



WISE Charter Society: Three-Year Capital Plan 2025/26 - 2028/29

Executive Summary

The WISE Charter School (WISE) is Alberta's first Waldorf charter school, marking a significant expansion of parental choice in education. As a new public charter school opening in the 2024/25 school year, WISE builds on over a decade of experience delivering high-quality Waldorf education in Alberta as a former private school authority. The school's infrastructure now requires investment to ensure safe, purpose-built facilities that align with Alberta Education guidelines.

Capital Request Overview: This capital request seeks approval for a replacement school adjacent to the current site in Ottewell. Our capital plan addresses critical space and infrastructure deficiencies, safety concerns, expansion possibilities and the need for dedicated spaces to support the delivery of the WISE charter. This proposal aligns with Alberta's Choice in Education Act, the Education Business Plan, Ministerial Mandate Letters, and Alberta Infrastructure's Strategic Capital Plan by ensuring students have access to a purpose-built facility that reflects provincial policy objectives.

Project Need: The existing school, built in 1958 with an expansion in 1964, has surpassed its functional lifespan. Core infrastructure deficiencies include depleted insulation, electrical, and mechanical systems, leading to high maintenance costs. Learning spaces, including the gymnasium and library, fall below Alberta Education standards and limit programming. The absence of dedicated science labs and Career and Technology Studies (CTS) spaces restricts hands-on, experiential learning. Transportation safety, traffic access and dispersed portables further compromise safety and supervision. Future expansion, including site fitness for a future high school, requires facilities that support long-term growth.

Project Proposed: The solution arising from the Value Scoping process is for a Replacement School on an adjacent site, ensuring long-term value, student safety, and effective learning spaces. Alternative options reviewed during the value scoping process were unable to fully address the range of needs identified.

Government Priorities & Community Engagement: This proposal aligns with provincial priorities by addressing aging schools and infrastructure needs, ensuring safe and appropriate learning spaces, increasing enrollment spaces, providing parental choice in education, reducing long-term costs, and enhancing student educational experiences. WISE is engaging with the City of Edmonton regarding a potential land exchange/acquisition, while also collaborating with the Waldorf Education Society of Edmonton, the current owner of the school building and land parcel, on acquiring the current site.

Next Steps: WISE will submit a School Capital Accelerator Program (SCAP) proposal to advance this three-year capital request.



Capital Plan: Supporting Data & Evidence

Built in 1958 with expansions in 1964, the existing facility has surpassed its functional lifespan and no longer meets education standards. A 2016 real estate appraisal on the building and a 2023 engineering report on the portable classrooms indicate deficiencies in insulation, electrical, and mechanical systems, contributing to inefficiencies and increasing maintenance demands. While some upgrades have been made, the aging infrastructure and inadequate portables continue to compromise energy performance, student comfort, and long-term sustainability. Additionally, poor ventilation leads to inadequate air circulation and excessive noise transfer into classrooms, further impacting the learning environment. These issues exceed the scope of Infrastructure Maintenance and Renewal (IMR) funding, making replacement an optimum solution.

Furthermore, core and ancillary spaces fall significantly below Alberta Education's space allocation guidelines, limiting student access to essential programming:

- At 53% of the required size, the gym significantly restricts K-9 physical education.
- The library lacks space to support oral storytelling and collaborative inquiry, all core to Waldorf pedagogy. A purpose-built space will support immersive storytelling, literary exploration, and flexible group learning in an environment aligned with child development principles.
- The absence of dedicated Career and Technology Studies (CTS) and science labs restricts the hands-on, experiential learning fundamental to Waldorf's phenomenological approach as outlined in the WISE charter. Purpose-built facilities will allow WISE to meet provincial education requirements.
- Administrative and student support spaces are critically deficient, impacting student services, staff collaboration, and WISE's culture of parental involvement and volunteerism. Waldorf education thrives on community engagement, requiring dedicated spaces that enable collaboration among educators, parents, and volunteers.
- Since becoming a tuition-free charter school, demand for WISE Charter School has surged, highlighting the need for expansion. In 2025/26, Kindergarten class sizes will increase by 20% to accommodate more students, yet demand already exceeds available space. To meet future enrollment needs, WISE plans to add a third Kindergarten class, requiring further infrastructure expansion to support a second stream per grade.

