
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Education

NO ATHLETE LEFT BEHIND IN NEW POWELL RIVER SCHOOL

POWELL RIVER – Plans for a new elementary school in Powell River have been expanded to ensure that all children can play, announced Education Minister Margaret MacDiarmid.

The school being built to replace Grief Point Elementary will be home to an expanded gymnasium that will be fully wheelchair accessible, including showers and washrooms for athletes with disabilities, as part of a Neighbourhood Learning Centre (NLC).

“It’s important for all students to be physically active so that they can grow up to be healthy adults,” said MacDiarmid. “This new Neighbourhood Learning Centre facility will ensure that all students have an opportunity to participate in sports and recreational activities.”

Through public consultations on the NLC, the Powell River school district and Model Community Project determined a need for the expanded gymnasium. The Model Community Project is a community-based program that works with federal and provincial agencies and foundations to help persons with disabilities develop access and integration in all public areas.

The NLC, expected to cost \$1.8 million, will also include space for a cluster of early learning services. Identified as a priority during community consultations, this new hub will provide one-stop services for parents and children from pre-natal to age five.

“The new school will be an early-learning hub for the community. We will house our early-learning mobile orca bus, Success by Six outreach with the United Way, and other outreach early learning services,” said Debby Lewis, Powell River school board chair. “The expanded gym will house the community wheelchair athletic events and a fully accessible practice facility. It will also provide the community a full-size gym and playfield for community recreation use.”

Three extra classrooms have also been added to the school plans to accommodate full-day kindergarten and early-learning space. The new classrooms will accommodate 40 early learners and 40 full-day kindergarten students.

The school replacement project was first announced in 2009. Due to its age and condition, Grief Point Elementary was identified as a priority project under the Province’s Seismic Mitigation Program. Studies by the Powell River board of education determined that replacement at the Gordon Park site would be the most cost-effective option.

Construction is expected to begin early this year, with the replacement school expected to open in September 2012. The new school is being built to accommodate 300 students; however, it will have the ability to hold up to 425 students in the future.

Since 2001, the Province has invested more than \$3.9 million in the Powell River school district for an addition to Brooks Secondary, increasing the school's capacity from 575 to 800 students. The Brooks expansion also allowed for the addition of a theatre, TV and film studio, all-weather turf field with sport lighting and expanded teaching kitchen and restaurant to Powell River's only high school.

The Neighbourhood Learning Centre website www.neighbourhoodlearningcentres.gov.bc.ca includes examples of some of the community services and programs already offered in schools around B.C. All school districts are now being encouraged to adopt this inclusive approach to planning the use of new school space by including elements of Neighbourhood Learning Centres in all new and replacement schools.

Since 2001, the Province has spent more than \$1.7 billion to complete 80 new and replacement schools, 148 additions, 26 renovation projects, and 22 site acquisitions across B.C. All new and replacement schools have been constructed to meet the latest seismic standards. By the end of 2010-11, the Province will have committed more than \$3.9 billion in school capital and maintenance projects throughout B.C.

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