

NANAIMO LADYSMITH PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
BUSINESS COMMITTEE  
PUBLIC MEETING  
ACTION SHEET

DATE: May 17, 2023  
TO: Business Committee  
FROM: Mark Walsh, Secretary-Treasurer  
SUBJECT: Rutherford Elementary

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### Recommendation

***The Business Committee recommends that the Board of Education of School District No. 68 (Nanaimo-Ladysmith) directs that Rutherford Elementary School be reopened as of September 2025 subject to final approval following the September 2023 confirmation of student count and that staff are directed to create a School Transition Working Group to address issues associated with reopening the facility.***

### Background

On June 22, 2022, the Board of Education passed the following motion:

That the Board of Education of School District No. 68 (Nanaimo-Ladysmith) direct staff to prepare for the re-opening of Rutherford Elementary School and the redrawing of the boundaries of McGirr, Randerson Ridge and Frank J. Ney (with the potential of other minor boundary shifts) with an opening date of either September 2024 or 2025 as determined following the District's confirmation of enrollment early October 2022.

This Action Sheet will provide a recommended response to the motion as well as outline next steps.

### Discussion

There are a number of important dynamics influencing the outcome of the Board's decision on when to open Rutherford Elementary School. This report will be broken down as follows to address the various issues.

1. Introduction
2. Educational considerations
3. Enrollment trends for the north end
4. Capacity and current enrollment in the north end
5. The impact on neighborhoods and catchments of the decision
6. The capital and operating cost of re-opening the school
7. Risk mitigation
8. School Transition Working Group
9. Conclusion

### ***Introduction***

The decision to re-open a school is nearly as difficult as the decision to close one. A Board needs to consider the educational, operational, financial implications and the impact on families and students of such a decision. It needs to consider short and medium-term trends and also attempt to predict the longer-term trends with respect to enrollment and housing development. Re-opening a school based on a short-term population bulge not only impacts the District's financial health, it also risks a future closure if numbers do not bear out. Finally, even where the evidence of need is present, the timing of the decision is a challenge. Does the school open with limited enrollment and wait to grow or does the Board wait until the last moment to ensure a vibrant school?

This report attempts to provide the Board with background on these issues. Staff, with the assistance of outside enrollment consultants relying on future development data, can only provide best estimates. Further, predictions of declining enrollment can be made in error and the same error can be made with respect to growth and the Board should be cognizant of this reality.

Finally, it should be noted that the closure of the school has allowed the District to reinvest millions of dollars into educational programming. These investments have supported record levels of student success. The decision to close was supported by demographic data at the time of the decision in addition to facility limitations that have been partly addressed in the interim years.

As the recommendation makes clear, the educational, operational and financial considerations support the re-opening of the school with some concerns outstanding.

### ***Educational Considerations***

Over the last number of years, the system has seen an increase in the level of complexity of our students. While the cause of this complexity is not clear and is largely influenced by external societal impacts and certainly by the impact of the isolation of COVID on children, the District is increasingly being asked to address issues that range from academic (our traditional mandate) to social and emotion to medical to economic. Whether this is reasonable is somewhat beside the point given the District's inability to limit such demands.

With this increasing complexity in mind, it is becoming clear that as schools continue to grow or even just maintain at capacity, some schools are lacking sufficient space to create the most enabling environment for all students. The philosophy of inclusion, pull-out models, space for regulation etc. is beyond the scope of this report as it is largely intended to address a demographic issue. Nevertheless, there is little doubt that in a system at capacity that, excluding the financial implication, educational harm is unlikely to occur by the creation of additional capacity in schools.

With respect to the use of portables, recently refurbished units referred to as learning studios provide an excellent learning environment. Their modern HVAC systems provide both heating and cooling and are in demand in the schools they have been installed. However, they also remove play space from facilities. Increased divisions also limit access to school amenities such as gyms, libraries and multipurpose spaces.

