



# Peter Lougheed School

by PETER STENNING

The Calgary Board of Education (CBE) may be setting a North American record in its goal of opening 23 new schools and completing four major modernization and one gym addition between August 2016 and September 2018 – and the work has come just at the right time, with the moribund oil and gas sector forcing many skilled labourers to seek employment in other provinces.

But in its provision of the new Peter Lougheed School in the northeast Calgary community of Saddle Ridge, the CBE and its development team encountered challenges that were endemic to bringing such a large number of learning institutes on line at the same time. “Subtrade resources were strained,” says Robert Ashley, manager of design services for the CBE. “Plus, with so many schools being delivered simultaneously, resources were stretched thin.”

Another challenge was a change in project delivery: Peter Lougheed, which would accommodate 900 students, was originally developed in 2013 as a P3 by the province. “However, the province decided to abandon the P3 format, and the five schools that had been developed under that model were turned over to CBE,” says Ashley. “It was a bit of a surprise to say the least, but CBE accepted the offer to build the five schools under the design-bid-build format. CBE then engaged Gibbs Gage Architects to prepare the tender documents, and LEAR Construction Management Ltd. was the successful contractor.”

The reason for Peter Lougheed is simple: a steadily rising influx in new residents to the city. “Our goal is to have students educated in their own

communities instead of being bussed, and if you look at a map of Calgary the majority of the new facilities are located on the outside edge of the city, in new communities,” says Ashley.

The provincial government had developed a series of designs based on student capacity, grade configuration and other factors, and when the CBE inherited Peter Lougheed it also inherited the design for a hammer shaped two-storey facility. “To meet existing schedules, CBE utilized the existing design and made a few adjustments,” says Ashley. “Essentially this is a steel frame structure with masonry cladding on the lower level and steel panelling on the second. We tweaked the interior to better accommodate program and operational needs. Standard components included a wood shop, foods and fashion lab, music room, science rooms and two gymnasiums.” Of the 36 classrooms, eight were designed as modular in order to accommodate any changes in student population levels into the future.

Kevin Showalter, project engineer for SMP Engineering, acknowledges the challenge of shifting from P3 to design bid build. “Our drawings had to be revised as well as meet new CBE standards for efficiency and security,” he says. “This would be a benefit to the students and teachers: for example, all the lighting became LED, and the communications systems were enhanced, ditto the security cameras and lock down components.

“While these revisions resulted in more expense and lengthier on site work, there will definitely be a return on investment for lighting. As for security, you can’t put a price tag on safety.”

Showalter adds that wireless was “a huge” consideration of the electrical portion of the project. “All told, it was an effort because we had to duplicate our design for both Peter Lougheed and another CBE project in Saddle Ridge, but the upside is that we can now adapt our drawings more easily to other schools in the planning stages,” he says.

Chris Grant, VP construction for LEAR, notes that although “there are only so many sub trades you can call on when so many schools are being built simultaneously, we came up with a way to make things work when construction began in the spring of 2015.”

The solution was to pair competitors together. “We set it up so that masons from different companies worked on Peter Lougheed, as did dry wallers, flooring people and other professionals,” says Grant. “And we shuttled them from one site to another when required, because we were also building the William Pratt middle school and two Catholic schools.”

Grant adds, “It wasn’t easy to get competitors to work side by side, but everyone put in their best effort, and the system worked.”

Apart from Calgary in 2016 experiencing the wettest summer in years, the actual construction process itself was uneventful, and by June interior masonry and GWB partitions were complete. Mechanical and electrical rough-ins, equipment installation and ducting was ongoing, as was external concrete block veneer installation. Interior painting and flooring had commenced, as had HVAC start-up. “The drawings we were given were good, Gibbs Gage was fantastic to work for, and we received tremendous support from the CBE and the City of Calgary,” says Grant.

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**LOCATION**  
148 Saddletree Close, Calgary, Alberta

**OWNER/DEVELOPER**  
Calgary Board of Education

**ARCHITECT**  
Gibbs Gage Architects

**GENERAL CONTRACTOR**  
LEAR Construction Management Ltd.

**STRUCTURAL CONSULTANT**  
TRL & Associates Ltd.

**MECHANICAL CONSULTANT**  
Remedy Energy Services Inc.

**ELECTRICAL CONSULTANT**  
SMP Engineering

**TOTAL SIZE**  
8,057 square metres

**TOTAL COST**  
Undisclosed

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Ultimately, Peter Lougheed School opened only a few days behind schedule, “which was an achievement in itself given the circumstances,” says Ashley.

No sooner did the September, 2016 wave of Calgary schools open than focus immediately shifted to the next 10 schools scheduled to open in January of the following year. “The process continues with more openings in September of this year and in September of 2018,” says Ashley. “It’s been a challenging few years for all of us, and frequently the scheduling required to keep everything in motion is incredibly complex. But the outcome is worth it, certainly to the new residents of Calgary.”

Grant concludes, “I think school work will continue long after all the middle schools are delivered in 2018. The next thing to be required is a wave of new high schools – and that means steady employment for the trades.” **A**