

Saskatchewan Ministry of Education says Connaught School plans are right on time



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Crews demolish Connaught Community School. *TROY FLEECE / REGINA LEADER-POST*

Despite concerns from community members

about the lack of progress on the construction of the new Connaught Community School, the province's Ministry of Education said they can expect the school to open on time in September 2017.

Over the weekend, a group gathered on the site of the Cathedral-area school to raise their concerns.

The 102-year-old school closed its doors in June of 2014 after parents lost a long and often emotional battle to keep it open.

Sheldon Ramstead, executive director of infrastructure for ministry, said everything is going according to plan and staying on budget.

The weekend rally was organized the school community council and, although it has been involved in the design process, its members are concerned about the ministry's requests to change or cut back the building's design.

Sarah Truszkowski, chair of the school community council, said she wanted a safe and beautiful school and feared the provincial ministry's requests would delay plans on construction.

"We are working with the school division to make sure that school opens in 2017," said Ramstead, on Monday.

Ramstead said the province does not "force" design changes on schools as a way to stay on budget, but may make design suggestions.

"We set out a budget for the school divisions to focus and they are familiar with that," Ramstead. "We work together to develop the school division's design."

An update on the school's [website \(http://www.rbe.sk.ca/news/2015/11/project-update-connaught\)](http://www.rbe.sk.ca/news/2015/11/project-update-connaught), notes planning for the rebuild "is almost completed and is awaiting approval from the Ministry of Education."

"The design process is the most important process," said Ramstead. "So if you have a solid design it really makes building the school a better and quicker project."

There is currently no construction happening at the site, but north on Elphinstone crews are working at Sacred Heart Community School and at Scott Collegiate.

Ramstead said there are currently 20 new schools scheduled to open in 2017 and Connaught remains on that list.

“We’re expecting it to go to tender in the next couple of weeks,” said Ramstead. “The contractor will lay out the timeline for construction.”

A spokesman for Regina Public Schools said progress was being made at the school even if it wasn’t visible to the public and that the project was not behind schedule.

Last year, Connaught students began being bused to Wascana Community School located in North Central, which is to continue until the new school is scheduled to reopen in September 2017.

Parents at the rally were also concerned that an economic downturn could negatively impact plans for a new school.

Ramstead said that will not happen because the construction phase is part of the 2015 budget.

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