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July 16, 2014

Honourable Jeff Johnson
Minister of Education
424 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 2B6

Dear Minister Johnson:

RE: Proposed Francophone School – Scenic Acres

The Calgary Board of Education (CBE) appreciates receiving a copy of Associate Minister Jansen's correspondence to you on the matter of the proposed Francophone School in Scenic Acres. We would like to highlight two issues that are of concern to our Board of Trustees and our Administration. Both issues concern the ability of the CBE and other school districts to move forward without delay on crucial school construction projects to meet the needs of rapidly growing student populations.

First, the selection and development of school sites on municipal and school reserves, through the auspices of the Joint Use Agreement (JUA), is resolved under the fundamental principle that it is in the best interests of both the citizens of Calgary and the local public school authorities. The JUA clearly recognizes the overlapping municipal recreation and educational functions, which through pooling and swapping resources, will optimize the benefit to local citizens and public school authorities.

The ability to plan and build schools on designated school reserve sites, set aside specifically for this purpose, is implicit in the school capital plans which school boards submit to Alberta Education on an annual basis. The parties to the JUA optimize the use of, hold in joint trust, and allocate or dispose of these sites through the protocols set up in the Agreement. There is no provision for a public consultation mechanism in the process of land allocation and subdivision of reserves. While community consultation is very important on many issues, implementing a consultation mechanism through the Joint Use Coordinating Committee (JUCC) for all school sites over 10 years old, as is being suggested by Ms. Jansen, is neither feasible, nor allowable, under the existing JUA arrangements.

Currently, our Three-Year School Capital Plan 2015-2018 lists 23 new school requests. Of these, most are planned on sites which have been designated for

more than 10 years. It must be understood that many reserve sites have been identified and selected years in advance through the JUA process. Communities, however, grow out and develop at different rates of growth based on how aggressive the marketing plans are and how buyers react to the area. The grow out rate and the family profile, to a large extent, determine how and when schools are prioritized. It is unclear how the CBE or the JUCB can be subjected to a requirement to consult on the use of designated school reserve sites when there are legal processes in place identifying these reserve sites when area structure plans are being assessed by the City of Calgary.

The CBE has committed to the development of an information program to inform communities about all our existing designated school sites in Calgary, as it is apparent that some citizens are unaware that they were designated school sites. We hope that improved awareness of these school site locations will help address community concerns about being appropriately informed in a timely manner.

Second, while we recognize your commitment to give the Scenic Acres residents a hearing, we are concerned that parent and resident appeals to Ministers should not be seen as a standard recourse for small dissatisfied groups. If there is a public perception that, as a result of such a meeting, the Minister will request Municipalities and School Boards to pursue outcomes not beneficial to all citizens of Calgary, by insisting on more community consultation, or directing the use of other reserve sites, even though existing district and municipal processes have been followed using sound town planning and technical considerations, there could be significant long-term implications for your office and for school development processes in the City of Calgary.

We acknowledge that our urban landscape is changing and that we are operating in an environment of competing values within our communities. Our Board of Trustees would be happy to participate in a high level discussion with you about these and other perceptions of public engagement issues in order to consider possible new approaches from all perspectives.

The CBE and other school districts desperately need the new schools which have been approved and funded by the government to be built without delay to meet the needs of our students and their parents. It is imperative that the reserve sites that have been identified and set aside for school developments be used as intended for the greater benefit of all the citizens of Calgary and the local public school authorities.

Best regards,



Joy Bowen-Eyre, Chair
Board of Trustees
Calgary Board of Education

cc. Honourable Wayne Drysdale, Minister of Infrastructure
Honourable Greg Weadick, Minister of Municipal Affairs
Honourable Sandra Jansen, MLA, Calgary-North West
Mayor Naheed Nenshi, City of Calgary
Ward Sutherland, Councillor, Ward 1
Anne-Marie Boucher, Chair, Francophone Education Region
Mary Martin, Chair, Calgary Catholic School District
Serafino Scarpino, Trustee, Calgary Catholic School District
Scott Lockwood, City of Calgary, City Planning
Keath Parker, City of Calgary, City Planning
Kyle Ripley, City of Calgary, City Planning
Dean Erickson, President, Scenic Acres
Ruth Sorrentino, General Manager, Scenic Acres Community Association
Save Our Park Steering Committee

