

| Edmonton Catholic Schools |

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

| OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL CLOSURE PROPOSAL, JUNIOR HIGH PROGRAM |

Updated February 15, 2022 (please be advised responses that reflect further clarification are indicated in blue)

1. What variables have been used to estimate / project declining enrolment? Have these projections considered densification and the City's overall plan for growth and vibrancy in the core?

Enrolment projections use a methodology that includes historical trends, Catholic participation rates, area demographics and municipal city plans. Projections are updated on an annual basis.

2. If St. Brendan is already getting a recreation academy and LSL is already getting a soccer academy, how are these decisions being made? Does this indicate that the decision has already been made about the junior high at OMLC? If the decision is made to keep the Junior High open at OLMC, then are we not putting schools in competition with each other?

The transition of the Golf Academy into a Recreation Academy at St. Brendan Catholic Elementary/Junior High is taking place regardless of the decision made on February 23, 2022. This change has no bearing on the motion for the closure of the Junior High program at Our Lady of Mount Carmel but rather expanding opportunities and diversifying the activities we offer to the students at St. Brendan. Furthermore, the Soccer Academy that is being implemented at Louis St. Laurent High School is a **High School** Soccer Academy and will complement the existing Senior High Hockey Academy.

3. What happens to all the elite families at OLMC? Where do they go?

Elite families would be designated to Louis St, Laurent Catholic Junior/Senior High School should they choose to continue in their Elite program.

4. If the junior high does close, what will happen with the coaches? Will they stay on with the elementary students, or will they move to new schools? We want our children to stay with their talented coaches.

Each year, Human Resource Services establishes staffing procedures in preparation for the upcoming school year. In collaboration with principals, staffing needs are determined and any year, staffing may fluctuate. The staffing procedures set out a process for any staff that may require transfer.

5. If the decision is not largely financial as there is only a \$100K savings, then why hasn't the Board looked into asking volunteers to take on duties, different fundraisers or other cost savings measures?

We truly appreciate the collaborative spirit of the school community, but the Division is not able to rely upon volunteers to supplement staffing requirements and associated costs necessary to operate a school. While fundraising is an integral part of a school's operations, gaming funds raised are only able to be used for supplemental resources and not for the lion's share of the costs associated with the operation of a school. As a result, fundraising dollars would not have a significant enough impact upon the overall financial assessment of OLMC's viability.

Furthermore, volunteers cannot take away from the staffing requirements necessary to operate a school. This would be in violation of all collective agreements. Fundraisers are always an option, but in many cases, there are restrictions as to what the money can be used for (i.e. staffing costs).

6. Why has money been put into capital projects for OLMC when the Board is just planning on decreasing the school to an elementary school?

As per the Alberta Education School Capital Manual, Operation and Maintenance funding is provided to all jurisdictions, including Charter Schools for the maintenance and operation of school buildings to ensure they are safe, comfortable, and suitable learning environments for children. The funding is different from the Infrastructure Maintenance and Renewal funding which is used for component replacement and the upgrading of existing facilities. Regardless of the school's utilization rates, ECSD is committed to providing all students with enhanced learning environments, including those students at Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

7. Why is money being spent on this engagement process and not being put back into the school itself?

According to Board Policy 14 and the Education Act, our School Division must provide an opportunity for the public to respond to a school closure proposal. This is being met through a

public participation process providing equitable opportunities for stakeholders to respond through multiple options. ECSD commits to being prudent in all spending.

8. Won't removing the junior high program lead to decreased enrollment in the elementary school, which will mean the entire school may close in the future?

A. The motion proposed to the Board of Trustees on November 24, 2021, was only for closure and re-location of the Junior High program (Grade 7, 8, and 9) at Our Lady of Mount Carmel. With the addition of the Green STEM program in the elementary, the Division anticipates an increase in enrolment at the elementary level over time.

9. What will the extra space be used for?

See Question 13.

10. What are the main drivers? What is to be gained by this decision?

The School closure process is governed by Policy 14, which identifies seven consideration factors that must be present before a recommendation for a school closure can be made. According to the policy, only one factor needs to be present in order to bring a closure proposal forward. Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Elementary/Junior high school possesses 4 of the 7 factors.

- Overall impacts of the proposal:
 - enhanced learning opportunities for all the OLMC Junior High students
 - better utilization rates at St. Brendan and LSL
 - improved flow of programming for our academy students
 - better retention of students within ECSD through to grade 12
 - cost savings and efficiencies for OLMC
 - no added expenditures for transportation
 - facility and technology enhancements at OLMC
 - creation of an academic-focused elementary program that will complement the existing elementary programming that is currently in place.

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11. How did ECSD decide on the format of the engagement process for the Our Lady of Mount Carmel, School Closure, Junior High program?