However, capacity should not come at the expense of a school's culture. Rutherford was built for approximately 400 students. In 2021-22 the facility hosted Pleasant Valley Elementary and was slightly above capacity. The experience was positive. However, in contrast, a school that is half empty is at risk of a lack of vibrancy. Therefore, it is imperative to ensure that Rutherford reaches 250-300 as quickly as possible and be assigned boundaries that will ensure the population is maintained at or above 300 students.

### ***Enrollment Trends for the North End***

Since the District's initial [longer-term housing-based projections](#) were received, the district has had two additional years of experience to ensure that our yield factor<sup>1</sup> aligns with our most recent available numbers. This work has led to declines in some of our projections (e.g., Frank J Ney and Pleasant Valley) and increases in others (such as Cilaire and McGirr). As highlighted in the District's initial LRFP, a variety of factors are influencing the slightly lower growth projections including housing affordability as well as family out-migration to other jurisdictions. Interestingly, the initial Licker Data was based on a pre-COVID environment whereas the most recent update is based on a post-COVID environment. We note that our elementary estimates (Baragar and Licker) have missed on the low-end and our secondary numbers have been above estimates<sup>2</sup>. There is some concern that this may be a direct impact of a post-COVID trend.

Further, there is a lack of clarity of how interest rate increases and more liberal housing development regimes in the lower mainland will impact Nanaimo-Ladysmith housing starts. This latter point is a risk factor. Nevertheless, the District's long term enrollment projections continue to project significant growth.

The Baragar Systems projections that the District relies on for shorter term planning indicate a flat, and in some areas, declining enrollment which differ from the Licker Geospatial data. However, the District has not taken the time to specifically incorporate the housing growth numbers into the program given our reliance on the Licker Geospatial data for our longer-term planning. While not specifically intended, the Baragar data likely provides the Board with the low-end estimate and the Licker data provides the high-end estimate.

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<sup>1</sup> Note that the yield factor is basically the number of students that are likely to be produced by a certain housing type in a specific neighbourhood. For instance, a condo in the north end is less likely to have children living in it than a single-family home with a suite in the south end.

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that Licker Geospatial data was designed as a 10-year projection and then annualized.

### 2022-23 Baragar Capacities and Projected Enrolment

Elementary School Enrolment Data	Official School Capacity	Actuals		Baragar Projected Enrolment							
		2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Frank J. Ney Elementary	415	425	422	429	430	421	419	415	404	406	407
McGirr Elementary	390	434	453	443	480	481	465	447	437	420	419
Pleasant Valley Elementary	345	392	395	403	409	419	439	438	442	437	433
Randerson Ridge Elementary	415	465	479	504	522	522	524	543	540	526	529
Seaview Elementary	320	261	271	259	273	263	272	276	277	274	269
Cilaire Elementary	195	170	181	169	164	169	168	171	169	172	167
Syuwen'ct Elementary	315	352	355	346	346	347	347	346	343	339	332
Departure Bay Elementary	295	393	405	425	429	424	440	451	436	424	429
Rock City Elementary	315	344	331	319	306	292	290	288	287	281	280
Uplands Park Elementary	370	327	330	331	318	316	305	303	305	294	295
Hammond Bay Elementary	535	362	375	384	399	418	431	447	461	461	460

### Licker Geospatial and SD68 Projections

Elementary School Enrolment Data	Official School Capacity	Long-Term Projection A	Long-Term Projection B	SD68 Estimate for	SD68 Estimate for	SD68 Estimate for
		Trends higher	Trends lower	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Frank J. Ney Elementary	415	618	503	425	430	423
McGirr Elementary	390	460	509	438	446	441
Pleasant Valley Elementary	345	719	581	400	409	421
Randerson Ridge Elementary	415	474	507	488	489	493
Seaview Elementary	320	384	393	259	273	270
Cilaire Elementary	195	167	197	178	176	178
Syuwen'ct Elementary	315	478	427	347	346	350
Departure Bay Elementary	295	436	422	406	409	405
Rock City Elementary	315	374	376	322	306	295
Uplands Park Elementary	370	397	371	321	308	309
Hammond Bay Elementary	535	535	416	384	399	418

The projections do not account for the Green Thumb development or any future Woodgrove Mall redevelopment. They also do not account for the holdings in the Stephenson Point and Hammond Bay areas owned by a major developer who the District has met with. The reason for this is the timeline for these projects puts the students slightly outside of the projection window. Therefore, assuming that this additional growth proceeds, additional enrollment will be available outside of the target window associated with the decision. As the District plans any catchment shifts, we will continue to meet with the major landholders in the impacted areas to understand future growth patterns as well as the timing of development.

