

Grande Prairie Public School Division

2026-2029 3-Year Capital Plan

Grande Prairie Public School Division

2026-2029 Capital Plan

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The importance of the projects on this list is relative to the projected growth of the city. As the city grows, the division will continue to grow, and the rate of growth may inform future changes in priority.

Three of the four projects listed below are carried forward from previous capital plans. The modernization solution is included for the first time as per the school availability.

1.NEW SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION

Project Title: New School, Kensington Neighbourhood

750 Student Capacity

Planning Period: 2026-2027 School Year

Opening Date: September 2029 Estimated Cost: \$30,000,000

2. MODERNIZATION SOLUTION

Project Title: Modernization Solution, Harry Balfour School

600 Student Capacity

Planning Period 2026-2027 School Year

Opening Date: September 2030 Estimated Cost: \$20,000,000*

*as part of this project, a value-scoping exercise or comprehensive cost estimate is

requested

3. PERMANENT ADDITION

Project Title: Permanent Addition, Charles Spencer High School.

200 Student Capacity

Planning Period: 2026-2027 School Year

Opening Date: September 2028 Estimated Cost: \$6,300,000

4. REPLACEMENT SCHOOL

Project Title: Replacement School, Crystal Park School

680 Student Capacity

Planning Period2028-2029 School Year

Opening Date: September 2031 Estimated Cost: \$37,700,000

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PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report, as per Alberta Education's School Capital Manual, is to identify the top capital priorities for the Grande Prairie Public School Division, for consideration by Alberta Education staff for capital funding in budget 2026 to budget 2029.

This report provides background information on the provincial process used for identifying school division capital facility construction needs, describes the current context regarding growth and development in the City of Grande Prairie, and provides an overview of the current enrolment, enrolment projections, and school utilization for schools in the Grande Prairie Public School Division.

ALBERTA EDUCATION'S CAPITAL PLANNING PROCESS

Each year Alberta school divisions are required to submit a three-year capital plan that identifies the priority capital projects in the division. The School Capital Manual describes five categories of school capital projects:

- New School
- Addition to an Existing School
- Modernization of an Existing School
- Replacement School
- Solution

Additionally, the School Capital Manual identifies the priority criteria by which projects will be assessed for need by Alberta Education staff:

- Building Condition These are demonstrated and documented deficiencies in the major building components; structural deficiencies; building envelope issues; deficiencies and/or issues with the interior mechanical and/or electrical components; building code and/or standards compliance issues that could not be resolved with available Infrastructure Maintenance and Renewal (IMR) funding.
- **Community Renewal** School capital projects that contribute to the redevelopment and sustainability of a school community and/or surrounding neighbourhood. These projects will promote efficient use of space within a community or surrounding neighbourhood.
- Efficiency Solutions School capital projects that provide operational efficiencies through
 the modernization, replacement or consolidation of existing space to provide a more
 optimal learning environment where the available space is more aligned with the student
 enrolment.
- **Enrolment Pressures** The school jurisdiction's existing facilities are insufficient to accommodate current and future students within a specified geographical area.
- Functionality and Programming Projects provide new and/or improved program space functionality through reconfiguration, relocation, or technology. Examples of issues may include the lack of functional capacity to deliver the curriculum in the intended manner, ease of supervision, lockdown capability, sound and light quality, etc.
- Health and Safety Projects that address risks to the health, safety, or security of the students or staff either immediately or in the longer term; projects that address compliance issues with federal or provincial legislation or municipal bylaws.

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Legal – Projects are evaluated on legal rights for equity of access and assessed regarding
existing legal judgement or potential legal action (e.g., Rights to francophone education
under Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms).

In the fall of 2024, the Premier of Alberta and Minister of Education announced the **School Construction Accelerator Program** which, beginning with budget 2025, will fund up to 30 new schools and up to 8 modernizations or replacement schools each year up to and including Budget 2027.

The first set of new school projects was announced in Budget 2025. Included in Budget 2025 was the announcement of design funding for the permanent addition to the Grande Prairie Composite High School.

The priority projects included in this plan are submitted for consideration by Alberta Education Staff for inclusion in the 2026 provincial budget.

