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## Westmount School on horizon

By Ryan Laverty  
Staff Reporter

While school enrolment numbers continue to drop off across the Foothills School Division, the Okotoks area won't stop growing.

To relieve some of the stress on the town's swollen classrooms, construction is already underway for Heritage Heights School in the Davisburg area, but the division knows that won't be good enough. When the division released its three and 10-year capital plan for facilities on June 15, another Okotoks school was one of the top priorities.

"With the growth we're seeing in Okotoks and the class-size initiative restricting the number of students in each classroom, we're expecting we will need another school there at some point in the next couple of years," said division secretary treasurer Drew Chipman.

The new Okotoks school ranked second out of nine facility priorities the division set for the next 10 years. Initial plans are for the school to be built on the south side of Okotoks, likely in the Westmount community.

Tentative start date for the project is fall 2006, but Chipman said in all likelihood that will only be the beginning of the process.

"The likelihood of that changing is very real," said Chipman. "Vision 20/20 will upgrade the (capital) plan. As we finalize that study we will be making changes to this plan. What we have just released is more like our stopgap plan.

"(Fall 2006) is the date we are hoping to make the request to the government."

Vision 20/20 is the division's study of current enrolment and utilization in schools across their jurisdiction. The idea behind the study is to increase the division's global utilization rates, thus increasing funding for operations and maintenance from the provincial government. The board is scheduled to pass a resolution finalizing Vision 20/20 March 22 of next year.

"A lot of things could change between now and then," said Chipman.

One of those things could be the proposition that the new Okotoks school serve 300 students between kindergarten and Grade 9.

"That's something we'll have to look at more closely at the time," said Chipman. "After Vision 20/20 is complete we'll have a better idea if the K to nine configuration makes sense."

The top priority on the division's facilities capital plan is the modernization of Black Diamond's C. Ian McLaren School, including the demolition of the 1929 and 1932 portions of the building and some new construction. That project is expected to start in April 2006. The remaining priorities on the list and their start dates are: modernize Cayley School, Spring 2006; modernize Blackie School, Spring 2007; modernize Longview School, April 2007; modernize Turner Valley School, April 2008; modernize Millarville Community School, April 2008; construct Okotoks area high school (350 to 550 student capacity), April 2008; construct High River area school, April 2010.

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