



Vancouver Board of Education

School District No. 39

BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES

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Tuesday, April 13, 2010

Hon. Dr. Margaret MacDiarmid, MLA
Minister of Education
PO BOX 9045 STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Dear Ms. MacDiarmid:

It is our understanding you have made statements recently pertaining to the Vancouver Board of Education's surplus student spaces. We wish to bring to your attention our understanding of the current facts of the situation.

Prior to Easter, you stated there are 10,000 empty seats in Vancouver. Last week, you revised the number down to 7,000 empty seats. Neither figure is correct.

We've done our own review of the numbers, and we currently estimate our district-wide net surplus spaces to be 4,682. If we include portable classroom capacity in the total, we have a net surplus of 5,796 spaces. These figures are based on district enrolment as of Sept. 30, 2009. We have also assumed that all Kindergarten classrooms will become full-day Kindergarten classes with the implementation of full-day Kindergarten.

There was a time when the Vancouver school district estimated that it had nearly 10,000 empty seats. The estimate was contained within a background report prepared as part of the Educational Facilities Review (EFR), and compared the capacity in Vancouver schools to the district's enrolment as of Sept. 30, 2006.

It has been more than three years since the EFR background report was written, and much has changed. The 10,000-empty-seat figure included capacity within portables, but since then, the VSB has removed 56 enrolling portables.

The school district is also decreasing space in schools with seismic projects such as Moberly, Strathcona and Queen Mary. At Strathcona, the school has space for more than 900 students, but we intend to reduce the capacity to 510 as part of the Neighbourhood Centres of Learning and Development pilot under development for the school.

At the same time, provincial government initiatives have increased the need for space within our schools. Your government announced in 2009 that full-day Kindergarten would be phased in over two years starting this September. This means additional space will be required in schools to accommodate full-day Kindergarten.

Board of School Trustees:

Patti Bacchus - Chairperson

Jane Bouey - Vice-Chairperson

Allan Blakey Ken Clement Ken Denike

Carol Gibson Sharon Gregson Mike Lombardi

Allan Wong

Additionally, 34 classrooms have also been allocated to StrongStart and childcare programs since 2007, further reducing the district's excess capacity.

The ministry has also told districts to plan for the implementation of pre-Kindergarten when calculating enrolment numbers for 2015-'16. If pre-Kindergarten proceeds, the district will be 715 seats short at the elementary level.

At this time, it is difficult for the VSB to address the question of school closures. We have witnessed our surplus space estimates decline dramatically in the past three years as a result of decreased use of portables, reduced space through seismic projects and added space requirements for government initiatives. Meanwhile the uncertainty of pre-Kindergarten may mean we will be out of space within five years.

Please clarify and confirm your intentions regarding plans for pre-Kindergarten programming and Neighbourhood Learning Centres so that this district can approach potential school closures with clear information regarding school space requirements.

We trust this clarifies the issue for you, and request you immediately correct the public record where needed.

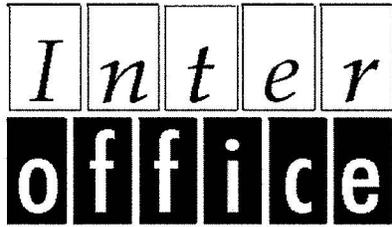
Sincerely,



Patti Bacchus
Chairperson

encl.

cc. Steve Cardwell, Superintendent of Schools
Brenda Ng, Secretary-Treasurer
VBE trustees



Memorandum

vancouver school board



Date: April 8, 2010

ITEM D2

To: Committee II - Planning and Facilities

From: Mark Dale, Assistant Secretary-Treasurer, Facilities

Re: Current Estimate of Net Surplus Space in VSB Schools

Background

A background report prepared in 2007 estimated that there were approximately 9,800 excess spaces in the district (based on 2006 enrolment). The report was prepared prior to more recent Ministry initiatives such as full-day kindergarten, early learning programs such as Strong Start and the introduction of neighbourhood learning centre space within schools. In addition, the surplus space estimate included portable classroom facilities.

Since this time, there have been references to the district having approximately 10,000 excess spaces. In order to clarify this issue, an estimate of net surplus space has been prepared based on 2009 enrolment. Looking forward, projected enrolment to 2011 is provided when Full Day Kindergarten will be fully implemented and 2015 when Pre-Kindergarten / Early Learning might be introduced by the Ministry.