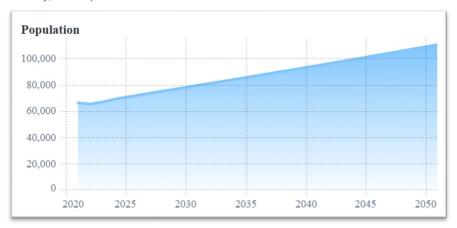
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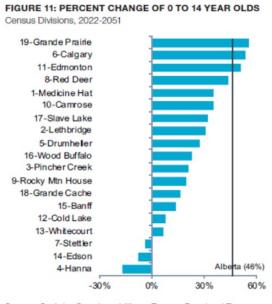
THE CITY OF GRANDE PRAIRIE

The attendance boundaries for the Grande Prairie Public School Division include the entirety of the municipal boundaries of the City of Grande Prairie. Grande Prairie has been identified as one of the fastest growing communities in the Alberta, and continues to grow. The 2024 Municipal Census Report identifies a population of 70, 385, up 3% from 68, 350 in September of 2023. The largest distribution of residents (27.3%) are between the ages of 30 and 44, 20.8% of residents are between the ages of 0 and 14. Grande Prairie also remains a youthful city, with the average resident 35.3 years old.

Population projections by the Alberta Government for the City of Grande Prairie and the Grande Prairie Public School Division illustrate a continuous upward trend, with a City population of 78,820 projected by 2030, 85,790 by 2035, and 109,150 by 2050. (Alberta Population Visualization by School Authority's Boundary, Public).



Further to those population projections, as one of the three fastest growing regions in the province, according to a report prepared by Treasury Board and Finance in July of 2023, Grande Prairie is expected to have the highest percentage growth of 0 to 14 year olds in the province.



Sources: Statistics Canada and Alberta Treasury Board and Finance

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In addition to the population within the city, City of Grande Prairie statistics identify a primary trade area population over 175,000 and a regional trade area population of 300,000. In 2016 the City completed an annexation of land from the County of Grande Prairie, primarily in the nw area of the City, to support the next 30 years of development within the city. The local economy is diverse, and relatively stable, with a balanced foundation of retail, oil and gas, forestry, agriculture and tourism.

With an average home price of \$310,024 in 2024, the residential real estate market is affordable relative to other larger centres in Alberta. Combined with the current employment opportunities and community amenities equivalent to a much larger size, Grande Prairie is recognized as an affordable and desirable place to live. In addition to a significant increase in the number of new single-family home starts in the city in late 2024 and early 2025, several multi-family developments are also in the planning stages or in development and have the potential to impact enrolments and utilizations in division schools.

In summary, Grande Prairie remains a strong community with high likelihood of continued growth, and potentially could see unexpected years of significant growth, which have the potential to impact schools with pre-existing high utilization rates.

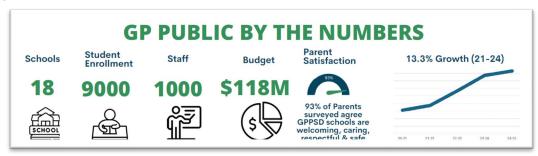
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GRANDE PRAIRIE PUBLIC SCHOOL DIVISION

The inclusion of design funding for a permanent addition to the Grande Prairie Composite High School will make a significant difference at the school. The addition of 18 classroom spaces will provide seats for an additional 450 students and bring the utilization down for several years until a third high school is required in the city.



The school division has managed a cumulative enrolment growth of 13.3% since the 2020-2021 school year. Strategic planning involves the engagement of the community, and the division's growth reflects the vision of the Board of Trustees to provide responsive programming to meet community needs. The responsive programming offered within the division, and developed over the years based on community need, is illustrated by the development of the following programs and facilities within the division:

- School building lease partnership with the Grande Prairie and District Society for Christian Education. Note: The Grande Prairie Christian School is not owned by the school division, and is consequently not included in this plan, but is currently operating at 103% utilization rate.
- The development of Academy Athletics programming.
- The single-track P-6 Montessori School.
- Grade 5 Late Entry French Immersion.
- K-8 Science Technology Engineering and Math.
- 10-12 International Baccalaureate.
- 10-12 Senior Trades and Registered Apprenticeship programming offered in multiple trades areas by teachers with Red Seal Journeyman certification.

