



March 14, 2018

Honorable Rob Fleming
Minister of Education
1020 Hillside Ave.
Victoria, BC V8T 2A3

Dear Hon. Minister Fleming:

Re: Isabella Dicken Elementary School – Fernie, BC

This letter is in response to your letter of January 30, 2018 advising that the Ministry's intake for School District's Annual Five Year Capital Plan closed on June 30, 2017. We respectfully request that the Ministry staff reconsider our amended Five Year Capital Plan that was unanimously approved by the Board on December 12, 2017 as a result of a presentation by Stantec and explained by our Secretary-Treasurer in his letter of December 21, 2017.

Please give consideration to the following information and the urgent educational/municipal needs of the City of Fernie and area as a rural and somewhat remote community from Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland when reviewing and approving capital priorities this year.

We would be pleased to discuss the educational circumstances, the community and area needs, and the potential landmark partnerships in more detail with you at your convenience. I am in receipt of an email dated December 21, 2017 indicating that you have tentatively accepted my request for a meeting and that ministry tours would be scheduled in February with some prospective dates. I also understand and appreciate the magnitude and complexities of your responsibilities.

Please consider:

1. We have been diligent in our efforts to meet the Ministry's Capital Asset Management Process with the April 30, 2012 facility update (Matrix), with the June 2013 PIR for Isabella Dicken Elementary (KMBR) and the December 2017 long-range facility plan (Stantec).
2. Isabella Dicken Elementary School is an aging, over-utilized and inadequate facility built as a primary school in 1964.
 - The school is characterized by low ceilings and undersized instructional classrooms all less than the Ministry's minimum 75m².
 - The school does not have a gymnasium but an Activity room of 327.1m². The space has enough room to accommodate a volleyball court with a ceiling height of 4.9m.

- A Fire marshal's report indicates that the non-fixed seating allows for a capacity of 344 (.95m² per individual). The present enrolment is 437 FTE with approximately 49 FTE staff with a further increase expected in September.
 - School administration has been forced to have presentations, assemblies and performances in shifts or sittings in order to accommodate students, staff, parents and the fire marshal.
 - The school's 2017-18 StrongStart registration is 256 and the Interior Health has advised us of 120 births in 2016.
 - The school is the only public elementary school in the community (Ministry directives had previous Boards close CL Salvador Elementary in 2002 and Max Turyk Elementary in 2007 - the only community in the District closing two schools).
 - Portables have been added regularly since 2012 and presently 6 portables are on site with at least one more required for September 2018.
 - The City of Fernie has a population of 5249 (2016 census also indicating a growth rate of 18%, the fastest in the country). Accordingly, one elementary school and 7 portables for a ratio of 1 for every 750 residents, whereas Surrey has a population of 525,220 (2016 census) with 41 elementary school sites having 141 portables, a ratio of 1 for every 1705 residents.
3. Ministry reserves were supplemented with the sale of CL Salvador Elementary School and site in July of 2006 (1.8 million) and the sale of Max Turyk Elementary School and site in 2008 (.8 million).
 4. There is an opportunity to partner with Teck Resources, the most recent mining company in the Elk Valley, and like all predecessors, they have contributed substantially to provincial coffers. It is our understanding that in excess of 1 billion dollars was contributed in 2017 and it is generally accepted that their contribution is always within the range of .5% of 1% of the Nation's GDP.
 - We understand the importance of paying increased attention to our partnerships during these economical times and this school replacement would not only be an investment for school aged children but an investment in families (employees) with pre-school aged children, an investment in working parents and an investment in health and well-being.
 5. The opportunity to partner with the Ministry of Children and Families by supporting an early years strategy that would include but not be limited to day care, before and after school care under the school roof.
 6. The opportunity to partner with Canfor and or Galloway Lumber to meet a wood first initiative and to follow LEED Gold or equivalent standards.
 7. Mayor and Council of the City of Fernie appeared as a delegation in March 2017 urging the Board to replace IDES reflecting the City's unprecedented growth rate.
 - The opportunity to replace an aging, outdated, inadequate and over-utilized integral community facility with a multi-purpose education/community facility with the City of Fernie as a partner presents itself once in a lifetime.

Honorable Minister, we know the Ministry will see a line-up of deserving capital replacement requests from all districts. We also know that the replacement of IDES will exhibit the qualities that the Ministry will be proud with landmark partnerships. Please give our replacement request careful consideration and move the replacement of IDES to the Pre Planning Stage allowing for the Project's definition and feasibility studies that will define the scope, the budget and scheduling for your review and final approval.

On behalf of a once in a lifetime opportunity,



Frank Lento
Board Chair

cc: School District 5, Board of Education
Lynn Hauptman, Superintendent
Robert G. Norum, Secretary-Treasurer
Tom Shypitka, MLA
Mayor Giuliano and Norm McInnis, City of Fernie
Nic Milligan, Teck Resources
Nicole Heckendorf, IDES PAC
Ute Hammer, FSS PAC