

POLICY 18 - SCHOOL CONSOLIDATION AND/OR CLOSURE

The Board of Education is committed to using its resources effectively to support the best possible educational outcomes for students.

If directed by the board, the director of education shall conduct a review of school facility requirements when specified by the board. The review may provide options with respect to possible attendance area consolidation and school closure for the efficient accommodation of students and the provision of quality education in the short and long term.

Note that if the school community council consents to a closure under The School Division Administration Regulations, 2017, the board may proceed without undertaking the formal school review process.

1. Circumstances that may prompt a school review

A review may be necessary in circumstances where the board is concerned that:

- 1.1 due to low enrolments, the quality of education is deteriorating.
- 1.2 due to low enrolments, where operating the school is a financial hardship.
- 1.3 due to the deterioration of the facility, the safety of the children may be at-risk.
- 1.4 repairing and maintaining the facility is cost prohibitive; or,
- 1.5 budgetary constraints require the consideration of cost-saving measures

2. Factors considered in a school review

The following factors shall be considered in any report on the future use of a school:

- 2.1 the quality of education in the school;
- 2.2 historical enrolments and projected enrolments compared to capacity over a multi-year period;
- 2.3 physical condition of the school facility and compliance with safety codes;
- 2.4 capital costs required to continue to operate the facility;
- 2.5 operating costs of the school;
- 2.6 qualitative and quantitative costs of relocation;
- 2.7 expected enrolment, educational and other impacts on neighbouring schools;
- 2.8 the effect of closure on the local community;
- 2.9 transfer and effective use of staff; and,
- 2.10 any other relevant factors that the board deems appropriate, consistent with The School Division Administration Regulations

3. **Process for school consolidation and/or closure**

The process of school consolidation and/or closure will be divided into two distinct phases:

Phase 1 – Strategic planning and ministry application

3.1 If a consolidation option is preferred by the board, the director will prepare a report with the relevant review factors.

3.2 The board may approve the submission of a major capital request to the Ministry of Education. This request may include the closure and/or consolidation of schools.

3.3 The submission of such a request does not initiate a school closure process under The School Division Administration Regulations, 2019.

3.4 During this phase, the director may inform the school community councils and stakeholders of the application and its rationale, without initiating formal consultation.

Phase 2 – Formal School Closure Review (Triggered Upon or Near Ministry Approval)

3.5 If school closure is proposed and ministry approval has been received or is reasonably anticipated, the board shall:

(a) on or before October 15 of the year before the proposed closure, pass a motion to review the school, adopt review criteria, and notify the public;

(b) on or before November 1 of the year before the proposed closure, establish a school review committee in accordance with The School Division Administration Regulations, 2017;

4. **Community Engagement**

4.1 In addition to the formal requirements of the regulations, the board may choose to engage school community councils, parent/guardian committees, community groups, and other stakeholders for input prior to making a final decision.

5. **Final decision and implementation**

5.1 Following consultation, the board may reconsider its request to the ministry based on feedback received.

5.2 If the board resolves to close a school:

- The board shall pass a motion to close the school and then direct the director to do all that is necessary to close the school in accordance with The School Division Administration Regulations, 2019.

Legal Reference: *The Education Act, 1995*
 The Education Regulations, 2019
 The School Division Administration Regulations, 2017
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