



Northland
SCHOOL DIVISION

Three Year Capital Plan Update

2025 - 2028

March 2024



FOCUS 10

Educational Consulting Group Inc.

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Executive Summary

Alberta Education requires each school division’s Board of Trustees to annually assess their school capital needs and prioritize projects based on the identified project drivers: Building Condition, Community Renewal, Efficiency solutions, Enrolment pressures, Functionality and programming, Health and Safety and Legal. When considering these project drivers and the data available, the following is the proposed aggregated Three Year Capital Plan for Northland School Division:

Priority	School	Cost*
Year 1 - identified as high priorities by Northland School Division administration		
1	Paddle Prairie School – Replacement School	\$10,715,600
2	Elizabeth Community School – Major Modernization	\$6,965,140
3	Grouard Northland School – Replacement School	\$16,347,520
Year 2		
4	Anzac School – Major Modernization	\$2,337,496
5	J F Dion School – Major Modernization	\$1,039,164
6	Calling Lake School – Major Modernization	\$3,980,970
Year 3		
7	Father R Perin School – Major Modernization	\$1,541,302
8	St. Theresa School – Major Modernization	\$737,632

*Price is based on the March 2021 cost, adjusted for non-residential building construction price index change between the 2nd quarter of 2021 and the 2nd quarter of 2023 in metropolitan areas of Canada (24.6%)⁷

Creating efficiency with infrastructure funding is critical, ensuring as many students as possible benefit from the funding available. Concerning infrastructure-related decision-making, It is important to consider enrolment within a school as it may determine future viability. According to the 2023-2024 Alberta School Funding Manual¹, section C1.8, Alberta Education provides grant funding to small schools with a minimum of 35 students. Below that level, funding is given at the base rate, with a much smaller grant.

Establishing a benchmark of 35 students for inclusion in capital projects, and placing schools with fewer students on a monitoring list or temporary hold until enrollment increases, is a strategic approach to ensure efficient allocation of resources and long-term sustainability. The following schools currently have a total enrolment of less than 35 students:

Priority	School	Cost*
Monitoring		

9	Chipewyan Lake School – 25 students – Major Modernization	\$2,616,600
10	Conklin Community School – 20 students – Major Modernization	\$2,184,238
11	Pelican Mountain School – 3 students – Major Modernization	\$2,616,600
12	Susa Creek School – 25 students – Replacement School	\$8,310,820

*Price is based on the March 2021 cost, adjusted for non-residential building construction price index change between the 2nd quarter of 2021 and the 2nd quarter of 2023 in metropolitan areas of Canada (24.6%)⁷

Background

In 2023 Northland School Division contracted Focus 10 Educational Consulting Group Inc. to create the Three Year Capital Plan 2024-2027. This plan provides an update to the original document, utilizing current information. The 2023-2027 Plan includes changes in the Division’s facility inventory, demographic trends, and regional economic conditions.

Alberta continues to see unprecedented levels of immigration. However, the growth is not equal in all parts of the province. Typically, the majority of families new to Alberta choose to move to urban areas. There is some growth in some rural areas, largely driven by the availability of employment opportunities.

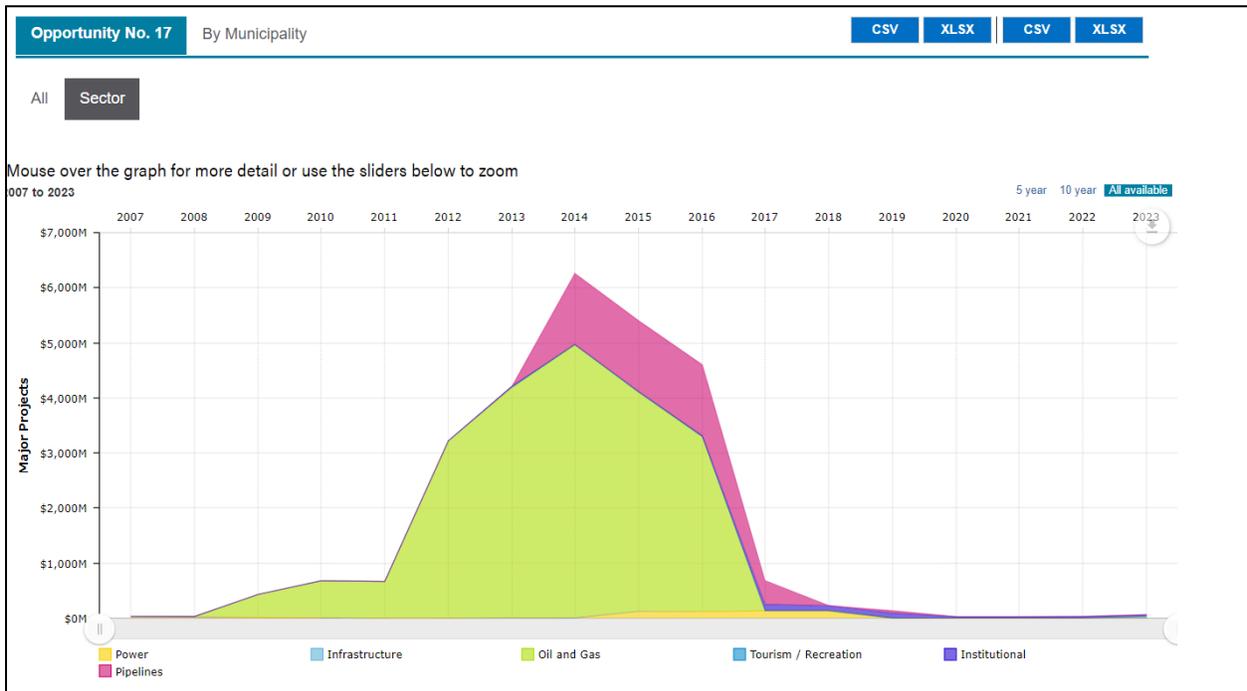
All provinces and territories recorded losses in their interprovincial migration exchanges in the third quarter of 2023, except for Alberta which continued to have the highest net gains, +17,094². However, growth is not equal across all parts of the province. Between 2016 and 2021, rural Alberta decreased by 2.7%, while urban centres grew by 6.3%³. This speaks not only to the preference of migrants to locate in urban centres, but also highlights the trend of rural residents moving into urban areas; usually to be closer to medical services as our Province’s population ages.

