

## **MANAGEMENT REPORT**

# Alternatives to New Secondary North



## **Management Report Alternatives to New Secondary North**

Three secondary schools serve the north of School District 68 (Nanaimo-Ladysmith) — Dover Bay, Wellington and Woodlands. Currently, there is acute overcrowding at Dover Bay, with 1,660 students enrolled at a school that has a capacity for 1,225 students. This situation is expected to remain for many years.

A few years ago, the Ministry of Education approved a new 600-student secondary school in the north end of the school district to relieve this overcrowding. However, as a result of the District-Wide Facilities Study in 2003 and subsequent internal reviews, the district decided to review possible alternatives to the building of a new secondary school in the north. A consultant firm, Matrix Planning Associates, was hired by the district to carry out the review.

In reviewing the alternatives for secondary schools in the north, School District 68 had two primary goals:

- to alleviate the overcrowding at Dover Bay
- to improve Woodlands by rejuvenating the facilities and, if possible, to broaden the range of program offerings by increasing enrolment to at least 900 students.

### **The Consultants' Findings**

The study by Matrix Planning Associates considered alternatives to the construction of a new secondary school in the north end of the district. In addition to the range of facilities options which included new construction and renovations, the consultants considered operational strategies such as busing students to schools with surplus capacity elsewhere in the district. The consultants' analysis included:

- development of new enrolment forecasts for north end secondary schools
- preparation of cost estimates for each alternative
- consideration of various criteria in the evaluation of the alternatives

The consultants worked with a steering committee to explore the alternatives, and presented a report to the Board of School Trustees in the spring of 2004.

### **Enrolment Forecasts**

School District 68 has two sources for secondary enrolment projections in the north:

- annual forecasts from Baragar Demographics
- forecasts from the District-Wide Facilities Study completed in the spring of 2003

Baragar’s forecast incorporates many factors and is especially good at dealing with projecting each age cohort into the future. However, it does not take into account anticipated residential development except indirectly through the use of net migration factors. This approach essentially assumes that the future will be similar to the past with respect to the amount of residential development.

Matrix Associates used the Baragar forecast as a base and consulted with local government planners to identify areas where future residential development is likely to be greater than in the recent past. They then added estimates of the number of school-aged children that are likely to live in these new developments to the baseline enrolment forecasts from Baragar.

Matrix Associates’ estimates for enrolment in the three north secondary schools were as follows:

<b>School</b>	<b>2003 (actual)</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2014</b>
Dover Bay	1,624	1,644	1,431
Wellington	1,058	920	803
Woodlands	712	704	602
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,394</b>	<b>3,268</b>	<b>2,836</b>

The forecasts provided by the consultants were slightly higher than Baragar’s estimates for all three schools, especially Dover Bay. The estimates were lower than the 2003 District-Wide Facilities Study forecasts for Dover Bay and Wellington, but higher for Woodlands.

### **Alternatives**

The consultants examined the following alternatives to the construction of a new north secondary school:

- implementing an extended day schedule at Dover Bay
- expanding Dover Bay Secondary School
- busing secondary students from the Seaview Elementary catchment to Wellington, Woodlands or another secondary school
- introducing a middle school grade configuration
- realigning catchment areas with Pleasant Valley going to Wellington and either Coal Tyee or Departure Bay going to Woodlands

The consultants examined the impact of each alternative, focusing on the costs and benefits associated with the most promising options.

### **Cost Estimates**

The consultants estimated construction costs associated with a 600-capacity new secondary north as well as three other alternatives — expanding Dover Bay, expanding Woodlands (as a result of catchment realignment) and an alternative that depended primarily on busing.

The cost estimates for the four alternatives were as follows. Note that all of the alternatives involve major renovation of Woodlands, at a cost of \$8.35 million.

- new secondary north alternative - \$23.4 million
- expanded Dover Bay alternative - \$12.1 million
- expanded Woodlands alternative - \$10.3 million
- primarily busing alternative - \$ 8.4 million

### **Evaluation of Alternatives**

The consultants evaluated the four alternatives using eleven criteria organized into five groups — primary project goals, education factors, strategic factors, implementation factors and costs. Considering all of these criteria, they concluded that the expansion of Woodlands (incorporating the realignment of certain catchment areas) was the best alternative for secondary schools in the north end of School District 68.

