



News Release

October 19, 2004

Surrey School Board abandons P3 process in wake of White Rock City Council letter

At an in-camera meeting, the Board of School Trustees of School District No.36 (Surrey) voted to terminate a Public-Private Partnership (P3) process relating to the potential development of a two-acre portion of the White Rock Elementary school site. The decision comes after the board received a letter from the mayor of White Rock on behalf of city council asserting the city's "position to exert considerable control" over what is built on the site.

"Trustees are saddened by the aggressive and threatening tone of the letter and its impact on the P3 process," says Surrey School Board chair Shawn Wilson. "The board is adamant that the safety and security of our students, as well as student and school community needs, are not compromised, yet the letter discusses only 'development potential' and 'greater financial return' and does not even mention the needs of the school community."

The Surrey School District is obliged to consider a P3 as part of the Ministry of Education's approval to fund replacement of White Rock Elementary school. The board had already short-listed a number of P3 development proponents for consideration. Under the district's P3 Expression of Interest, the district would make available two of the eight acres on the site for development, as the elementary school requires only six acres. The board intended to use the funds gained from the P3 to support school construction costs and pursue an integrated fine arts school facility for the benefit of students.

The letter states potential development of the site "will be subject to a number of city processes" and goes on to list several of them.

"White Rock city council appears to be compromising the P3 process and this leaves our board with no choice but to abandon the initiative at this time so the district can ensure the much needed and anticipated new elementary school will be built by the fall of 2006, as promised by this board to the White Rock elementary school community," adds Wilson. "I cannot emphasize enough the frustration trustees feel that the position city council has taken has effectively thwarted such a promising initiative."

Surrey School District staff has advised the Ministry of Education and other interested parties of the letter and that the board's decision is to now proceed with the school project without the P3 initiative.

On a related issue, in response to interest expressed by White rock City council, the board has offered to sell the 1914 school building on the White Rock Elementary school site to the City of White Rock for \$10 with the condition that the building must be relocated to another site at the city's cost.

Staff will now focus on ensuring the timely construction of the new White Rock Elementary replacement school.

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