

MEDIA RELEASE



For immediate release

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Lethbridge School Division:

- We are growing, leading and supporting -
- West Coulee Station Grand Opening -

On Tuesday, Sept. 2, West Coulee Station Elementary School opened its doors to students for the first day of classes in Lethbridge School Division. Opening day for the school came four years after the Government of Alberta approved the \$32.9 million capital project back in the spring of 2021. In April of 2022, work began on site, as Melcor Developments took great efforts to consolidate the land for both the building site and the surrounding park lands.

From there, construction on the two-story school, which opened with a capacity for 600 students, began in the summer of 2023. The Government of Alberta contracted the design-build team Ward Bros. Construction Ltd. to construct the school, as local firm FWBA Architects led the construction design team.

The 6,000 square metre structure is designed for the future inclusion of 12, two-story modular classroom units, which will allow West Coulee to reach a full potential capacity of 900 students.

West Coulee is the Division's first two-story elementary build since the 1950s, when Senator Buchanan Elementary School and Westminster Elementary School were constructed.

The school's exterior and interior design draws inspiration from both the Garry Station neighbourhood's steam engine logo, along with Lethbridge's iconic High Level Bridge. If you look closely toward West Coulee from the east, you will notice the hints of a steam engine in the outline and in the materials used on the building faces. On the inside, the colour of the exposed steel trusses in the central gathering space and the gymnasium are black, in reference to the historic train bridge.

One of West Coulee's other unique features include a large drop-off round on the exterior. Interior features include a large central gathering space for multiple functions for student, staff and other events and performances. Of special significance in this space is the grand theatre staircase, which acts as a secondary connection from the central gathering space to the second floor Learning Commons.

For the Hon. Martin Long, the Government of Alberta's Minister of Infrastructure, the new westside schools checks a lot of boxes in terms of meeting the needs of young learners and accounting for the growth the city has experienced.

"The opening of West Coulee Station Elementary is a proud moment not just for Lethbridge but for Alberta's education system," said Long. "This modern, state-of-the-art school will provide students with the tools and spaces they need to learn, grow and succeed for years to come. Our government remains committed to building schools that support families and keep pace with the needs of our growing communities."

According to Christine Lee, the Division's Associate Superintendent of Business and Operations, (who retired at the end of August) the long road to completion resulted in a school everyone can be proud of.

"Our journey with West Coulee Station Elementary School began in October of 2021, when we invited the west Lethbridge community to imagine the possibilities of a new elementary school," she said. "Today, we celebrate the realization of that vision — a beautiful, welcoming space shaped by the voices of our community. From the expansive gathering area that floods the school with natural light to the grand staircase leading to the Learning Commons, every detail reflects our commitment to creating inspiring environments for teaching and learning. We extend our heartfelt thanks to our partner, The City of Lethbridge, for their contribution to the upsized gymnasium — an incredible space that will host tournaments and community groups for years to come. This school stands as a testament to collaboration, vision and the power of education to bring people together."

West Coulee principal Dean Hawkins added the new school will allow students to pursue their passions and learn in the best environment possible.

"Opening West Coulee Station Elementary is a dream come true, and I am so proud to see our students walk into a school built just for them," he said. "This is more than a building — it is a place where children will discover their potential, build friendships and create lifelong memories."

Lethbridge School Division Board Chair Christine Light went on to say the Division is thrilled for the opening of West Coulee.

"It is a beautifully and intentionally crafted state-of-the-art, 900-capacity facility that will allow students and staff to foster creativity, innovation and community in their learning spaces," said Light. "This school is an essential step in addressing capacity issues due to growth in our city and is an environment we wish every student in the public education system could experience."

For Lethbridge Mayor Blaine Hyggen, adding to the city's recreational capacity is another important component of the West Coulee project.

"On behalf of Lethbridge City Council, I want to congratulate everyone involved in making the grand opening of the West Coulee Station Elementary School a reality," said Hyggen. "We know there is a growing need for indoor recreational spaces in our city. That's why Council was happy to approve funding to increase the size of the school's gymnasium. Expanding this space isn't only about recreation. It also reaffirms the City's continued commitment to school partnerships."

Lethbridge School Division

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