The consultants said that the expansion of Woodlands would be the best alternative for secondary schools in the north for several reasons. They said that the expanded Woodlands option would:

- alleviate the overcrowding at Dover Bay
- be the only alternative to significantly improve Woodlands through expansion
- provide the best balance of educational objectives
- be \$13 million less costly than building a new secondary and renovating Woodlands
- be only \$2 million more costly than the least expensive ‘primarily busing’ option
- be the least expensive alternative to operate
- provide the best strategic balance and potential for future enrolment growth or decline

The consultants noted that a challenge for the expanded Woodlands alternative would relate to implementation. They said that the realignment of catchment areas would have an impact on students and parents, and there would be disruption to the operations at Woodlands during the period of construction.

The consultants concluded that if the challenges are managed effectively, the positive aspects of the expanded Woodlands alternative make it the best plan for secondary schools in the north end of the school district.

### **Management Comments on the Consultants’ Report**

Subsequent to receiving the Matrix Planning Associates’ Report, the Board of Trustees approved the following motion:

*That the Study of Alternatives to a New North-End Secondary School prepared by Matrix Planning Associates be referred to district management staff and that recommendations be brought back to the October Business Committee Meeting.*

Management staff have reviewed the Matrix consultants' report in detail. As part of that review, enrolment information has been updated.

### **Expanded Woodlands Option**

Management agrees with the conclusion of the consultants that the expanded Woodlands option is the best plan for secondary schools in the north end of the district. The expanded Woodlands option:

- presents the best educational alternative, creating three secondary schools of 900 or more students (as opposed to four smaller schools) which will be able to provide better program offerings to students
- will help to alleviate the overcrowding at Dover Bay
- will be less expensive than building a new secondary school
- will enhance the program offerings at Woodlands and will provide the school with a much-needed facility upgrade
- has the overwhelming support of parents and the Woodlands Vision Committee

### **Expansion of Dover Bay**

While the expansion of Woodlands would help alleviate the overcrowding at Dover Bay Secondary, the overcrowding and congestion issues at that school would still not be fully addressed.

Management believes that the Board should seek Ministry approval for a 200-student addition to Dover Bay Secondary. Such a project would provide additional space for instructional purposes as well as additional space to alleviate problems related to congestion within the school.

Management believes that it is necessary to expand student capacity at both Dover Bay and Woodlands in order to properly address the overcrowding at Dover Bay. Management believes that an expansion of 200 at Dover Bay and an expansion of 200 at Woodlands along with renovations at that school are reasonable requests, considering that the Ministry had already made a commitment to a new secondary school with 600 student spaces.

### **Realignment of Secondary Feeder Schools**

If the Board requests Ministry approval to expand Woodlands in lieu of building a new secondary school, it is expected that the expansion would be complete by September 2007. At that time, the district would need to realign north-end secondary feeder schools, to reduce overcrowding at Dover Bay.

Management has reviewed enrolment projections and the consultants' recommendations and believes the most logical realignment would be as follows:

- Pleasant Valley Elementary, which now feeds into Dover Bay Secondary, would feed into Wellington Secondary.
- Coal Tyee Elementary, which now feeds into Wellington Secondary, would feed into Woodlands Secondary.

The realignment of feeder schools would occur upon completion of the Woodlands expansion in September 2007. The changeover would apply to students entering grade 8 at that time. Thus, the students to be affected by this change are currently in grades 5 and lower at Pleasant Valley and Coal Tyee. Students entering grades 9-11 would be encouraged to transfer to their new secondary schools in 2007, but they would not be required to do so.

It should be noted that the consultants considered the possibility of assigning Departure Bay students to Woodlands instead of Coal Tyee students, but concluded that Coal Tyee is a better choice for two reasons: the Coal Tyee catchment area is closer to Woodlands and there are more students in the Coal Tyee area, resulting in a better balance of student numbers between Woodlands and Wellington. Management concurs with the consultants in this regard.

There is a map of the proposed catchment areas in Appendix I.

### Revised Enrolment Projections

The expansion projects and realignment of feeder schools would result in the following revised enrolment projections.

