



Community Schools Alliance

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Honourable Mitzie Hunter
Minister of Education

Dear Minister:

On behalf of the members of the Community Schools Alliance, I thank you for the decision to open the Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline and the Community Planning and Partnerships Guideline for review and to invite input on the two guidelines being reviewed. The executive committee wishes to respectfully submit the following recommendations for your consideration:

- The current Pupil Accommodation Review (PAR) timeframe should be extended beyond the minimum five months and the minimum number of public meetings should revert to the four that were required by the previous PARG.
- The minimum modified PAR timeline of three months should be eliminated.
- An impacted municipal council should be invited to appoint a representative to be a member of an Accommodation Review Committee (ARC).
- An ARC should have the option of extending the timeframe and the number of meetings if a new closure recommendation is added during the accommodation review process.
- At least three accommodation options (a recommended option, an alternative option and a status quo option) should be included in the initial staff report.
- The initial staff report must include how the options will impact the school board budget, student programming and achievement, student well-being and the impact on the community and the local economy.
- School boards should invite elected municipal representatives and municipal staff to a meeting to discuss the initial staff report with school board trustees and staff.
- A school board's capital plan must list all families of schools planned to be recommended for accommodation reviews during the upcoming five-year period.
- A school board's capital plan must be part of the agenda for meetings with municipalities required by the Community Planning and Partnerships Guideline (CPPG).

- Meetings required by the CPPG should permit two-way sharing of capital plans to facilitate integrated community planning.
- Meetings required by the CPPG should permit elected municipal officials to communicate directly with school board trustees.
- The Ministry of Municipal Affairs should be encouraged to require each single and upper tier municipal government to establish a Municipal School Advisory Committee to serve as a liaison between the municipality and the school boards with schools within the municipal boundary.
- Municipalities and school boards should be encouraged to establish community hubs in underutilized schools before the schools are closed.
- The provincial regulation on the disposition of surplus property (Regulation #444) should be amended to permit municipalities to purchase school buildings before they are closed and lease the space needed for education back to the school board.
- The provincial regulation on the disposition of surplus property (Regulation #444) should be amended to permit municipalities to purchase school buildings at a price based on the property's Fair Market Value as an institutional use.
- A model of school ownership that would have a school established in leased space in a building owned by a municipality and subject to a proper asset management plan should be developed by the ministry.
- The Ministry of Education should continue to enhance the annual capital funding in the Joint-Use Seed Funding Program to provide a greater incentive for coterminous school boards to establish joint-use schools, particularly in rural and northern Ontario.
- The Rural and Northern Education Fund (RNEF) should become a permanent component of the Grant for Student Needs and should be enhanced with funds saved through the reduction in top-up funding.
- Lastly, while not part of this review, it is our position that the physical size of school boards in rural Ontario and the North is too large to permit effective democratic governance and should be reduced to create a larger number of boards with each representing a smaller jurisdiction.

We appreciate the opportunity to submit these recommendations.

Yours truly,



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