

610 Closure of Schools (Permanent)

Adopted: December 9, 2003

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 *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 permanent school closure. The Board shall allow a period of 60 days 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.

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 closure.

All 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. The Board will endeavour to inform the public as thoroughly as possible. This will be done through parent newsletters and notices, parent advisory councils, meetings with employees, notices to rental groups, notices in local newspapers, and information posted on the School District website.

A public meeting will be held to address the proposed school closure and shall form part of the public consultation process.

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.

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.

The final decision to permanently close a school will be done through the adoption of a *School Closure Bylaw* as provided in *Ministerial Order (M320/02)*.

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 would be affected, at both the closed school and surrounding schools
 - Enrolment trends and utilization for the school and surrounding area
 - Availability of space at receiving schools
 - Proximity to possible receiving schools and the routes to schools
 - Socio-economic conditions 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 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 School District website.

- The Board should 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 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.
- 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.

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.