

610 Closure of Schools (Permanent)

Adopted: December 9, 2003

Revised: January 26, 2011

Revised: March 8, 2016 (References to Parent Advisory Council changed to Parents' Advisory Council)

Policy

The Board believes that one of its major responsibilities is to strive to provide school facilities throughout the District that will allow for program effectiveness for all students and operational efficiency. In order to fulfill this responsibility, the Board, in accordance with the requirements of the *School Act* and *School Opening and Closure Ministerial Order*, may from time to time have to consider the permanent closure of schools. Closing a school permanently means the closing, for a period exceeding 12 months, of a school building used for 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, as set out in this Policy and associated administrative procedures, provide a public consultation process with respect to a proposed closure of a school (permanent). Following a Board motion to consider the proposed closure of a school, the Board shall provide a period of 60 days for public consultation.

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 prior 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 proposed closure.

In compliance with Section 73 of the *School Act* and the *School Opening and Closure Ministerial Order* (M194/08), the decision to permanently close a school will be done through the adoption of a *School Closure Bylaw*. The final decision on a proposed school closure will be made at a public Board meeting through the first, second, and the third and final reading of a School Closure Bylaw.

Public consultation will include fair consideration of community input and adequate opportunity for the community to respond to the Board's proposal to close the school permanently. At least one public meeting will be held, along with opportunity for written input, as part of the public consultation process. Consideration will be given to future enrolment growth in the District of persons of school age, persons of less than school age, and adults as well as possible alternative community use for all or part of the school.

Fair consideration will be given to all input prior to the Board making its final decision. Fair consideration includes the concept that the Board's proposal to close a school could be changed or reversed.

Persons or groups in the community who could be affected by a school closure should be made aware of the Board's proposal to close a school. This will be done through a variety of methods including parent newsletters and notices, parents' advisory councils, meetings with employees, notices to rental groups, notices in local newspapers, information posted on the School District website, and other appropriate means.

The closure of a school should not normally take place until June 30th following the final decision by the Board, allowing parents, students and school staff time to make alternative arrangements.

Following a decision to close a school, the Board will provide, without delay, written notification to the Minister of Education of its decision and will include the name, facility number and address of the school and the date the school will permanently close.

Administrative Procedures

The proposal to consider a school for closure shall be initiated through a Board motion at a public meeting of the Board. The school 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.

The Board shall take the following steps to ensure that public consultation will take place:

- 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:
 - The number of students who could be affected, at both the school proposed for closure and the population of the surrounding schools
 - Enrolment trends for persons of school age, persons of less than school age, and adults for the school and surrounding area
 - Utilization for all or part of the school, including alternative community use
 - Availability of space at receiving schools
 - Proximity to possible receiving schools and the routes to schools
 - Socio-economic conditions and demographics in the affected community
 - Educational program/course implications for the affected students
 - Financial considerations including anticipated cost savings
 - Facility age and condition
 - Potential for revenue generation through lease and/or sale of the school building and/or site
 - Impact on the Ministry of Education's five-year capital plan submitted by the Board.
- Once a proposed closure has been initiated through a Board motion at a public Board meeting, at least one public meeting will be held to discuss the proposed closure
- 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 parents/guardians of students currently attending and/or registered to attend the school, a notice in the local newspaper, notices to neighbouring schools, parents' advisory councils, employee groups, information posted on the School District website, and other appropriate means.
- The Board will present the following at the beginning of the public meeting:
 - Rationale for the proposed closure, including, but not limited to the pertinent facts and information related to the factors identified within the policy
 - The timing of the proposed closure and the implications for the placement of students in accordance with Policy 605: Admission of Students to School
 - Possible future community growth in the area of the school.
- Minutes of the public meeting will be kept to record concerns or options raised regarding the proposed closure. Following the public meeting, the Board will give fair consideration to all input prior to making its final decision with respect to the proposed school closure.

- 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.