

Summary of Changes to the Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline April, 2018

November 16, 2018

The Community Schools Alliance is a non-profit organization working to develop a more collaborative relationship between municipal councils and school boards in planning to meet the future infrastructure needs of Ontario communities.

In June, 2017, as a result of pressure from the Community Schools Alliance, several other organizations and the general public, the Ontario Minister of Education announced a moratorium on school closures, a new \$20 million Rural and Northern Education Fund (RNEF) and a review and update of the Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline (PARG). The Community Schools Alliance was very actively involved in the subsequent review of the PARG. On April 27, 2018, the Minister of Education released a 'final' version of the new PARG. Below are the changes in the new document:

- The Initial Staff Report presented by school board administrators to a board recommending a Pupil Accommodation Review (PAR) will have three options (scenarios);
- The Initial Staff Report will follow a ministry-approved template;
- Each option in an Initial Staff Report will address four impacts:
 1. Student programming
 2. Student well-being
 3. School board resources
 4. Local community
- "Impact on local community" will include the local economy if at least one school in the PAR is eligible for RNEF;
- The impact on the local economy will follow a ministry-approved template;
- Notices must be sent to the head of each affected single, upper and lower-tier council and their CAO within 5 business days inviting them to a meeting if school board trustees approve a PAR;
- The meeting for municipalities to discuss an Initial Staff Report must be held before the first public meeting;
- Minimum number of public meetings is increased from 2 to 3;

- The minimum time between trustee approval of a PAR and the first public meeting is increased 30 to 40 business days;
- The minimum time between the first and final of the 3 or more public meetings is increased from 40 to 60 business days;
- A modified (shortened) PAR is prohibited if one or more of the schools under review qualifies for the RNEF;
- The Final Staff Report following the public meetings must include secondary school student feedback;
- Municipal council responses to the Initial Staff Report must be included in the Final Staff Report;
- An extra public meeting must be held within 20 business days if a new school closure is introduced in the Final Staff Report.

The Ministry of Education has not yet released the templates for the Initial Staff Report and the Economic Impact Study. It is expected that those templates will first be released as drafts for further consultation. It is also expected that the moratorium on Pupil Accommodation Reviews will remain in place until final versions of the templates are released.