



Board Introduces 2007 Update to Long Range Facilities Plan

December 5, 2007. North Vancouver, B.C.... At last night's Finance and Facilities Standing Committee Meeting, Bill Wood of Matrix Planning and Associates presented an updated version of the 2004 Report "Facilities Implications of Enrolment Trends" where it was predicted that the North Vancouver School District's enrolment would decline by approximately 3000 students over the next fifteen years. In this updated report, Matrix Planning projects that the trend of declining enrolment will continue for the next ten years before it plateaus between 2016 and 2021. This trend means that there will be more than 1600 surplus secondary spaces and more than 2400 surplus elementary within ten years.

The report recommends that the Board consider closing smaller schools that are in poor physical condition. Closing smaller less efficient schools that are more costly to operate will protect operating funds for educational purposes. Closing schools in the worst physical condition protects maintenance budgets by allowing them to go further. The Board will need to continue to monitor enrolment trends and develop a plan to improve the overall quality and safety of schools.

Declining enrolment also means less grant funding from the Ministry of Education, which is primarily based upon a per pupil funding formula. The loss of each full time equivalent student means a reduction in grant funding of \$5,851. A decline of 500 students means a reduction of nearly \$3 million in grant funding from the Ministry of Education.

Board Chair Chris Dorais stated "The Board of Education is well aware of the serious impact of declining enrolment and diminishing resources on the school district and is releasing this report to the public to provide a transparent picture of the significant challenges facing the School District in the coming years." "This is not a new issue for the Board and we are extremely proud of the many initiatives we have already implemented to address the situation". These include:

1. Creation of the Sustaining Schools Working Committee, a broadly based working committee tasked with identifying innovative concepts and potential opportunities designed to sustain schools.
2. Board commitment to a visioning process to develop a comprehensive vision for the future of the School District.
3. Expansion of programs of choice such as the introduction of the International Baccalaureate Program at Balmoral and Carson Graham and the expansion late French Immersion and career and trades programs.
4. Introduction of the North Vancouver High Performance Program at Cloverley School, a partnership with Pro Arte Dance Studio offering optimal learning experiences for students involved in extracurricular training in sports music and/or performing arts.
5. Introduction of a Distributed Learning School offering courses in mathematics, social studies and physical education.

6. Shared administration and a common timetable between Carson Graham School and Balmoral Schools. The common timetable facilitates students who are actively involved in the arts, sports or music by providing flexible timetable options.
7. Facilities renewal plan that includes the construction of four new schools, Lynn Valley, Westview, Sutherland and Highlands (currently in progress). Planning for a major renovation of Ridgeway and seismic upgrades to Carisbrooke, Canyon Heights, Queen Mary and Carson Graham Schools as well as planning for a new Artists for Kids Gallery and Education Services Center.
8. Continued support of School District initiatives and programs that generate over \$12 million annually including the Artists for Kids, Continuing Education, Curriculum Sales and the International Student Program enrolling approximately 600 students annually.
9. Leasing closed schools Monterey, Westover, Maplewood and Cloverley to private tenants generating over \$600,000 annually in revenue.

The Board will continue making all efforts to minimize the impact of declining enrolment and diminishing resources, however, there are certain demographic realities related to lower birth rates and insufficient affordable housing on the north shore that may eventually force the Board to consider further school consolidations in the future. “We need to ensure that we do not unnecessarily maintain surplus classrooms by diverting money that could be better spent on classroom instruction,” said Board Chair Chris Dorais, “however it is important to note that absolutely no decisions have been made as a result of this report.” “This report is intended to facilitate future discussion within the community and with our partner groups, Dorais added. The Sustaining Schools Working Committee has been charged with monitoring enrolment trends and making recommendations as to what future actions may need to be taken as a result of the continuing declining enrolment trend.

-30-

For more information, contact:
Chris Dorais, Chairperson of the Board of Education
(778) 231-6189