

Text Overview of school conditions

Since 2002, the condition of federally funded Indian schools has improved dramatically. In the past ten year period over \$2.2 billion in construction and repair and maintenance funds have been devoted to reducing the number of schools in poor condition as determined by the Facilities Condition Index (FCI) by 50 percent. A school is defined as being in poor condition if it has an FCI of over 0.10; however, being in “poor condition” does not necessarily imply that critical health and safety issues are present. Yet we recognize that more must be done.

In Fiscal Year 2002 35% of schools were in good or fair condition and 65% were in poor condition. Upon completion of existing construction projects scheduled in FY 2012 there will be 66% of schools in good or fair condition and 34% of schools in poor condition. There has been an increase of 31% or 59 schools that have improved conditions from poor to good or fair.

Indian Affairs American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provided the single largest education construction appropriation in history. As a result \$153.3 million was allocated to replace deteriorating Bureau-funded schools in a pre-established priority order and \$133.1 million was allocated to repair of buildings and education related facilities such as communications towers that are necessary to sustain and prolong the useful life of Bureau-funded education buildings. Construction awards for these projects began in May of 2009 and all of the funds have been obligated, and some smaller projects have already been completed, a pace that set new records for execution within Indian Affairs. In all, more than 7,000 students will benefit through the use of adequate school facilities earlier than thought possible before passage of the Recovery Act.

While significant progress has been made in the correction of education facility deficiencies, 63 schools remain in poor condition and there is significant and major work to be done to bring all education facilities into acceptable condition. As Assistant Secretary Echo Hawk testified before this committee on February 25, 2010, when asked about our estimated school construction backlog, he stated that we have an estimated school construction need of \$1.3 billion.

This \$1.3 billion is the estimated cost to bring the 63 schools remaining in poor condition to an acceptable facility condition after all currently available funding is expended. This figure includes more than simply fixing the deferred maintenance items. For example, if a school has a number of leaks in the roof, in the long run it will be more economical to replace the entire roof rather than continue to fix leaks year after year. Therefore, the cost to replace the entire roof is included in the figure above, rather than the cost to repair all the separate leaks. Likewise, it might also be more economical to replace an entire building or school rather than to repair a number of deferred maintenance work items. If this is the case, the cost to replace the building is included above. It is important to note that the cost to simply repair the deferred maintenance at each of these schools on a project by project basis is much less than this \$1.3 billion. However, we cannot simply use the estimated deferred maintenance cost as a basis for what the true cost will be to bring a school into acceptable condition.