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# EDUCATION FACILITIES PLAN



Grande Prairie  
Public School  
Division

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Grande Prairie Public School Division  
Executive Summary, 2024-2027 Capital Plan

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## 2024-2027 Capital Plan

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## 2024/2027 – 3 YEAR CAPITAL PLAN

<b>Identified Project</b>	<b>Priority</b>
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<b>Modernization – Crystal Park School K – 8</b>	<b>1</b>
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Facility modernization

Planning Period:	2024-2025
Opening Date:	2027
Total Budget:	\$ 42,150,000

<b>Permanent Addition – Grande Prairie Composite High School 9 – 12</b>	<b>2</b>
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Two story addition to accommodate increasing enrolment

Planning Period:	2025-2026
Opening Date:	2027
Capacity:	300
Total Budget:	\$9,400,000

<b>New School – New School in Kensington Neighborhood K – 8</b>	<b>3</b>
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Accommodate population growth

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

<b>Permanent Addition – Charles Spencer High School 9 – 12</b>	<b>4</b>
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Two story addition to accommodate increasing enrolment

Planning Period:	2027-2028
Opening Date:	2029
Capacity:	200
Total Budget:	\$6,300,000

End of list for all capital projects new or modernization.

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### BACKGROUND

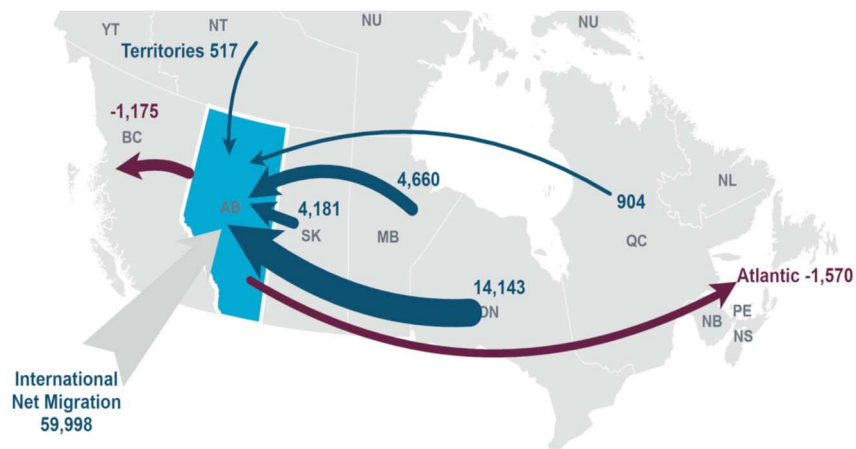
The Division has identified its facility needs after reviewing and assessing areas requiring maintenance and capital investment in the short term and longer term. The three-year capital plan highlights the priorities that were identified from that process which are detailed below.

### 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 shown strength in 2022 and continues to reverse the impact of the pandemic from the past few years. Our Division has taken those external factors into the processes undertaken for enrolment planning and determining our facility needs.

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. It is evident that Grande Prairie will continue to be an economic hub for the Northern Alberta and British Columbia Peace Country which will continue to drive the growth in the city. 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 2023 in the Athabasca, Grande Prairie and Peace River region was at 5.2% (5.6% Jan-22) as compared to the province at 5.8% (7.0% - Jan-22). 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.

The provincial economy is on the path to recovering from the effects of the pandemic and we entered a period of higher oil prices which has bolstered economic activity. Alberta has experienced record interprovincial migration illustrated to the right in the Statistics Canada and Alberta Treasury



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Board and Finance visual (July 1, 2021 to June 20, 2022, with a net increase of 99,338 in population from all areas or 2.24%).

Grande Prairie experienced a reversal of families moving away from the city which occurred during 2020 and 2021. This translated into increased enrolments from the 2021/22 school year with an increase of 4.87% as illustrated in the table below.