	2004 Capacity	Number of Students			
		2004 Actual	2009 Projection	Feeder School Adjustment	2009 Adjusted
Dover Bay	1225	1660	1644	-191 (PV)	1453
Wellington	900	1051	920	+191 (PV) -203 (CT)	908
Woodlands	700	738	704	+203 (CT)	907
<b>Totals</b>	<b>2825</b>	<b>3449</b>	<b>3268</b>		<b>3268</b>
Student Spaces Needed		624	443		443

The above chart indicates the number of students at each secondary school as a result of the change in feeder schools. The enrolments were derived by taking the current grade 3-7 students and promoting them to grades 8-12 in 2009. For Pleasant Valley and Coal Tyee, the number of students would be 191 and 203 respectively. These numbers were then used to adjust the 2009 secondary enrolment projections.

A 200-student addition to Woodlands and a 200-student addition to Dover Bay would result in approximately 43 students over capacity at north end secondary schools in 2009.

In addition to feeder school realignment, the consultants cited other factors that could affect the enrolments at both Woodlands and Dover Bay, over and above the normal projections.

In the case of Woodlands, the consultants noted that 251 secondary age students reside in the Woodlands area and yet attend other secondary schools. This represents 35% of secondary students in the area, a very high proportion of students who do not attend their designated secondary school. At the present time, Woodlands has exceeded its 2004 projection. Management believes that this increase -- coming at a time when a decrease had been expected --

is likely attributable to the Soccer Academy and the impact of recent renovations at the school. The addition of Coal Tye will increase enrolment at Woodlands. The introduction of special programs such as the Soccer Academy, as well as facility enhancements such as the recent renovations and any future additions and/or renovations, will enable the school to continue to attract back some of those catchment area students.

In the case of Dover Bay, a factor that will affect the school's enrolment is the amount of growth occurring in the north end of the district. If the growth in this area continues to exceed expectation, the eventual enrolment at Dover Bay will easily exceed our present projections.

### Revised Cost Estimates

Capital Building Project	Consultants' Alternatives				Management Recommendations
	New Secondary North	Dover Bay Expansion	Woodlands Expansion	Primarily Busing	Woodlands and Dover Bay Expansions
New North Secondary	\$15.0M				
Woodlands Renovation	\$8.4M	\$8.4M	\$8.4M	\$8.4M	\$8.4M
Woodlands Expansion			\$1.9M		\$1.9M
Dover Bay Expansion		\$3.7M			\$3.7M
<b>Total Cost</b>	<b>\$23.4M</b>	<b>\$12.1M</b>	<b>\$10.3M</b>	<b>\$8.4M</b>	<b>\$14.0M</b>
Percentage of cost of New North Secondary		52%	44%	36%	60%
Savings compared with New North Secondary		\$11.3M	\$13.1M	\$15.0M	\$9.4M

### Pleasant Valley Catchment Area Topics

#### *Bussing*

Bussing would be required for a small number of Pleasant Valley students who reside outside of the 4.8 kilometer walk limits to Wellington Secondary School. One additional route would be required to supply this service. Pleasant Valley students are currently within the walk limits of Dover Bay Secondary and are therefore not presently bussed to school. The cost of bussing will depend on whether an existing run can be extended (\$20,000) or whether a new run would be required (\$30,000). The majority of Pleasant Valley students are within the walk limits to Wellington Secondary, as illustrated by the map in Appendix II.

### *Walk Routes*

There are two walk routes from the Pleasant Valley catchment area to Wellington Secondary:

- Metral to Turner (or Rutherford), to Uplands Drive, to Mexicana Road, to Wellington Secondary. This walk route has partial sidewalks and streetlights. While students will need to cross Highway 19 at Turner Road or Rutherford Road, they currently need to cross the highway to attend Dover Bay Secondary.
- Metral Drive to the E&N Trail to Norwell, to Ross Road, to Wellington Secondary. This route has the advantages of the separate trail and the highway pedestrian overpass at Norwell.

### *Public Transit*

Nanaimo Regional Transit provides good service from the Metral Drive area to the Wellington School area. The bus run along Metral begins in the early morning and continues until late evening. Students utilizing this service would be on the bus for about 20 minutes with no need for transfer(s).

## **Coal Tye Catchment Area Topics**

### *Bussing*

Coal Tye students are currently within the walk limits of Wellington and are therefore not presently bussed to school. No bussing would be required to make the change for Coal Tye students to attend Woodlands Secondary.

All areas within the Coal Tye catchment are within the 4.8 kilometer walk limits of Woodlands Secondary School. The map in Appendix III outlines the walking distances for Coal Tye students. For Coal Tye students, the distance to Woodlands Secondary is 700 meters farther than to Wellington.