A purpose-built facility will:

- Ensure compliance with Alberta Education guidelines for space allocation, student safety, and delivery of the Waldorf charter.
- Support long-term operational efficiency, reducing maintenance cost burdens.
- Provide students with a safe, well-equipped, and functionally appropriate learning environment in accordance with the WISE Charter.
- Accommodate long-term growth.



WISE Charter School - Aligning with Government Priorities

This proposal contributes to the Government of Alberta's education and infrastructure strategies by:

- Expanding Parental Choice in Education – WISE CS supports the province's commitment to increasing charter school options for families and enrollment spaces.
- Ensuring appropriate learning spaces – WISE CS can provide a modern, efficient, and cost-effective replacement for an aging facility and a purpose-built Waldorf facility to enable the WISE to fulfill its Charter.
- Enhancing student safety and accessibility – By redesigning the campus to alleviate traffic congestion, address student pedestrian safety, and allow for busing transportation.
- Supporting holistic child development and mental wellness – As a core tenet of Waldorf education, WISE CS creates nurturing spaces, increased access to nature and a screen-free learning environment supporting improved student and school community mental health outcomes.
- Building on a strong educational legacy – The new WISE CS brings over a decade of demonstrated educational success in delivering Waldorf education as a previous Accredited Private School Authority operating in Alberta.

Project Drivers

Building Condition: The 1958-built structure has significant infrastructure inefficiencies (electrical, mechanical, and building envelope) that cannot be addressed with Infrastructure Maintenance & Renewal (IMR) funding alone. The aging facility no longer meets modern building standards, resulting in higher operational costs and reduced sustainability.

Health & Safety: The current school layout prevents safe student drop-off, lacks space for busing, and creates significant congestion risks for students, staff and families during peak times. The dispersed placement of portables presents supervision challenges and inefficiencies in student movement on the site, impacting student safety and accessibility.

Functionality & Programming: The lack of CTS spaces, science labs, and appropriately sized gym/library facilities limits WISE's ability to meet Waldorf and Alberta Education curriculum delivery requirements. Additionally, current administrative and student support spaces are critically undersized, impacting student services, teaching and leading collaboration, and community-building.

Efficiency Solutions: A new build allows for considerable operational efficiency improvements and long-term maintenance cost reduction, while ensuring a sustainable facility that meets current and future educational needs. Consolidating instructional spaces into a purpose-built structure enhances program delivery, student experience, and school-wide integration.

Expansion & Future Readiness: WISE is committed to long-term growth, including a vision to expand into high school (10–15 year horizon). In WISE's first year of becoming a charter school, enrollment demand has exceeded available space in the early grades. To support this growth, WISE plans to introduce a second stream beginning in 2026/27, adding one modular classroom per grade each year. A purpose-built facility will ensure compliance with Alberta Education's space guidelines while preserving Waldorf principles and supporting the growth outlined in the WISE Charter.



Enrollment Projections - 3-Year Capital Plan

Student Numbers *	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	New School opens	By second year of new school
Current Year	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
186	201	240	261	307	335
	Kinder 20% increase, demand exceeds spaces	Third Kindergarten stream commences	Double stream Grade 1 commences	Double stream Grade 2 commences	Double stream Grade 3 commences

* WISE's educational model requires increased designated classroom space per student to meet pedagogical standards.

Capital Priorities

WISE Charter School requests that Alberta Education approve funding for a replacement school for 2028/29 that will:

- Accommodate 320 students (K-9) in a purpose-built facility.
- Provide two classrooms per grade (K-2) and a single stream for Grades 3-9.
- Accommodate core facilities for 420 students to allow for future growth.
- Include dedicated spaces meeting Alberta Education capacity standards, CTS equivalent charter school space, science labs, library, gymnasium, an auditorium and ancillary spaces.
- Ensure space for out-of-school care and Waldorf Early Childhood Education (ECE), a critical feeder program supporting enrollment growth.