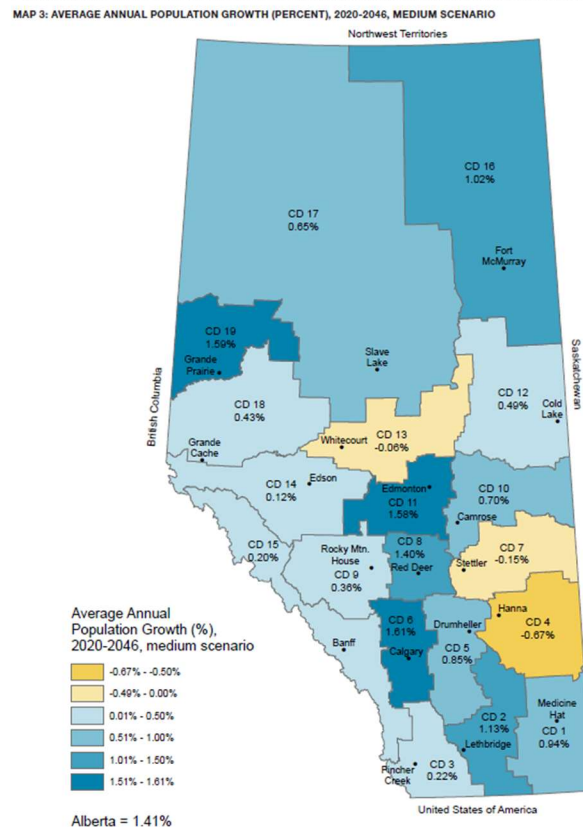
Funded Student Head Count (Program Unit Funded (PUF) Pre-Kindergarten and K-12)

2018-2019 (ECS-12)	2019-2020 (ECS-12)	2020-2021 (ECS-12)	2021-2022 (ECS-12)	2022-2023 (ECS – 12)	Change from 2021-2022	Change from 2021- 2022(%)
8236	8276	7823	7947	8334	387	4.87%*

\*a 1.1% increase (87 students) was projected in the budget submitted in May 2022.

The growth we experienced this school year is driven in large part by the reversal of the four year trend of net transfers out of the division. This current school year we experienced a net transfer into our division of 102 students (805 transfers in as compared to 703 transfers out) We expect this trend to continue based on economic predictions for the area alongside the provincial population growth projections as prepared by Statistics Canada and Alberta Treasury Board and Finance.

Grande Prairie is one of three Census Divisions (CD19) which is predicted to exceed the average provincial population growth in the next twenty years (*source: Population Projections: Alberta and Census Divisions, 2021-2046, Treasury Board and Finance, July 2, 2021*). Per the report, Alberta’s average annual rate of growth between 2021 and 2046 is expected to be about 1.4% while Census Division 19 (CD19) containing the city of Grande Prairie is predicted to be on average of 1.6% per year. For past decades Grande Prairie and area has grown substantially and in years of economic downturn in the rest of the province, the region operated with a continued strong economy and continued to attract families due to the labour and economic opportunities. This will continue to drive the growth in our division and supports our planning with the priorities we have identified in our three year capital plan.



12 | Population Projections: Alberta and Census Divisions, 2021-2046 | Treasury Board and Finance | July 2, 2021



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## HIGH SCHOOL ENROLMENT SUMMARY