Recent capital projects approved by Alberta Education, and their current adjusted utilization rates, include:

- **Isabel Campbell Public School.** New 760 student K-8. Opened September 2016. 2024-2025 adjusted utilization of 97%.
- **Riverstone Public School.** New 880 student K-8. Opened September 2016. 2024-2025 adjusted utilization of 85%.
- Roy Bickell Public School. New 580 student K-8. Opened September 2018. 2024-2025 adjusted utilization of 82%.
- **Grande Prairie Composite High School.** Replacement School for 1580 students. Opened September 2022. 2024-2025 adjusted utilization of 101%.

Note: no approvals for modular classroom requests have been received during this period.

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ENROLMENT, UTILIZATION, AND PROJECTIONS *Division Enrolments*

Using the enrolment totals from Alberta Education, funded student enrolment in the division has grown a total of 13.1% since the 2020-2021 school year, and the division has continued to grow throughout the current school year.

	Funded Enrolments - Division	Division Growth
2024-2025	8840	1.4%
2023-2024	8718	4.7%
2022-2023	8329	4.8%
2021-2022	7944	1.6%
2020-2021	7818	

cumulative growth %

13.1%

Division Utilization

The 2024-2025 Area Capacity Utilization Report identifies the 6 schools below as having the highest adjusted utilization rates in the division:

School Name	Grade Configuration	Net Capacity	Adjusted Total Enrolment	Utilization %
Grande Prairie Christian School	K-9	439	450.5	103%
Grande Prairie Composite High School	9-12	1582	1601	101%
Isabel Campbell Public School	K-8	760	740	97%
Charles Spencer High School	9-12	1252	1116	89%
Riverstone Public School	K-8	880	749.5	85%
Roy Bickell Public School	K-8	584	480	82%
Crystal Park School	K-8	816	660	81%
DIVISION TOTAL	ECS-12	11,408	9176	80.4%

^{*}note1: The adjusted total enrolment uses a Student Allowance Factor to account for the additional space required by some students with special needs for the effective and safe delivery of programs.

Division Projections

Estimating student enrolment projections accurately has proven challenging in the community of Grande Prairie. Birthrate data has proven inaccurate in recent years, as the unexpected net influx of new families to the division has exceeded any birthrate trends resulting in population growth in the

^{*}note 2: The Grande Prairie Christian School is owned by the Grande Prairie and District Society for Christian Education and is leased to the division since September 2007 through a tripartite arrangement between the division, the Society, and Alberta Education.

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city and in the division. The risk of the potential for significant and unexpected enrolment growth compared to projections is moderate, and in spite of comprehensive data use to calculate projections has happened several times in recent years

Division administration has submitted conservative student population estimates to Alberta Education since the onset of the 3-year Weighted Moving Average (WMA) funding model, to minimize the risk to revenues of overestimating the enrolment growth. In each of the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 school years, the division submitted estimated enrolment growth of 1.5%, and actual growth was 4.8% and 4.7% respectively for those years.

For the 2025-2026 school year, the division has submitted to Alberta Education an estimated increase to student enrolment of 1.4% (125 students).

For the purposes of this report, 3 estimates have been developed to illustrate the potential enrolment growth of the division. The table below shows projected growth over the next 5 years of 1%, 3% and 5% annually. These numbers have been chosen using the range of growth in recent years, and to align approximately with Alberta Education's estimates for growth in the City of Grande Prairie.

		Annual Division Growth 1%	Annual Division Growth 3%	Annual Division Growth 5%
	2028-2029	9199	9949	10745
	2027-2028	9108	9660	10233
	2026-2027	9018	9378	9746
	2025-2026	8928	9105	9282
	2024-2025	8840	8840	8840
CI	umulative growth %	4.1%	12.6%	21.6%

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2026-2029 CAPITAL PRIORITIES

Project Title: New School, Kensington Neighbourhood

750 Student Capacity

Planning Period: 2026-2027 School Year

Opening Date: September 2029 Estimated Cost: \$30,000,000

Another identified area that will drive increases in enrolment is the ongoing development of a new residential subdivision, currently being developed with a high concentration of multi-family homes, in the Kensington Area Structure Plan (ASP) in the southwest corner of the city. Originally this ASP indicated 122 hectares of subdivision development, but a subsequent application made to the city has now increased this area to 190 hectares. This is a significant increase in the ASP from what we were originally planning to accommodate.