A. Edmonton Catholic Schools Division has developed an engagement approach that allows for four different ways to engage on the proposed school closure, enabling parents, guardians, and the community to choose how they wish to participate in the process. The engagement process was designed to create multiple avenues for stakeholders to respond to the school closure

proposal. The public meetings format is such that members of the public can respond in a comfortable and safe setting where everyone who wants to speak at the public meetings has the opportunity to do so.

There are four ways that parents, guardians, and the community can participate in the engagement process, and Edmonton Catholic Schools Division invites all stakeholders to engage in the way(s) that work for them. They are:

- A. Survey,
- B. Written and video submissions to engagement@ecsd.net or mailed to Lumen Christi Catholic Education Centre, 9807 106 Street, Edmonton, AB T5K 1C2,
- C. Public Engagement through the Table Talks of which there are six different times to choose from, and
- D. Phone call to speak to Karen Garlitos, Engagement Specialist, personally at 780-441-6122.

12. What will happen to the academy programming in Grades 3-6?

Should the decision on February 23, 2022 be to close and relocate the Junior High program at Our Lady of Mount Carmel School, the academy programming in Grades 3-6 will not be impacted. In addition, Our Lady of Mount Carmel will offer Green Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) programming starting September 2022.

13. What will happen to the Jr. High floor in the building? What is the plan for the classrooms?

Should the decision on February 23, 2022 be to close and relocate the Junior High program at Our Lady of Mount Carmel School, Edmonton Catholic Schools Division will work with the school administration to determine how to best use the space.

14. Can you give us two enrolment cycles to increase enrolment in the Jr. High general program?

Since 2016, enrolment at Our Lady of Mount Carmel junior high has decreased by 56% despite strong marketing efforts. There is no indication that enrolment in the Junior High program will increase. *In summary, 117 Junior High students left OLMC since 2016; 6 students chose not to register between Grade 6 and 7; 33 students did not transition from Grade 7 to 8; and 41 students left the school after their grade 8 year. This results in 80 students that did not transition into their next junior high grade.*

15. How has one year been enough time to increase enrolment since Educational Planning met with us to discuss adding the Enhanced Academic Program?

The addition of the Enhanced Academic Program at Our Lady of Mount Carmel did not result in any new enrolment for the 2021-2022 school year despite the program being marketed as part

of the overall offerings of the school. It must be noted that 15 of the 17 EAP students are also in an academy and leave campus in the afternoon, this leaves the school with only 2 EAP students out of the 30 students that remain behind.

16. Why did Louis St. Laurent Junior/Senior High families get letters the same day announcing the program additions to their school? The email and letter make it sound like decisions have already been made.

The letter that was sent to Louis St. Laurent Junior/Senior High School parents indicated that the Enhanced Academic Program and Advanced Placement Program would be implemented at Louis St. Laurent to replace the outgoing International Baccalaureate Programs. This change has no bearing on the motion for the closure of the Junior High program at Our Lady of Mount Carmel. The current EAP program at Our Lady of Mount Carmel will not be offered in 2022-2023, regardless of the decision made on February 23, 2022. Furthermore, the Soccer Academy is being implemented at the High School level to complement the existing Hockey Academy.

17. Will you be considering a more forward-thinking, transitional approach? That is, could you potentially phase out new admissions next year for Grade 7 so that children that have started at Our Lady of Mount Carmel are able to complete their remaining years without bearing the burden of relocating?

Our Lady of Mount Carmel's low junior high enrolment number does not make it feasible to phase out the Junior High program over three years. If the decision is made on February 23, 2022, to close and relocate the Junior High program at Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Edmonton Catholic Schools is committed to working with all affected families to ensure a smooth transition.

18. Should immediate closure of the entire Junior High program take place next year, what supports will there be for students to adjust to this change - particularly those that will feel a sense of loss or do not deal well with changes or have difficulty making new friends or feeling safe in new environments? How will you support the transition for these students going from a school of 90 to a school of 1100?

More than half of our schools in ECSD are K-6 elementary schools that require students to transition into Grade 7 after their time at the school is complete. Should the Board approve the recommendation for the closure of the Junior High at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Elementary/Junior High School on February 23, 2022, the Edmonton Catholic School Division will work with affected families to support a smooth transition to their new site. The administration and staff of our schools are aware of these common anxieties and are well equipped to successfully handle students that are moving from one school to another.

Edmonton Catholic School Division is committed to taking care of all our students to foster their overall development.

19. Has COVID not impacted the enrolment at the school?

There were nine students previously enrolled at Our Lady of Mount Carmel that chose to enrol in online learning at Genesis Catholic Online Elementary/Junior High School this year. Only two of the nine students were registered in Junior High.

