Eastern School District

NEWS RELEASE

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TWO SCHOOLS CLOSED DUE TO AIR QUALITY ISSUES

Stratford - Investigations into the air quality and health concerns at Morell Consolidated School and Spring Park Elementary School have revealed air quality issues at both schools, prompting the Eastern School District to close the schools until remediation work can be completed.

“Due to health concerns such as headaches, sinus infections, coughs and eye, nose and throat irritations by some staff members at Morell Consolidated and Spring Park Elementary Schools, health surveys were circulated. As a result of a thorough investigation, we have decided to close both schools as of Monday January 10,” said Ricky Hood, Superintendent of the Eastern School District. “The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has demonstrated that they will do what it takes to address these issues and I know that we have full support from the department to ensure that the health and safety of our students and staff is the number one priority.”

The results of the mold test, analysis of a health survey, air quality tests and a review of the previous data for the past 15 years were available to the Chief Health Office for review. The decision to close the schools was made by the Eastern School District following discussions with representatives from the Departments of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, Education and Early Childhood Development and Health and Wellness, including the Chief Health Officer, the Provincial Epidemiologist, and the Manager of Environmental Health for PEI.
This closure is due to the results of the air quality testing and a number of staff reporting symptoms that, in many cases, are associated with exposure to mold or poor air quality. However, the decision is not based on concerns of long-term health effects. The schools will remain closed until it is determined that the buildings are safe to occupy.

“While we don’t know the full extent of the remediation work that will be required, we are aware the time to complete this work is significant, “ said Mr. Hood, “We are operating under the assumption that this work will take months and, for planning purposes, we will use a tentative target date of September 1, 2011 for re-entry to the schools. Please note the schools could open sooner or later, but this will not be known until there is a full building assessment.”

The District has begun the process of identifying alternative classroom spaces for the students and staff. We hope to have the students back in classes in a new location by Tuesday, January 18. We are aware that this closure will have a major impact on all families and we promise to try to provide a solution as quickly as possible.

The District intends to work closely with media and use our own Eastern School District web site (www.edu.pe.ca/esd) to provide parents and staff with any updates and changes that may impact on the affected children.

A parent information session will be held on Monday, January 10, 2011, at Colonel Gray Senior High School, beginning at 7:00 pm. for parents of students attending Spring Park Elementary. As well, a parent information session will be held on Tuesday, January 11, 2011, at Morell Senior High School, beginning at 7:00 p.m. for parents of students attending Morell Consolidated. The meetings will provide an opportunity to share information and to address any questions parents may have.

We know the closure of these two schools will be a significant disruption to all concerned but believe it to be the best decision in terms of the health and safety of our students and staff. Your understanding of this most difficult situation would be greatly appreciated.

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