If the Baragar numbers were accurate, the District could likely combine catchment shifts and the continued use of portables to address our capacity issues. If Licker Geospatial is correct, then additional capacity is the only solution. The immediate numbers do mean that the Board could delay a decision. However, there are other factors to consider in its deliberations.

Based on the BC government's focus on housing growth, the Federal government's continued elevated levels of immigration, continued demand for our amazing area and continued commitment by major developers for sustained growth, it is reasonable to assume that at minimum the area's enrollment will be maintained and, barring major shifts in the region's economics, see enrollment increases.

**Current Capacity Enrollment**

The north end has been facing a capacity issue for a number of years. This capacity issue has been addressed by a combination of expansion (Frank J Ney) and an attempt to expand French Immersion to shift students away from overcapacity schools (École Hammond Bay) and portables.

The District’s strategies to address capacity have been mostly successful. However, many of our sites will cease to be able to support portables if there is continued growth. For instance, we will not place new portables at Randerson Ridge. Departure Bay already has 5 portables. It is unclear whether the Hammond Bay Expansion will have the impact on alleviating neighboring school capacity issues that the business case for the expansion was partially premised upon.

The following chart illustrates impacted school capacities without portables and then with portables, and the variances against current enrolment as of May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023, for the 2023/24 school year:

**Elementary Capacity Vs. Current Enrolment for 2023/24**

<i>Elementary School Enrolment Data</i>	Official School Capacity	Current Enrol for 23/24 at	Variance without Portables	Portables	Revised Capacity	Variance with Portables
Frank J. Ney Elementary	415	422	-7	1	440	18
McGirr Elementary	390	433	-43	3	465	32
Pleasant Valley Elementary	345	387	-42	2	395	8
Randerson Ridge Elementary	415	459	-44	2	465	6
Seaview Elementary	320	242	78	0	320	78
Cilaire Elementary	195	167	28	0	195	28
Syuwen'ct Elementary	315	329	-14	2	365	36
Departure Bay Elementary	295	392	-97	5	420	28
Rock City Elementary	315	312	3	3	390	78
Uplands Park Elementary	370	338	32	1	395	57
Hammond Bay Elementary	535	391	144	0	535	144
	3910	3872	38	19	4385	513

Excluding Hammond Bay, 13.65% of our 2023/24 registered elementary students will be served in portables in the north end (475 of 3,481 students). Further, almost all the schools in the area would require additional portables to serve an additional division or alternatively lose spaces within the school to serve an additional division.

With portables, most of our schools can support their populations and small levels of growth. This strategy is absolutely an option if the Board wishes to wait to see the medium-term impact of the current economic environment. However, Randerson Ridge has been closed to additional enrollment with the exception of kindergarten registration. Further, Pleasant Valley requires an additional portable for September. Notably, due to resource and permitting issues, it is not guaranteed to be ready. Even in the event that portables are available the timing of installations is now so lengthy in planning, permitting and installation that portables are an increasingly poor solution to immediate capacity issues.