Project Classification

WISE Charter School's capital request is to build a Replacement School. WISE seeks a new K-9 facility on an adjacent site to replace the current outdated and inadequate existing structure. A Replacement School enables WISE to provide a safe, efficient, purpose-built Waldorf school with additional space that enables it to meet enrolment demand.

A Modernization & Addition option was also considered to upgrade the existing building with expansions to accommodate student needs and safety, however this option does not fully address safety concerns, long-term expansion potential, and poses significant student learning disruption due to phased construction.



Capital Project Request

Replacement School – A new K-9 facility on an adjacent site.

This request involves constructing a replacement facility on an adjacent site and demolishing the existing school upon completion of the new facility. The new building would be designed to meet Alberta Education guidelines, improve safety, and provide specialized spaces that align with Waldorf pedagogy. This location allows for future expansion, including doubling streams for K-6 and the potential addition of a high school. While this project requires land acquisition and rezoning, it is the most future-proof solution.

Meeting Evaluation Criteria

This WISE Charter School capital request meets the six key evaluation criteria outlined in Bill 73, the Infrastructure Accountability Act as it:

- Aligns with government priorities by expanding charter school access, supporting Alberta's Choice in Education policy.
- Ensures safe and appropriate learning environments by addressing aging infrastructure to meet modern safety and accessibility standards.
- Enhances community resilience by providing a stable and long-term facility for a growing community while attracting young families to the area.
- Supports cost efficiency by investing in new infrastructure and reducing long-term maintenance costs.
- Improves the student experience by providing a purpose-built space to support high-quality Waldorf education.
- Enhances economic growth and innovation by nurturing creativity, problem-solving, and adaptability, aligning with Alberta's long-term workforce development goals. The interdisciplinary, experiential approach at WISE CS develops students critical thinking and leadership skills, essential for future economic diversification. By investing in a purpose-built Waldorf school, Alberta secures an educational model that contributes to a skilled, healthy and innovative workforce.

Municipal and Community Engagement

WISE Charter School has engaged with the City of Edmonton regarding a potential land exchange to facilitate the development of a new school site. Initial discussions indicate that the City is open to exploring a 1:1 exchange, pending a civic spaces assessment. Acquiring additional open space beyond a direct exchange requires the City to evaluate whether the land is surplus to civic needs and to seek approval for any sale at fair market value.

The Waldorf Education Society of Edmonton (WESE), the current site owner, is open and interested in discussing the sale of the property to support this development.



Municipal and Community Engagement contd.:

WISE remains committed to working within municipal and provincial planning frameworks to ensure that, upon funding approval, site readiness aligns with necessary processes and regulatory requirements, enabling the project to move forward efficiently.

Project Scope & Implementation Readiness

WISE Charter School has completed a Value Scope assessment in collaboration with START Architecture, confirming the most effective capital solution to address infrastructure, space, and educational needs. This process has provided a clear framework for implementation, ensuring the project aligns with Alberta Education facility standards and capital planning priorities.

With the Value Scope work now complete, WISE is equipped to develop a School Capital Accelerator Program proposal and advance to the next phase of planning.

Capital Project Cost: Replacement K-9, with double stream K-2, and 420-core school

Option 2 - Demolish existing school and build a replacement with a 420 core capacity and 320 initial capacity					
	Item Description	Area	\$/m2	Subtotal	Total
1	Replacement School	3578	\$ 5,100.00	\$ 18,247,800.00	
2	Hazardous materials abatement	2080	\$ 100.00	\$ 208,000.00	
3	Demolition of existing building	1550	\$ 125.00	\$ 193,750.00	
4	Demolish modular classrooms	530	\$ 125.00	\$ 66,250.00	
5	Miscellaneous sitework	3.5%	\$ 18,715,800.00	\$ 655,053.00	
6	Subtotal			\$ 19,370,853.00	
7	Contingency	3%		\$ 581,126.00	
					\$ 19,951,979.00

Capital Plan Attachments for Reference

1. Value Scope Report (January - March 2025)
2. School campus: Real Estate Appraisal - Analysis & Conclusion (2016);
Portables' Engineering report (2023)
3. Board Meeting Minutes approving Capital Plan - March 2025