

Northern Lights Public Schools

2026-2029

CAPITAL

PLAN





PREFACE

Each year, school divisions across the province are required to submit a Three-Year Capital Plan to Alberta Education. All school divisions are also required to have a 10-Year Capital Plan on file that is approved by the School Board.

Some things should be noted when reading the document, including the following:

- The Capital Plans are a list of capital priorities that the Board would like the Provincial Government to fund. They are a “wish list” submitted to the Government for consideration in its infrastructure planning process. The Government decides which projects are approved for funding and when they will go ahead.
- The School Division does not receive annual funding that it can use to construct new schools or do major renovations to an existing school. The School Board cannot requisition funds from taxpayers to pay for new schools or major renovations. If projects do not receive approval from the Provincial Government, the School Division cannot move forward with construction.
- While the plans are referred to as a Three-Year and 10-Year Capital Plan respectively, that does not mean that all, or any, of the projects will actually be approved or completed within that timeframe. Sometimes it takes many years for a project to be approved, even if it is ranked at the top of the School Division's Capital Plan.
- While the plan includes scheduled start dates, end dates, and costs, those are estimates and suggestions only. The dates are determined based on how quickly the Division wants to move forward with the project and how quickly construction could start if the project was approved immediately. The dates usually also reflect any work that has already been done to move the project forward, such as negotiating a location with a municipality. The suggested dates and costs are used to help the Provincial Government assess the project and determine whether or not to approve it. If, and when, the Government approves a project, it will determine the actual timelines and budget for that project.
- The School Division is required to rank all of the projects, but that does not mean that the projects will proceed in that order. For instance, a modernization project, which is a renovation of an existing facility, may move forward before the construction of a new school. This could be due to a variety of factors, including cost. As well, it is possible for priorities to shift, particularly if there are emergent issues that increase or decrease the urgency of a particular project.



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REPLACEMENT SCHOOL

Vera M. Welsh Elementary

Vera M Welsh is in a low lying area, which contributes to many facility issues and health concerns. An underground spring runs through the lower mechanical room. Additionally, it is located next to the CN railroad that hauls dangerous chemicals up to oil and gas sites. While the NLPS maintenance team does its best to address issues, it is still an old, tired facility that is at end of life. The five-year deferred maintenance costs, estimated several years ago, of \$11.8 M alone are a third of the cost of replacement .

NLPS was thankful to receive an announcement for design funding in Budget 2023 for a replacement school and since that time has been working diligently on sourcing and confirming the site, visiting schools across the province, and engaging with parents and staff to aid in design determination. The school will be located adjacent to the Bold Centre with access off of Nipawin Road. This location will provide walking access to the Bold Centre while still providing the necessary security required for elementary schools.

Currently, the design of the school is nearing completion (working drawings will be 90% by March 31). With respect to the design, NLPS was unsuccessful in its request to increase the overall capacity to 400, but the core of the building will accommodate expansion to 400. This means that the school will open at a 92% utilization (counting ECS as 1.0 FTE), and will not accommodate a preschool program.

With this news, NLPS and parents are looking to find solutions to offer preschool programming, which is extremely limited in the local community. As the design is anticipated to be tender ready by the end of April 2025, the next step is to wait for a construction announcement.



Project Budget

\$37,750,000



Key Drivers

Health & Safety
Demographics
Infrastructure Condition

Quick Facts

Has been on Capital Plan for 20 years

School is currently underutilized

Will be eligible for playground funding at new site

5 year deferred maintenance costs are \$12.3M

Programming benefits being located close to the Bold Centre

The replacement school will be right-sized to enrollment

Change in Capacity & Area

Current Capacity: 620

Current Gross Area: 4,312.88

Current Instructional Area: 2,149.90

Proposed Capacity: 345

Proposed Gross Area: 3379

Proposed Instructional Area: 2,203



REPLACEMENT SCHOOL

Cold Lake South Solution

In 2019, NLPS embarked on a reconfiguration in Cold Lake to alleviate pressure at the schools in the north by shifting students to the south, where schools were historically significantly underutilized. At that time, Cold Lake had two elementary schools (NSES in the south as a K-3 and CLES in the north as a K-4), two middle schools (CLMS in the south as a Grade 4-8 and NHS in the north as a 5-8), one high school (CLHS located centrally for 9-12) and one alternative program (ASAA, K-8) located on 4 Wing Cold Lake. All schools were at or near capacity, except for the two in the south. After reconfiguring, the intent was to operate the schools in the south at 85% of capacity. However, an influx of students started to occur at our schools in the south that coincided with the reconfiguration.

