



COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
Report No. 23-061

12 September 2023

New Findlay Creek Elementary School Study – Consultation Plan Approval

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PURPOSE:

1. To obtain Board approval of a consultation process and timeline to establish the opening grade structure, program offering, and attendance boundary for a future elementary school to be opened in the Findlay Creek community.

CONTEXT:

2. The Findlay Creek-Leitrim community is a rapidly growing development area within the City of Ottawa. By the end of 2022, there were approximately 6,400 homes built and occupied in the neighborhood. A significant number of building permits for new residential units have also been issued so far in 2023, and an additional 2,500 units are still expected to be constructed over the next several years.

The community is currently serviced by one elementary school, Vimy Ridge Public School (PS), which offers Kindergarten to Grade 8 English with Core French and Early French Immersion programs, and has a capacity of 674 students. Vimy Ridge PS opened in 2017 as the first of the two planned Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) elementary schools for the community. It remains the only public elementary school within the Findlay Creek Community serving local students.

Significant enrolment pressures exist at Vimy Ridge PS. As at 31 October 2022, enrolment at the school was 1,151, a utilization rate of 171%. The school is currently operating with 23 portables on site which is the absolute maximum that can be placed.

The need for a second 674 pupil place elementary school within the Findlay Creek Community was first identified as a capital priority in 2018. In April 2022, funding for the new school was announced by the Ministry of Education. The 2.55 ha (6.3 acre) site is located at 4501 Kelly Farm Drive, at the southeast intersection of Kelly Farm Drive and Miikana Road. Please refer to the general location map attached as Appendix A. The site was acquired on 22 October 2021.

As per Report No. 22-037, interim accommodation measures currently exist for Vimy Ridge PS area students. Until the new Findlay Creek Elementary School (ES) is open and operating, new students moving into the Vimy Ridge PS attendance boundary area as of 1 January 2023 and beyond are currently being directed to Robert Bateman Public School (PS) for Kindergarten to Grade 6 English with Core French and Early French Immersion programs, and to Roberta Bondar Public School (PS) for Grades 7 and 8 English with Core French and Early French Immersion programs.

Discussion regarding the future accommodation of those current students who are being redirected to Robert Bateman PS and Roberta Bondar PS who find their addresses in the to-be-amended Vimy Ridge PS attendance boundary and new Findlay Creek ES attendance boundary will take place as a result of this study.

The purpose of this study is to gain approval for the opening grade structure, program offering, and attendance boundary of the new Findlay Creek ES, which is anticipated to open and welcome new students by September 2024.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

3. A general location map for the study area showing all school sites situated within Findlay Creek area is attached as Appendix A.

Vimy Ridge PS is located on Kelly Farm Drive in Findlay Creek. In addition to serving students in the Findlay Creek area, the school's attendance boundary area also includes areas extending west to Limebank Road, North of Rideau Road, and South of Leitrim Road (as outlined in Appendix B).

In fall 2020 capital funding for the construction of a grade 7 to 12 secondary school in Riverside South was approved by the Ministry of Education. The approved attendance boundary area will include the entire Vimy Ridge PS attendance boundary area, with the exception of a minor adjustment for the Boothfield Community, which will be redirected to Steve MacLean Public School (PS) upon approval of Report No. 23-048. Upon opening of the new Riverside South Secondary School, Vimy Ridge PS's grade structure will adjust to Kindergarten to Grade 6. Future students attending Vimy Ridge PS will feed to the new secondary school upon its opening.

To facilitate discussion, a preliminary attendance boundary for the new Findlay Creek ES has been included (attached as Appendix E). The preliminary attendance boundary includes a section of the currently existing Vimy Ridge PS attendance boundary. This attendance boundary is not final, however it will serve to stimulate discussion as part of the advisory group meetings and will be subject to revision over the course of the study.

This study does not qualify as a Pupil Accommodation Review (PAR) under Policy P.118.PLG Pupil Accommodation Review, and will include a different consultative process.

Policy P.118.PLG states that a PAR is not required when the Board is planning the relocation of grades or programs in which the enrolment constitutes less than 50% of the school's total enrolment. Staff does not foresee an attendance boundary for the new Findlay Creek ES which would result in the movement of more than 50% of a school's enrolment.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

4. The cost of conducting the study will be managed within existing departmental budgets.

COMMUNICATION/CONSULTATION ISSUES:

5. It is proposed that a working group will be formed in fall 2023 and that it will be comprised of District staff and two representatives from each study school.

In addition to impacting Vimy Ridge PS, the opening of a new elementary school in the Findlay Creek development area may affect enrolment at both Robert Bateman PS and Roberta Bondar PS as a result of temporary accommodation measures identified previously in this report.

Middle French Immersion program students residing within the Vimy Ridge PS attendance boundary area are directed to Blossom Park Public School (PS). It is not anticipated that the new Findlay Creek Elementary School will include a Middle French Immersion Program. Given this consultation with the Blossom Park PS community is not expected to be required as a part of this study.

It is therefore recommended that the working group include representatives from each of the above-mentioned schools: Vimy Ridge PS, Robert Bateman PS and Roberta Bondar PS.

Appendix C provides a snapshot of current enrolment and accommodation data for those schools which are expected to be included in the study process.

Local community associations will also be invited to provide a representative on the working group. Area trustees will be notified and invited to attend all working group meetings.

According to the recommended consultation plan, a study working group will meet on several occasions over the course of the fall 2023. Meetings have been preliminarily scheduled for the months of October and November 2023. Additional meetings of the working group may be convened should they be necessary.

A public consultation meeting is tentatively scheduled to be held within the local community in December 2023. Final decisions regarding the study are scheduled to be made by the Board in January 2024.

A detailed study consultation plan and timeline for the study is attached as Appendix D to this report.

STRATEGIC LINKS:

6. The opening of a new elementary school within the developing Findlay Creek community will serve to provide students with improved access to learning environments and optimize the use of District resources. This is consistent with stewardship objectives of the 2023-2027 Strategic Plan.

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the New Findlay Creek Elementary School Study Consultation Plan and Timeline, attached as Appendix D to Report No. 23-061, be approved.

Randall Gerrior
Associate Director, Business Operations

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Director of Education and
Secretary of the Board

APPENDICES

- Appendix A General Location Map – Study Area
- Appendix B School Attendance Boundary Map – Vimy Ridge Public School
- Appendix C Current Enrolment and Accommodation Chart
- Appendix D Study Consultation Plan and Timeline
- Appendix E Proposed Attendance Boundary – New Findlay Creek Elementary School