

## BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES OF SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 68

### ACTION SHEET

**DATE:** December 20, 2006  
**TO:** Board of School Trustees  
**FROM:** Michael J. Munro, Superintendent/CEO  
**SUBJECT:** Proposed Consultation on School Closures

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#### **Background:**

The School Act gives the authority to a Board of School Trustees to permanently close a school. The School Act and Ministerial Order provide the guidelines for the school closure process and state that a Board must have a policy in place that outlines the public consultation process that will be used when the Board is considering a closure.

School District 68 Policy and Procedure 3605 and 3605P on School Closure and/or Alternate School Use provide the process to be followed when a closure is contemplated. The Policy and Procedure are attached.

#### **Discussion:**

School District 68's Policy and Procedure to consider school closures is designed to ensure procedural fairness. Those affected by any potential closure, particularly parents, must be given a meaningful opportunity to communicate their views and have those views fully considered by the Board of School Trustees.

There is also an expectation that all parties will be able to obtain information and documentation from the school district, so that they are able to fully develop and present their viewpoints.

The ultimate decision of a Board must not be made until all of the input is received within the timelines established.

#### **Current Status of Staff Reports:**

On December 6, 2006 staff presented a report entitled "Renewal – Long Range Plan for School Facilities." This was accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation that outlined in detail the critical challenges that face the district as a result of declining enrolment. In the presentation, notice was given that staff intended to recommend that the Board approve a consultation process on the proposed closures of South Wellington Elementary and Dufferin Crescent Elementary, effective for September 2007. All of this information has been reported in the local media. In addition, the report and the presentation have been available on the school district website since the evening of December 6.

At this time, staff believes that the closure of these two schools is necessary to support the needs of all students across the district, and we will be recommending that a process to consider closing these schools be undertaken.

Both school buildings have serious structural seismic issues and have been the subjects of study by outside consultants. The Ministry of Education guidelines for school construction and renovation effectively mean that neither site will be considered for funding support from the Ministry for required capital projects.

In both cases there are schools adjacent to these with sufficient space and capacity to have the students in these two schools attend the neighboring schools.

The staff report of December 6 outlined the ways in which cost increases in both operating and capital budgets is further exacerbated by the impact of declining enrolment across the district.

### **Proposed Consultation Process:**

Staff proposes the following process and timelines be implemented in keeping with the policy on school closure and in the interests of procedural fairness.

1. December 21, 2006 – Letter home to parents at both schools, advising them of the proposed closures and their opportunities to give input. Included will be dates of proposed public meetings.
2. December 21, 2006 – Information about the proposed closures and consultation process will be posted on the School District 68 website with updates as required during the consultation process.
3. December 25, 2006 – January 5, 2007 – Winter Break
4. Early January 2007 – Advertisements in the Nanaimo and local newspapers advising of the proposed closures and outlining ways in which input can be given to the Board, along with details of scheduled public meetings.
5. January/February 2007 – Reminders in all schools' newsletters about the consultation process.
6. January/February 2007 – Two public meetings – one at each of the schools being considered for closure – to allow the district to present background information and to receive input. Summaries of the input will be prepared by staff and given to trustees. The dates of these meetings will be scheduled after consultation with the principal and PAC of each school.
7. March 12, 2007 – Special Business Committee meeting to allow public presentations from parents and interested members of the public to be made to all trustees and partner group representatives. A second meeting will be scheduled on March 13, if required, to hear all of the presentations requested.
8. March 14, 2007 – The deadline for receipt of written input.
9. March 19-23, 2007 – Spring Break
10. March 28, 2007 – Special Business Committee Meeting for the purpose of considering all of the feedback received and to allow all members of the committee to provide reactions to the information gathered during the consultation process.
11. April 4, 2007 – Staff will present a final report with any recommendations to the Board of School Trustees at a Special Board Meeting.

### **Summary:**

School District 68 Policy provides for a consultation period of a minimum of 60 days when a district is considering the closure of schools. Staff has outlined a process to allow full opportunity for response and input by affected communities and interested members of the public regarding the possible closures of South Wellington Elementary and Dufferin Crescent Elementary.

**Recommendation:**

It is the recommendation of staff that the Board of School Trustees of School District 68, in keeping with District Policy 3605, direct staff to initiate a process of consultation on the proposed closures of: a) South Wellington Elementary and, b) Dufferin Crescent Elementary, starting December 21, 2006 and accepting written submissions until March 14, 2007, and that staff present a full report on the consultation to the Board of School Trustees on April 4, 2007, at which time the Board will render a decision on the proposal to close South Wellington Elementary and Dufferin Crescent Elementary schools.