The draft ASP, and development to date, illustrates the dwellings developed in this area will tend towards families who have a higher number of children with market prices at a level that attract young families or new families. The ASP data projects a total population at build out of 7,500 residences. The projected student population in the subdivision is shown in the table below:

Total Students	19 percent of total population of 7,500	1425
Public School Students	66 percent of total students	940
K-8	70 percent of PS students	658
9-12	30 percent of PS students	282

As shown in the table above, an additional 658 Kindergarten to Grade 8 public school students are projected to join our schools. Development in the area is consistent for the last few years and the number of students living in the area and bused out to other schools, is growing.

The closest schools to this area, Derek Taylor Public School and Isabel Campbell Public School, which are at 72% and 97% utilization, respectively. Isabel Campbell Public School is in an area that is almost completely built out and but will still experience some continued enrolment growth. The future student population in the Kensington development can be accommodated temporarily in the existing schools in the area, however, the need for a neighborhood school is growing.

Another significant factor considered as part of the request for a new school is the presence of a major arterial road separating the development from our existing schools. Kensington area students attending Derek Taylor Public School or Isabel Campbell Public School require busing from the Kensington development. Because of all these factors, our Board has identified this area as a priority for a new school in the short to medium outlook.

The new Kensington school also offers an opportunity for the division to address utilization concerns at Isabel Campbell Public School. The school, currently at 97% utilization, could potentially benefit

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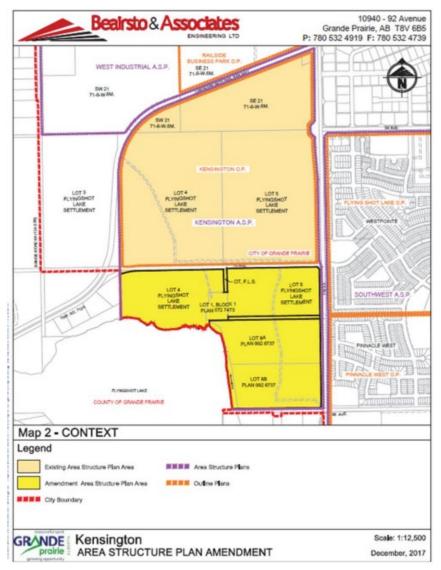
from an attendance boundary adjustment to allow some students nearest the neighbourhood to attend the new school in Kensington. Enrolment growth projections for Isabel Campbell are shown in the following table:

ISABEL CAMPBELL GROWTH

		ICPS	ICPS	ICPS
		Growth	Growth	Growth
		1%	3%	5%
	2028-2029	755	817	882
	2027-2028	748	793	840
	2026-2027	741	770	800
	2025-2026	733	748	762
	2024-2025	726	726	726
1	owth %	4.1%	12.6%	21.6%

cumulative growth %

The development area, available in the Area Structure Plan on the City of Grande Prairie Website, is shown in the image below.



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Project Title: Modernization Solution, Harry Balfour School

