

NANAIMO LADYSMITH PUBLIC SCHOOLS
BOARD OF EDUCATION
PUBLIC MEETING
ACTION SHEET

DATE: March 29, 2023
TO: Board of Education
FROM: Mark Walsh, Secretary-Treasurer
SUBJECT: NDSS Consultation Report

Recommendation

That the Board of Education of School District No. 68 (Nanaimo-Ladysmith) direct staff to conduct further consultation as well as provide additional information with respect to potential NDSS options and report back to the Board with recommendations and next steps for the Board to consider.

Background

On Wednesday, January 25, 2023, the Board of Education passed the following motion:

That the Board of Education of School District No. 68 (Nanaimo-Ladysmith) direct staff to initiate a consultation process with respect to addressing capacity issues at Nanaimo District Secondary School with potentially impacted communities and report back to the Board with recommendations and next steps for the Board to consider.

The NDSS – Ensuring Capacity and Safety (the “Report”) referenced in the motion can be found on the [NDSS Consultation webpage](#).

This Information Sheet and its attachments will review:

1. The Consultation Process pursuant to the Report;
2. What we heard with respect to each option presented in the Report;
3. Present other idea put forward by the community; and
4. Provide recommended motion and rationale for a potential next step for the Board to consider in proceeding on the issue.

Introduction

As outlined in the Report, the purpose of the consultation was to address a significant current and future capacity issue at NLPS’ largest school, NDSS. The District wants to acknowledge that the process has caused stress to potentially impacted students and their families. However, addressing the capacity issue at NDSS is extremely important.

While the District’s success rates continue to reach all-time highs, including at NDSS, the stresses of operating a school so far above capacity impact staff and students in a variety of ways. For instance, lack of elective, specialty spaces and amenities as well as bathroom spaces impacting student choice and comfort. Recently, it has been identified that students are regularly late due to the crowded hallways between classes. The District is concerned about the expansion of portables. The situation, while made functional by the work of our staff, will continue to deteriorate as populations grow.

As the District prioritizes the replacement of NDSS due to condition and seismic safety issues, it is also contemplating an expansion. However, given there is excess capacity in John Barsby and Cedar, it will be difficult to argue to the Ministry of Education and Child Care to fund the entirety of the expansion. The only mechanism for the Board to raise funds is to move funds from our operating budget (e.g. classrooms and support) or to sell land.

Finally, the District would like to acknowledge the passionate, articulate and respectful community that is NLPS. The community has not only pressed the District to ensure accuracy of information they have presented the potential impacts on students of the presented options in a manner that has shifted thinking and led to alternate conclusions.

The Consultation Process

A community engagement webpage included background information with instructions on how to participate during the consultation period: <https://www.sd68.bc.ca/board/community-engagement/>
Information on the community engagement period was:

- Emailed to all district staff via district email
- Emailed to all families via School Messenger platform
- Posted in district news
- Shared on social media (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram)

The consultation period began on January 26, 2023. The community had until February 28, 2023, to provide feedback by emailing consultation@sd68.bc.ca, ThoughtExchange, an in-person session at Gabriola Elementary or during the virtual open house.

Timeline

- Thursday, January 26, 2023
 - Email to families
 - District news for staff
 - Social media posts
- Friday, January 27, 2023
 - Launch the “Ensuring Capacity and Safety at NDSS” [webpage](#)
- Monday, February 13, 2023
 - Reminder email to staff and families
 - Social media posts
- Thursday, February 16, 2023
 - In-person engagement session at Gabriola Elementary from 5:30 to 7 p.m.
- Tuesday, February 21, 2023
 - Virtual open house session (MS Teams) 5 to 6 p.m.
- Monday, February 27, 2023
 - Reminder email to staff and families
 - Social media posts
- Thursday, March 9, 2023
 - In-person session with Lacrosse Families at NDSS from 5:00 to 6 pm.

What we heard

ThoughtExchange

- [Overview report](#) (Overall top thoughts)
- [Report](#) – Parent/Caregiver top thoughts
- [Report](#) – Student top thoughts
- [Report](#) – Employee top thoughts
- [Report](#) – General Community top thoughts

Email

- Received 57 emails (see Appendix A: NDSS Consultation – All email Feedback)
- Email themes along with frequency of mention (see Appendix B: “NDSS Capacity – Email Feedback overview – March 2023.pdf”)

In-person

- Gabriola Island table notes held on February 16, 2023 (see Appendix C: “Gabriola Elementary – consultation table notes.pdf”)

Virtual open house

- Public [meeting](#) held on Microsoft Teams held on February 21, 2023

Regular Board Meeting

- Public meeting held on February 22, 2023
- Received [presentations](#) from Gabriola Elementary PAC and NDSS Lacrosse Academy

Next Steps

Given the feedback and the determination that no changes would happen for September of 2023 the recommended motion is intended to provide more time for staff to dig deeper into the impact of a determination by the Board.

Specially, the following issues required additional discussion and research:

1. The impact of not doing anything.

For instance, staff have not spent much time hearing the thoughts of students and parents who were not going to be impacted by a potential move. Gathering information from this group is important.

2. The impact of expansion of portables.

If the Board passes the motion, staff intend to visit mainland schools with capacity issues that NDSS is predicted to reach if no steps are taken to address the issue.

3. The impact of potentially losing the programs of choice.

Significant feedback has suggested that the programs (lacrosse, soccer, volleyball) could be at risk if moved. Staff feel further discussion about both the reality of potentially losing the programs as well as the impact on student outcomes is worthy of further review.

4. A costing of portable expansion and potential contribution to future expansion.

As previously noted, the costs of additional portables leading up to an expansion will be paid for by the Board (all of the funds for portables and some of the funds for the expansion). Staff require time to determine the budgetary impact of such a decision and where the fund would come from.

Appendix A: NDSS Consultation – All email Feedback

Appendix B: NDSS Capacity – Email Feedback overview – March 2023

Appendix C: Gabriola Elementary – consultation table notes