

Proposed School Closures: Community Engagement

DECEMBER 3&4, 2025

Dialectical Thinking

- Two things can be true at the same time
- Life isn't either/or – it's both/and
- Change and acceptance can coexist

“You can be grateful and grieving, hopeful and heartbroken, all at the same time. That's not confusion—that's being human.”

— **Brené Brown**

MHPSD Mission Statement

Our mission is to provide an inclusive, progressive learning community through trust, courage and collaboration.

Government Announced: School Construction Accelerator Program

Through an investment of \$8.6 billion, government will create more than 100 new and updated schools – over the next 7 years.

The government will create the new student spaces by:

- building up to 90 new schools
- modernizing or replacing up to 24 existing schools
- expanding the modular classroom program



Capital Planning Overview

- In January 2025, a 3-day value scoping (VS) exercise occurred that was an important tool to inform the development of the 2026-2029 capital plan.
- Participants included, Alberta Education staff and external architect consultants experienced in replacement and new school construction projects.
- The cost of VS was \$38,000 - Alberta Education covered this expense and encourages this type of in-depth analysis for capital planning.

Capital Planning Overview

The value scoping focused on 3 sectors of the city and related enrollment, building utilization and building conditions.

- Southeast Elementary Schools
- North Elementary Schools
- Hill Schools

Value Scoping Day 1 (Jan 14, 2025)

- The group developed Project Evaluation Criteria.
- Capital options considered must meet **ALL** criteria:
 - **Priority A (Fiscal)** – responsible use of government resources.
 - **Priority B (Fiscal)** – right-size facilities for operational and staffing efficiencies.
 - **Priority C (Facilities)** – Address aging infrastructure and facility inefficiencies.
 - **Priority D (Education)** – Facilities that provide spaces for 21st Century Learning.

Value Scoping Day 2 (Jan 15, 2025)

- Brainstorming all possible building options by sector.
- Measure options against project evaluation criteria.
- Narrow the list of possible solutions to 2-3 in each category for architects to create costing before next meeting.

Value Scoping Day 3 (Jan 25, 2025)

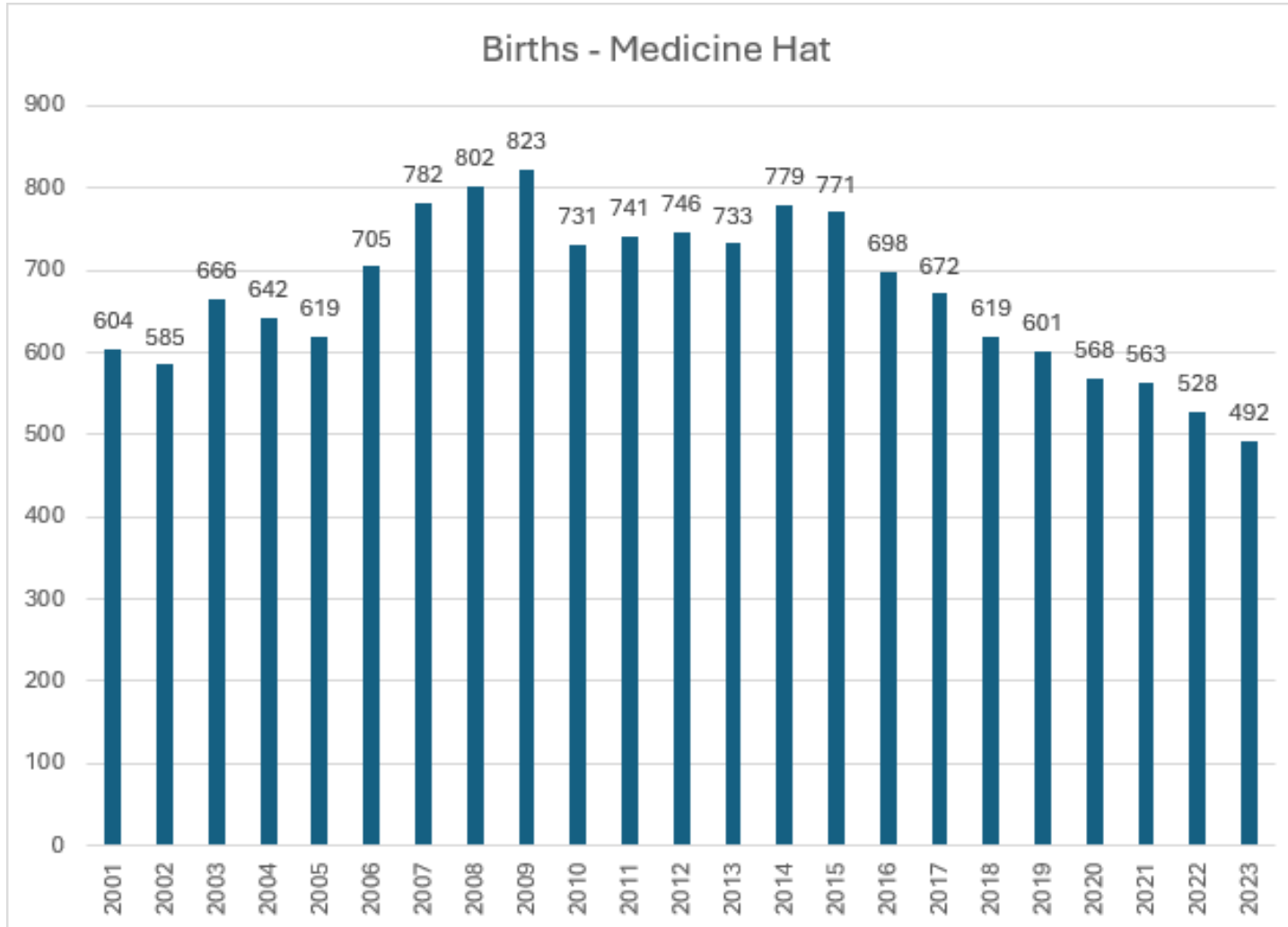
- Architects presented the costing for the options in the 3 categories.
- The group determined the final priorities for the different areas being considered. This was a tool to develop the 10-year capital plan.

