

Update on Westbrook community growth from the Limestone District School Board and the City of Kingston

The Limestone District School Board (LDSB) is preparing to submit its 2026 application to the Ministry of Education requesting funding for a new school in the Westbrook neighbourhood.

As previously shared, the LDSB was unsuccessful in securing funding in 2025 application year and in the time since that announcement, the City of Kingston has continued to work closely with the LDSB to explore any new options or opportunities toward securing a new school in the Westbrook Neighbourhood. The strongest opportunity continues to be the potential land swap between Westbrook Park and the current W.J. Holsgrove School site.

We believe that Limestone's business case put forward in the application has significant merit, but we acknowledge that new school developments often take several rounds of applications before funding is approved. We also acknowledge and understand that we remain in a "hurry-up-and-wait" situation on the potential land swap and future park development on either of the Westbrook Park or W.J. Holsgrove sites. The 2026 application period closes in early October, and the LDSB expects to be notified of the Ministry of Education's decision in later winter/early spring 2026. Planned updates to Westbrook Park remain on hold as we await the outcome of this application cycle.

Through this update we are also sharing some more information and answers to the questions we have continued to receive from the community. These responses can be found below, as well as on the project page on Get Involved Kingston.

Once again, we would like to thank the Westbrook community for providing feedback on this project. Please continue to stay tuned to our Get Involved Kingston page, where we will continue to share updates.

- The Westbrook Community Growth Project Management Team

FAQs related to LDSB's application for funding, and the current W.J. Holsgrove Public School

Funding application process for schools

- 1) How is the funding process similar or different for the other school boards?
 - a. The funding application process for capital priorities is the same for all boards. Boards that are able to levy Economic Development Charges (EDCs) have the ability to purchase land from their own reserves. Limestone DSB does not levy EDCs and therefore is subject to Ministry approval for funding through the Capital Land Funding process.
- 2) What is the timing of the new application cycle?
 - a. A new capital submissions opportunity became available in early September with submissions due in early October. The province reviews the submissions and then allocates funding to some projects while rejecting others. We would anticipate hearing a response at some point in the winter or early spring.
- 3) Why is the LDSB submitting a funding application before Council and Trustees have made a final decision on the land swap?
 - a. The purpose in putting forward a proposed land swap is to place a school in a similar location to the existing school and reducing costs for taxpayers by removing the cost of purchasing the land.
- 4) Why did LDSB not buy land in Woodhaven?
 - a. LDSB did express interest in the school designated lots during the subdivision planning process but was not in a position to purchase before building in area began. Other school boards used their EDCs to purchase the property.

Limestone DSB was in discussions about purchasing the property with the French public school board. Their Board of Trustees decided to purchase the property on their own without further discussions with Limestone DSB.
- 5) Why is the LDSB not buying the school block in the proposed new subdivision? (Greene Homes)
 - a. For Capital Land Funding to be approved, the requesting school board must demonstrate the need for the school and the purchase of land by showing the surrounding schools at their accommodation capacity. Even though Limestone DSB currently has some accommodation capacity at the surrounding schools in the west end of Kingston, it will be investigating the merits of submitting a capital land funding request for property in this area.

- 6) How will LDSB strengthen its application this cycle?
 - a. LDSB believes the business case for a new school build in the west end is merited with the information that was provided to the Ministry. The application will be reviewed and updated as required for the new submission. The Ministry is balancing the accommodation pressure needs across the entire province when it comes to the distribution of funds for building new schools. LDSB will continue to advocate for the approval of our business case.
- 7) How many applications for this new school has the LDSB made?
 - a. Each time the Capital Funding Application has opened in the last four years, the board has applied. We have been told our application is strong, well-explained and clearly shows the need by the Ministry Capital Analyst who supported LDSB at that time. It has been said that owning shovel-ready land is an important point for a successful application. Each subsequent application has been strengthened to show advancement in the talks with the City of Kingston on the land swap.
- 8) If the new application is successful, what is the timeline on the proposed swap and the new school?
 - a. If the new application is successful, the expectation is that the project planning and the proposed swap would move ahead as quickly as the two parties can manage. Typically, a new build takes up to three years. Ideally a potential land swap would occur in phases so the new building could be finished and then students would move from the current school into the new school. The timeline of the proposed swap and new school will be dependent upon the City meeting their requirements for the proposed swap to be finalized.
- 9) If the new application isn't successful, how many times do you apply for the same project?
 - a. This depends on changing needs and population changes. LDSB can only utilize current student numbers and short-term projections as part of a business case. Assuming the City continues to grow in population, Limestone will pursue this particular build and others. There is no limit on the number of times a project may be submitted for funding. Due to the volume of requests the Ministry receives, it is not uncommon for this process to take several attempts. It should be noted that W.J. Holsgrove is well over its capacity as witnessed by the number of portables on the site.
- 10) What commitment from the City did you include in your application?
 - a. The most recent application included a conditional agreement of purchase and sale, as required by the Ministry of Education. This was not a final agreement but outlined a potential agreement, contingent upon the success of the funding application and approval by the Board and City Council (including the necessary

community consultation) as conditions. This application with a potential land swap agreement lowers the overall taxpayer cost because it does not include a request for money to purchase land.