While population growth in most of the rural communities remains static, it is acknowledged that growth projections are made more challenging by the fluctuating nature of the oil industry. Population in rural areas in Alberta is generally tied to major projects in the energy (oil/gas) or agricultural sectors. In the areas that Northland School Division serves, employment in the sectors is mostly energy (pipelines, oil and gas, power, etc.). For example, in Big Lakes County, which includes Grouard, the number of major projects has dropped off over the last few years⁶.

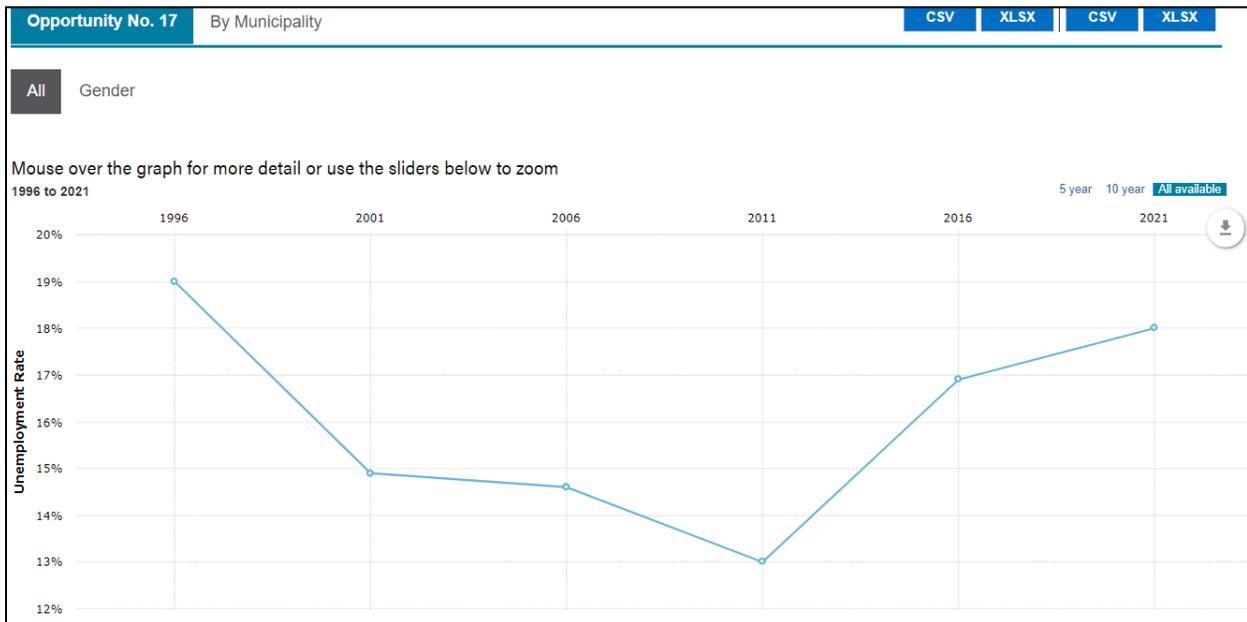


In the Municipal District of Opportunity No. 17 (which includes Chipewyan Lake, Calling Lake, Sandy Lake - Pelican Mountain School, and Wabasca - St. Theresa/Mistassiniy schools), pipeline, oil and gas, power

and institutional major projects have declined since 2014. The value of major projects in Opportunity No. 17 in 2023 was \$62.2 million. The value of major projects in Opportunity No. 17 greatly increased 98.7% year-over-year, and decreased -72.7% in the last five years. ⁴



This decrease in major projects can be linked to the unemployment rate increasing by 6.5% to 18% in the last 5 years. The unemployment rate in Opportunity No. 17 was 18.0% in 2021, increasing 6.51% from 16.9% in 2016. The female segment had the largest decline over last five years, decreasing -6.78% to 11.0%. ⁵



Currently, the Northland School Division (NSD) has 19 active schools, including outreach and online schools. On September 1, 2022, Athabasca Delta Community School was transferred to the Parkland School Division, removing it from the Division's inventory. In addition, Fort McKay School was closed beginning in September 2022 and transferred to the Fort McKay First Nation on October 31, 2023.

The replacement of Mistassiniy School was completed on February 1, 2024, with all staff and students transitioning to the new building on that date. The original Mistassiniy School will be demolished in the Spring of 2024, with final landscaping completed by July 2024.

Given these recent changes, taking into consideration ongoing fluctuation in enrolment patterns and facility conditions, an update to the Division's Three Year Capital Plan was warranted.

Considerations for Ranking Capital Priorities

Alberta Education requires each school division's Board of Trustees to assess their school capital needs and prioritize projects based on the Provincially established project drivers. The resulting capital priority ranking is to be submitted to Alberta Education by April 1st. Following is a list of the drivers and the data considered to support each driver:

- Building Condition
 - Five-year deferred maintenance per square metre
 - The cost to bring the school up to "good" condition over the next five years. This value is divided by gross area (square metre) to accurately compare buildings of differing capacities.
 - Five-Year Facility Condition Index (FCI)
 - This is the building's five-year deferred maintenance divided by the replacement cost for the building.
 - Building Age
 - The building age is considered to be the year of construction of the oldest part of the building. This year is subtracted from 2024 to calculate the number of years.
- Community Renewal
 - Community profiles, environmental scan for total population and economic changes
 - While these factors are not explicitly ranked in the calculations, the information is factored into the enrolment projections which are considered.
- Efficiency solutions
 - Building Energy Cost Index (BECI)
 - The cost (\$) of energy for a school building normalized/divided by the area of the building (2022)
 - Building Energy Performance Index (BEPI)
 - The amount of energy (equivalent kilowatt hour - ekWh or gigajoules - GJ) for a school building normalized/divided by the area of the building (2022)
- Enrolment pressures
 - Five-year historical enrolment
 - Change in enrolment from 2019/20 to 2023/24 for the total school population
 - Ten-year projected enrolment

- Change in enrolment based on projections from 2023/24 to 2033/34 for the total school population
- o School utilization
 - Calculation that shows how much instructional space in the school is being used by students
- Functionality/programming and Health/Safety
 - o Additional context provided by administration for elevating priorities consider additional health/safety and/or program functionality considerations
 - o These drivers are explored in the [Ten Year Facility Plan 2021-2031 and Three Year Facility Plan 2021-2024](#) from March 2021.
- Legal
 - o Not applicable as it only applies to Francophone school divisions

These factors were considered in the creation of an aggregated list for all schools in the Division, informing the Three Year Capital Plan 2025-2028.

