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Added classrooms meet priority enrolment needs

Edmonton... Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation will provide school boards across the province with 129 new modular classrooms over the next year to address high-enrolment needs.

"Although overall enrolment in the kindergarten to Grade 12 school system has remained relatively unchanged in recent years and is now on the decline, some individual schools are facing significant enrolment pressures," said Dr. Lyle Oberg, Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. "These new classrooms will address the needs of these schools. It's a very positive start and I look forward to announcing even more school infrastructure as funding becomes available."

The first 25 modular classrooms are already under construction and will be put in place in time for the start of the school year in September 2005. To meet current space needs, these will be supplemented by the relocation of 64 existing portables from underutilized schools. The remaining 104 modular classrooms are expected to be completed and put into place by spring 2006.

These new modular classrooms are superior in design and construction to what are commonly known as portables and will last up to 10 years longer. This is the first time government has centralized the design, construction, and delivery of modular classrooms, which will result in cost savings.

"Classroom space was a key priority for many of the jurisdictions I visited earlier this year," said Education Minister Gene Zwozdesky. "These new modular classrooms will help alleviate space pressures in high enrolment areas, and will also help these schools meet the requirements of the Class Size Initiative."

Additional classroom space needed by some school jurisdictions to fully implement the Class Size Initiative across the province will be looked at as funding becomes available.

School boards receiving modular classrooms, and/or funding to move existing portable classrooms will receive details of their allocations in the coming weeks.

The modular classrooms use the latest in construction technology. By using a consistent design, the classrooms can be moved easily and used interchangeably with core schools. These new classrooms look and feel remarkably similar to permanent classrooms, but have the steel frame to support multiple moves.

The 25 modular classrooms currently under construction cost \$5 million. An additional \$22.4 million in new funding has been approved for the remaining classrooms and relocation of existing portables. Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation will coordinate the manufacturing of the modular classrooms with a qualified supplier(s).

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Backgrounder

Modular Classrooms - A new approach

For the first time, Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation will centralize the design, purchasing, construction, and delivery of modular classrooms. The consistent design can be moved easily and used interchangeably among core schools. Modular classrooms feature:

- steel frame
- singular unit construction
- moisture resistance
- lifespan 5-10 years longer than traditional portable
- state-of-the-art computer networking accessible throughout the classroom
- efficient and quiet heating compatible with school monitoring systems
- drywall interior finish

For improved durability and strength, the modular classrooms are reinforced with steel - allowing for multiple moves.

A unique feature in the new design is the singular unit construction. Previous portables were constructed in two parts and sewn together, which could result in moisture, sagging and misalignment. With singular unit construction, the classroom is designed for moisture resistance and will retain its shape and structure over time.

The walls of the modular classroom are also moisture resistant in that they feature a steel exterior, foam insulation, and a steel interior. The inside of the classroom is then finished with drywall for a permanent classroom look and feel.

School Infrastructure - Update

Alberta has allocated more than \$1 billion for 368 school projects, including new and replacement schools, additions and modernizations over the last five years. In fact, 45 new schools have opened in the past five years and another 45 new schools will be built over the next three years. In addition to the 129 modular classrooms, the Alberta government has provided school boards with funding to purchase 278 portables since 2000. Altogether, this means room for approximately 43,000 more students compared to five years ago - while enrolment has remained relatively unchanged.

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