20. What are the benefits of choosing Louis St. Laurent? What would make Louis St. Laurent a better experience than Our Lady of Mount Carmel?

Louis St. Laurent is a Junior/Senior High School offering diverse programming that ensures a vibrant and rich junior high experience only 5 km from OLMC. For example, students at Louis St. Laurent have access to the Spanish Bilingual Program, the Enhanced Academic Program, the Hockey Academy, the Soccer Academy, Drama courses that include productions, extra-curricular teams, student clubs, and access to the newly renovated Confederation Recreation Facility, soccer fields, and tennis courts. New for next year is a SPARK academy in grades 7-12 with a technology-based focus. Louis St. Laurent has the student population and resources to enhance the junior high experience. Visit the school website at <https://www.ecsd.net/8409> for more information.

21. What are the benefits of choosing St. Brendan? What would make St. Brendan a better experience than Our Lady of Mount Carmel?

St. Brendan is a Kindergarten to Grade 9 school with 526 students. It is a new facility that opened in 2016. There is a robust junior high program offering at St. Brendan with two Bilingual programs (Ukrainian and Spanish), extra-curricular teams, school clubs, CTF Construction and Foods labs, an annual science fair, Band and French programming, which includes trips to southern Alberta and Quebec, Recreation Academy programming and yellow bus transportation service. St. Brendan will ensure an enhanced, vibrant experience for all junior high students. Visit the school website at <https://www.ecsd.net/1970> for more information.

22. Recognizing that St. Brendan has elementary and junior high, there will likely be families who will not want to have to do two separate drop offs. The report states that students would be double designated to St. Brendan and Louis St. Laurent. The follow up questions are:

a. Does St. Brendan have the capacity to receive new junior high and elementary students? What impact will this have on class sizes?

St. Brendan has a capacity of 786 students and a current utilization rate of 79% for the 2021 school year. With the opportunity to add 8 additional modular units to its facility,

St. Brendan has ample space to accommodate future growth. Class sizes are site-based decisions and are made at the time of registration.

b. Is this a move that will ultimately see Our Lady of Mount Carmel close entirely because of low enrolment?

The motion proposed to the Board of Trustees on November 24, 2021, was only for closure and re-location of the Junior High program (Grade 7, 8, and 9) at Our Lady of Mount Carmel. With the addition of the Green STEM program, the Division anticipates an increase in enrolment at the elementary level over time.

23. How will transportation to school change for the current Grades 7-9 Our Lady of Mount Carmel students?

Transportation will not be provided for students who choose to attend Louis St. Laurent. These students will access already established ETS school routes. For students who attend St. Brendan, transportation will be available for all eligible students.

24. Why do St. Brendan staff already know there is the Recreation Academy program going there if the Our Lady of Mount Carmel school closure proposal, Junior High program decision has not yet been made?

The Golf Academy currently offered at St. Brendan Catholic Elementary/Junior High School will be replaced with a Recreation Academy in September 2022 that offers more diverse opportunities for current students to be involved in the academy. This change has no bearing on the motion for the closure of the Junior High program at Our Lady of Mount Carmel. The Recreation Academy will be offered at St. Brendan Catholic Elementary/Junior High School regardless of the decision made on February 23, 2022.

25. Why are we contributing to families leaving our school board for EPSB?

Our commitment is to provide a Catholic Education that inspires students to learn and that prepares them to live fully and to serve God in one another. This recommendation was brought forward to enhance the effectiveness of the Junior High program delivery for all students while creating a strong and clear pathway for students choosing to enrol in a sports academy.

26. Did you know that the nearby parish of St. Anthony's, has only the one school, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, to look after?

Regardless of the decision made on February 23, 2022, St. Anthony Parish will continue to support Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic School.

27. How did the district let this happen? We've entrusted you to provide quality Catholic education in this community, and you've made it sound like it's not

being delivered. Closure doesn't seem the solution for it and now you've further let families down. How did we get to this point, with no warning from the school board? Where did the district go wrong with Our Lady of Mount Carmel?

The Division has taken numerous measures to support the school to increase enrolment, such as the introduction of Kindergarten with Full day programming, investing over \$32,000 in marketing initiatives over the past 6 years, increasing the attendance boundary, engaging with the school community in October 2020, implementing the Enhanced Academic Program in Junior High and the upcoming implementation of Green STEM for K-6 students in the 2022-2023 school year.

Regardless of the decision made on February 23, 2022, Edmonton Catholic School Division will continue to support all schools to provide the best possible experience for all students.

28. Why are we turning away any families if enrolment is a problem?

Guided by [Administrative Procedure 305, Attendance Areas](#), a classroom composition within a school is a site-based decision. Principals will create class sizes to optimize curricular delivery. Principals can make these decisions as they know the historic enrolment trends and patterns of the community.