

# Media Release



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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **RE: Fireside boundary opens door for capital planning discussion**

Rocky View Schools (RVS) recent announcement of a potential change in attendance boundaries for Fireside School has raised concerns over its capital planning process in the Town of Cochrane – a discussion the jurisdiction welcomes.

“Alberta’s capital planning process is complex, weighed down by competing priorities, under the complete control of the Alberta Government, and a process we’ve successfully navigated over the past number of years,” said Associate Superintendent – Business and Operations Darrell Couture. “Since 2014, we have gained provincial approval to open eight new schools, built a RVS-funded starter school in Airdrie, and purchased lands in Cochrane for a future high school site.

“While some Cochrane residents are concerned that little breathing room was achieved with the addition of RancheView and Fireside Schools, shifting the boundaries at Fireside actually will provide a better balance of enrolments among all schools and, in fact, mean less change and disruption to families in the future. It also ensures we will continue to demonstrate to government the need for future capital investments to be made in Cochrane,” he said.

Couture explained that outside of health and safety issues and building conditions, capital approvals are not granted unless school jurisdictions can demonstrate an 85 percent utilization rate in a given community. With construction of new schools taking between 24 to 36 months to complete, he noted it's a real balancing act in communities that are constantly growing.

“Most boards plan for new schools to be full within a few years of opening so future schools can be built in the communities where children reside. The size of the school is dictated by the education program, the number of acres provided by municipalities, its traffic capacity, and the municipal area development plan. We’ve even had to buy our own high school sites, as sufficient lands are not made available to accommodate the needs of high school students.”

According to Couture, RVS has planned sufficient space in Cochrane for the near future with Cochrane’s 2016 census confirming its growth rate is tapering off at eight percent, compared to 11.5 percent the previous year. He noted that in the board’s 2017-2020 Capital Plan, RVS’ projects overall utilization rates for Cochrane schools in 2019/2020 will be 83 percent at the K – Gr. 8 level and 89 percent at the Gr. 9 – 12 level.

“The issue of capacity already has been addressed at the high school level through an addition to Bow Valley and modernization at Cochrane High in the current capital plan,” he said. “Our 2018-2021 plan we further propose additional space at the K-8 level.”

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“We fully appreciate the need to minimize boundary changes and achieve stability for our students and our families, but in growing communities changes are inevitable,” he said. “RVS and the Board remain committed to providing all students with engaging and supporting learning environments.”

Board Chair Colleen Munro said Trustees are well aware of the growth in Cochrane, and across the division, and are hopeful that the province will recognize this growth and the need for new schools in RVS. She added that the Board of Trustees will be requesting a meeting with Town Council to review the jurisdiction’s capital plan for the Town of Cochrane, with hope that both bodies can ensure the needs of Cochrane families are at the forefront.

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