



FOR RELEASE
December 19, 2012

Temporary gymnasium planned for F.H. Collins during school construction

WHITEHORSE—Subject to a successful bid on the F.H. Collins replacement project next month, Yukon Education and the Department of Highways and Public Works will partner to build a temporary gymnasium that will be available for students from fall 2013 until the new school is completed in fall 2015, Education Minister Scott Kent announced today.

“We listened to students and parents at the open house on November 22 and committed to explore partnerships that could make a temporary gym at F.H. Collins a reality,” Kent said. “We will partner with Highways and Public Works and if there is a successful project bid, we will have a temporary, on-site gym for F.H. Collins students at the start of the next school year.”

The temporary gym – a steel structure – will be insulated and constructed on the school’s lower soccer field. While it will have electricity and heat, it will not have plumbing and will not be available to external user groups in order to minimize both costs and the number of people on school grounds during the construction period. This addition to the school replacement project will be made financially feasible by Highways and Public Works moving and repurposing the structure for other uses after the new school is completed.

“Contract Services will issue an addendum to the current public tender for the construction of the new F.H. Collins School to add the construction of this temporary facility,” Highways and Public Works Minister Wade Istchenko said. “Including this work as part of the existing tender will increase efficiency and may improve cost effectiveness for the construction of the temporary gymnasium.”

Demolition of the current F.H. Collins gym is scheduled for this spring. When students return from March break, physical education activities will follow the previously announced plan that combines access to other facilities in Riverdale and throughout the city with increased outdoor sports for the remainder of the year.

The original plan would have seen students engaging in a variety of physical education activities throughout the construction period. These activities, beyond regularly planned trips, will no longer be offered for the 2013/14 and 2014/15 school years.

The public tender for construction will close January 24, 2013.

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See letter below.

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Open Letter About F.H. Collins Secondary School Gym Plan

The issue of the plans for gymnasium activities during the construction period⁽¹⁾ for the replacement of F.H. Collins Secondary School (FHCSS) has been the subject of much conversation, debate and lobbying. It's important that affected stakeholders be kept up to date on where we are on this issue.

To ensure that we are all on the same page, the term "gymnasium activities" includes:

- large assemblies and events, such as graduation and the annual fashion show;
- physical education classes (mandatory for Grades 8, 9 and 10; optional for those in grades 11 and 12);
- sports team practices and games;
- lunchtime and break time area for gathering, playing pickup sports, etc.; and
- other ad hoc uses.

Large assemblies and events will be held at the Yukon Convention Centre during the construction phase. The location for other types of gym activities is still under discussion, as described below.

(1) Demolition of the gym is scheduled to occur at the beginning of the construction period during March break 2013. The construction phase spans the period from March 2013 to August 2015.

Original Plan for Gymnasium Activities During Construction

The plan for physical education during the construction phase was designed to facilitate new approaches to physical education, which see students engaging in activities in the community. Such activities promote an active living mindset for life. Physical education teachers at the school could plan their programming around the following opportunities, the costs of which would be covered by Yukon Education.

Within walking distance in Riverdale:

- Leaping Feats Creative Danceworks
- Mad Trapper Bowling Alley
- Polarettes Gymnastics
- Outdoor skating/hockey rink at the Gadzoosdaa Residence
- Outdoor basketball court at Gadzoosdaa Residence
- Outdoor basketball court at Christ the King Elementary School
- Peak Fitness
- Millennium Trail
- Upper soccer field and track at F.H. Collins
- Outdoor volleyball at Rotary Peace Park

Physical education venues that would require bussing (school bus or school-based activity bus):

- Canada Games Centre (swimming, skating, hockey, indoor track, fitness gym, indoor soccer, hard court gym)
- Yukon College gymnasium
- Takhini Broomball Arena
- Mount McIntyre (cross-country skiing, curling and tennis)
- Mount Sima
- Takhini Arena

School team practices and games

Within the plan, the ability for FHCSS students to participate in school sports teams would be maintained. However, without a gym, practices would have to take place at other gyms and all games would be "away" games.