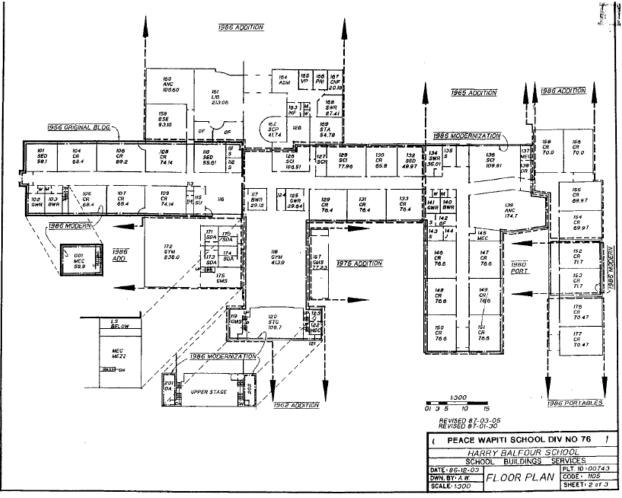
600 Student Capacity

Planning Period 2026-2027 School Year

Opening Date: September 2030 Estimated Cost: \$20,000,000

The opening of the new Harry Balfour School, in the County of Grande Prairie, leaves the old Harry Balfour School unutilized by the Peace Wapiti Public School Division (PWPSD). Division administration has spoken with PWSD administration, Alberta Infrastructure staff and Capital Planning Staff from Alberta Education on a number of occasions about the potential for Harry Balfour School ownership to be transferred to the division.

The map of the school below shows all of the phases of construction, beginning with the initial construction in 1956, and additions and modernizations in 1962, 1965, 1975 and 1986



Harry Balfour School is on the lot adjacent to Avondale Elementary School, and to take ownership and modernize it to function as a neighbourhood school would create a challenge for Avondale Elementary. Taking ownership and modernizing it to house an expanded division school of choice is

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a desirable option however and would directly address parent need and provide operational flexibility within the division.

The Solution

Parkside Montessori offers parents in the division a traditional, single-track Montessori program option for children in pre-school to grade 6. Originally designed as an ECS-3 program operating alongside the traditional elementary programming at Swanavon Elementary School, the Montessori program moved to Parkside when the Ecole Montrose solution construction was completed, and that school became a single grade ECS-8 school.

Over the years Parkside Montessori enrolments have grown, and the program is extremely popular with parents. Capacity issues at the relatively small Parkside facility have essentially capped the program and there is limited availability to add more students. The Parkside Montessori School Council has identified a strong desire for Montessori programming to be expanded to Grade 8. Doing so would mean Parkside Montessori students would not need to transition from the unique Montessori programming in grade 6 to a traditional grade 7 and 8 structure, and then finally to high school for grades 9-12.

To express their interest, a group of parents representing Parkside Montessori presented to the Board of Trustees for the division in June of 2023. Further engagement with school administration and school council continued through the 2023-2024 school year. In December and January of the current school year, all parents of the school were surveyed to explore their interest in different options for extending programming to grade 8. Approximately 70% of all parents responded, and 93% of the parents identified a preference for their children to attend a single-track ECS-8 program in one facility. In a recent school council meeting attended by the Board Chair and the Superintendent of Schools, parents spoke passionately about the potential of their students continuing to develop in the Montessori environment through to grade 8. They also identified the specific appeal of having their children remain in the same cohort with their peers and to benefit from the highly appreciated Parkside Montessori culture until their transition to high school.

The likelihood of the division being awarded a new school build to house ECS-8 Montessori programming is extremely low. No other options currently exist in the division to support moving the program. A modernization solution to support the move of Montessori programming to Harry Balfour School appears to be an excellent opportunity at just the right time.

Several options exist for the re-utilization of the current Parkside Montessori facility. No consultation has been formally initiated re: the future of Parkside Montessori, but if a value scoping exercise for the project were to be funded, or if design funding were to be awarded, formal planning will begin.

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Straightline enrolment projections for Parkside Montessori from ECS to 8 are shown in the table below. It is important to note that the projections in the table do not include any enrolment growth, the assumption shown in the table is that the same number of students in each grade will advance to the next grade, up to grade 8.

Enrolment growth is highly likely, however, and the estimated total of 403 students shown below could easily increase over the years similar to the projected growth in the division. A modernization of Harry Balfour School will provide additional space to utilize expected enrolment growth.

	ECS	Grade	Total							
	13	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	iotai
20-21	73	35	29	27	12	15	11			202
21-22	85	39	42	28	25	11	18			248
22-23	90	39	39	39	28	21	12			268
23-24	95	38	38	34	36	24	13			278
24-25	113	42	38	34	30	28	21			306
25-26	113	42	42	38	34	30	28	21		348
26-27	113	42	42	42	38	34	30	28	21	369
27-28	113	42	42	42	42	38	34	30	28	383
28-29	113	42	42	42	42	42	38	34	30	395
29-30	113	42	42	42	42	42	42	38	34	403

In closing, a review of the current building condition, various building reports, and a thorough inspection of the mechanical infrastructure in Harry Balfour School suggests a complete modernization is warranted.