Capital Plan Overview – Submitted April 2025

- Priority 1 – Southeast K-9 on Crestwood Site
- Priority 2 – Elm Street Replacement School
- Priority 3 - Vincent Massey Replacement School

School Closure Conversation – Why Now?

- Operational deadlines (i.e. February 1st Registration)
- Enrollment trends
- Educational opportunities of school amalgamation
- Maintaining a presence in each area of the city
- Capital planning –Increasing our building utilization improves our chances of capital project approval.
- Operating cost savings
- Capital cost savings



Births: Medicine Hat (2001 – 2021)

Source – Government of
Alberta <https://regionaldashboard.alberta.ca/region/medicine-hat/births/#/?from=2014&to=2023>

	# Students 2025/26	Category	# Schools
Riverside	-		
Elm Street	118	Under 200 students	4
Southview	137		
Herald	148		
Webster Niblock	174		
Vincent Massey	204	Between 200 - 299 students	6
George Davison	208		
Ross Glen	222		
Crestwood	286		
Christian School	286		
Dr. Ken Sauer	298	Between 300 - 399	2
River Heights	312		
Connaught	379	400+ Students	4
AMS	421		
DRWLC	727		
CHHS	1,177		
MHHS	1,297		
Traditional Schools	6,394		16

Enrollment Trends

Educational Benefits of School Amalgamation

- Reducing split grades
- Maintaining schools in every neighbourhood preserves community connections.
- Grade level partners fosters staff collaboration and professional growth.
- Higher enrollment provides greater flexibility in programming and expands student opportunities.
- Accessibility increases for service providers and other system resources (i.e. FSLW time).

Cost Savings & Potential School Closures

- **Operating** - Annual cost savings of closing Webster Niblock and Southview
 - \$500,000
 - Equivalent of multiple teacher/EA positions
- **Capital** - Deferred maintenance required for each school
 - Webster Niblock \$4,374,000
 - Southview \$3,558,000
 - **\$7,932,000**

Process & Next Steps

- November 10 -14: Staff Engagement
- November 17 – December 5: Stakeholder Surveys
- December 3: Southview School Community Engagement
- December 4: Webster Niblock School Community Engagement
- Date TBD (First week of January 2026): School Board Special Meeting to make a final decision

Community Engagement



Welcome to a
Medicine Hat Public School Division
Community Engagement Session

Facilitated by Cal Hauserman and David George

Grounding



Small Fires

- Establishes norms of respectful listening.
- Brings people into the here and now.
- Gets all voices in the room.
- Allows expression of hopes and fears.
- Values thinking and feeling.

Process



Small Fires

- Someone will be selected as the starter.
- Brief pause for 30 seconds to 1 minute.
- Starter begins by responding to the statements.
- Other group members listen and process.
- After the starter is done, the person to their left goes next.
- Continue around the table with each person taking a turn.
- No cross talk.
- This is a time to practice your listening skills.

Introductions



Small Fires

1. Your name.
2. How you are connected to Medicine Hat Public School Division.
3. How you feel about being here.
4. Your expectations for today.

Agenda

- Welcome – Small Fires
- Sandbox
- Information Gathering Process:
 - Responding to Questions
- Next Steps
- Gots and Wants
- Adjournment



The Sandbox

Our Parameters of Work Today

- Considerations of a possible amalgamation of schools.
- No cold-water comments.
- Only positively worded comments.



The Parking Lot

Other Ideas or Comments You May Have



Responding to Questions and Sharing of Ideas – Table Groups



Roles:

- **Facilitator/Recorder**
 - Place your name on each sheet.
 - Number the sheet and list the question in red.
 - Paraphrase and record comments – use earth tones and alternate colours.
- **Participants**
 - Take turns.
 - Phrase comments in the positive.
 - Share ideas.

Question 1

- **Q1** What are some considerations you would like the School Division to think about when making a decision on possible school amalgamation?
- **Q2** What might be some possible opportunities for students if schools are amalgamated?
- **Q3** What might be some possible challenges for students if schools are amalgamated?
- **Q4** What might be some supports students and families may need to make a smooth transition to a new school if amalgamation takes place?



What is next for this collected input?

Information will be summarized and reported back to the Board.

Gots and Wants

Gots



Reflect on the evening.

Gots - A “got” might be an idea received, something learned, or a positive response to the work today.

Wants - A “want” might be a comment about process (go faster or slower), a request for information, or a comment about the ideas shared.

Wants