School Profiles

Anzac Community School (Kindergarten to Grade 4)/ Bill Woodward School (Grade 5 to Grade 9)



Anzac Community School and Bill Woodward School operate as a kindergarten to grade 9 campus in the hamlet of Anzac. Enrolment at both schools has remained relatively consistent over the last 10 years. Collectively, the schools have declined by 25 students over the last five years and are projected to remain stable over the next ten years. Kindergarten enrolment in Anzac Community School has remained stable at around 18 students over the last 5 years. This enrolment trend is based on known demographics and economic activity in the area.

Anzac is in the heart of Alberta's oil sands. The hamlet of Anzac is located approximately 45 kilometres southeast of Fort McMurray. According to the federal census, there were 548 residents in 2016 and the population declined to 506 residents (-7.7%) in 2021. Until additional projects are planned for the Anzac community, the population is projected to slowly decline and mature, which will mean the number of students will also decline accordingly.

Bill Woodward School was built in 2010 and at this time does not require a major modernization or replacement. Since the Three Year Capital Plan 2024-2027, the siding on the gymnasium has been replaced with metal clad siding, and insulation was added to the deck fluting around the circumference of the gymnasium. In addition, both boilers were replaced. Anzac Community School has higher projected enrolment, above-average deferred maintenance, and Facility Condition Index (FCI). Anzac Community School is currently the most utilized school in the Division. According to the last review of building condition, a recommendation to complete the following scope of work was made:

A complete overhaul of the building management system, the construction of a commercial kitchen, repairs to the exterior envelope (new cladding where appropriate), and the replacement of major system components including windows, electrical, mechanical and structural where required. The estimated cost of this modernization is based on the size and scope of similar projects within the same region.

Since the submission of the Three Year Capital Plan report in 2018, highlighted building improvements at the Anzac Community School include: work to address the fire system deficiencies, upgrades to the security system, moisture remediation, replacement of flooring in a portable, replacement of a phase converter in the electrical system, installation of a downspout heat trace, replaced roof drains, and installation of a new generator, inspections and a variety of general repairs.

The building improvement highlights for Bill Woodward School are: repairs and upgrades to the Building Control System, the gym floor was refinished, LED lighting upgrade was completed, upgrades to the security system, replacement of damaged blinds, the addition of a video surveillance system and some additional repairs to the interior lighting.

Bishop Routhier School (Kindergarten to Grade 6)

Bishop Routhier School offers kindergarten to grade 6 programming in the Peavine Métis Settlement. Enrolment at the school had declined but now stabilized over the last five years, and is projected to remain stable over the next ten years. Kindergarten enrolment in Peavine Métis Settlement has stabilized at around 10 students. The enrolment projection is based on current trends and known future projects.



Peavine Métis Settlement is located 56 kilometres north of High Prairie. According to the Federal census, there were 607 residents in 2016 in Peavine Métis Settlement with the population declining to 387 residents (-36.2%) in 2021. Until additional projects are planned for the Peavine Métis Settlement, the population is projected to continue to decline and mature, which will mean the number of students will decline accordingly.

Bishop Routhier School was built in 2010 and, at this time, does not require modernization or replacement. The highlights of the projects completed at Bishop Routhier School include security system upgrades, upgrade of the Building Management System Controls, sewage lagoon reclamation (in progress), replacement of the fire control panel, the addition of a video surveillance system, and paving a gravel parking lot and bus area for the school.

Calling Lake School (Kindergarten to Grade 12)

Calling Lake School offers kindergarten to grade 12 programming in the community of Calling Lake. Enrolment at the school has hovered around 120 students over the past five years; projected to decline slightly to an average of 110 students over the next 10 years. Kindergarten enrolment in the community of Calling Lake is almost 10 students most years. This enrolment projection is based on current trends and known future projects.



Calling Lake Community is a vacation community with a population increasing in the summer months. The population increase does not include permanent residents; therefore, there is no corresponding student enrolment increase. According to the federal census, there were 448 residents in 2016 in the community of Calling Lake and the population declined to 375 residents (-16.3%) in 2021. Until additional projects are planned for the community of Calling Lake, the population is projected to remain stable, with no student enrolment growth foreseen in the immediate future.

Calling Lake School ranked above average in all categories concerning building age or condition in 2023, and BEPI for utilities in 2022, and is one of the older facilities within the Northland School Division. According to the last review of building condition, requirements are:

Calling Lake School requires the built-up asphalt and gravel roofing to be replaced. Additionally, the mechanical systems have reached the end of service life expectancy. Last, the electrical systems have reached or are very near the end of service life.

Since the 2018 report, completed building improvements include: front door replacement, replaced interior fluorescent light fixtures, upgrades to the security system, automatic door openers installed, replaced steel front store-front doors, replaced hallway fire door, refinished gym floor, replaced the fire alarm panel, upgraded video surveillance, HVAC ducts cleaned to improve efficiency and air quality and the generator was inspected and repaired. In 2024, there was a full renovation of the junior/senior high washrooms, and gymnasium change rooms including flooring, roof, electrical, tiles plumbing, fixtures, fire suppression/lighting, and cabinets.

Chipewyan Lake School (Kindergarten to Grade 9)

Chipewyan Lake School offers kindergarten to grade 9 programming in the community of Chipewyan Lake. Enrolment at the school is approximately 25 students over the past five years and is projected to continue to remain 20 and 25 students over the next 10 years. Kindergarten enrolment in the community of Chipewyan Lake is between 1 and 3 students most years; this year's enrolment of 6 students is an exception.