More detailed information is available for during a value scoping exercise and/or utilization of an allocation of design funding to develop a more comprehensive estimate of the scope of the modernization solution project.

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Project Title: Permanent Addition, Charles Spencer High School.

200 Student Capacity

Planning Period: 2026-2027 School Year

Opening Date: September 2028 Estimated Cost: \$6,300,000

Charles Spencer High School opened in 2013 with capacity for 1000 students. 8 modular classrooms have been added to the school since 2013 to increase its capacity to 1200 students and the school is currently, and consistently, operating at approximately 90% of capacity. The site does not have the physical space to add any additional modular classrooms.

Charles Spencer's attendance boundaries were adjusted to accommodate the opening of the Grande Prairie Composite High School replacement in September 2022. The adjustment to attendance boundaries provided some initial temporary relief to the school's high utilization, but the school has since resumed an upward growth trend for the past two years. As the city of Grande Prairie continues to grow, with new development occurring in the south and west parts of the city, Charles Spencer's utilization remains an area of concern for the division.

Further adjustments to division attendance boundaries are not likely to prove operationally beneficial for two reasons: (1) Transportation to Charles Spencer is challenging given its location in the southwest part of the city, and transporting students from the north would increase ride times significantly and break up community cohorts of students, and (2) programming changes are not possible given the nature of how programs of choice are balanced between the two high schools.

Given projected city and division growth, planning for a permanent addition to Charles Spencer High School is necessary in order to properly serve the southern city population and it's public education needs. The yearly enrolments for the school based on the same projection model used for the Division above are summarized in the table below.

	CSHS	CSHS	CSHS
	Growth	Growth	Growth
	1%	3%	5%
2028-2029	1131	1223	1321
2027-2028	1120	1188	1258
2026-2027	1109	1153	1198
2025-2026	1098	1120	1141
2024-2025	1087	1087	1087
umulative growth %	4.1%	12.6%	21.6%

Assuming conservative 1% enrolment growth, Charles Spencer High School will be at 97% utilization rate in the 2028-2029 school year. The school will be at 98% utilization at 3% growth.

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Project Title: Replacement School, Crystal Park School

680 Student Capacity

Planning Period2028-2029 School Year

Opening Date: September 2031 Estimated Cost: \$37,700,000



Crystal Park School is over forty years old and has not undergone any significant modernization in its years of operation. The layout of the school is unique, as it was purpose built to serve as a hub for the provision of wraparound programming to support students with complex special needs in an inclusive setting. With a significant number of offices and small professional therapy spaces, its construction utilization. It was also built with extra wide hallways to ensure ease of access for students who require mobility assistance.

Crystal Park is one of very few schools in Alberta with a swimming pool, designed specifically to provide therapy programming for students, but which is unfunded in the funding manual. The classrooms are organized in four pods that extend out from a common central gathering area that includes a koi pond and a large amount of greenery. The specialized therapy areas, such as the physiotherapy pod, were ideal for the specific purpose they were designed for but are unable to be utilized as per current day programming needs. Consequently, the building is a highly inefficient use of space, with a footprint significantly larger than its student population merits.

A mechanical systems assessment commissioned in October of 2017 highlights many deficiencies. The assessment was conducted eight years ago, however the systems have been maintained to ensure the safety and operation of the building. They will be unable to be maintained in the long term, which highlights the necessity of this priority.