Current Planning Initiatives and Considerations

Several facility and program initiatives have been introduced since 2007:

- 56 enrolling portables classrooms have been removed from the district;
- 34 classrooms or portables have been allocated to StrongStart and childcare programs;
- Some seismic mitigation projects involve a net decrease in school capacity, such as Moberly, Strathcona and Queen Mary elementary schools, as the district recalibrates the size of facilities to serve the needs of school communities;
- Rapidly developing communities, such as UBC, International Village, Southeast False Creek and East Fraser Lands require the provision of new school facilities;
- The provision of Full Day Kindergarten classrooms across the district by September 2011 will require the allocation of additional classrooms to kindergarten programs;
- The prospect that the Ministry could introduce Pre-K / Early Learning programs as early as 2015; and
- The introduction of NLC space as part of school design for renewed facilities.

Current Estimate of Net Surplus Space

Based on September 2009 enrolment, the district's net surplus space is estimated at 4,682 student spaces (2,700 elementary spaces + 1,982 secondary spaces). There are an additional 1,114 student spaces provided in portable classroom facilities. Including existing portables, the grand total of surplus space is estimated at 5,796 student spaces.

In the short term, enrolment projections to 2011 indicate that the net number of surplus spaces within school facilities (excluding portables) will increase to 5,485 student spaces. Enrolment is then expected to begin a gradual recovery by 2015 with the net surplus space total at 4,182 spaces (excluding portables). The school capacity estimates incorporate planned capacity adjustments related to approved or planned seismic mitigation projects.

A preliminary estimate of implementing Pre-K / Early Learning programs in 2015 indicates the potential need for approximately 3,471 additional student spaces. At this stage, the Ministry has not provided direction on the scale or configuration of this program proposal. 2010 Capital Plan instructions reference the possibility of voluntary pre-school opportunities.

Planning Implications

Long-range planning and the potential of school closure is not solely contingent upon total surplus space within the district. Other evaluation criteria such as educational adequacy of existing facilities, local area enrolment demand, financial sustainability, seismic safety, building condition and operating costs, program consolidation, and other district program priorities should be considered. If school closures are proposed, the school communities would be notified and the specific proposals would follow a public consultation process, in accordance with School Closures Policy (FL) and Regulations (FL-R).

This report is provided for information.

Estimate of Net Elementary Surplus Space

This summary table provides an estimate of the current number of surplus spaces in the district in 2009.

The estimates consider the implications of implementing Full Day Kindergarten.

The enrolment projections factor in areas of population growth associated with UBC, Downtown, SE False Creek, etc.

Current capacity incorporates planned capacity adjustments related to seismic mitigation and new school construction,

(Ex. capacity reductions at Moberly, Strathcona, Queen Mary and capacity increases at Trafalgar, UBC NRC & Acadia)

2006 empty space estimate included HDK spaces and portable spaces in the 10,000 empty spaces total.

Estimate of Net Elementary Surplus Space

| | 2006 | 2009 | | 2011 | 2015 |
|---|---------------|---------------|-----------|---------------|---------------|
| Kindergarten Spaces (*2006 reported as HDK) | *5965 | 3,040 | FDK | 3,097 | 3,097 |
| Grade 1-7 Spaces | 30,910 | 30,084 | Gr. 1-7 | 30,690 | 30,690 |
| Sub-Total | 36,875 | 33,124 | | 33,787 | 33,787 |
| Adjustment for Strong Start / Childcare Classroom Use | | -794 | | -794 | -794 |
| Net Operating Capacity | 36,875 | 32,330 | | 32,993 | 32,993 |
| Total Kindergarten Head Count | 3,541 | 3,502 | FDK | 3,659 | 3,857 |
| Grade 1-7 Enrolment | 27,716 | 26,128 | Gr. 1-7 | 25,748 | 26,380 |
| Net Enrolment (Headcount) | 31,257 | 29,630 | | 29,407 | 30,237 |
| Net Elementary Surplus Space | 5,618 | 2,700 | Projected | 3,586 | 2,756 |

Estimate of Net Secondary Surplus Space

| | | | | | |
|--|---------------|---------------|--|---------------|---------------|
| Net Operating Capacity | 24,550 | 25,075 | | 25,075 | 25,075 |
| Net Enrolment (Headcount) | 22,689 | 23,093 | | 23,176 | 23,649 |
| Net Secondary Surplus Space | 1,861 | 1,982 | | 1,899 | 1,426 |
| District Wide Net Surplus Space | 7,479 | 4,682 | | 5,485 | 4,182 |

Additional Space Provided in Portables

| | | | | | |
|--|--------------|--------------|---------|--|--|
| Elementary Enrolling Portables | 1,350 | 374 | 16 port | | |
| Secondary Enrolling Portables | 690 | 350 | 14 port | | |
| District Alternative Program Enrolling Portables | 288 | 390 | 26 port | | |
| Net Portable Classroom Capacity | 2,328 | 1,114 | | | |

Note: Ministry has advised districts to estimate 2015 Pre-K Population with 0.90 factor of projected FDK **3,471**