

# CENTRAL OKANAGAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## PRESSURES AND CHALLENGES

I am here today to talk about Public Education in general and Central Okanagan Schools in particular. Thank you for this opportunity.

The reason I have continued to be involved in public education for so long is because I truly believe that nothing is more important than the support, the nurturing, and the education of each and every student who enters our public schools.

It would be naïve to suggest that there are no other public institutions that need to be supported – health care, both physical and mental, must also be a priority of any government which truly cares about the people they serve.

But for me, my focus is Public Education.

### Capital Funding

Our School District is at **106 %** capacity (and finding suitable sites for new schools is becoming impossible).

The District is **growing** by the population of an elementary school or a small middle school every year (**250 to 500+ students**). We currently have **118 portables** in the district and we know we will need more.

The Ministry of Education is well aware of our acute needs.

To name a few:

**Rutland Middle:** 70 years old; inaccessible for students with challenges; **11 portables housing 46%** of its students. Has been on our Replacement list for **15 years**.

**Glenmore Secondary School:** All Kelowna area Secondary Schools will be out of space by 2015. This is a top priority.

**Westside Secondary School:** Currently there are **13 portable classrooms** at the only secondary school on the Westside, Mount Boucherie. The Board is waiting for Ministry approval to repurpose the current George Pringle Elementary site to a Secondary school. While we wait for this second secondary school to house some of the growing population of the City of West Kelowna, we will need to place more portables at Mount Boucherie.

These are just three examples, but throughout our entire school district the pressures continue to build.

**The School District is currently undergoing a facility review, including catchment areas. Parents are very concerned about whether their children will be able to attend their "neighbourhood school".**

## **Operating Funding**

As a follow-up to my comments regarding the Capital pressures, it is important to note that every **portable classroom costs about \$300,000** to purchase and move on-site. These costs are not covered by Ministry of Education Capital Funding, but must come from the Operating Budget. The ongoing use of operating funds to pay for portables means less supports and programs for our students.

### **Prevalence Model**

- The introduction of a model that no longer funds the district based on designated students will not reflect the current needs in the Central Okanagan.
- The district currently allocates **\$7 million** more to the Inclusive Education supplement we receive from the Ministry.
- Kelowna has become a hub for health supports and has seen a significant increase in families with designated students moving here. The prevalence model must be dynamic enough to ensure that funding keeps pace if student population will no longer be the factor for funding. We must support these students who need extra support.

### **Head Count Secondary School Funding**

- The District has worked hard to provide voice and choice to our students in determining their secondary school path. This includes many courses outside the timetable and dual credit opportunities.
- We are concerned that a Head Count model rather than a Course count, will result in less opportunities for our students to follow their passion and succeed.

## **Transportation**

The Ministry of Education has often reminded school districts that they are not obliged to provide transportation for their students. However, this is not only an expectation for parents living some distance from their children's schools, but in these days of increased awareness regarding the Climate Crisis, to add to the number of personal vehicles driving to and from our schools would be less than responsible environmentally and also discriminatory to some families.

At the moment we are budgeting over **\$3.1 million extra** into our transportation budget (and this is after we apply the **over \$1 million** in busing fees we charge our riders).

We urge government to increase funding for the transportation of students.

## **Fundraising**

The Public School system should not rely on fundraising by Parent Advisory Councils to pay for enhancements to programs. There is often a disparity between schools when it comes to fundraising.

Also, many school districts have come to rely on income from fee-paying students, for instance International students, to add funds to the district's general revenue.

Respectfully submitted,

Moyra Baxter

Chairperson, Central Okanagan Board of Education

## Capital Funding Planning and Communication

Over the past year, Central Okanagan Public Schools engaged in broad planning and communication around the future needs of a rapidly growing school district. This includes the development of a Long Term Facilities Plan and Board Advocacy for New/Replacement Schools.

### Long Term Facilities Plan (LTFP)

There are seven urgent capital projects outlined in the LTFP, at a total estimated cost of ~\$400M: Constable Neil Bruce Middle Addition (\$13M), Glenmore Elementary Replacement (\$40M), New Glenmore Secondary (\$127M), New Elementary in Wilden (\$37M), Rutland Middle Replacement (\$58.5M), Dr. Knox Middle Addition (\$20M), and New Westside Secondary School (\$110M).

- Development of the [Long Term Facilities Plan](http://www.sd23.bc.ca/DistrictInfo/LongTermFacilityPlan/Documents/Long%20Term%20Facilities%20Plan%20-%20June%202021.pdf) (<http://www.sd23.bc.ca/DistrictInfo/LongTermFacilityPlan/Documents/Long%20Term%20Facilities%20Plan%20-%20June%202021.pdf>) took place between Oct. 7, 2020, and Jun. 9, 2021. Consultation included extensive reviews and multiple public townhalls on the considerations brought forward in three surveys, as well as a fourth survey that solicited feedback on the draft plan.
- Communication for each phase of the LTFP development was supported with news releases, district website posts, and direct messaging to staff and families via School Messenger.
- Planning for facilities focused on needs of students as identified by research findings, Board policies, and Ministry of Education requirements.
- Final LTFP noted that:
  - Most of the capital investment in the next ten years will be focused on a combination of new space to address enrolment pressures and renovating or replacing facilities that are reaching the end of their useful life.
  - The Central Okanagan is one of the fastest growing regions in the country with an annual projected growth rate of 1.3% over the next 5 years.

### Board Advocacy Communication (#TogetherWeBuild)

In May 2021, the Board of Education began communication for [an ongoing advocacy campaign](http://www.sd23.bc.ca/boardadvocacy/Pages/default.aspx#/) ([http://www.sd23.bc.ca/boardadvocacy/Pages/default.aspx#/=](http://www.sd23.bc.ca/boardadvocacy/Pages/default.aspx#/)) to build public support for new schools and urge members of the public to advocate for urgent capital projects. Key components of the campaign include:

- Briefs on urgent capital projects, including background facts, opportunities, and estimated costs
- A communication strategy for Board of Education members to engage public in advocacy
- Social media posts
- Promotional videos