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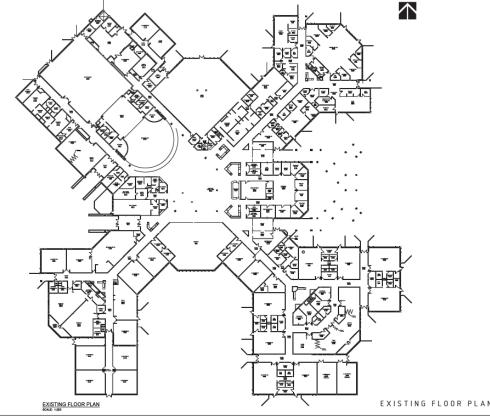
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In summary the report findings indicate:

- 1. The existing mechanical systems are at the end of their service life.
- 2. The mechanical systems are not configured to good engineering practice.
- 3. Significant upgrades to the mechanical systems are required to bring the systems to modern design practices, guidelines, and standards.
- 4. The existing mechanical systems use a disproportionate amount of energy.

The estimated cost for the upgrades required of the mechanical systems was approximately \$1.4 million at the time the assessment was completed. In addition to the mechanical systems, the school flooring, interior finishing, and cosmetics require updating to refresh the overall appearance of the school as it is showing its age. The division is continually striving to minimize school operating costs, such as switching to energy efficient light bulbs and replacing doors. In spite of those efforts Crystal Park School is the least energy efficient school in the Division with utility and energy costs are higher than the average of all other schools. This situation is also observed even in the summer months when the school is closed.

In the fall of 2023, a value scoping exercise was funded by Alberta Education to explore options to bring the school up to the current education standards. The evaluation committee considered several modernization options that would retain certain portions of the existing facility. It was evident the modernization option would be a substantial undertaking due to the sheer size and layout of the facility, shown in the school map below:



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The evaluation committee reviewed four modernization iterations. Three of the modernization options were essentially a new building with some of the larger existing spaces remaining intact. These were disruptive to the existing student population and would cause issues with the proper operation of the school during the process. One modernization option retained most of existing school, however it would leave the school with some aging infrastructure that was designed for a different purpose in mind when built.

The following priorities for modernization were developed by the committee to evaluate the construction options:

- Student health and safety.
- Provide the best learning environment possible for students.
- Balance education with operational components/ costs.
- Not purpose built for special needs students but where special needs can come and
- succeed.
- Long term viability of the school. It needs to be the right size for today and for the future to
- ensure the school is not underutilized.
- Ability to adapt and grow. Flexible grade structure.
- Improved functionality of the school.
- Meets the requirements of 21st century learning.
- Sustainability.
- Impact on community understanding about the function of Crystal Park School. The
 Division has transitioned from having a dedicated special needs focus at Crystal Park
 School to offering more inclusive teaching methods and structures in all schools across the
 Division.
- Infrastructure and age of the building.
- The swimming pool.

After consideration of the advantages and disadvantages of the modernization options and the replacement school option, the participants concluded the best option was to pursue a replacement school as it would eliminate the aging infrastructure concerns. This course of action does not disrupt the operation of the existing school and allows continued operation until the new school is ready for operations. A new building will be energy efficient and provide flexibility as to the floor plan and design to address the current and future educational needs. The modernization options reviewed were a significant proportion of the cost of a replacement school and demolition costs of the existing school. When the cost of the options is considered in conjunction with the impact to school operations the replacement school approach rises to the top as the preferred option.

As such, the Grande Prairie Public School Division is requesting a replacement school for Crystal Park School. The school has operated for close to forty years without any modernization therefore it is well overdue to be addressed, and we owe it to our Grande Prairie community to continue to provide quality and modern facilities where our students are supported to succeed.

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2029 AND BEYOND

The division's 10-year capital plan will be updated in the 2025-2026 school year. Looking forward however, it is important to add other capital challenges the division will face in the coming years. By all accounts, using local and provincial information, the City of Grande Prairie is expected to continue to grow, and as such the Grande Prairie Public School Division will continue to grow as well. The unpredictability of the rate of growth is concerning, and should growth occur more quickly than the conservative 1%-3% projected, the following capital needs will become evident more quickly than they are currently identified:

- The division is expected to continue to submit Modular Classroom Requests for schools as they approach and exceed 100& adjusted utilization.
- A modernization of I.V. Macklin Public School, originally constructed in 1999, or a solution that includes other neighbouring schools may be required.
- A new High School will be required in West Grande Prairie as the recently annexed land becomes more fully developed
- Similarly, a new K-8 School is likely to be needed in Northwest Grande Prairie as development begins in that area.