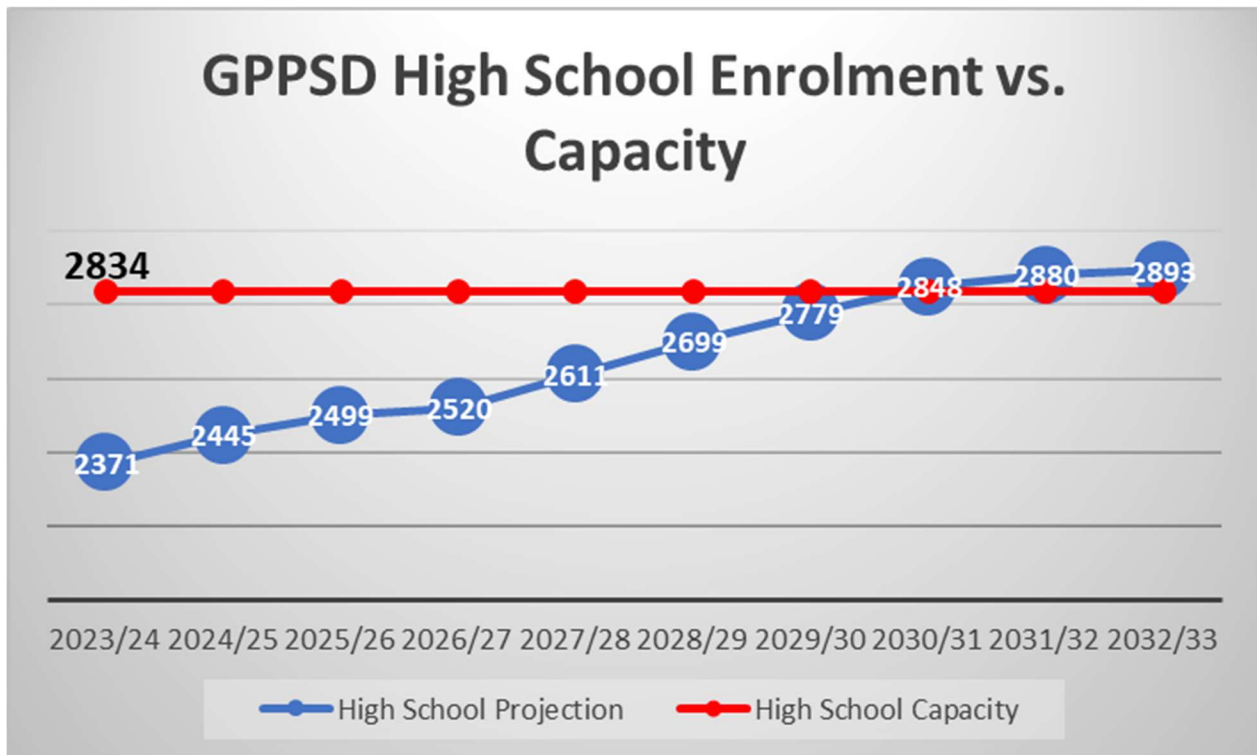
### High School Enrolment Capacity

As indicated in the introduction of the capital plan, the city of Grande Prairie has been identified as an urban center that will surpass the average provincial population growth. Utilizing the information from the government’s population report we have prepared a ten year enrolment forecast based on the average 1.6% of growth for Grande Prairie. This is a modest growth model when we look at the historical averages in Grande Prairie over the last two decades. Therefore it is also realistic that higher growth scenarios may occur depending on economic drivers.

*Illustrated in the table below is the 10 year summary of GPPSD’s projected enrolment growth.*

School Year	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	Yearly Average
Enrolment Projections	8596	8764	8937	9079	9207	9370	9541	9714	9791	9948	
% change		1.95%	1.97%	1.59%	1.41%	1.77%	1.82%	1.81%	0.79%	1.60%	1.64%

The graph and table below are the comparison of the high school enrolment projections derived from the Division’s 1.6% annual growth model compared to the current available high school capacity. The Division will exceed it’s available capacity in the 2030/31 school year.



School Year	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33
High School Projection	2371	2445	2499	2520	2611	2699	2779	2848	2880	2893
High School Capacity	2834	2834	2834	2834	2834	2834	2834	2834	2834	2834
% Utilization	83.7%	86.3%	88.2%	88.9%	92.1%	95.2%	98.1%	100.5%	101.6%	102.1%



## 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.

A mechanical systems assessment was commissioned in October of 2017 which highlights many deficiencies. As this assessment was conducted almost six years ago, these systems have been maintained to ensure the safety and operation of the building but it highlights the urgency this priority has become due to not making the provincial capital priority list. 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.

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The estimated cost for the upgrades required of the mechanical systems are approximately \$1.4 million at the time the assessment was done, almost six 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.

As of the writing of this report, we have been verbally advised we have been approved and granted funding to procure a consultant to undertake a value scope engagement to determine the next steps in the process. Once we have the results of the value scope process we will be submitting a revised and updated 2024-2027 capital plan later this year to incorporate the recommendation of the report.

We expect to move to the next stage of the capital project request in the spring of 2024 as this priority has been identified six years ago and to date has received no provincial support to move forward. 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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## Grande Prairie Composite High School - Permanent 300 student addition to the core building

