

FEBRUARY 14, 2009

Riverview school a go

■ Time-line for new school undecided, but education minister says 'fairly soon'

BY CRAIG BABSTOCK
TIMES & TRANSCRIPT STAFF

While he couldn't be specific about when it will happen, Education Minister Ulfke Lamrock

said yesterday the east end of Riverview will get a new school.

That will be happy news to parents of students at the overcrowded Gunningsville and Lower Coverdale Schools, who appeared before Riverview town council Monday night to stress the need for a new kindergarten-to-Grade 8 school in their community. Both schools were built more than 60 years ago and are bursting with students.

Gunningsville was originally built to house 150 students and now has more than 250. There are several portable classrooms outside the school and the cafeteria doubles as a gymnasium.

Lower Coverdale has 80 students, which is up from 60 students just three years ago.

The east end is the fastest growing part of

► See SCHOOL, A15

School will be built: minister

► Continued From A1

Riverview, meaning those two schools will continue to become more and more crowded.

Riverview council agreed with the need for a new school and vowed to write letters to the provincial government supporting the idea. But Lamrock sounds like he's already convinced, stating yesterday: "There's no doubt Gunningsville needs a new school and there's no doubt the (school) district has now identified it as its top priority."

Lamrock said his department's top priority is to properly fund education programs, so he doesn't want to take funding from that to spend on new buildings.

"I have no doubt in the years ahead it will be built, but the only thing we can't do is bankrupt the classroom system to pay for buildings," he said.

But he also said replacing older schools

in New Brunswick is an ongoing project. "Every year, like previous years, five or six new schools get built in New Brunswick, where the average school is 40 years old," said Lamrock, in a media scrum at the Delta Beausejour hotel yesterday. "In my experience, when we do five or six, there are five or six more that move up to the critical list and every year I do scrums on them and the next year they get built and there's a new list of ones I do scrums on."

When asked about a time-line for the new Riverview school, Lamrock indicated the project could move to the top of the list within a couple of years.

"I'm allowed to announce one budget at a time," he said. "All I can tell you is if you go back and check the schools you were asking me about two years ago, they're all built now and I expect the schools you're asking me about will be built fairly soon too."