



## **Grande Yellowhead Public School Division Evansburg – Wildwood Facilities Review**

### **Community Engagement Session Summary**

**June 2018**

#### Project Overview

Grande Yellowhead Public School Division (GYPSD) is conducting a review of three schools in the Lobstick Zone: Evansview School and Grand Trunk High School in Evansburg and Wildwood School in Wildwood. The goal of the Evansburg-Wildwood Facilities Review is to determine how to provide the best learning environment and educational programs for the students of Wildwood and Evansburg, given the resources available.

Input from engagement will be used to determine if the school division's current capital plan should to be changed and re-submitted to Alberta Education by the end of September, 2018. GYPSD'S current three year capital plan lists modernization of Grand Trunk High School, Evansview School, and Wildwood School, in that order, as the top priorities. A change in the capital plan could include amalgamation of schools or a change in priorities.

#### Engagement Overview

Four community engagement sessions were held in June 2018 with members of both the Evansburg and Wildwood communities. Two sessions were held June 12 in Evansburg – one at Grand Trunk High School (1:00 – 2:30 pm) and one at Evansview School (5:00 – 6:30 pm). On June 14, two sessions were held at the Wildwood School – one from 1:00 – 2:30 pm and the other from 5:00 – 6:30 pm. Both the 1:00 pm sessions were scheduled to follow other events that would bring the community to the school. The evening sessions were scheduled early, so as not to conflict with evening activities (e.g. soccer games).

The purpose of the engagement sessions was to provide accurate information on the Facilities Review and start the dialogue on how GYPSD can provide the best learning environment and educational programs for the students of Wildwood and Evansburg. The sessions were designed to gather input on community members' aspirations and concerns related to the Facilities Review and potential changes to the GYPSD's Capital Plan, as well as to determine how community members want to be involved in the next stages of the engagement process.

Approximately 100 people attended the sessions. They included parents, school councils and staff from all three schools, as well as businesses, organizations and community members from Evansburg, Wildwood and other parts of Yellowhead County.

The following members of the GYPSD Administration and Board of Trustees were in attendance:

- Carolyn Lewis, Superintendent of Schools
- Brenda Rosadiuk, Board Chair
- Ken Baluch, Director of Facility Services

- Corey Halabi, Director of Transportation Services (Wildwood School 5 pm session only)
- Nikki Gilks, Manager of Communications

Session attendees provided input through discussion of a series of questions. These questions were also included on a feedback form. Discussion was recorded on flipcharts by GYPSD staff and 51 completed feedback forms were handed in. In addition to the community engagement sessions, community members could provide input through an online survey. The survey was available through the GYPSD website from June 18 – 30, 2018. The survey questions were similar to those asked at the engagement sessions and 53 community members responded.

## What We Asked

Participants attending the community engagement sessions were first asked what they had heard about the Evansburg-Wildwood Facilities Review. This was to gauge the level of information – or misinformation, in the community about the review. The responses to this question helped guide the short presentation on the review process.

The remainder of the session focused on discussion of four questions:

- What concerns you about the Evansburg-Wildwood Facilities Review?
- What do you see as the opportunities or benefit of this project?
- What questions does the review raise for you? What additional information could we provide to help you understand the project?
- How would you like to be involved in the next stages of the project?

These four questions were also asked on the feedback form and through the online survey.

## What We Heard

The following is a high level summary of what was heard at the four engagement sessions and through our online survey. It includes input gathered on flipcharts, feedback forms and through the survey. More detailed information can be found in the following appendices:

- Appendix 1: Transcribed Flipcharts
- Appendix 2: Transcribed Feedback Forms
- Appendix 3: Online Survey Results

### What the Community Knows About the Review

Many session attendees had heard variations of the following:

- All three schools need renovations
- If renovated, the schools will be “right sized” (building made the appropriate size to accommodate current and projected student enrolment)
- A decision has been made
- Wildwood School is closing
- Grand Trunk will be K-12 – all three schools will be amalgamated into Grand Trunk

While the first two points are accurate, GYPSD staff stressed that no decision has been made and the last two bullets are just two of the options.

