
EDUCATION FACILITIES PLAN



Grande Prairie
Public School
Division

Grande Prairie Public School Division
Executive Summary, 2023-2026 Capital Plan



Grande Prairie
**Public School
Division**

2023-2026 Capital Plan

Contents

- Identified Projects
 - 2023-2026 – 3 Year Capital Plan 2
- Executive Summary
 - Background 3
 - Introduction 3
 - Project Summaries 3-5

EDUCATION FACILITIES PLAN



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2023/2026 – 3 YEAR CAPITAL PLAN

Identified Project	Priority
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Modernization – Crystal Park School K – 8

1

Facility modernization

Total Budget: \$ 42,150,000

New School – New School in Kensington Neighborhood K – 8

2

Accommodate Population growth

Estimated Opening Date: Sept 2030
Capacity: 600 students
Total Budget: \$26,000,000

Gym and/or partial modernization – Aspen Grove School K – 8

3

English K - 8 Redeployment

Total Budget: \$ 5,000,000

End of list for all capital projects new or modernization.



BACKGROUND

The Division has identified its facility needs after reviewing and assessing areas requiring maintenance and capital investment in the short term and longer term. The three-year capital plan highlights the priorities that were identified from that process which are detailed below.

INTRODUCTION

As a result of the change in the economic environment, the growth trend in the city of Grande Prairie has tempered when compared to the historical growth rates over the last 20 years. The Grande Prairie economy has been further tempered by the effect of the global pandemic. Our Division has taken those external factors into the processes undertaken for enrolment planning and determining our facility needs.

Looking ahead as the provincial economy is on the path to recovering from the effects of the pandemic and a period of lower oil prices, Grande Prairie is poised to be a leader in the provincial recovery. The city of Grande Prairie is a hub for the northwest corner of the province and serves a regional trading area of over 300,000 (per the city's Economic Profile – 2020) in population. The economic area of Grande Prairie continues to have one of the lowest unemployment rates in the province. As per the city's February Economic Development newsletter, the unemployment rate for January 2022 in the Athabasca, Grande Prairie and Peace River region was at 5.3% (9.9% Jan-21) as compared to the province at 7% (10.6% - Jan-21). The city continues to be one of the youngest in the province. A review of the city's Economic Profile – 2020 on its website indicates a population with the median age is 31.9 which drives growth in the student population. Because of the population demographic in the city and the recovery in the resource based economy that the area depends on, our Division will continue to grow. The trends indicate the continuation of young families and stable birth levels in the foreseeable future.

CAPITAL PROJECT SUMMARIES

Crystal Park School Modernization (Kindergarten to Grade 8)

Crystal Park School is thirty-nine years old and has never been modernized in its years of operation. This is a unique school in our Division as it was built as a school focused on special needs programming. Its construction consists of wide hallways to ensure ease of access for students who require mobility assistance. It is one of very few schools in Alberta which has a swimming pool. The classrooms are structured in four pods that extend from a common central area. There are specialized areas such as the physiotherapy pod which were built for the specific use at the time. However, with today's programming needs the building is inefficient, and these specialized areas need to be reconfigured to allow for better use of the space.

EDUCATION FACILITIES PLAN



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A mechanical systems assessment was commissioned in October of 2017 which highlights many deficiencies. 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 good 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 are approximately \$1.4 million at the time the assessment was done, almost five years ago. 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. Crystal Park School has been identified as the least energy efficient school in the Division with utility and energy costs running higher than the average of our remaining schools. This situation is also observed even in the summer months when the school is closed.

Note that the cost estimate will have to be determined with a scoping exercise done in the designing phase because of the reconfiguration of the physiotherapy and administration office areas would have to be analyzed to make determinations on the most effective use of the available space.

New School in the Kensington Development

Another identified area that will drive increases in enrolment, is the development of a new residential subdivision. Included in this report is information on the city's Kensington Area Structure Plan (ASP) subdivision 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. In reviewing the city's data on the draft ASP, it is anticipated the dwellings developed in this area will tend to be 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. Below is a table projecting the subdivision to have the following student population:

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

EDUCATION FACILITIES PLAN



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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 has been ongoing for the last few years and have tempered due to the pandemic impact. However, as the Grande Prairie economy recovers, development will accelerate along with enrolment growth as families move into the subdivision.

Currently our closest schools to this area, Derek Taylor Public School and Isabel Campbell Public School which are at 51% and 91% utilization, respectively. Isabel Campbell Public School is in an area that is almost completely built out and will 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 long term, the Kensington neighborhood will require a school. A significant factor in the request of a new school is the presence of a major arterial road separating the development from our existing Division schools. Kensington area students attending Derek Taylor Public School or Isabel Campbell Public School would require busing from the Kensington development. Because of all these factors, our Board has identified this area as priority for a new school in the medium to long term outlook.

Aspen Grove School (Kindergarten to Grade 8)

Aspen Grove School was originally built as a Kindergarten to Grade 6 school and over the years it has had a larger student population than was intended for the school. With recent school additions and change in attendance boundaries in the Division, the enrolments have decreased, and the school is currently at 62% of its built capacity. However, the school programming offered is now Kindergarten to Grade 8.

The gymnasium was never constructed to accommodate junior high students and does not meet the physical education needs for this level of programming and it restricts what can be accomplished at this level. The current Aspen Grove School gymnasium is approximately 402 meters square. The standard gym configuration for a newly built Kindergarten to Grade 8 schools is approximately 550 square meters.

For these reasons, it is included in our capital plan to expand the gymnasium to provide the necessary space to accommodate the physical education programming needs of school community.