

SPECIAL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
Report No. 21-008

2 February 2021

Purchase of New Portable Classrooms

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PURPOSE:

1. To obtain approval to purchase ten new modular portable classrooms in order to provide the District with sufficient flexibility to accommodate student enrolment.

CONTEXT:

2. Report No.20-040, Purchase of New Portable Classrooms, was presented to the Board on 28 April 2020, requesting the approval of 10 new portable classrooms. Board approval was received. These portables were required in order to ensure that the District would have a sufficient number of surplus units available to meet anticipated needs for the 2020-2021 school year. Acquisition of the newly constructed portables was subsequently approved by the Ministry and construction is complete.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

3. Enrolment at both the elementary and secondary panels is expected to increase for the 2021-2022 school year (a total of over 500 students).

While there is some uncertainty as to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the enrolment forecast, there remain areas within the District that are experiencing accommodation pressures, where portables are required. In addition, there are portable requirements to accommodate students in schools that are experiencing facility issues and/or renovations.

The annual portable allocation process for the coming school year will commence in April 2021, with principals submitting their requests. Staff estimates that the District will likely require the use of all available surplus portables in order to meet needs. Please note that this count includes the 10 new portable classrooms that were approved for purchase in 2020, which have been fabricated and are ready for movement once locations are determined.

The increases in enrolment which the District has been experiencing in recent years are forecasted to continue beyond the upcoming school year and into the

foreseeable future. This trend will generate a continuing need for additional temporary classroom accommodation.

Recent updates to the energy efficiency requirements in the Ontario building code have enhanced the overall performance of newly constructed portable classroom structures by upgrading the building envelope through increased insulation volume and continuity. In addition to the building envelope performance upgrades, mechanical systems for portables are now required to incorporate energy recovery. Portable classrooms operate entirely from electricity, which reduces their carbon footprint by not consuming natural gas. Please find attached Appendix A which provides a thorough description of the sustainable design implemented for the new portable classroom construction.

In addition to the features outlined above, staff are undertaking a review of possible options for alternative portable classroom structures by entering into discussions with various research and development organizations (National Research Council (NRC), universities etc.). Staff is continually monitoring developments in the field and will provide information with respect to longer term costs and benefits.

Inquiries to the three coterminous school boards have confirmed that none have surplus portable classrooms available for purchase at this time. All of the boards responded that they are in a similar position to the OCDSB, either requiring all available portable classrooms or seeking the acquisition of additional new units.

Considering the information above, it is prudent for the District to begin moving forward with the acquisition of additional portable classrooms for the 2021-2022 school year and beyond. In order to ensure that accommodation needs are met in a timely fashion, staff is recommending the purchase of the additional 10 new portable classroom units at this time.

Separate funding for temporary accommodation is provided by the Ministry, based on average costs incurred over the three preceding years. Under the funding model, staff is projecting that the District will receive approximately \$1,912,329 for 2020-2021, all of which would be used for portable classroom moves.

The staff recommendation is to fund their acquisition from reserves, subject to Ministry approval.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

4. New modular portable classrooms include air conditioning and are estimated to cost \$155,460 per unit. This estimate excludes HST and any costs to prepare the site, provide service connections, and receive the portables. Additional administrative and permit fee costs, estimated at a total of \$20,000, can also be expected. The purchase of 10 new portable units is estimated at a total cost of \$1,574,600 (plus HST), to be funded from reserves.

The updated figures reflect the most recent actual cost experience under the administered standing agreement.

COMMUNICATION/CONSULTATION ISSUES:

5. There are no communication or consultation issues associated with the recommendations contained in this report.

STRATEGIC LINKS:

6. The purchase of new portable classrooms will ensure that students are provided with learning opportunities and resources to support well-being. This is consistent with the culture of caring objectives in the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan.

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the purchase of ten new modular portable classrooms, at a budgeted total cost of \$1,574,600 (excluding HST), be approved and funded from reserves, subject to Ministry approval.

Michael Carson
Chief Financial Officer

Camille Williams-Taylor
Director of Education and
Secretary of the Board

APPENDICES

Appendix A Details of portable construction