With respect to current enrollment, the District is seeing very soft elementary enrollment from projections as follows:

**Elementary 2023/24 Enrolment - Projected Vs. Current**

<i>Elementary School Enrolment Data</i>	SD68 Estimate for 2023/24	Current 23/24 Enrol at May 9	Variance
Frank J. Ney Elementary	425	422	-3
McGirr Elementary	438	433	-5
Pleasant Valley Elementary	400	387	-13
Randerson Ridge Elementary	488	459	-29
Seaview Elementary	259	242	-17
Cilaire Elementary	178	167	-11
Sywen'ct Elementary	347	329	-18
Departure Bay Elementary	406	392	-14
Rock City Elementary	322	312	-10
Uplands Park Elementary	321	338	17
Hammond Bay Elementary	384	391	7
	<u>3968</u>	<u>3872</u>	<u>-96</u>

The District is taking steps to advertise and promote registration. However, the likelihood of having lower elementary school enrollment than projections in 2023-24 is greater than exceeding the estimate. This dynamic also lessens the pressure to open Rutherford in 2024-25.

**Impact on Catchments and Neighborhoods**

Part of the reason to consider the reopening of Rutherford in the short-term is to alleviate pressures at Departure Bay (by the movement of students from Departure Bay to Frank J Ney and Frank J Ney to Rutherford). It is also intended to move students from Randerson Ridge to Rutherford.

Both scenarios will result in family expectations changing with boundaries and limiting access to Randerson Ridge, Departure Bay and Frank J Ney. In the case of Departure Bay, there will be families who not only will be impacted at the elementary level but also their secondary catchment would shift to Dover Bay. For instance, while the catchments are not complete and would require consultation, the likelihood of Oakridge shifting to Frank J Ney and the catchment for Rutherford extending well up the hill on Rutherford Road is high.

The creation of boundaries will result in significant community concerns. Many will be left disappointed, and the Board should be aware of this reality.

Until the Board has made a decision with respect to opening, contemplating how the school should be reopened is slightly premature but there are a number of options including:

**1. Seeking volunteers from the newly drawn catchment to attend the school**

This option would create the least disruption among the community. However, the challenge with this option is whether the school could create grade configurations that make sense. For instance, would the school end up with split classes over 3 grades? What is the cost to opening a school with limited numbers.

There is a possibility that the District could initially seek volunteers but if that system was ineffective then mandatory moves could be required.

**2. Opening the school as a K-1 or a primary school (K-3) or a K-5 and require students in catchment in the impacted grades to shift.**

This option, particularly the K-3 and K-5 version of it would likely raise concerns among impacted parents. In all three of these scenarios is it likely there would be sufficient time to create a school culture by their grade 7 year that the disruption of the shift could be mitigated.

There would likely be limited resources for such a small school, but if the Board has a multi-year budget plan, the deficits created by a small school would be anticipated and fade as the school added an additional grade each year. This is similar to Hammond Bay which will have significant amounts of empty space until their additional kindergarten cohort from 2021-22 moves through to grade 7.

**3. Open the school as a K-7 and require all students in the catchment to move unless a cross boundary transfer was available to remain at their current school.**

This option, while making Rutherford immediately viable, would have impacts on families not wishing to transfer. For instance, a student entering their grade 7 year is unlikely to want to leave their cohort. The financial and operating benefit is unlikely to outweigh the individual impact on impacted families in the circumstances.

These are just some of options available to the District and the proposed working group would ultimately make recommendations as to the catchment and manner of opening.

***Financial Considerations***

There are two main considerations with respect to the financial impact of the decision.

Capital

Rutherford saw investments to upgrade the facility to serve as a temporary home to Pleasant Valley Elementary. This investment dealt with a number of issues including:

- Creation of a new classroom space by reappropriating a portion of the library
- Updating the majority of classrooms - including targeted flooring replacements, painting, whiteboards, storage
- Addition of sinks and hot water in classrooms
- Water bottle filling stations
- Improved classroom ventilation in the two-storey block
- Exterior painting
- IT WIFI/Data upgrade throughout
- Full duct cleaning
- Repair of targeted building envelope issues
- Repair of crawlspace mold/initiation issue