FAQs related to the current and future school

11) How many students currently attend W.J. Holsgrove, and how many students will the new school accommodate?

- a. The 2024-25 enrolment was 246 and the new school request is for 502 students.

12) Will students eventually be bused to other areas of the City for school?

- a. Each year the board reviews its accommodation plan and adjusts as needed. A decision to bus students to other schools at this time would weaken the need for a new school because the area would no longer demonstrate accommodation pressures.

However, as the population continues to grow, and with the current capacity at W.J. Holsgrove, Limestone may have to explore other strategies such as busing to other schools and/or shifting the current school to K-6 and moving Grades 7-8 into a secondary school.

13) If a second new school will be needed for the neighbourhood, why not build a bigger school now?

- a. Our business case for a new school can only focus on existing numbers and short-term projections (five-year enrollment forecasts). As a result, and very frequently, schools are built and immediately are over capacity. This is not unique to Limestone and exists across the province.

14) How big can an elementary school be?

- a. There is not a set limit, but typically elementary schools have fewer than 1000 students. Sizes of elementary schools vary significantly based on the communities they serve.

15) Could a new school be built elsewhere and Holsgrove retained with fewer students?

- a. This is a possibility, but it would require more funding from the province to maintain an older building than a new one.

The catchment of Holsgrove has accommodation pressure well beyond the 107 students it was originally designed for, so retaining a small school there would not

be appropriate.

16) Are there sufficient washrooms to meet the current needs of students and staff?

- a. There are sufficient washrooms. Meeting the minimum washroom count is a requirement of the Ontario Building Code and is reviewed by the architects and the City prior to the approval of the installation of a portable.

17) How is asbestos in schools managed?

- a. Asbestos in buildings in Ontario is required to be managed through an Asbestos Management Plan with assessments and removals as required by legislation.

18) What is the minimum parcel size for a new school?

- a. The ideal size of property for an elementary school is five acres, but site constraints may increase or decrease the size requirement.

19) Why can't the existing school be expanded or replaced?

- a. There are significant limitations in building on the existing site, such as setback requirements for a pipeline that runs through the property. Because of this, there is not sufficient space to build a new school while maintaining the existing one until the new one is completed. Replacing the existing school might be an option but due to the limited buildable footprint of the current site, there would be significant constraints on a new building. Currently, we do not have capacity in other schools in the area to accommodate all of the students from Holsgrove while this work takes place.

20) Could the students be bused elsewhere during the build?

- a. Transportation and accommodation requirements are considered during any building project. This would be an option, but so would a gradual land swap that would allow students to use the current building until the new one is completed.

21) What other considerations do you have to have for a new school?

- a. A number of things need to be considered by the school board and municipality as part of the process of designing, building and opening a new school. This includes but is not limited to:
 - walkability and sidewalks
 - bus accommodation
 - outdoor fields and play structures
 - childcare, including before- and after-care

22) Are there any restrictions on the school land related to the original donation/sale of the land by the Holsgrove Family?

- a. We are not aware of any historical arrangements or restrictions of this nature.

23) Are there any ways to honour the donation of the land?

- a. Some options could include a potential new school name and/or a plaque to ensure history is honoured. School naming decisions require broad consultation with students, families, staff, and community. Ultimately, school naming decisions rest with Trustees. That being said, under proposed legislation tabled in the spring, the provincial government may have greater influence on school naming decisions in the future.

FAQs related to the City of Kingston's role in the land swap and school development process

1) What is the planning process for requiring school blocks in new developments?

- a. There are a number of ways the requirement for a new school can be identified and planned for. School blocks can be negotiated directly with landowners when a school board identifies a need for a new school. They can also be pre-planned in consultation with school boards when developing or redeveloping large pieces of land (e.g. new subdivisions).

All Official Plan and Zoning By-law amendment applications are circulated to the school boards, where they can provide comments to the file planner. Comments are considered and a recommendation is brought forward by Staff to Council for a decision on the land use matters.

