



## **Media Release**

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### **Tender for St. John Paul II Junior-Senior Catholic High School is Officially In**

As of August 2016, the results for St. John Paul II Junior-Senior Catholic High School's tender have officially come in. The school originally went to tender in June 2016, but the results have now allowed Grande Prairie & District Catholic Schools to get pricing on the project.

The new high school is expected to finish construction in 2018. "It may be anywhere from January to September, 2018," Superintendent Germann said regarding the project. "We will have a better idea once we have our start-up meetings and get construction underway." Currently, utility work, which began in the spring, is being done. It is expected that footing construction will begin in the fall, and steel work will commence prior to Christmas.

#### **Building Up**

The approval for the District's second Grande Prairie high school was originally approved in 2014 by Alberta's Conservative government. "The Conservative government, at that time, gave us approval and provided us with planning funds. When the NDP government took office, they finalized the process, pushed us to tender, and provided us with construction funds," Superintendent Karl Germann stated.

However, following the approval and announcement of funding, there was an insufficient amount of land available within Grande Prairie to meet the District's needs. The area that was set aside for the District at the time was too small for the construction of not only St. John Paul II, but also St. Catherine.

A solution to the issue came from Henry Hamm of Prudential Lands and Helix Engineering. Hamm was able to fast-track a change to the area structure plan, allowing the District to receive the necessary land at his own cost. "It's not just about a developer trying to put land in place so that



they can continue to develop the area,” Germann explained. “Henry Hamm is truly a community-minded person who provided us with land 5-7 years before it needed to be provided in the area, and it comes at his cost, but it certainly helps us move the project forward so that it can become a great addition to the north-west part of the city.”

In recognition of his work and efforts, the District awarded Henry Hamm the “Friends of Education Award” during the official Sod Turning and Site Blessing of St. John Paul II on August 29.

### **A Unique Design**

When St. John Paul II opens in 2018, it will boast an incredibly unique design for its students. One of the key features is that it is designed around a family and college concept. “This is where students are within specific areas of the school and those areas hold a variety of learning spaces so that students can be in their classroom with their teacher, and then also flex into another space with their teacher or other students,” said Germann. “It allows the school to be large, but small. This is the key piece we have been working to achieve, as we want to ensure that students have a wide variety of options, while making sure that they feel they are part of a family. The concept is important, as that sense of belonging helps students reach higher levels of achievement, and it shows them that every single student matters.”

Other key features of the school include a small student art gallery, which is unique to the school, as well as an outdoor classroom. Perhaps the most highly anticipated feature, however, is the adjacent Performing Arts Centre. The design for the Centre is similar to theatre designs that have been tried and tested in Olds and Airdrie, Alberta. The Performing Arts Centre will be able to accommodate a variety of community-run programs, and will feature a “Black Box” theatre, which can seat up to 350 people and can also be reconfigured via telescoping seat platforms into different types of spaces to better suit community needs, such as a banquet hall or a convention space. The theatre also incorporates state of the art theatre audio and LED lighting equipment, a full stage length cyclorama screen for projection and special lighting effects, and acoustic engineering for perfect sound quality. Students will have access to the theatre and a separate drama room, ensuring that the theatre will not always be used by students and can be used for a variety of other community events. The Performing Arts Centre is expected to finish construction during the same timeframe as St. John Paul II.