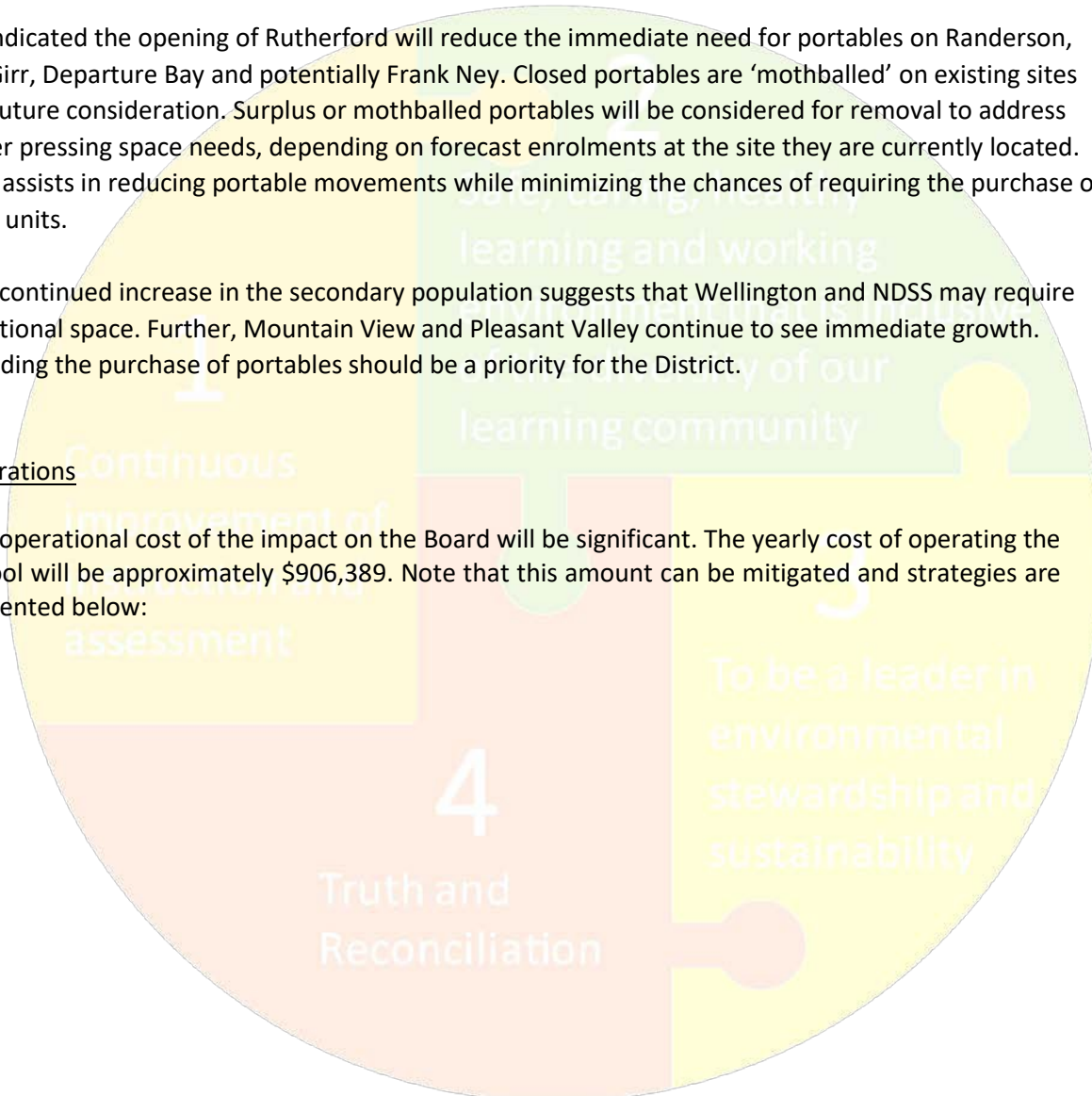
The District has also upgraded portions of the heating system. Given this, the District does not envision a major capital investment to reopen the facility. However, the Board will be required to fund some minor capital alterations/improvements (yet to be identified) and approximately \$450,000 to support school-based furniture and equipment, including desks, gym equipment, library resources, technology, etc. Further, the facility will need to be placed on the District's seismic upgrade list. However, the majority of our schools are currently in need of upgrading. Given this reality the capital costs associated with the Rutherford opening are not a significant barrier and the Board would likely need to set aside approximately the \$450,000 noted above in local capital to prepare for the opening.