Chipewyan Lake is located in a remote area, 110 km from the town of Wabasca. The secluded nature of the community is ideal for vacation properties but limits the community's potential for permanent residential growth. Any population increase will not likely be permanent residents; thus, there will be no corresponding student enrolment increase. According to the Federal census, there were 86 residents in 2016 in the community of Chipewyan Lake and the population declined to 72 residents (-16.3%) in 2021. Unless there are additional projects planned near the community, the population is projected to continue to remain stable, with no student enrolment growth foreseen in the immediate future.

Chipewyan Lake School ranks high in all categories concerning building condition, including utility costs and performance in 2022. According to the last review of building condition, requirements are:

Beginning with the exterior, the 'half log' vertical wood siding is extremely weathered and deteriorated; large gaps are present between logs. The siding does not provide an adequate rain screen and grants sanctuary for pests. Chipewyan Lake School's mechanical and electrical systems have reached their lifecycle expectancy and should be replaced. The school's millwork is original and requires replacement, including the plumbing fixtures. Concrete work is needed throughout Chipewyan Lake School, in spaces such as the gymnasium and main entry. The

gymnasium concrete floor slab is exhibiting movement; there is no vestibule at the main entrance and no asphalt parking lot. Lawn areas should also receive minor regrading to better shed run-off from the higher site elevations.

Since the 2018 report, completed repairs include upgrades to the cooling system, generator coolant leak repairs, upgrades to cameras and door security access, and replacement of an LED lamp. To improve insulation and durability and remove pests, the siding was removed to apply an underlay and then re-installed.

Conklin School (Kindergarten to Grade 12)

Conklin School offers kindergarten to grade 12 programming in the community of Conklin. Enrolment at the school has 20 students in 2023 compared to 32 students in 2019. Enrolment is projected to remain low, between 10 and 15 students over the next 10 years. Kindergarten enrolment in the community of Conklin is between 1 and 2 students most years.



Conklin is a remote, rural community located approximately 155 kilometres southeast of Fort McMurray on scenic Christina Lake. The distant nature of the community means that for community growth to occur, employment opportunities would need to be located close to Conklin to contribute to population growth. Conklin is not within commuting distance of any larger centre. When population growth is limited, student enrolment becomes even more limited as the existing population ages out or moves to find employment after schooling is complete. According to the Federal census, there were 185 residents in 2016 in the community of Conklin and the population declined to 154 residents (-16.8%) in 2021.

Conklin School ranks highest in all categories concerning building condition. According to the last review of building condition, requirements are:

The gymnasium flooring has exceeded service life expectancy, and the VCT is exhibiting edges lifting. The school's washroom fixtures are original to the building and require replacement. Last, the boilers and air handling units have surpassed their service life expectancy.

Since the 2018 report, completed building improvements include: replacement of the roof, an intercom system installed, pneumatic controls renewed, the gym floor refinished, the gymnasium light fixtures replaced with LED, the video surveillance system upgraded, blinds replaced, exterior stairs replaced, fire system upgraded, lighting upgrade to LED fixtures, the generator was inspected and repaired, and a water main break required a new water line to be installed to the portable building.

Elizabeth School (Kindergarten to Grade 8)

Elizabeth School offers kindergarten to grade 8 programming in the Elizabeth Métis Settlement. Enrolment at the school has rebounded to 97 students in 2023, up from 77 students in 2012. Enrolment is projected to remain stable, between 95 and 105 students over the next 10 years. Kindergarten enrolment in the Elizabeth Métis Settlement averages 8 and 10 students most years.

Elizabeth Métis Settlement is situated along the Alberta/Saskatchewan border. The settlement is relatively close to the city of Cold Lake (36 km). As this school serves the Elizabeth Métis Settlement exclusively, enrolment in the school is entirely dependent on the population residing in the settlement. Due to their proximity to the City of Cold Lake, residents can choose to access educational opportunities within the City. According to the Federal census, there were 653 residents in 2016 in the Elizabeth Métis Settlement, with the population declining to 594 residents (-9%) in 2021.



The building condition rating for Elizabeth Community School ranks as “good” compared to other Division buildings. According to the last review of building condition, requirements are as follows:

...there are gym roof leak issues, and concern was raised regarding cracks observed in the glulam beam structure. Also, visible water stains down the interior face of gym concrete block walls and in some locations into the beam support pocket. The gym is relatively small but does have a storage room attached. It is noted that there are classroom heating issues that may be partly due to shared thermostats. Within the school, municipal water is provided but not used for drinking; plumbing fixture staining is apparent due to water composition. The commercial kitchen dishwasher has a canopy to collect steam but does not exhaust. On the school grounds, gophers are a problem throughout the property; gopher eradication is currently underway. Moreover, the school's parking lot is gravel and would benefit greatly if paved, along with the concrete flatwork at the main entrance needs replacement. In classrooms, smartboard installations would benefit from cable management accessories, as several loose cords are hanging which can be hazardous. Last, the former septic discharge north of the school property should be decommissioned entirely, and maintenance would benefit from a complete Building Management System.

Since the 2018 report, completed building improvements include: roof replacement, fire system upgraded, security system upgrade, front reception area upgraded, gym floor was refinished, gym doors replaced, LED lighting upgraded, the surveillance system upgraded, the entrance to the bathroom was relocated, a rooftop unit (HVAC) was repaired, and a replacement design study was conducted for the rooftop unit. In 2024, there was a total replacement of the gymnasium rooftop, which will eliminate the issue of water draining into the gymnasium.

Note: The glulam beams in the gymnasium have further deteriorated since an Engineer's report in 2017, which recommended monitoring for further degradation. An inspection of the beams conducted in 2024 identified a need to conduct a closer examination to determine the structural integrity of the beams. Depending upon the results of the structural review, major repair work may be required.

Father R. Perin School (Kindergarten to Grade 9)



Father R. Perin School offers kindergarten to grade 9 programming in the Hamlet of Janvier. Enrolment at the school has declined to 71 students in 2023. Enrolment is projected to continue to decline to approximately 50 students, over the next 10 years. Kindergarten enrolment in the hamlet of Janvier varies between 3 and 6 students, in most years.

