
NEWS RELEASE

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Office of the Premier
Ministry of Education

NEIGHBOURHOODS OF LEARNING MAP NEW FUTURE FOR SCHOOLS

VANCOUVER – The future of B.C. schools is changing with the \$30-million Neighbourhoods of Learning pilot project, which will see education and community services brought together in a single neighbourhood hub, Premier Gordon Campbell announced today.

“This government has a vision for education in B.C. – one where schools and community organizations can create Neighbourhoods of Learning where people can access educational and community services under one roof,” said Premier Campbell. “Schools throughout the province will be able to adopt this model in the future to best meet the needs of their students and communities.”

Three school districts will be participating in the Neighbourhoods of Learning pilot project. Vancouver school district will be the first to create three Neighbourhoods of Learning Model Schools by partnering with the Province. Queen Mary Elementary, General Gordon Elementary and Lord Strathcona Elementary – Vancouver’s oldest school – will undergo renovations to restore their historical buildings or replacement, and include services on site that will benefit students and the community.

Lord Strathcona Elementary is already home to a branch of the Vancouver Public Library and the district will consult with the community and local groups to determine what other services to incorporate in their Neighbourhoods of Learning.

“This initiative gives the Vancouver Board of Education an extraordinary opportunity to further engage our community and schools in a common focus on learning and development at all ages,” said Clarence Hansen, chair of the Vancouver Board of Education.

The other two participating districts will be in rural areas and will be announced shortly. In one of the rural districts, a new school or one scheduled for replacement will be designed and built from the ground up as a Neighbourhoods of Learning Model school.

“The Vancouver school district is being innovative and working with community organizations to use extra space in schools to meet the needs of the community,” said Premier Campbell. “The district is developing Neighbourhoods of Learning in order to create places where people have better access to educational and community services, and we expect all school districts to move towards a more inclusive approach when planning the use of school space in the future.”

The Neighbourhoods of Learning pilot project also includes the ministry and school districts working together to incorporate elements of the other Neighbourhoods of Learning Model schools into their existing capital projects.

Neighbourhood of Learning schools can be used for educational or community services, such as early learning or child-care programs, office or meeting rooms for non-profit organizations, health clinics, sports programs, family resource or seniors' centres, industry training, or branch libraries.

“As I've visited school districts throughout the province, I've seen first hand how other schools are using models similar to the Neighbourhoods of Learning by providing community services in underutilized school spaces,” said Education Minister Shirley Bond. “This pilot project is an opportunity for us to formalize the process of including communities in the consultation process to decide how school space should be used.”

In order to support the Neighbourhoods of Learning concept, the School Building Closure and Disposal policy has been created. School districts will no longer be able to dispose of school properties except on a case-by-case basis and with government approval.

The policy also requires boards of education to:

- Consider the needs of all students in the district, including francophone students and students attending independent schools; and
- Broadly consult with education and community partners about the best use of surplus school space.

The policy supports a 2007 throne speech commitment to ensure that schools or school lands are used for maximum public benefit. In addition, a cornerstone of the Province's Pacific Leadership Agenda is vibrant, connected communities that are socially responsive and are environmentally sustainable.

Since 2001, the Province has spent \$1.3 billion to complete 67 new and replacement schools, 147 additions and 25 renovation projects. By the end of 2008/09, the Province will have invested more than \$3.1 billion in school capital and maintenance projects across the province.

1 backgrounder(s) attached.

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