Now, NLPS finds itself with schools that were end of life in 2006 (ASAA) with no replacement solution, maxed out on all fronts (space, power, parking, play areas, etc.) with not enough gym space for the increased capacity (NSES) or of poor design causing significant supervision (and potentially liability) issues (CLJH). The three schools involved are all within the K-9 configuration. Initially, this request was only contemplating a modernization of NSES, but has since evolved to requiring a solution for all three schools in the south of Cold Lake.

Staff have met with the City of Cold Lake and 4 Wing Cold Lake to discuss potential sites, but site selection hinges upon how to reconfigure and address the facility issues in the south along with proposed city development. Planning funds would be extremely useful in helping determine the best approach to an educational solution. Planning funds would be used to determine scope, negotiate sites (as a facility may need to be built on federal lands) and determine the costs necessary to develop a more robust capital plan submission.



Project Budget

\$65,000,000



Key Drivers

Demographics
Infrastructure Condition
Healthy & Safety
Program Changes

Quick Facts

Capacity issues - both Art Smith Aviation Academy and North Star Elementary School are nearing capacity

Programming issues - not enough gym/library time at North Star Elementary School and gym is inadequate

Liability issues - line of sight and supervision at Cold Lake Junior High and safety concerns at Art Smith and North Star

Site issues - where to locate a replacement school (on federal land, MD or City land)

A Solution for 3 Schools

Art Smith Aviation Academy

North Star Elementary School

Cold Lake Junior High



REPLACEMENT SCHOOL

Buffalo Lake Metis Settlement

NLPS is requesting a new K-8 School on the Buffalo Lake Metis Settlement to replace an aging school at the current Caslan site. Buffalo Lake is the only Metis settlement in the province without a school. The Settlement has been advocating for a school for the past number of years and NLPS is partnering with them to further this request.

A new K-8 school has been chosen simply because it is replacing Caslan School. Conversations with the Settlement indicate that not all students are attending Caslan School. The Settlement also believes that a K-12 may be warranted. With nearly all students being bussed offsite (Crossroads Outreach is the exception), the actual school population may increase if education was offered at the Settlement. Currently, Caslan School is struggling to obtain funding for a new playground as it is difficult to source funding for a school that is hopefully going to be relocated. The capacity requested for the new school is 200 student spaces, but a value scoping or design funding would be beneficial in determining configuration and capacity.

The current school facility has a number of condition issues including boilers and air handling units, windows, emergency lights, and a electrical panel that need replacing. There have been no interior upgrades to flooring, ceilings and millwork since the 1980s. The pipes to the sewage lagoon are starting to deteriorate and the pump to the lift station is at end of life. This facility is in a precarious condition. So while health and safety are not a concern currently, it is imminent. A replacement school located on the Settlement would also likely reduce transportation costs, as all students are currently bused from Buffalo Lake to Caslan to attend school.

Buffalo Lake Metis Settlement recently built a new community centre and is addressing growth within the community. The intent of the property surrounding the site identified for a school is to develop more residential housing. There is also the possibility of co-locating community services with the new school, like the Head Start program, currently offered out of a different building on the Settlement .

NLPS is requesting for an announcement of planning funding to better determine the scope of this project which will aid in cost calculations and design.



