

**Mount Benson Parent Presentation to
Trustees of School District 68**

October 24, 2007

Presenter: Sharon Preston: PAC President

Q&A: David Murchie: PAC Treasurer

PRESENTATION

- In the 2007 Business Plan, it is proposed that funding for Mount Benson's Expansion be re-allocated.
- Parents would like Trustees to direct staff to keep Mount Benson Expansion funding allocated to Mount Benson as part of its facility renewal and sustainability planning.

Background

- Almost from the day it opened in 1950 as a 3 room school, Mount Benson students have had to deal with a facility which was too small and overcrowded.
- At times our school has operated at almost double its capacity.
- Crowding forced EAs to work on hallway floors and in closets. At times over 1/3 of the school was in portables located on the playground. Parents do not want this situation repeated.
- The school district's 2004 facility study predicts Mount Benson's area to grow by over 350 students, yet none of that growth was predicted to occur before 2009.
- The Neighbourhood has a large amount of undeveloped land close to the school. Many of the development sites will be higher density. Once development begins the school could see over 400 new housing units built within 1km of the school over a short period of time. In addition, between 100 & 200 units are currently under construction or pending construction in other parts of our neighbourhood.
- In addition to Mount Benson's developable area, Coal Tyee's catchment has at least 40 acres of land to develop, and they could see another 200 to 600 housing units, more than enough to push its enrolment past its capacity.
- Both Mount Benson AND Coal Tyee are required to accommodate future growth in the Wellington and Northfield neighbourhoods.

Location

- The Ministry of Education and School District 68 have both stated location is a key factor in site selection.
- As with any service, location determines sustainability and growth.
- Mount Benson School has an ideal location in the centre of its catchment, a high-growth, high-density neighbourhood.
- Avonlea, the farthest subdivision from the school is only 1400 meters away,
- Over half the catchment students live within 750 meters of the school.
- Mount Benson has no close neighbour. Coal Tyee and Pleasant Valley, are 5.8km apart, with Mount Benson roughly halfway between them. Barsby and Woodlands are closer together than Coal Tyee and Pleasant Valley.

Current Enrollment

- As mentioned in the Business Plan, only 67% of Mount Benson catchment's students are enrolled in the school. The school does not have space for all the children in its catchment.
- As a result, Mount Benson has been able to comply with Bill 33 without resorting to portables.
- With every classroom currently in use, even minor increases in enrollment will result in the need for portables or expansion.

Inner City School

- Mount Benson is a Tier 2 – Inner City School.
- Catchment changes which move Mount Benson students to pleasant valley would result in children walking 3 km along busy streets and through industrial.
- Families without cars need schools which are close to them.
- Carless families with young children in both Kindergarten and another grade would have to walk 15-21km a day just to drop-off and pickup their children at Pleasant Valley or Coal Tyee. Regular attendance would be improbable.

A Rejuvenated Building

- In 1986 and 1995 the school underwent major renovations and additions which resulted in a new office, new staffroom, 3 new classrooms, new library, new gym, new computer lab and a new multi-purpose room.
- In 2004, Mount Benson's new gym was renovated and seismically upgraded.
- SD68 documentation shows Mount Benson's remaining seismic upgrade was estimated to cost only \$993,000.
- The cost of completing Mount Benson's seismic upgrade is significantly less than the cost of expanding other schools to absorb Mount Benson Students.

Site Size.

- Site size determines the sustainability of a school in growth areas.
- Too small a site, and the school cannot accommodate growth or provide the necessary field and playground areas for the students.
- Mount Benson is a large site at 7.6 acres.
- Ministry requirements state a 7.6 acre site can support an elementary school of 600.
- Proposals to move most Mount Benson Students to the smaller 6.1 acre Coal Tyee site are unsustainable. Ministry area requirements state this site is only big enough for 400 students.
- Mount Benson's large site is required for the projected growth of its neighbourhood.

Site Quality

- Mount Benson School is not built above the mines which stretch from Wellington to Northfield.
- By investing in Mount Benson School, the Ministry and the School District will be avoiding unnecessary risks associated with building above coal mines.

To Summarize

Site

- It's near the centre of the 5.8km void between Coal Tyee and Pleasant Valley.
- It's in the centre of its neighbourhood
- It's located in an area designated high growth and high density.
- It is a large, stable site which can accommodate up to 600 students,

Future Planning

- It is located where growth is going to occur,
- It is a tier-2 inner city school and is located where it can best serve lower-income families.
- AND it is a critical site in ensuring Public Education is Sustainable in our community.

In Closing

- Mount Benson is a quality site in a key location, in an area School District consultants predicted would have significant future growth.
- The Mount Benson PAC would like Trustees to direct staff to continue to invest in Mount Benson School, and to maintain the expansion plans allocated to Mount Benson as part of its facility and sustainment plans.