

Revenue-generating potential of school district land studied

Once again, School District 57 is looking over its land holdings, pondering ways of generating revenue.

The school board has put together a committee to assess what district properties could make some money for the cash-strapped district.

Under changes to provincial legislation last January,

any revenue generated through the lease of school property will go the district's general operating budget.

But the prospect of giving up land also has some red flags, especially in light of the district's new policy broadening parental choices in public education.

"Having gone through the

first couple of weeks since the policy of choice was approved, and the numbers of enquiries we've had, we're concerned that by doing anything to remove existing surplus space could well come back to haunt us."

In particular, the surplus land at Harwin Elementary School has piqued the board's

interest a great deal.

"That is probably the primary target right now," says trustee Doug Walls, "What we're hopeful of doing — because [the Elizabeth Fry housing project] was hugely over-subscribed — that a Phase Three and Four could be considered along Johnson Street, which would take up

land the school district owns but is not using."

The district also has an ulterior motive with such a suggestion: students. It is anticipated the existing housing project will result in enrolment increases next year as there are a number of pre-school students living there now. A third and fourth phase

would only help alleviate Harwin's dwindling numbers even further. Not only that, he adds, it would assist with the City's goal of revitalizing the Bowl area.

"That's an area where the committee will be focusing. We've already had discussions with the city about jointly developing the land."

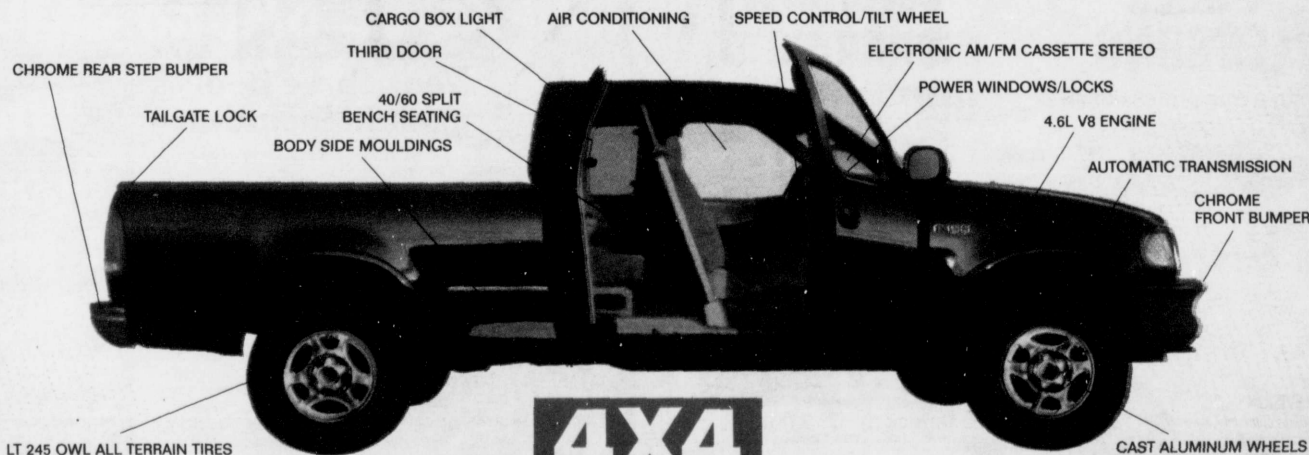
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