

Latest on the K-12 school project

M. McKinnon

The district school board has written the new MPPs for the area - Greg Rickford (Kenora - Rainy River) and Judith Monteith-Farrell (Thunder Bay - Atikokan) - to update them on the two major projects the board has launched, the development of K - 12 schools in Rainy River and Atikokan.

The provincial funding for these projects comes from the Ministry of Education's capital priorities program, a long-term school renewal fund that at least so far has been left in place by the new government. MPP Rickford is a member of the new Progressive Conservative Cabinet, with a combined portfolio for Mines, Northern Development, Energy, and Indigenous Affairs.

The Rainy River project is a re-development of Rainy River High School, which is being funded with \$5.17 million from the province and \$4.9 million in school board reserves. The first phase of that work, the renovation of the north wing of the school, is expected to continue through the first semester of this school year.

Here, the province has contributed \$19.7 million for an almost complete re-build of the structure at the high school site (Grayson Hall will remain, as will much of the tech wing of the existing school). In addition, the province will fund a new day care centre in the school (\$1.6 million, 39 places) and child and family centre (\$800,000).

Atikokan project update

Over the summer, the board hired Ian Hill of Critchley Hill to provide architectural services on the Atikokan project. Although based in North Bay, this firm has been very active in the Northwest; it is currently working on the new consolidated Catholic elementary school in Fort Frances and the new high school in Sioux Lookout. It met with the building committee on June 18, and that committee will review progress on the project design this month.

The core committee includes architect Hill, board plant operations and maintenance manager Travis Enge, superintendent of education Al McManaman, and

AHS principal and vice-principal Beth Fairfield and Brad Gascoigne. The advisory team includes trustee Mike Lewis, student rep Samantha Ribey, director of education Heather Campbell, superintendent of business Laura Mills, IT services manager Stephen Danielson, AHS teacher Graeme Bond, North Star teacher Corinna Bolen, parent council reps Jennifer Learning (AHS) and Mellisa Gallagher (North Star), and community rep (and former AHS principal) Bleddyn Williams.

The schedule calls for the phasing plan for the construction, as well as the temporary student accommodation plan, to be ready by the end of October. A public consultation regarding these plans will be held.

Construction documents should be ready for February, 2019, with a tender call to follow. The school board expects to award the construction contract in late March or April, 2019, with the contractor mobilizing on site shortly thereafter.

The full project will take over a year to complete; opening of the K - 12 school is expected in time for the start of the 2020-21 school year, with some of the exterior site work not being completed until the summer of 2021.