The City of Whitehorse had been contacted to discuss the addition of the requirements for F.H. Collins sports teams' practices and games into the existing "joint use agreements" throughout the school facilities in Whitehorse. We have been assured that everyone can be accommodated; however, some adult groups would likely be asked to take later times in the evening and/or move to other locations to free up space after 5:00 p.m. at one of the four school gymnasiums in Riverdale:

- Selkirk Elementary School
- Christ the King Elementary School
- Vanier Catholic Secondary School (VCSS) (has two gymnasiums)

For before and after school practices:

- *Porter Creek Secondary School has invited F.H. Collins teams to practice with them at PCSS.*
- *Selkirk Elementary School's gym is available each morning for pre-8 am practices for FHCSS teams.*
- *The Canada Games Centre flexihall can be used for after school practices and games.*

Porter Creek Secondary School has invited F.H. Collins teams to practice with them at PCSS.

Lunchtime and break time activities:

With the gymnasium not available during construction, the approximately 100 students who occupy the current gym at lunch time and break times would be directed to other positive and constructive activities. The current photo lab (over 1,000 square feet) would be converted to leisure and hang out space for pick-up games. Students would be encouraged to join clubs, use other school facilities (weight room, cafeteria, library, etc.), bring their skates for a game of shinny hockey at the Gadzoosdaa residence, etc. There are dozens of positive, fun activities which can be done at lunchtime.

November 22 Open House

On November 22, 2012 Yukon Education held the first of a number of planned construction-related open houses at F.H. Collins Secondary School with displays and Yukon Education personnel available to discuss:

- Construction, safety and timelines
- 21st century school programming
- The design of the new school

- The gymnasium plan
- Geothermal exchange heating

In addition, all the plans and drawings for the new school were made available to those interested in reviewing them and asking questions.

The evening was designed so that individuals could attend whichever of the above-referenced displays that interested them. During introductory remarks from Deputy Minister Valerie Royle and me, we thanked all those who had been involved in the project planning of several years. Ms. Royle also addressed the request for a temporary gym on site at FHCSS during construction. One quote had been received in the amount of \$1.3 million (plus required site work and heating costs) – an amount which we stated was far beyond the allocated budget and therefore not fiscally feasible.

Several of the people in attendance presented their opinions and concerns about the location of the new school and the fact that no gymnasium would be on site during the construction period (over two school years). They made compelling arguments for the erection of a temporary gym rather than the gym plan that had been designed.

In discussions with parents and students that evening, Deputy Minister Royle and I agreed to explore other fiscally responsible options to construct a temporary gym on site. This commitment was confirmed publicly by Ms. Royle through media interviews and personal contact and by me in the Legislative Assembly and in communication with concerned individuals.

Petitions, letters to the editor, media comments and a student protest in support of a temporary gym have occurred since November 22.

What's Happening Now?

Since November 22, Yukon Education and the Department of Highways and Public Works have been working to identify feasible options for a temporary gym structure at FHCSS for safe use during construction.

I'm pleased to inform you that, subject to a successful bid on the F.H. Collins replacement project next month, a temporary gym will be built on-site for the 2013/14 and 2014/15 school years.

This new development is made possible through a partnership between Yukon Education and the Department of Highways and Public Works.

The gym will be large enough to house two volleyball and one or two basketball courts. It will be constructed of steel and it will be both heated and insulated, though, to keep costs down, it will not have plumbing.

Because construction cannot begin until the ground thaws, the gym will not be ready for students this spring. This means that after spring break and through the remainder of the school year, F.H. Collins students will follow the previously announced plan that combines access to other facilities in Riverdale and throughout the city with increased outdoor sports.

Next school year, alternative activities that were originally going to be available to F.H. Collins students—such as skiing at Mount McIntyre and accessing community facilities like the curling rink and the Canada Games Centre—will not occur beyond what is planned for a typical school year.

The new gym structure will be temporary. It will be repurposed by the Department of Highways and Public Works in the summer of 2015. A permanent structure would be far too costly and is beyond the scope of the project. Also, in order to minimize the number of people near the construction site, the temporary gym will be for the use of F.H. Collins students only. The City of Whitehorse has assured us that there is adequate space to accommodate all user groups at their current levels in existing facilities.

I would like to reiterate that the plan for a temporary structure is contingent upon receiving a successful bid on the project. The tenders were issued in November and the general construction contract closes on January 24, 2013. We anticipate a decision in early February 2013.

If you have questions or concerns, you can express them to school administration at FHCSS, your school council or to Superintendent Mike Woods (mike.woods@gov.yk.ca).

Happy Holidays from Yukon Education!

Sincerely,



Scott Kent
Minister of Education

cc:

Valerie Royle, Deputy Minister, Yukon Education
Michael Woods, Superintendent of Area 1, Public Schools Branch
Darren Hays, Principal, F. H. Collins Secondary School
F. H. Collins Secondary School Council

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