As indicated the opening of Rutherford will reduce the immediate need for portables on Randerson, McGirr, Departure Bay and potentially Frank Ney. Closed portables are 'mothballed' on existing sites for future consideration. Surplus or mothballed portables will be considered for removal to address other pressing space needs, depending on forecast enrolments at the site they are currently located. This assists in reducing portable movements while minimizing the chances of requiring the purchase of new units.

The continued increase in the secondary population suggests that Wellington and NDSS may require additional space. Further, Mountain View and Pleasant Valley continue to see immediate growth. Avoiding the purchase of portables should be a priority for the District.

#### Operations

The operational cost of the impact on the Board will be significant. The yearly cost of operating the school will be approximately \$906,389. Note that this amount can be mitigated and strategies are presented below:





## 2023-24 Estimated School Opening Costs - Rutherford

<b>Rutherford Opening - Estimated Ongoing Operating Costs</b>			
Administration	1.000		183,795
<i>Possible Adj for reductions at other schls</i>	-0.300		(55,139)
<b>Teacher Staffing</b>			
Basic		<i>Internal Transfer</i>	
Not all divisions will be transfers	3.2436	124,696	404,464
IST	0.700	124,696	87,287
ELL	0.600	124,696	74,818
Library	0.260	124,696	32,421
<i>Adj entry for reductions at other schls</i>	-1.150	124,696	(143,400)
<b>Itinerant Staff</b>			
Literacy Coord	0.500	129,083	64,542
Counselling	0.400	124,696	49,878
SLP	0.200	124,696	24,939
Psych	0.200	124,696	24,939
<i>Possible Adj for reductions at other schls</i>	-0.300	124,696	(37,409)
Clerical	1.000	70,000	70,000
<i>Adj entry for reductions at other schls</i>	-0.429	70,000	(30,030)
<b>EA Staffing</b>			
Supervision - transferred from other schls	0.000	55,000	-
CYFSW (16.5 Hr position)	0.500	60,568	30,284
Misc. (Bus Driver/Grounds/Caretaker/Materials)			45,000
Saving per 1 route removed from FJN (2hrs/day*school days)			(15,000)
IN-ED Staffing/Supports (EA)		<i>Internal Transfer</i>	
Operating Budget for site			30,000
Annual Utilities Cost			65,000
<b>Total Costs</b>			<b>906,389</b>

**Notes/Assumptions:**

- \* Based on approx. 250-300 students
- \* No expected additional Ministry revenue as students will move from alternate District schools
- \* Most divisions will transfers from reductions to surrounding schools but anticipate some will be new
- \* No additional EA costs as EA's would move with students
- \* CYFSW's are site based, generally 16.5 hrs/week for a school this size
- \* Indigenous Ed - TBD, but site based EA's approx. .5 FTE for a school this size - likely an internal transfer
- \* Itinerant Staffing is site based - transfer of costs likely minimal - Approximate costing/transfer noted
- \* IST formula =  $0-199=60\text{FTE}/200-299=70\text{FTE}/300-399=80\text{FTE}/400+=90\text{FTE}$
- \* ELL added to IST formula where total designations+ELL/51
- \* Subsequent to IST/ELL Formula calculation the FTE is increased per site based complexities
- \* Library formula = 1.0 FTE for every 891 students
- \* Other Itinerant for 200-300 students (SLP/Psych = .2FTE ea./Literacy Coord=.50FTE/Counselling=.40FTE)
- \* Admin=1.0 per Elem school + VP when reach 350 where .20=350-399/.3=400-449/.4=450+
- \* Principal would be added to school, no VP, and reductions at other schools would be the .30 cost of the salary diff as VP's teach .80FTE of applicable division - Or full 1.0 if reduced div per enrol - difficult to project the impact here pending actual enrolment projected for the year of opening
- \* Supervision - 1 position for each 120 students
- \* Clerical - Less than 220 = 30hrs/220-279=35hrs/280-339=40hrs/340-399=45hrs/400+=50hrs
- \* Operating Budgets for Elementary is approx. \$130/student FTE
- \* Misc. (Bus/Grounds/Caretaker) - Caretaker estimate = 2 hrs/day(10hrs/wk.=.25 of \$68K  
Bus is 2 hrs/day=10/wk.=.25 of \$65K - Grounds+Maintenance Estimate = 2hrs/wk. = .05 of \$75K  
plus fuel/materials so rounded from \$37 to \$40K in total