Project Budget

\$24,500,000



Key Drivers

Infrastructure Condition
Other

Quick Facts

Only Metis Settlement without their own school

Students are bused 20 minutes from Settlement to Caslan School

Caslan school population is 100% students from the Settlement

Buffalo Lake Metis Settlement has designated land with services adjacent to it

This project would require the disposal or demolition of Caslan School

Change in Capacity & Area

Current Capacity: 266

Current Gross Area: 1,754.27

Current Instructional Area: 959.20

Proposed Capacity: 200

Proposed Gross Area: 2,114

Proposed Instructional Area: 1,229



MODERNIZATION

Ecole Plamondon School

Ecole Plamondon School would benefit from planning funds to determine the scope of improvements needed on the facility. The building was constructed in 1965, and in 2024 was impacted by a major flood. Other than the high school addition, paid for by NLPS, this facility has seen limited improvements, even after the flood. It has significant shortcomings both from a programming perspective and deteriorating facility conditions.

From a facility perspective, there are code issues with the building that compromise the safety of the students. Plumbing (pipes, stacks, drains), flooding and drainage, and continuous sewer smells in the school are a drain on the division's limited maintenance funds and pose safety concerns for students and staff. One bank of washrooms has been renovated with IMR funding, but the elementary banks still need upgrading. From a building condition perspective, the school needs new windows, a new roof, replacement boiler and air handling unit. In 2023, it was determined that the 3 portables on site needed to be demolished, and access for programming use for 2023-24 was eliminated. NLPS has submitted an application for demolition (utilization after demolition would be ~75%). While it is recognized that "old and tired" buildings do not necessarily qualify for funding approval, this is part of the overall assessment. The millwork in classrooms and the flooring were upgraded as part of the flood restoration, but ceilings throughout the school need to be replaced.

With respect to programming, this school does not meet the needs of K-12 programming requirements. The addition that was funded by NLPS in 2009 addressed some of the shortcomings, but there still remains programming deficits. This includes a home economics room. NLPS has also been unable to fully capitalize on the Skills Canada tire balancing equipment that was donated. This is frustrating for parents and students alike as there is no rationale available to justify how these programming deficits are allowed to continue.

Given the historical enrolments at Ecole Plamondon, it is evident that, other than a drop during the pandemic, the enrolment has been fairly consistent. This request does not include a growth component, but only addresses the facility itself. A modernization would be extremely beneficial in addressing all of the noted safety and facility condition issues while resolving the programming demands and requirements.



Project Budget

\$34,000,000



Key Drivers

Healthy & Safety
Infrastructure Condition
Other

Quick Facts

Program shortfall for foods and fashion

2024 flood resulted in improvements to flooring and millwork

School needs to be brought to current code requirements

NLPS contributed more than \$3M to add/ modernize high school wing and add CTS lab

61% utilization (ECS counted as 0.5 FTE)

Ecole Plamondon serves a diverse community including Francophones and White Russians

Change in Capacity & Area

Current Capacity: 575

Proposed Capacity: 496

Current Gross Area: 5,663.12

Proposed Gross Area: 5,036.23

Current Instructional Area: 2,448.3

Proposed Instructional Area: 1932



AUDIT UPGRADE H. E. Bourgoin

In 2000, Alberta Infrastructure identified areas in the school that required an upgrade to bring all Alberta Schools to a certain building standard. This audit upgrade project for the H.E. Bourgoin School involves an upgrade to address the following: roofing, electrical service surge protection; flooring; barrier-free access-automatic doors and acoustic treatment on the gym walls. In 2015, NLPS upgraded the mechanical system under the IMR program.



AUDIT UPGRADE Kikino School

Alberta Infrastructure identified areas in the school that required an upgrade to bring all Alberta Schools to a certain building standard. This audit upgrade project for the Kikino School includes an upgrade of the fire alarm system, electrical service surge protection, flooring, and window sills.



AUDIT UPGRADE Wandering River School

In 2000, Alberta Infrastructure identified areas in the school that required an upgrade to bring all Alberta Schools to a certain building standard. This audit upgrade project for the Wandering River school includes flooring, fire alarm upgrade, barrier free access-automatic doors, and electrical service surge protection.



Project Budget

33,500,000



H. E. Bourgoin

Key Drivers

Demographics



Project Budget

\$15,000,000



Kikino School

Key Drivers

Demographics



Project Budget

\$12,000,000



Wandering River
School

Key Drivers

Demographics



Northern Lights
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