There is a large Métis population in Janvier and it is home to the Chipewyan Prairie First Nation. The hamlet of Janvier is fairly remote, located 120 km south of the City of Fort McMurray. For permanent residency growth to occur, either employment opportunities would need to be located closer to Janvier, as it is not in commuting distance to any larger centre, and/or there would need to be growth experienced within the Métis or the Chipewyan Prairie First Nation populations. When population growth is limited, student enrolment is even more limited as the existing population ages out or moves to find employment after schooling is complete. According to the federal census, there were 100 residents in 2016 in the hamlet of Janvier, and the population declined to 61 residents (-39%) in 2021.

Father R Perin School ranks as the second highest in regard to facility condition and fairly high in utilities in 2022. According to the last review of building condition, requirements are as follows:

Concerning the school site, there is gravel access and parking, and the municipal upgrades underway include paving an adjacent roadway, which is higher in elevation than school property. With these additions, the site could accumulate surface runoff. There is landscaping care required around the building to deal with weed growth and unused planter; damage to masonry caused by ice damming. Moreover, the school's skylights, gymnasium rubber floor, and air handling units have all surpassed service life expectancy. There is a partial BMS installed, and the millwork is mostly original and requires upgrading/ replacement. The main corridor would benefit from noise reverberation acoustic treatment.

Since the 2018 report, the highlights of the building improvements include: heat trace installed in drain pipes to prevent damage from freezing, the lighting in the gym has been replaced, deficiencies in the fire alarm system have been corrected, an upgrade was made to the rooftop drainage, pneumatic controls replaced, LED lighting upgraded, repairs made to the intercom system, upgrades to the security system completed, gym floor has been refinished, ceiling remediation from a glycol leak completed, science countertops replaced, upgrades made to the fire system, and the generator was inspected and repaired. There was also some resilient floor replaced as a response to moisture infiltration.

Gift Lake School (Kindergarten to Grade 9)



Gift Lake School offers kindergarten to grade 9 programming in the Gift Lake Métis Settlement. Enrolment at the school has slightly declined to 127 students in 2023, down from 134 students in 2019. Enrolment is projected to slightly decline to approximately 120 students over the next 10 years. Annual kindergarten enrolment in the Elizabeth Métis Settlement is projected to be between 10 and 15 students over the next ten years.

Gift Lake Métis Settlement is located relatively close to the City of High Prairie (40 km). As this school serves the Gift Lake Métis Settlement exclusively, enrolment in the school is entirely dependent on the population that resides within the settlement. Due to the proximity of the City of High Prairie, members can choose to access educational opportunities within the City. According to the federal census, there were 658 residents in 2016 in the Gift Métis Settlement, and the population declined to 625 residents (-5%) in 2021.

Gift Lake School was built in 2015 and, at this time, does not require modernization or replacement. The highlights of the work completed at Gift Lake School included a security upgrade, including the installation of cameras, refinishing of the gym floor, roof repairs, and the replacement of a glass partition wall. In 2023, Gift Lake School installed a new door-answering system and completed some mechanical upgrades that included: re-balancing the boilers, ductwork, radiant heat panels, and thermostat controls were added to the gymnasium and food lab.

Grouard Northland School (Kindergarten to Grade 9)



Grouard Northland School offers kindergarten to grade 9 programming in the hamlet of Grouard. Enrolment at the school has declined to 31 students over the past five years, from 75 students in 2019. The school population is projected to remain between 30 and 35 students over the next 10 years. Kindergarten enrolment in the community of Grouard is between 3 and 5 students, most years. The enrolment projections are based on current trends and known future projects.

The Hamlet of Grouard is located relatively close to the City of High Prairie (33 km). Due to the proximity of the High Prairie, families can choose to access educational opportunities within the City. If employment opportunities increase in High Prairie, Grouard could see some renewed interest as it is within commuting distance. According to the federal census, there were 255 residents in 2016 in the hamlet of Grouard, and the population declined to 166 residents (-34.9%) in 2021.

Grouard Northland School ranks above average in building condition categories, but below average in enrolment/utilization. The enrolment has dropped significantly in the last five years. By September 30th, 2023, enrolment was only 31 students. According to the last review of building condition, requirements are:

Around the exterior, the paving stones, concrete sidewalks, and surface drainage have been partially addressed for safety concerns but need complete replacement. The exterior brick veneer requires numerous repairs, in addition to the roof mansard, soffits, eavestrough and downpipes, which are in poor condition. There are several issues concerning the wall openings. First, the exterior windows are outdated aluminum and require replacement. Second, the window security shutters are not the correct application. Last, the outer metal doors are in poor shape and provide little in the way of heat loss mitigation. The exterior lighting around the school is outdated and damaged. Within the school, the millwork is original and beyond service life. Moreover, the CTS foods classroom is outdated and requires upgrading. Similarly, the CTS woodworking has outdated equipment; dust extraction should also be reviewed. Finally, the building heating, ventilation, and electrical systems are original and beyond service life expectancy.

Since the 2018 report, building improvements include: fluorescent light fixture renewal, security upgrades including cameras, and the generator was inspected and repaired. In 2023, the rooftop drainage system was replaced including gutters and downspouts. In addition, re-grading was completed around the school to further address drainage issues.

Hillview School (Kindergarten to Grade 6)

Hillview School offers kindergarten to grade 6 programming in the East Prairie Métis Settlement. Enrolment at the school has rebounded to 37 students in 2023, from 24 students in 2022. The school is projected to remain at approximately 25 students over the next 10 years. Kindergarten enrolment in the East Prairie Métis Settlement is between 3 and 5 students, most years. The enrolment projections are based on current trends and known future projects.



East Prairie Métis Settlement is located relatively close to the Town of High Prairie (50 km). As this school serves the East Prairie Métis Settlement exclusively, enrolment in the school is entirely dependent on the

population that resides within the settlement. Due to the proximity of High Prairie, members can choose to access educational opportunities within the Town. According to the federal census, there were 304 residents in 2016 in the East Prairie Métis Settlement, and the population remained at 310 residents (+2%) in 2021.

Hillview School was built in 2008 and, at this time, does not require modernization or replacement. The highlighted upgrades at Hillview School since 2018 include the security system and video surveillance system.

