

November 12, 2023

Karim Hachlaf, SD40 Superintendent/CEO  
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SD40 Board of Education  
By email: [boardofeducation@sd40.bc.ca](mailto:boardofeducation@sd40.bc.ca)

**Re: Public Consultation re: Long Range Facilities Planning**

Dear Superintendent Hachlaf and SD40 Trustees,

At our meeting on October 19, 2023, DPAC membership passed the following motion:

*The DPAC requests the Board of Education and District employ a more comprehensive and inclusive public consultation process in the development of the next revision of the Long Range Facilities Plan (LRFP) for School District 40 (SD40).*

This motion represents a critical step forward in addressing the pressing issues facing our fast-growing district and ensuring that the LRFP truly reflects the needs and preferences of all parents, caregivers, students and community stakeholders.

The rationale for this request is focused on the following areas:

- 1. Growth and Overcrowding:** New Westminster is a rapidly growing district, and we are experiencing increasing overcrowding and capacity pressures in our schools. It is imperative that the district fully comprehends the impact of this growth and plans accordingly to meet the needs of our students and the community.
- 2. Accessibility and Equity:** The LRFP must provide a means for as many families as possible, ensuring that all families and caregivers have equitable access to our educational facilities. All consultation and communication should use plain language, and incorporate other forms of accessible communication such as visual or video. This is fundamental to promoting equity, and inclusivity and fostering a sense of belonging among our diverse community.
- 3. Transparency and Trust:** A more robust and comprehensive consultation process will build trust and integrity in the LRFP development. Transparency in decision-making is key to ensuring that the community feels heard and respected in the planning process.
- 4. Parental Engagement:** Parents play a pivotal role in providing valuable feedback on various options and assessing the impact each option has on families. Involving parents actively in the process is not only beneficial but also aligns with best practices in public engagement, as articulated in the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) principles. All consultation and

**5. Alignment with Best Practices:** Other school districts, including Vancouver, Nanaimo, and Burnaby, have successfully undertaken robust planning processes involving extensive public consultation. These examples demonstrate that such an approach can lead to more comprehensive and effective LRFPs.

Moreover, Part II of the Ministry of Education in British Columbia Long Range Facilities Plan recommends a robust public consultation. These recommendations can be found here ([Long Range Facilities Plan Guidelines, 2019](#))

*Public consultation is a key element in the development of a new LRFP or when updating an existing LRFP, especially with respect to the community use of space in open schools and closed schools, and public access to school grounds. This consultation must include all First Nations within the educational community, as input regarding indigenous student attendance trends and indigenous study programming will be an important consideration in any meaningful LRFP*

*Part III, H*

**Public Consultation** *A board of education must decide on how public consultation will be undertaken in the development of the LRFP for its school district. When a consultation process is completed, it is advisable that the public input be summarized and how that information was used by the board in the drafting of the LRFP*

*Part IV, E* also recommends Districts include a Public Consultation Summary as a schedule:

**Public Consultation Summary** – *summary that includes a description of the public consultation process undertaken; the type of public input received; and how the input was used during the development of the LRFP*

Other districts have incorporated robust public consultation as part of their LRFP process.

- In Vancouver, the district engaged students, parents, staff, and community members through online surveys, virtual town hall meetings, and written submissions, ultimately resulting in a revised and improved LRFP.
- In Nanaimo, the district engaged with stakeholders, utilizing online surveys, virtual town hall meetings, and feedback to inform their LRFP.
- In Burnaby, the district engaged community stakeholders through in-person information sessions, online surveys, and written submissions, leading to a refined LRFP.
- In Coquitlam, the district engaged community stakeholders through email and an online platform, finalizing their LRFP based on this valuable feedback.

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We encourage the Board of Education to take inspiration from other districts as well as ministry recommendations and embrace a more comprehensive and inclusive consultation process for the next revision of the LRFP in School District 40. This approach will not only address the pressing and immediate challenges posed by our growing district but also build trust, foster inclusivity, and ensure that our educational facilities meet the diverse needs of our community.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue, and we look forward to the District's plan to initiate a more inclusive consultation process for the next LRFP.