### ***Transportation***

Further, the cancellation of the Frank J Ney bus trip from Route #16, will bring a savings of about \$13,400. As trips on Route 16 also service NDSS and Mountain view, it is not possible to remove a bus from the fleet.

Eliminating the Frank J Ney trip could also improve service from Mountain View catchment to NDSS, and Mountain View catchment to Mountain View Elementary. NDSS students would not have to arrive as early in the morning or leave as late in the afternoon. Route #3 stops could be re-distributed with Route #16 to allow shorter runs and less time waiting at the school to go home. There would be some kilometers added back in the morning so the fuel savings would be a bit less, but the staffing would still save one hour/day. Savings in this scenario would be approximately \$11,600.

### ***Risk Mitigation and Timing***

As noted above, elementary enrollment is low at this time. As the LRFP warned changing economic conditions, lack of affordability in the region, out migration to Alberta and other issues could result in changing dynamics for the District. Staff continue to see significant levels of construction in the region. Nevertheless, if lower enrollment becomes a trend Rutherford's re-opening would be an ongoing net negative to the District that would require the reallocation of resources on an ongoing basis to support it.

The District has five strategies to address the financial issue:

1. Additional Revenue generation;
2. Reviewing Current Funding Formulas within the District;
3. Reallocating Discretionary Expenditures;
4. Consolidating District Programs and/or Resources; and
5. Use Surplus to Support the Opening of the School

#### ***1. Additional Revenue***

There are two areas to look for additional revenue to support the school opening: 1) International Student Programming; and 2) Community Partnerships.

##### ***International Program***

With appropriate boundaries, the North End can currently support a healthy Rutherford. As previously noted, we currently have 19 active portables in the impacted area. Rationalizing our service would require redrawing catchments and closing access to portables and limiting transfers.

On April 26, 2023, the Board pass the following motion:

That the Board of Education of School District No. 68 (Nanaimo-Ladysmith) approve the expansion of the International Student Elementary School Program.

The action sheet associated with the decision can be found [here](#). If the District can successfully expand our elementary school program the District would be able to use additional revenues from the program to support the additional operating costs of a school.

ISE Tuition fees for an Elementary Student are currently \$16,400 which covers the cost of educational supports, District overhead and medical insurance. Residual revenue is able to support District programming.

Notably, as our domestic population continues to grow the international enrollment would be limited by such growth.

### *Community Partnerships*

Both the Board's LRFP as well the City of Nanaimo's Official Community Plan envision schools as neighbourhood hubs. Given this, it is likely that the District could contemplate some rental of the facility if it is conducive to the school and has limited impact. This concept has not been explored in depth but at the very least could offset some of the ongoing maintenance and caretaking costs of the facility.

## **2. Reviewing Current Funding Formulas within the District**

In the event that Rutherford opened and the overall elementary FTE of the District did not increase the District could consider changing school formulas. For instance, any of the itinerate categories should shift resulting in slightly less service to schools while maintaining the same ratio of service to students. Other formulas could also be reviewed if required.

## **3. Reallocating Discretionary Expenditures**

Many of the District's financial obligations are set by collective agreement requirements or legislative need. There are areas, however, that the Board has flexibility.

For instance, the year the Board closed Rutherford coincided with increased hours for CYFSWs. The Board could proceed to shrink the size of the Board for the next election to 7. The Board could limit Learning coordinators or make other similar shifts. Similarly the inclusion outreach program could be an option, bussing etc. These shifts are not being recommended, but in the event that enrollment growth does not appear and other mitigation strategies are unsuccessful, shifts will be required.