J.F. Dion School (Kindergarten to Grade 8)

J.F. Dion School offers kindergarten to grade 8 programming in the Fishing Lake Métis Settlement. Enrolment at the school dropped to 57 students in 2023, down significantly from 73 students in 2019. Enrolment is projected to decline further, dropping to 48 students over the next 10 years. Kindergarten enrolment in the Fishing Lake Métis Settlement averages 6 to 8 students, in most years.



Fishing Lake Métis Settlement is located in the Lakeland area of Alberta. The settlement is accessible to the City of Cold Lake, Bonnyville, and Lloydminster (100 km), but not close enough to any of the centres to be commutable. As this school serves the Fishing Lake Métis Settlement exclusively, enrolment in the school is entirely dependent on the population that resides within the settlement. According to the federal census, there were 446 residents in 2016 in the Fishing Lake Métis Settlement, and the population declined to 414 residents (-7.2%) in 2021.

J.F. Dion School ranks above average in all categories except enrolment. According to the last review of building condition, requirements are:

Since the property slopes from the main community road down to the school front entrance, runoff is subject to freeze up, creating a hazard. One of the main safety concerns is the brick veneer wall on the north side of the modular classrooms. Since the brick is pulling away from the substrate, there is potential for the brick to detach eventually, given the height of the wall. Continuing with the exterior, there are exposed decorative timber rafters which are very weathered and require replacement. The exterior lighting of the entrance colonnade is insufficient and poorly located; the lighting should be upgraded and relocated. The front entrance's concrete walkway/plaza concrete requires replacement and also features brick planters that are no longer used, so they should be removed.

Moreover, the crawlspace of the original 'modulars' may have residual lime from a previous hazmat cleanup, posing a threat to future maintenance. Within the interior of J.F. Dion, the gymnasium shower rooms are out of service and used for storage; these rooms must be modified to comply with the building code if maintained as storage. The gym floor is a non-cushioned rubber sheet product. All of the school's windows are aluminum and of reasonable quality, however, they exhibit air leakage around rough openings. The municipal water quality is in

question, so it is not used for drinking. Last, maintenance would benefit from a complete Building Management System.

Since the 2018 report, building improvements include: flooring replacement due to moisture remediation, HVAC repairs completed, upgrades made to the Building Management System, fluorescent fixture replacement, upgrades made to the security system, refinishing of the gym floor, bat access prevention, replacement of the carpet on the stairs, repair of sprinkler system, inspection and repair of the generator, as well as additional repairs made to the fire alarm system to address identified deficiencies.

Mistassiniy School (Grade 7 to Grade 12)



Mistassiniy School offers a grade 7 to grade 12 program in the community of Wabasca. Enrolment at Mistassiniy School has increased from 261 students in 2019 to 311 students in 2023. Enrolment is projected to peak at around 343 students in the next 2 to 3 years, and then decline over the next 10 years to 237 students. Grade 7 enrolment is from grade 6 students at St. Theresa and Pelican Mountain schools. This enrolment projection is based on known demographics and economic activity in the area.

The community of Wabasca is located 186 kilometres north of Athabasca, Alberta, 130 kilometres east of Slave Lake. According to the federal census, there were 1,480 residents in 2016 in Wabasca, and the population increased to 1,594 residents (+7.7%) in 2021. Wabasca is a rapidly growing community fueled by increased activity in the oil sands and in forestry.

Northland School Division has completed a replacement for Mistassiniy School in February 2024. The \$31.4 million school is designed for 400 students.

Paddle Prairie School (Kindergarten to Grade 12)

Paddle Prairie School offers kindergarten to grade 12 programming in the Paddle Prairie Métis Settlement. Enrolment at the school has increased to 126 students in 2023, from 114 students in 2019. Enrolment is projected to be stable over the next 10 years.



Kindergarten enrolment in the Fishing Lake Métis Settlement is between 8 and 11 students, most years.

The Paddle Prairie Métis Settlement is 70 km from the Town of High Level and over an hour (126 kilometres) from the Town of Manning. The distance between Paddle Prairie and other larger centres means that, for community growth to occur, employment opportunities would need to be located closer to the settlement. When population growth is limited, student enrolment is even more limited as the existing population ages out or moves to find employment after schooling is complete. According to the federal census, there were 544 residents in 2016 in the Paddle Prairie Métis Settlement. The population has remained relatively stable, with 551 (+1.3%) residents recorded in 2021.

Paddle Prairie School ranks above average in all categories, including utility costs in 2022. According to the last review of building condition, requirements are as follows:

The first concern is the school's paving. Whether it is concrete sidewalk or asphalt most is in poor condition. Paddle Prairie School's interior and exterior concrete flatwork is subject to the high-water table of the site, contributing to heaving. At one location, the exterior pad below a door was removed because it had heaved high enough to prevent the door from opening. Also, the south side of the school paving stone is overgrown with weeds and grass. Furthermore, at least one wall of the links serving the modular classroom was replaced due to excessive movement. Last, the school's heating and air handling systems are deemed to be beyond service life expectancy.

Since the 2018 report, building improvements include: upgrades to interior fluorescent fixtures, upgrades made to the security system, including cameras, the gym floor was refinished, repairs made to exterior concrete, and the generator was inspected and repaired. In addition, the portable Career and Technology Studies (CTS) facility was permanently installed.

Pelican Mountain School (Kindergarten to Grade 6)

Pelican Mountain School offers kindergarten to grade 6 programming in the Hamlet of Sandy Lake, otherwise known as Pelican Mountain. Enrolment at the school has declined from 25 students in 2019, to 3 students in 2023. The school population is projected to remain low over the next 10 years. Kindergarten enrolment in the community of Sandy Lake is inconsistent with no kindergarten students in some years. The Division is consulting with the community regarding alternate uses of this facility.



Sandy Lake Community is a small Hamlet, located 40 km from Wabasca. According to the federal census, there were 121 residents in 2016, and the population increased to 163 residents (-34.7%) in 2021.

Pelican Mountain School ranks above average in all categories related to building condition and utilities. According to the last review of building condition, requirements are:

The exterior brick veneer exhibits damage resulting from freeze-thaw conditions. Most of the concrete sidewalks and entrance plaza concrete flatwork is broken, cracked, and spalled. Also, the paving stone has significant weed growth. Pelican Mountain School's millwork and plumbing fixtures, mechanical, and electrical systems have all exceeded service life expectancy. Moreover, the gymnasium lighting seems excessive, with several full arrays. Last, the kitchen equipment appears original and should be updated, including the corresponding mechanical components.