Sincerely,

Laura Kwong  
Chair, SD40 District Parent Advisory Council

- The SD40 recently passed a motion at during the October 19, 2023 general meeting to request that the Board/District undertake a more comprehensive process in developing the next revision of its long-range facilities plan
- The rationale for this is as follows:
  - New Westminster is a fast growing districts and is facing increasing overcrowding and capacity pressures; its important for the district to understand the impact
  - Accessibility and equity - provide a means for as many families as possible to all families and caregivers are
  - Provide transparency and built trust and integrity into the process
  - To ensure that parents play in active role in providing feedback on various options, the impact each option has on families
  - Stay consistent with IAP2

- Other schoolboards including Vancouver, Nanaimo, Burnaby, undertake robust planning process

Public consultation is important for long-range facilities plan for a school district because it helps to ensure that the plan reflects the needs and preferences of the students, parents, staff, and community members who are affected by the plan. Public consultation also helps to build trust and support for the plan, as well as to identify potential issues and opportunities for improvement. [Some of the benefits of public consultation are](#) <sup>1</sup>:

- It encourages the public to provide meaningful input into the decision-making process.
- It helps create a strong foundation for long-lasting and trustful relationships between the project and the stakeholders.
- It helps organisations enhance risk management and have better project outcomes.

[The Ministry of Education in British Columbia also requires public consultation as a key element in the development of a new LRFP or when updating an existing LRFP, especially with respect to the desired provision of childcare and other alternative community uses of space in open schools and closed schools, and to increased public access to school grounds](#) <sup>2</sup>. [The Ministry provides guidelines and suggestions for conducting effective public consultation for LRFPs](#) <sup>23</sup>.

Long Range Facilities Plan Guidelines 2019 From Ministry states the following:

Public consultation is a key element in the development of a new LRFP or when updating an existing LRFP, especially with respect to the desired provision of childcare and other alternative community uses of space in open schools and closed schools, and to increased public access to school grounds. This consultation must include students, parents, community agencies, local government, First Nations, business interests, and all other engaged members within the educational community. Input from local bands regarding indigenous student attendance trends and indigenous study programming will be an important consideration in any meaningful LRFP. The results of these external consultations will ultimately assist a board of education when determining the capital needs of its school district, including a strategy for the acquisition of sites for new schools; the retention and upgrading of existing schools; the closure of existing schools, and the disposal of surplus school properties

Here is a short summary of the public consultation process for the long range facilities plan for the following school districts:

- [Vancouver: The Vancouver School Board \(VSB\) conducted a public consultation process from October 2020 to January 2021 to gather feedback on its draft Long Range Facilities Plan \(LRFP\)](#) <sup>1</sup>. The process included online surveys, virtual town hall meetings, stakeholder workshops, and written submissions. The VSB received over 4,000 responses from students, parents, staff, and community members. [The feedback was used to revise the draft LRFP, which was approved by the VSB in February 2021](#) <sup>2</sup>
- [Nanaimo: Nanaimo Ladysmith Public Schools \(NLPS\) engaged with the public from July 2020 to May 2021 to develop its Long Range Facilities Plan \(LRFP\)](#) <sup>3</sup>. The engagement process involved online surveys, virtual town hall meetings, meetings with local partners,

and written feedback. The NLPS received over 2,500 responses from various stakeholders. [The feedback was used to inform the LRFP, which was approved by the NLPS in May 2021](#) <sup>4</sup>.

- [Burnaby: The Burnaby School District \(BSD\) initiated a public engagement process in January 2020 to create a new Long Range Facility Plan \(LRFP\)](#) <sup>5</sup>. The process included in-person information sessions, online surveys, and written submissions. The BSD received over 1,800 responses from parents, students, staff, and community members. [The feedback was used to refine the LRFP, which was adopted by the BSD in May 2020](#) <sup>6</sup>.
- [Coquitlam: The Coquitlam School District \(SD43\) prepared a new Long Range Facility Plan \(LRFP\) in 2019, based on previous consultations, research, and long-term planning](#) <sup>7</sup>. The LRFP was presented to the public in February 2020, and the SD43 invited [feedback via email and an online platform](#) <sup>8</sup>. The SD43 received over 500 responses from various stakeholders. [The feedback was used to finalize the LRFP, which was submitted to the Ministry of Education in June 2020](#) <sup>9</sup>.