This level of pre-planning is helpful when large redevelopments occur through a Plan of Subdivision to ensure that a large enough block is set aside. However, school are generally allowed in the zoning by-law across both residential and park lands.

Once a school site has been established on a lot that is sized appropriately and where it is permitted by the zoning, each school must proceed through a site plan control application with the City.

2) What role does the City play when working with the school boards on new schools?

- a. The City works with the school boards during the development application review process, and through broader growth planning processes (for example an Official Plan or a secondary plan) to identify where school blocks may be needed.

The City encourages school boards to collaborate, particularly in exploring joint

sites, as was recently done for the West Village subdivision. It is ultimately the responsibility of the school boards to secure the necessary land to accommodate their projected enrollment.

- 3) What is the projected population growth for the Westbrook area?
- a. Kingston West, including Westbrook, is anticipated to grow by approximately 36,500 new residents by 2051. We anticipate that approximately 43% of this population growth will be in the Midland Avenue, Creekford Road and Woodhaven areas. This includes the growth associated with existing subdivision applications that have not yet been built. The growth associated with the existing subdivision applications in the area is likely to occur over a 10-year time frame.

- 4) Is there a school block included in the new subdivision on Creekford Road?
- a. For the proposed urban boundary expansion Official Plan amendment application at 3279 and 3403 Creekford Road, a school block has been included on the conceptual plan.

Any new applications within the urban boundary expansion areas will be examined for appropriate places to accommodate new schools. This may not happen until after the passing of the new Official Plan, when the lands become ready for development based on available services and zoning is in place.

- 5) What zoning is needed for a new school?
- a. Schools are permitted in several zones including both Urban and Rural Residential zones. Proposed schools have to meet the setbacks, lot coverage, landscaped open space, and other applicable regulations of the zone that applies to the property.

- 6) What City considerations are made around schools for sidewalks, bus lanes, childcare and outdoor spaces?
- a. New or expanding schools must go through a site plan control application which reviews the location of the building, utilities, parking, drive aisles, playgrounds and sports fields, and bus loops. They have to demonstrate the functionality of pedestrian and vehicle movements through the site, including the bus lanes.

Daycares are permitted as an accessory use. The City is currently developing a 5-Year Service Plan for licensed child care and year years programs. Learn more at <https://getinvolved.cityofkingston.ca/child-care-early-years-service-system-plan>

The City has partnered with school boards on projects in other areas of Kingston to assist in the development of shared school/park amenities with the goal of

supporting the schools but in also securing expanded community use opportunities on fields and play spaces.

7) Will improvements to Westbrook Park be made?

- a. The Westbrook Park improvements are on hold for the time being as we continue a conversation with the Limestone District School Board regarding the potential land swap. If the land swap moves forward, the community would be engaged on the design and conceptual planning for the park to be installed on the current W.J. Holsgrove Public School site. The City Parks Development team would bring forward the ideas and considerations previously shared on the consultation on Westbrook Park as a strong starting point for the potential new park.

You can learn more about the Westbrook Park engagement and what was included in the final conceptual design on the Get Involved Kingston project page:

https://getinvolved.cityofkingston.ca/creekside-valley/news_feed/westbrook-park-engagement-summary-final-conceptual-design

8) Has the City made deals on new schools before?

- a. The City has worked with school partners on many projects over the years. Most recently the City partnered with École Secondaire Publique Milles-Îles and École Secondaire Catholique Sainte-Marie-Rivier. This partnership assisted the school boards to complete a unified public access campus around the schools as a functional extension of the adjacent City park, with the benefit of community access to a recreation field, paved walking track, basketball court, parking, field and track elements, interior theatre and gymnasium spaces.

In 2013 the City partnered with the LDSB on the development of the Rideau Heights Community Centre (RHCC) and Library. This project combined the redevelopment of the former Wally Elmer Arena site with the development of Shannon Park and an expansion of amenities to Rideau Height Public School. The RHCC and Library opened in 2018.

If the land swap moves forward, the City would be looking to secure the following as part of the partnership agreement:

- Community access for 20+20 years to the outdoor campus, outside of school hours and generally defined as weekdays after 5 pm, weekends and summer.
- Campus access would include all amenities, paths, basketball, parking, field, track and area including the school playground area.
- Community access to the gymnasium/cafeteria outside of school hours but within standard operating hours.
- Formal bookings completed through the schools' booking system

9) How would the City consider using the Holsgrove parcel for a park?

If the land swap moves forward, the City would be looking to demolish the existing buildings on the W.J. Holsgrove Public School site and would intend to develop the site into a new park. The community would be engaged on the design and conceptual planning for the park and the City Parks Development team would bring forward the ideas and considerations previously shared on the consultation on Westbrook Park.