Since this report, building improvements include: the renewal of the public address system, roof repairs were completed, security cameras installed, propane tank repaired, and upgrades were made to the security system.

Susa Creek (Kindergarten to Grade 8)

Susa Creek School offers a kindergarten to grade 8 program and is located near the Hamlet of Grande Cache. Susa Creek School's enrollment has remained at approximately 25 students over the last 5 years. Enrolment is projected to decline to 19 students over the next 10 years. Kindergarten enrolment in Susa Creek is between 1 and 3 students, in most years.



The community of Grande Cache is located 90 minutes from the Town of Hinton and over 2 hours from Grand Prairie. The secluded nature of the community limits the community's potential for permanent residential growth. According to the federal census, there were 3,571 residents in 2016 in Grande Cache, and the population declined to 3,276 residents (-8.3%) in 2021. Most students, in close proximity to Grande Cache, attend schools within the Grande Cache community. Those schools are part of the Grande Yellowhead School Division. Susa Creek School ranks average in most facility categories. According to the last review of building condition, requirements are:

A significant concern is that the existing 'rural' type of property servicing (standalone septic system), water storage, propane tanks, and potable water well add a significant layer of critical upkeep to the NSD maintenance team. Normally, this infrastructure maintenance belongs to utility companies in a municipal setting. Second, the building is a combination of modular components that do not have a core administration/general office or common area. The current kitchen is constructed of residential-grade material. Maintenance would benefit from a complete Building Management System. Last, the building is not barrier-free.

Since this report, building improvements include: the HVAC duct system has been cleaned, upgrades made to the security system, the addition of a well water treatment system, provision of a partial building management system, and remediation of water damage to a portable. Access to the roof-top RTU was identified as a safety concern due to the severe pitch of the roof. The RTU will be relocated to the ground level in April 2024.

St. Theresa School (Kindergarten to Grade 6)

St. Theresa School offers a kindergarten to grade 6 program in the community of Wabasca. Enrolment at St. Theresa School has declined from 288 students in 2019, to 258 students in 2023. Enrolment is projected to continue to decline to 225 students, over the next 10 years. Kindergarten enrolment in the community of Wabasca is approximately 30 students, most years.



The community of Wabasca is located 186 kilometres north of the Town of Athabasca, and 130 kilometres east of the Town of Slave Lake. According to the federal census, there were 1,480 residents in 2016 in Wabasca, and the population increased to 1,594 residents (+7.7%) in 2021. Wabasca is a rapidly growing community with development increasing in both the oil sands and forestry industries.

St. Theresa School ranks high in utilization and building age, but average in all other categories. According to the last review of building condition, requirements are:

The exterior of St. Theresa School features brick veneer which has either been painted or contains clear 'graffiti coating' on many building facades. Some of these locations are shedding the coating, and the control joint sealants have failed; this is evidence of trapped moisture that causes damage to masonry. The exterior concrete flatwork (sidewalks and pads) has heaved and cracked in parts around the building perimeter; some large panels are currently being replaced. Moreover, several areas of the school seem to be overheating; the library is an example. There are interior spaces observed having overhead radiant heating which may be contributing to the discomfort. The existing BMS could also be at the root of this overheating issue; regardless, it must be resolved to benefit the learning environment. On the rooftop, mounted pyramid skylights have been leaking and therefore need replacing. Also, there is chronic back-drafting in the boiler room, causing heavy condensation and a risk of carbon monoxide exposure. On the interior, some of the modular classroom skirting needs replacement. Additionally, the fire suppression system sprinkler tree leaks periodically.

Since the 2018 report, building improvements include: the replacement of the storm window plexiglass, gym floor refinished, upgrades made to the security system, LED Lighting upgrades completed, replacement of exterior concrete, repair made to the school entrance A-frame structure, and repairs made to the Building Management System controls.

Proposed Aggregated Priorities

Considering the project drivers required by Alberta Education and the data available, the following is the proposed aggregated Three Year Capital Plan for Northland School Division:

Year 1 - Identified as high priorities by Northland School Division			
Prev. Priority	Prop. Priority	School	Cost*
3	1	Paddle Prairie School – 75.5 points <i>Replacement of Paddle Prairie School with a new 150-student capacity school on an adjacent parcel next to the existing school.</i>	\$10,715,600
6	2	Elizabeth Community School – 58 points <i>Major modernization including flooring, interior finishes, and major building components/systems (electrical, mechanical, and envelope). Addition of a Gymnasium.</i>	\$6,965,140
12	3	Grouard Northland School – 43.5 points <i>Replacement of Grouard Northland School with a new 150-student capacity school on an adjacent parcel next to the existing school.</i>	\$16,347,520
Year 2			
Prev. Priority	Prop. Priority	School	Cost (March 2021)
4	4	Anzac School – 72 points <i>Major modernization including flooring, interior finishes and major building components/systems (electrical, mechanical and envelope)</i>	\$2,337,496
2	5	J F Dion School – 65.5 points <i>Major modernization including flooring, interior finishes and major building components/systems (electrical, mechanical and envelope)</i>	\$1,039,164
1	6	Calling Lake School – 61 points <i>Major modernization including flooring, interior finishes and major building components/systems (electrical, mechanical and envelope)</i>	\$3,980,970
Year 3			
Prev. Priority	Prop. Priority	School	Cost (March 2021)
5	7	Father R Perin School – 58 points	\$1,541,302

		<i>Major modernization including flooring, interior finishes, and major building components/systems (electrical, mechanical, and envelope).</i>	
7	8	St. Theresa School – 53.5 points <i>Major modernization including flooring, interior finishes, and major building components/systems (electrical, mechanical, and envelope).</i>	\$737,632

*Price is based on the March 2021 cost, adjusted for non-residential building construction price index change between the 2nd quarter of 2021 and the 2nd quarter of 2023 in metropolitan areas of Canada (24.6%)⁷

According to the 2023-2024 Alberta School Funding Manual¹, section C1.8, Alberta Education provides grant funding to small schools with a minimum of 35 students. Below that level, funding is given at the base rate, with a significantly smaller grant.

