

Policy 14

SCHOOL CLOSURE AND/OR CONSOLIDATION

The Board has a responsibility to provide school facilities throughout the District that will allow for program effectiveness for all students, health and safety of all occupants and operational efficiency. At times, the Board may have to consider consolidation or permanent closure of schools.

The Board has the authority to close/consolidate a school for reasons, which include:

- The school is unable to offer an adequate and viable educational program;
- Declining enrolment;
- The school is no longer economically or operationally viable;
- The restructuring of educational programs, consolidation of operations and relocation of students to other schools in the District which results in the school being deemed surplus to the District's educational needs;
- The school is being replaced with a newly constructed school.

Closing a school permanently means the closing, for a period exceeding twelve (12) months, of a school building used for the purposes of providing an educational program to students. The Board may decide to permanently close a school, following a public input process, and must provide written notification to the Minister of Education.

The Board shall provide a public consultation process with respect to the permanent closure of a school prior to the Board making its final decision of the closure of that school. The Board will initiate a consultation process with parents, staff and the community.

The public consultation process will be meaningful and must include:

- A fair consideration of all public input and adequate opportunity for the public to respond to the Board's proposal to close the school permanently;
- Consideration of future enrolment growth in the District of persons of school age, persons of less than school age, and adults; and
- Consideration of possible alternative community use for all or part of the school.

Fair consideration includes the concept that the Board's proposal to close a school could be changed or reversed.

The intent of any proposed closure and consolidation of facilities is to ensure that Board facilities are used as cost-effectively as possible in order that educational resources are focused on programs and services that directly support students.

Specifically

1. The Superintendent will recommend to the Board which school(s) will be evaluated for closure and/or consolidation.
2. The proposal to consider a school for closure shall be initiated through a Board motion at a public meeting of the Board.
3. The Superintendent will notify the Principal(s), and the Parent Advisory Council in writing that the school has been identified for possible closure/consolidation. All persons or groups in the community who could be affected by a school closure are to be made aware of the Board's proposal to close a school. The Board will endeavour to inform the public as thoroughly as possible. This will be done through parent newsletters and notices, meeting with employees, notice to rental groups, notices in local newspapers, and information posted on the District website.
4. The Board shall allow a period of sixty (60) days during the school year or as otherwise directed by the Board, for public consultation to take place between the time that a proposal to consider a school for closure is initiated through a Board resolution at a public Board meeting and when the final decision is made to close a school by the adoption of a School Closure Bylaw at a public Board meeting.
5. The period of public consultation may be shortened if the Board is satisfied that there is a pressing need for a shorter time frame and consultation has given the community adequate notice and an opportunity for input, such that the Board has a full understanding of the impacts of the closure.
6. The school(s) being considered for closure and the proposed effective date shall be specified. The proposed closure will be addressed and discussed in a public meeting involving the affected communities.
7. The Board shall take the following steps to ensure that public consultation will take place:
 - 7.1 Make available, in writing, the rationale for the proposed school closure considered by the Board, including, but not limited to the pertinent facts and information with respect to the following factors for any proposed school closure:
 - 7.1.1 The number of students who would be affected, at both the school to be closed and surrounding schools;
 - 7.1.2 Enrolment trends and utilization for the school and surrounding area;
 - 7.1.3 Availability of space at receiving schools;
 - 7.1.4 Proximity to possible receiving schools and the routes to schools;
 - 7.1.5 Community impact;
 - 7.1.6 Education program/course implications for the affected students;
 - 7.1.7 Financial considerations including anticipated cost savings;

- 7.1.8 Facility age and condition;
 - 7.1.9 Potential for revenue generation through lease and/or sale of the school building and/or site;
 - 7.1.10 Impact on the Ministry of Education's five-year capital plan submitted by the Board.
- 7.2 Once a proposed closure has been initiated through a Board motion at a public Board meeting, at least one (1) community meeting will be held to discuss the proposed closure.
- 7.3 The time and location of the public meeting shall be widely advertised to notify affected persons or groups in the community. This will mean written notification to students currently attending and registered to attend the school, a notice in the local newspaper, notices to neighbouring schools, Parent Advisory Councils, employee groups and information posted on the District website.
- 7.4 The Board shall present the following at the beginning of the public meeting:
- 7.4.1 Rationale for the proposed closure, including, but not limited to the pertinent facts and information related to the factors identified within the policy;
 - 7.4.2 The timing of the proposed closure and the implications for the placement of students in accordance with Administrative Procedure 300 – Admission to School;
 - 7.4.3 Possible future community growth in the area of the school; and
 - 7.4.4 Possible alternative community use for all or part of the school.
- 7.5 Minutes will be kept of the public meeting to record concerns or options raised regarding the proposed closure. Following the public meeting, the Board will give consideration to all input prior to making its final decision with respect to the school closure.
- 7.6 The Board shall provide an opportunity for affected persons to submit written responses to the Board regarding the proposed school closure. The Board will provide information and directions on how to submit the written responses. Written submissions will be summarized and community concerns and proposed options will be acknowledged.
8. The final decision on a school closure will be made through the first, second, and third and final reading of a School Closure Bylaw at a public Board meeting. Following a decision to close a school, the Board will provide, without delay, written notification to the Minister of Education of its decision containing the following information:
- 8.1 The school's name,
 - 8.2 The school's facility number,
 - 8.3 The school's address, and
 - 8.4 The date on which the school will permanently close.

9. The closure of a school will not normally take place until June 30.

Legal Reference: Sections 8, 8.2, 22, 65, 73, 85, 96, 100 School Act
Section 23, Ombudsman Act
School Opening and Closure Order M194/08
Disposal of Land or Improvement Order M193/08

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