### Community Concerns

Five main concerns about the facility review were identified through the engagement sessions and the online survey:

- **Bussing** – potential increase in length (time and distance) of new bus routes; more students needing to be bussed; and impact on younger students and those with special needs.
- **Impact on the community** – potential impact on the whole community, if Wildwood School closes; potential loss of community hub, impact on businesses and property values; impact on organizations that use the school; and it will be harder to attract new families to the community.
- **Impact on the students** – disruption during construction; transitioning – students feeling lost or that they don't belong; potentially larger class sizes and less one on one time with teachers; and combining elementary and high school students in the same school.
- **Timing** – when will decisions be made; how long to get funding and for construction; will current students be around to benefit; will change in priorities or amalgamation shorten timelines; and potential that enrolment decreases and schools are closed by the government in the interim.
- **Process** – not all the options are being considered; consider amalgamation in the middle of the zone; need to look at bigger picture and include Niton; and potential for different grade configurations.

Other concerns included the impact on current partners (e.g. playschools, libraries and Lobstick Literacy), the current/deteriorating condition of schools and impact on teachers and staff.

### Opportunities and Benefits

The engagement sessions and online survey identified a number of potential opportunities and benefits of the Facilities Review including:

- **Programming** – increased enrolment at a school could increase funding for programming; additions to curriculum, options, and extra-curricular activities; development of new and unique programs and skills; students get same opportunities as bigger schools; encourage students to stay in the community; and could be a draw for home-schooled and other students.
- **Improved facilities** – upgrades and improved facilities are needed; opportunity to have safer, more modern schools; windows in classrooms; better technology for students; facility that better meets needs of the community; and create a hub in the community.
- **Kindergarten to Grade 12 configuration** – combining schools would mean less split classes – easier on teachers; could benefit students – stay together from kindergarten to Grade 12; potential efficiencies of amalgamating schools; could combine resources; could attract increased variety of teachers.
- **Increased enrolment** – would lead to more funding and programs; schools become more competitive and attract more students; and attract more teachers

Other opportunities identified included potential to change boundaries, potential to create new partnerships and potential for improved bus routes.

### Information Needed

In order to participate in future engagement activities related to the Facilities Review, session and online participants identified the following information needs:

- **Bussing** – length (time and distance) of potential new bus routes; and cost implications.
- **Enrolment / demographics** – past, current and projected enrolments – K-6, junior high and high school; past, current and projected population data; numbers of students who are home schooled or attend out of district; and class sizes if schools amalgamated.
- **Potential programing** – what new programs can realistically be added; which facility option will provide the best programming.

- **Impact on community** – assessment of impact on community; and examples of impacts to other communities where school was closed.
- **Potential facilities** – costs of various facility options; what ‘right-sizing’ would look like; possible designs; and how future growth would be accommodated.

Participants were also interested in receiving information on timelines; criteria used by Alberta Education when approving capital funding; impact on staff; the role of Yellowhead County; potential for boundary changes; rules around partnerships in schools and the place for current partners in a new school; and what will happen to current school properties if schools amalgamate.

### Future Involvement

Participants preferred to receive information by email over receiving information through the schools. This was particularly true for those who attended the engagement sessions. Of those that completed the feedback form or the online survey, slightly more respondents were interested in attending a meeting or workshop than participating online.

Participants also provided input on how information on the Facilities Review should be communicated in future.

Suggestions included:

- Putting information on community bulletin boards
- Providing information through local newspapers
- Communicating broadly to all the community – not just parents

### Meeting Evaluation

The community engagement sessions were generally well received, with all but one of the 51 feedback form respondents rating the meeting as *Good* or *Excellent*. All but between two and five of the respondents indicated *Agree* or *Strongly Agree* to the following statements:

- The objectives of the meeting were clear.
- The information presented was easy for me to understand.
- I had enough information to provide meaningful input.
- Participation and interaction were encouraged.
- I now have a better understanding of the Facilities Review Project.
- I think GYPSD will consider community input in the Facilities Review Project.
- Participating in this meeting was a good use of my time.

Complete details of the meeting evaluations are contained on pages 10 and 11 of *Appendix 2: Transcribed Feedback Forms*.

### Next Steps

The input received through the engagement sessions and online survey will be used to develop community engagement activities to take place in September 2018. Details of these activities will be communicated in August 2018.