predict but are likely to be larger than the actual savings estimated. This occurs because amalgamation of schools can be expected to result in staffing efficiencies that are not easily measured.

For staffing reasons, the budget for 2010-2011 must be determined by the end of April. The development timeline is short. The District Sustainability Committee report is the first step in addressing financial challenge and provides direction so that the district is able to best serve educational interests of our students.



TIMELINE

January 19	DSC report presented to the Board of Education
January 26	Public Board meeting – motions to begin consideration of recommended school closures
January 27-March 25	Public consultation period re: proposed school closures
February 8-March 18	Public consultation meetings
March 30	Public Board meeting – decisions made regarding school closures
March 31-June 30	Implementation of remaining recommendations and steps to balance the district's 2010-11 budget
April - May	Board determination of 2010-11 budget, in order to meet staffing processes and obligations in collective agreements
June 30	Deadline for filing the district's 2010-11 budget.

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