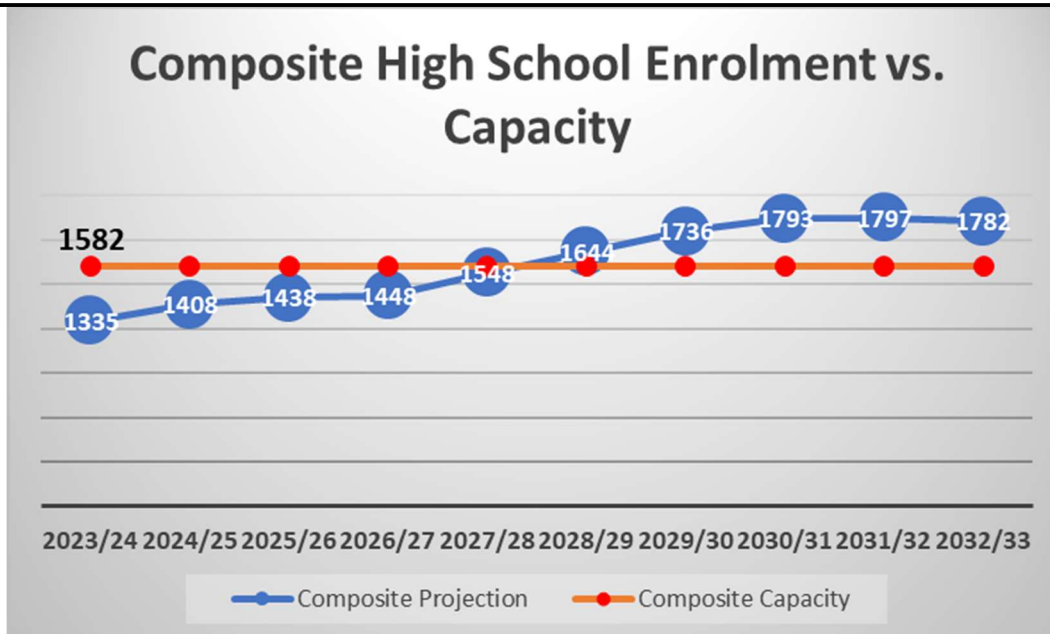


The Division revised its attendance boundaries to be in proportion to the size of our two high schools. With the recently opened replacement of the Composite High School, the boundary adjustment relieved capacity issues in Charles Spencer our southern city high school which had been operating a maximum capacity for several years. With the new boundaries the Composite High School opened at 80% capacity.

The school is built to accept 1582 students. Projections for the 2023/24 school year of 1335 students, or 84.4% utilization, indicates the school has already reached full operational capacity as per Alberta Education’s guidelines and funding model. While applying the moderate population growth expected in Grande Prairie (1.6% annually) we predict we will exceed the physical space capacity of the building by the 2028/29 school year which is only five years away.

The yearly results of the projection model are summarized in the table below.

School Year	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33
Composite Projection	1335	1408	1438	1448	1548	1644	1736	1793	1797	1782
Composite Capacity	1582	1582	1582	1582	1582	1582	1582	1582	1582	1582
% Utilization	84.4%	89.0%	90.9%	91.5%	97.9%	103.9%	109.7%	113.3%	113.6%	112.6%





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### **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

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 regained momentum as the economy continues to be strong and recover.

Currently our closest schools to this area, Derek Taylor Public School and Isabel Campbell Public School which are at 60% and 87% 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, long term the Kensington neighborhood will require a school.

Another significant factor considered as part of the request of 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 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.

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### **Charles Spencer High School - Permanent 200 student addition to the core building**

The Charles Spencer High School site cannot accommodate the addition of any more modular classrooms as we are currently as close as is possible to the property line. In addition to having no other property space, the Division undertook a comprehensive attendance boundary revision for the opening of the replacement Composite High School in September 2022 to relieve capacity issues in Charles Spencer High School. The high school boundaries were right sized



for the corresponding sizes of our two high schools. Proportionally the boundaries are now set with a very long term view. Any other changes to the boundaries would not be operationally beneficial and as it would further accelerate the need for expansion at the Composite High School which is detailed in this report. The transportation logistics would also not be feasible. Transportation of students from the southern part of the city to a northside high school is not practical and does not align with provincial goals of decreasing ride times for our students. As a Division we have exhausted every option available to delay the permanent addition expansion to the high school and the next necessary step is to start the planning process to add the addition in order to properly serve the southern city population and it's public education needs.

The yearly enrolments for the school based on the projection model are summarized in the table below.

School Year	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33
<b>Charles Spencer Projection</b>	1036	1037	1061	1072	1063	1055	1043	1055	1083	1111
<b>Charles Spencer Capacity</b>	1252	1252	1252	1252	1252	1252	1252	1252	1252	1252
<b>% Utilization</b>	<b>82.7%</b>	<b>82.8%</b>	<b>84.7%</b>	<b>85.6%</b>	<b>84.9%</b>	<b>84.3%</b>	<b>83.3%</b>	<b>84.3%</b>	<b>86.5%</b>	<b>88.7%</b>