### *Walk Routes*

There is a walk route from Coal Tye to Woodlands that has sidewalks or large shoulders and crosswalks. The route is via Rosstown Road or Labieux Road to Bowen Road to Strathmore Street to the main entrance of the school. Students would be required to cross Bowen Road, but it should be noted that the students currently walking to Wellington Secondary cross Highway 19. Some students may consider walking along Northfield Road to Woodlands. However, the high volume of traffic and narrow shoulders along Northfield preclude this from being a preferred walk route to Woodlands.

### *Public Transit*

There currently is not a direct transit route from the Coal Tye area to Woodlands Secondary School.

## **Consultation with Community Agencies**

The recent formation of the Nanaimo Safer City Alliance provides the school district with an opportunity to consult with community agencies about the safety of students walking to school. Agencies working together on the Safer City Alliance include the City of Nanaimo, ICBC, the Ministry of Transportation, the Nanaimo Regional District, and the RCMP. If there is a realignment of attendance areas for Pleasant Valley and Coal Tyee, a Safe Walk Committee would be established at each of those schools, and community partners would collaborate in making the walk routes as safe as possible.

## **Discussion with Parents**

Board Policy 3020 - Boundaries/Catchment Areas states:

*School boundaries shall be determined after consultation with the affected communities and due consideration of all relevant factors, including:*

- the present school enrolments and future population trends in the District*
- the accommodation available in the schools*
- the accessibility of the school to the pupils*
- the safety of the students in going to and from the school, and*
- the availability of transportation*

Once the Board has made a decision on the recommendations, staff would arrange meetings with parents of students at the affected schools to discuss issues related to the changes being planned. The consultation would include a letter sent home to parents at Pleasant Valley and Coal Tyee in early November and a meeting with parents at each of those schools later in November. There would also be meetings with the PACs and with staff committees at Dover Bay and Woodlands in late November.

## **Summary and Recommendations**

For a number of years, the district has been seeking a solution to the overcrowding at Dover Bay Secondary and the need for revitalization of Woodlands Secondary.

Approval to build a new 600-student secondary school in the north end was received from the Ministry of Education in 1999 but construction did not proceed because of problems with the acquisition of a suitable site. As a result of the District-Wide Facilities Study in 2003, the district began to question whether there might be alternatives to building a new secondary school that would be more educationally appropriate. Last spring, the district asked Matrix Planning Associates to review possible alternatives to building a new secondary school in the north end of the district. The consultants were asked to address Dover Bay overcrowding and Woodlands renovation in their review.

The consultants recommended revitalization of Woodlands and a 200-student addition. While district management agree with the consultants' recommendation, we believe that it does not fully address the issue of overcrowding at Dover Bay. As a result, we are proposing a 200-student addition to Dover Bay. We believe it is reasonable to request the Ministry of Education, which has already given approval for a new 600-student school, to approve 200 new spaces at Dover

Bay and 200 new spaces and a renovation at Woodlands. The proposed projects will cost less than building a new school and are supported by sound educational programming rationale.

We recognize that approval of these two projects will create change for some students and their families. The district is committed to consultation with the affected schools, and will work with parents to address any issues that may arise.

Management staff believe that the district must now move forward to address the pressing issues at Dover Bay and Woodlands. All things considered, we believe the following recommendations represent the best options for the district.

### **Recommendations**

In lieu of construction of a new secondary school in the north end, management staff make the following recommendations:

1. That the Board request Ministry of Education approval to enlarge and renovate Woodlands Secondary School to accommodate 900 students, with a completion date by September 2007.
2. That the Board request Ministry of Education approval to enlarge and renovate Dover Bay Secondary School to accommodate 1425 students and to alleviate congestion.
3. That the Board approve in principle that students residing in the Pleasant Valley catchment area will attend Wellington Secondary School, beginning with students entering grade 8 in September 2007.
4. That the Board approve in principle that students residing in the Coal Tyee catchment area will attend Woodlands Secondary School, beginning with students entering grade 8 in September 2007.
5. That staff consult with the parents of students presently in Grades K-5 at Pleasant Valley and Coal Tyee to discuss issues relative to their catchment areas feeding into Wellington and Woodlands respectively effective September 2007, with a report brought back to the Business Committee in December 2004.