## **4. Consolidating District Programming**

The District is also facing a capacity crunch for broader District programming. For instance, Woodlands and Dufferin are nearing capacity for student programming and District supports that are housed at these facilities. In the event that Rutherford opened and maintained at less than capacity the District could theoretically place additional programming at the site dependent on parking requirements. Another example could be our ICE program or even the Board office (however that would involve a significant capital investment).

## **5. Use of Surplus**

Staff have previously presented the idea of setting aside surplus to mitigate the impact of the reopening of Rutherford on our operating budget. This strategy would see the Board setting aside surplus from the 2022-23 and 2023-24 (if available) to offset the operating cost impact of the reopening in 2024-25. Essentially, we would be planning to set aside surplus to offset the additional costs that are not covered by increasing enrollment without the requirement to reduce services. If enrollment did not grow sufficient resource reallocations would be required.

**Timing**

As noted, staff are recommending the opening occur in September of 2025 subject to final confirmation of North End enrollment in Fall of 2023. Currently, based on the current lower than anticipated enrollment for September 2023, a reopening in September 2024 would not be required.

Administrative Procedure 302 provides the following:

Boundary decisions will normally be made no later than the January prior to the commencement of instruction in a new school or a school undergoing school boundary/catchment area revisions.

While September 2024 is achievable, a September 2024 date would require staff to complete catchments over the summer, the Board to determine whether enrollment supports a September 2024 opening in early October 2023 followed by a major community consultation to determine boundaries to be complete by January 2024.

If in Fall of 2023 enrollment is approaching our estimates, then the Board would proceed to direct the consultation work to be undertaken by the School Transition Working Group. If enrollment continued to be softer the Board may wish to consult further with the community (both broader NLPS community as well as staff) to determine priorities.

**School Transition Working Group**

The purpose of the School Transition Working Group (the "STWG") would be to:

1. Discuss catchments as created by staff and external consultants;
2. Discuss the manner in which the school would open;
3. Create a consultation plan for both of these issues;
4. Discuss staffing and risk mitigation (note that some direct discussions would occur between NDTA and the District and CUPE and the District outside of this process);
5. Invite external presentations and guests (e.g. developers, school reps as required) as specific issues are addressed; and
6. Report to the Board on progress and provide recommendations.

While a terms of reference would be drafted along the lines of the points above the intended membership would be the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent Elementary, the Secretary-Treasurer, rep from finance, rep from facilities, Director of Communication, two DPAC members (one executive member and a member from an impacted school), two NDTA reps (with a request for an executive member and a teacher from an impacted school), CUPE reps (with a request for an executive member and a staff member from an impacted school) Leaders for Learning, the principals of Randerson, Departure Bay, McGirr an Frank J Ney and a staff member from the City of Nanaimo.

Note that as a working group there is not a trustee member. This is purposeful. Given trustees will be making the ultimate decision on boundaries, the manner in which the school opens, trustee membership could create a concern about bias.

**Conclusion**

Nanaimo and particularly north Nanaimo remains one of the fastest growing regions in the country. Active and planned housing growth is continuing. More people are coming. The Board’s LRFP commits to ensuring positive learning spaces for our students.

In the District's case it has a closed facility ready to be brought back online in an area of significant projected growth. This alignment of commitment to providing positive learning space and future growth have led staff to make the recommendation it has made.

However, the recommendation is not without the noted risks. Additional space and shrinking our portable usage is a positive goal but need to be considered in the light of any detrimental impacts on programming and the people that provide the programming. The recommendation is intended to balance risk with the benefits of a reopening with negative impacts.

It is likely that some members of the community would prefer the school to open sooner rather than later. The District could likely delay the opening further until additional growth has materialized focusing resources on areas of District need. The recommendation of a reopening of September 2025 with a final review of numbers in the fall of 2023 provides an appropriate balance for the Board’s consideration.

