

January 30, 2017

Objet: École Boréal update

Dear parents,

In recent days, discussion has intensified about the state of the École Boréal school building and the return of students. Among other things, a media report gave the impression that the decision had been taken to return students to school in September. It is therefore necessary for CSCN to bring you up to date.

The reality is that the CSCN has not made a ruling on the date of return to school. For now, we wish to finish the work that is being done inside the school and ensure that the building is safe and that it complies with all health standards for children and staff. We understand that some families would like to get back into our building quickly, but at the same time we recognize that there are concerns as to the health and safety standards that need to be followed before students and staff return to the school. Clearly, the CSCN must give priority to the health and safety of its students and staff.

Regarding the state of our building, we should mention that work is progressing well. I received confirmation last Friday that work should be completed by 3 February 2017. An inspection will be carried out by the CSCN's infrastructure project manager the following week in order to confirm that the work meets our expectations. Parents should know that we have taken advantage of the closure to make some improvements to the school. For example, several floors have been replaced and most of the walls have been repainted. Some minor items still need to be installed, such as cabinets and security cameras. After the inspection, maintenance operatives will complete their work, including waxing some floors. Our IT personnel will have to reinstall the computer network and put teaching aids, e.g. projectors, back into place. We are hopeful that this work will be finished by the end of February.

The CSCN is aware of parents' concerns about the site environmental inspection. We have to finalize an agreement with a specialist firm who will take samples inside the building for the purposes of analysis. This firm will be independent from the companies used by our insurance company and from the company that did the work inside the school. We anticipate that samples will be taken during the week of 6 February and at regular intervals over a period of two weeks. The company has said that about 15 to 20 business days will be necessary to get results and a further 15 days will be required to produce a detailed official report.

The municipality, in conjunction with provincial agencies, will also be proceeding with soil analysis. Sampling is under way in the municipality of Fort McMurray and the investigators have told us that it will end in mid-February. Results of the analysis are expected in April. This is the third and final phase of analysis that the authorities have announced. The analysis level of the samples is Alberta Tier 2.

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The municipality has carried out three sessions of cleaning the playground equipment on the École Boréal school grounds. In addition, the soil material surrounding the playground equipment has been replaced. Before winter arrived, the grassy area around the school was maintained by the municipality and a visual inspection was made in order to remove any debris that could be found. According to our information, the chief medical officer of the province has declared the area to be safe for children. Nevertheless, the CSCN is considering the possibility of cleaning the grass further using vacuum equipment. We will provide you with more details when we know more.

We will also discuss these issues with parents before making a decision. One proposal is the creation of a parent-representative committee for the purpose of consultation. I have asked Mme Gisèle Bourque to set up this committee. We are also going to begin a survey of parents or direct communications with parents that will be a source of information for the school board's decision-making process.

We must also consider the plans to rebuild the Abasand neighbourhood. The municipality has to send us their redevelopment plan for the neighbourhood, since it may have an impact on our school operations. The municipality is reputed to take school environments into consideration whenever it is preparing major projects in its neighbourhoods. Although we do not anticipate any problems, it is necessary for the CSCN to have all the pertinent information.

The CSCN will also have to keep an eye on the psychological aspects of returning to the neighbourhood for families and staff members alike. Several steps have already been taken since the spring of 2016 to support our community in this way. Our team is in direct collaboration with government agencies involved in this sector as well as stakeholders from other school boards.

The decision about when to return students and staff will not be taken until the CSCN is satisfied with the results of the health and safety inspections. At present, announcing a date will only serve to create speculation and even false expectations. I fully understand that the uncertainty surrounding the date of return to school at École Boréal presents a challenge. Even so, returning without having all the necessary information is a risk we do not wish to take. I also understand that the CSCN has taken some time to publish this update. Frankly, this is because we have had very little information to share before last Friday.

I will be pleased to respond to any concerns during the coming weeks.

Please send your questions by writing to me at directiongenerale@centrenord.ab.ca



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