

St. Frances Cree Bilingual School Capital Funding Request

ISSUE

In a letter dated January 20, 2021, to the Chair and Committee Members of the Standing Policy Committee on Planning, Development and Community Services, Diane Boyko, Board of Education Chair, Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools (GSCS), outlined the school board's plans to construct a new school on the site of the former Sion School, located at 2010 7th Street East and relocate the St. Frances Cree Bilingual School to this location. Further, the letter requested a partnership between GSCS and the City of Saskatoon (City) be

“formalized to support the actualization of spaces dedicated to fostering physical activity and functional fitness for both the St. Frances Cree Bilingual community as well as residents of Saskatoon, specifically those from the Holliston Community”

For further information on the project and the request see Appendix 1.

BACKGROUND

Following receipt and discussion of the letter from GSCS on February 2, 2021, the SPC on Planning, Development and Community Services resolved that Administration be directed to engage with GSCS Board and report back on potential options to partner on this project.

CURRENT STATUS

The Government of Saskatchewan approved a new school replacement for St. Frances Cree Bilingual School, as part of its 2020 provincial budget. The new school will be built on the former Sion School site located at 2010 7th Street East in the Holliston neighbourhood. The new school will replace the current St Frances School located on McPherson Avenue in Exhibition.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

On May 20, 2021, Administration received a detailed presentation from a GSCS Senior Administrator on the St Frances Cree Bilingual School project. The presentation revealed an architecturally impressive and culturally sensitive school that will have a program developed in partnership with the Saskatoon Tribal Council, the University of Saskatchewan's College of Nursing, Indian Teacher Education Program and SaskSport.

Administration conducted a review of existing funding and current capital projects, including the Recreation and Parks Game Plan and could not identify a source of funding which aligned with scope and within policy to provide funding support to this project. Further to this, the Game Plan Partnership Reserve is currently underfunded, so not able to support any new partnership projects at this time. In a follow up meeting, Administration informed the GSCS the City does not have a source of funding to make a capital contribution to the project, nor to partner in programming beyond the terms of the already existing Joint Use Agreement (Agreement).

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In the Agreement, the City, Saskatoon Public Schools and GSCS have agreed to maximize the use of their respective facilities during non-peak periods in recognition these facilities are a resource to serve the community. Through this Agreement the combined Community Association of Queen Elizabeth/Haultain/Exhibition presently offers community programs at the current St. Frances Cree Bilingual School in the Exhibition neighbourhood and will have the same level access to the new school on 7th Street East, along with the Holliston Community Association.

In return for community access to elementary schools, students from both school divisions enjoy low cost and/or no cost access to City of Saskatoon Leisure Centres and the Forestry Farm Park and Zoo, including use of City-owned sports fields for school activities.

The Agreement serves as a foundation of the City's community development model as Saskatoon's neighbourhood elementary schools and associated outdoor spaces serve as neighbourhood community centres, providing spaces annually for thousands of hours of community led programming.

Administration has reviewed the Community Association usage of the current St. Frances Cree Bilingual School and is confident these hours can be accommodated at the new school or the Queen Elizabeth School, should the current St. Frances Cree Bilingual School no longer be available for community use. Queen Elizabeth school is in close proximity, approximately four blocks east of the St. Frances Cree Bilingual School. However, this may have an impact on the accessibility of community programming, particularly for residents in the Exhibition neighborhood, in that they will have to travel further distance to access community programming at Queen Elizabeth School and the new School. Residents of Exhibition will continue to have access to several outdoor green spaces in their neighborhood parks and the outdoor skating rink in Achs Park located within the Exhibition neighborhood.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no privacy, legal, or environmental implications.

NEXT STEPS

The new St. Frances Cree Bilingual School is scheduled to open in 2024. Administration will facilitate conversations between area community associations and GSCS regarding after-hours community access to the new school. The GSCS has committed to keep the City informed of their plans for the closure and assumed disposal of the current St. Frances Cree Bilingual School building and land in the Exhibition neighbourhood.

APPENDICES

1. Letter from Diane Boyko, Board of Education Chair, Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools.

REPORT APPROVAL

Written by: Kevin Kitchen, Community Development Manager

Reviewed by: Andrew Roberts, Director of Recreation and Community Development

Approved by: Lynne Lacroix, General Manager, Community Services

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