

July 19, 2024

Honourable Demetrios Nicolaides
Minister of Education
Members of Executive Council
228 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Ave
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

<sent via email: education.minister@gov.ab.ca>

Re: Progress on Vera M. Welsh Replacement School

Dear Minister Nicolaides,

The Northern Lights Public Schools' (NLPS) Board of Trustees would like to express our appreciation to Alberta Education and Alberta Infrastructure for their efforts in advancing our replacement K-3 school for Vera M. Welsh Elementary School (VWM) in Lac la Biche. We appreciate the planning and the many meetings that have occurred thus far.

As we progress through the design phase and move toward the tendering process for an architect, our students, their families, and our staff all share in our anticipation and excitement for the next phase. Despite the community's disappointment at not receiving construction funding in Budget 2024, we are all thrilled by the progress and collaboration over the past months to address student needs in the community and have been diligent in keeping the community informed about the progress being made.

Cognisant of the complex situation in meeting the needs of Lac la Biche's students, NLPS has been intentional about approaching our sister boards in a solutions-focused manner. In February 2023, our Board was pleased to learn that the Minister was open to the transfer of the NLPS building that currently houses Light of Christ School to Lakeland Roman Catholic Separate School Division (LCSD), once both school boards have agreed upon terms. Although we invited LCSD to submit a proposal that is reflective of their needs and have met several times since, we

have, to date, not received a proposal nor discussed any other proposals, including the possibility of a shared space.

NLPS understands the community's strong desire for a replacement school for VMW as soon as possible, with its proximity to the rail line and a major intersection, along with its recognized structural concerns. Our Board is receiving pressure to ensure the school is built without further delay. At this point in progress on design, we would not choose to change direction on the project, nor would our current site allow for it. While we await a response from LCSD regarding their needs in order to realize the official transfer of the Light of Christ building, we remain dedicated to working diligently with Alberta Education, Alberta Infrastructure, and other partners to progress towards securing a modern K-3 learning environment for VWM students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karen R", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Karen Packard
Board Chair, NLPS

cc: Chair Mary Anne Penner, LCSD
Minister Brian Jean