

SCHOOL CLOSURE

Background

The Division's facility planning processes are designed to ensure the provision of well-maintained and highly utilized school facilities that effectively accommodate student learning needs. A variety of facility planning considerations may necessitate the closure of a school.

The Board believes that schools perform a vital role in the lives of the communities in which they are located, and supports their retention. However, it may be necessary to close all or part of a school program for operational and/or financial reasons. When considering the possible closure of a school or school program, the Board will consult and communicate with the parents and the broader community, in compliance with the procedures outlined in provincial legislation and regulations.

Specifically

1. Definitions

1.1 "Closure" means to:

- 1.1.1 Close a school permanently or for a specified period of time; not temporarily for inclement weather or student safety;
- 1.1.2 Close entirely three (3) or more consecutive grades in a school; or
- 1.1.3 Transfer all students from one (1) school building to one (1) or more other school buildings on a permanent basis.

2. Facility Planning Principles

Three principles guide the Division's facility planning processes:

- 2.1 All Division students are to have reasonable access to quality educational programs and services.
- 2.2 School facilities are to be well maintained and highly utilized.
- 2.3 Bus ride times are to be as reasonable as possible.

3. School Closure Factors

One (1) or more of the following consideration factors may lead the Superintendent to submit a School Closure Proposal to the Board:

- 3.1 Increasing enrolments;
- 3.2 Decreasing enrolments;
- 3.3 Continuing low enrolments in a school or within grades in a school;

- 3.4 Enhancing the effectiveness of program delivery;
- 3.5 Improving school facility utilization;
- 3.6 Ensuring efficient and effective operation of the Division;
- 3.7 Threats to health and/or safety.

A proposal for school closure may also be initiated at the request of the Board.

4. School Closure Proposal

A School Closure Proposal prepared by the Superintendent shall include the following:

- 4.1 The consideration factors precipitating the proposed school closure;
- 4.2 How the closure would affect the attendance area defined for that school;
- 4.3 How the closure would affect the attendance at other schools;
- 4.4 The effect on the social environment of the community;
- 4.5 Information on the Board's long-range capital plan;
- 4.6 The number of students who would need to be relocated as a result of the closure;
- 4.7 The need for, and extent of, busing;
- 4.8 Program implications for other schools and for the students when they are attending other schools;
- 4.9 The educational and financial impact of closing the school, including the effect on operational costs and capital implications;
- 4.10 The educational and financial impact if the school were to remain open;
- 4.11 The capital needs of the schools that may have increased enrolment as a result of the closure;
- 4.12 Possible uses of the school building or space if the entire school is being closed, or three (3) or more consecutive grades in the school are being closed entirely.

5. Notice of Motion – Proposed School Closure

In the event that the Board decides to proceed with the proposed school process following its review of the Superintendent's School Closure Proposal, the matter shall be raised by way of a Notice of Motion made at a regular meeting of the Board.

The Notice of Motion signals the beginning of the Division's public consultation process. No decision with respect to the school closure will be made until the completion of the procedures outlined in sections 5, 6 and 7 of this policy and at least twelve (12) weeks have passed since the date of this Notice of Motion.

The Notice of Motion shall include:

- 5.1 The school and grades affected by the proposed school closure;
- 5.2 The date upon which the Board plans to vote on the motion to close the school.

6. Notification of Proposed School Closure

Where a Notice of Motion is tabled to consider the closure of a school, the Board shall, in writing, notify the parents of every student enrolled in the school who, in the opinion of the Board, will be significantly affected by the closure.

This written parental Notification shall provide the following information:

- 6.1 The School Closure Proposal prepared by the Superintendent pursuant to section 4 of this policy;
- 6.2 The date, time, format and location of the public meeting organized and convened by the Board for the purpose of discussing the information provided to the parents in the School Closure Proposal;
- 6.3 The date upon which the Board plans to vote on the motion to close the school.

7. Public Meeting – Proposed School Closure

Where a Notice of Motion is tabled to consider the closure of a school, the Board shall:

- 7.1 Organize and convene a public meeting for the purpose of discussing the information provided to the parents in the School Closure Proposal; possibly facilitated by a third party;
- 7.2 Post the time and place of the public meeting in five (5) or more conspicuous places in the area or areas of the school or schools affected by the closure for a period of at least fourteen (14) days prior to the date of the public meeting;
- 7.3 Advertise the time and place of the public meeting on the website and in a newspaper circulating within the area or areas of the school or schools affected by the closure, on at least two (2) occasions as close as is practicable to the date of the meeting;
- 7.4 Ensure that at least two (2) trustees shall be in attendance at the meeting;
- 7.5 Ensure that minutes of the public meeting are prepared;
- 7.6 Provide an opportunity for the Council of the municipality in which the school is located to provide a statement to the Board of the impact the closure may have on the community; and
- 7.7 Establish a date by which written submissions relating to the proposed school closure will be received for its consideration following the meeting.

8. Board Decision on Proposed School Closure

- 8.1 The Board shall not make a final decision on the proposed school closure until at least three (3) weeks have passed since the date of the public meeting and until at least twelve (12) weeks have passed since the date of the Notice of Motion in section 5.
- 8.2 The Board shall give due consideration to any written submissions related to the proposed school closure that it receives after the public meeting referred to in section 7 of this policy.
- 8.3 The Board shall by Board motion decide whether or not to close the school.

- 8.4 If the decision is to close the school, the Division shall forthwith notify the Minister in writing of the decision.
- 8.5 Following the Board decision to close a school, a letter will be sent to the parent of every child in the schools(s) affected, notifying them of the fact and the implications of the school closure.
- 8.6 All school closure procedures shall be initiated and completed within the school year in which the decision to close the school is made.

Legal Reference: Section 33, 51, 52, 53, 62, 192, 222, 248, 249 Education Act
Petitions and Public Notices Regulation