C1.8 – Rural Small Schools Grant		
The Rural Small Schools Grant is designed to address challenges associated with operating small schools in rural Alberta. Rural small schools will be provided with a guaranteed block of funding to ensure that funding is predictable and sustainable.		
Allocation Formula		
Block Funding Rate per School (applicable group level rate)		
Groups	WMA FTE Enrolment Threshold	Block Funding Rate
Group 1	< 35 and Hutterite Colony Schools	\$26,500+Base Instruction Grant
Group 2	=> 35 < 55	\$481,770
Group 3	=> 55 < 75	\$663,772
Group 4	=> 75 < 95	\$802,950
Group 5	=> 95 < 115	\$920,716
Group 6	=> 115 < 135	\$1,006,364
Group 7	=> 135 < 155	\$1,070,600

Due to this, 35 students is the proposed benchmark for projects to be included in the capital plan; schools with less than 35 students are proposed to be on a monitoring list or put on hold until enrolment increases to a point that future sustainability is ensured. Notwithstanding the recommendation to place these schools "on hold" until enrolment reaches a viable level, capital funds can be used to provide upgrades to the schools as part of the Division's maintenance program. Doing so will ensure the schools remain safe and comfortable for students. The following schools currently have a total enrolment of less than 35 students:

Monitoring			
Prev. Priority	Prop. Priority	School	Cost*
9	9	Chipewyan Lake School – 25 students – 73.5 points <i>Major modernization including flooring, interior finishes, and major building components/systems (electrical, mechanical, and envelope)</i>	\$2,616,600

8	10	Conklin Community School – 20 students – 55 points <i>Major modernization including flooring, interior finishes and major building components/systems (electrical, mechanical and envelope)</i>	\$2,184,238
10	11	Pelican Mountain School – 3 students – 47 points <i>Major modernization including flooring, interior finishes and major building components/systems (electrical, mechanical and envelope)</i>	\$2,616,600
11	12	Susa Creek School – 25 students – 43.5 points <i>Replacement of Susa Creek School with a new 150 student capacity school replace aging infrastructure and reduce utility consumption.</i>	\$8,310,820

*Price is based on the March 2021 cost, adjusted for non-residential building construction price index change between the 2nd quarter of 2021 and the 2nd quarter of 2023 in metropolitan areas of Canada (24.6%)⁷

According to the Alberta School Capital Manual, “If projections show low utilization and declining enrolment, then consider submitting rationale/evidence to support the need to keep the school operational over the next 15-20 years.” This does not mean these schools should be not maintained or closed; however, it does mean that the Division should monitor enrolment to ensure there is a sustainable long-range plan for these sites. The removal of these sites contributes to the increased priority of other sites.

Changes in the priorities include an increase in priority for Paddle Prairie, Elizabeth, and Grouard Northland schools. Factors that influence this increase in priority include:

- Paddle Prairie School - increased enrolment in the 2023/24 school year and improved enrolment projection
- Elizabeth School - increased enrolment in the 2023/24 school year, an improved enrolment projection and increased utilization
- Grouard Northland School

Changes also include a decrease in priority for J.F. Dion, Calling Lake, Father R Perin, St. Theresa, Chipewyan Lake, Conklin Community, Pelican Mountain and Susa Creek schools. Factors that influence this decrease in priority include:

- Many of the decreases in priority are due to the increase in priority of Paddle Prairie, Elizabeth, and Grouard Northland Schools
- J.F. Dion, Calling Lake, Father R. Perin, and Pelican Mountain schools - decreased enrolment in the 2023/24 school year and a decreased enrolment projection
- Calling Lake and Chipewyan Lake schools - smaller increases reported in the Facility Condition Index indicating a slower decline in overall condition
- Calling Lake declined in priority due to a full renovation of the junior/senior high washrooms, and gymnasium change rooms including flooring, roof, electrical, tiles plumbing, fixtures, fire suppression/lighting, and cabinets
- J.F. Dion, Pelican Mountain and St. Theresa schools - less increased reported deferred maintenance as compared to other schools, due to low enrolment or facility improvements.

Summary

This document provides updated information on the enrolment, building condition, utility, demographic, and utilization information that is critical in assessing a plan for capital within a school division. The combination of this updated information with the detailed condition assessment and site functionality in the [Ten Year Facility Plan 2021-2031 and Three Year Facility Plan 2021-2024](#) from March 2021 are excellent resources for the Northland School Division to consult when making major infrastructure decisions. Together these documents fulfill all the requirements in the [School Capital Manual](#) for Three-Year Capital Plans. The proposed aggregated priority list above considers all the metrics in the 2021-2024 and 2024-2027 reports, while adding a proposed layer of accountability that identifies a list of projects for monitoring, ensuring enrolment viability is achieved before a capital request is made.

When these capital requests are funded, Northland School Division students will be well-served into the future. Modernized and replacement facilities support the Division’s vision: “Our students love to come to school in Northland” while also supporting the Division’s commitment to “Excellence in Indigenous Education”.

Sources

¹ [2023-2024 Alberta School Funding Manual](#), Alberta Education

² [Canada's population estimates, third quarter 2023](#), Statistics Canada

³ [Population growth in Canada’s rural areas, 2016 to 2021](#), Statistics Canada

⁴ [Opportunity No. 17 - Major Projects](#), Alberta Regional Dashboard

⁵ [Opportunity No. 17 - Unemployment Rate](#), Alberta Regional Dashboard

⁶ [Big Lakes County - Major Projects](#), Alberta Regional Dashboard

⁷ [Residential and non-residential building construction price index in metropolitan areas of Canada from 1st quarter 2017 to 2nd quarter 2023](#), Statista

Data Sources

Data	Source
Current and Historical Enrolment	Northland School Division
School Utilization Rate/School Capacity	Alberta Education
Condition Information (FCI, deferred maintenance)	VFA - Alberta Infrastructure
Gross Area, Year Built - Gross Area Report	Alberta Infrastructure
Enrolment Projections, utilization projections	Focus 10 Educational Consulting Group Inc.
Capital Plan matrix scores and rankings	Focus 10 Educational Consulting Group Inc.
Energy Information	Northland School Division - REDE