



PUPIL ACCOMMODATION REVIEW (Consolidation or Closure)

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| Legal References: | <i>Education Act R.S.O. 1990, c. E.2, s. 8 (1), par. 26</i> <i>Education Act R.S.O. 1990, c. E.2, O. Reg. 444/98</i> |
| Related References: | <i>Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline, Ministry of Education (March 2015)</i> <i>Community Planning and Partnerships Guideline, Ministry of Education (March 2015)</i> <i>Administrative Review of Accommodation Review Process, Ministry of Education</i> <i>Administrative Procedure 4860 – Pupil Accommodation Review</i> |
| Effective Date: | <i>July 1, 2016</i> |
| Revisions: | <i>December 2014, April 18, 2016, October 16, 2017, May 17, 2021</i> |
| Reviewed: | <i>November 8, 2021, awaiting Ministry direction regarding updated Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline before revising the policy</i> |

1. Preamble

- 1.1. The Waterloo Region District School Board (the “Board”) is responsible for deciding the most appropriate pupil accommodation arrangements for the delivery of elementary and secondary programs.
- 1.2. The Board ensures that decisions regarding school consolidations or closures are made with the involvement of an informed local community, and are based on a broad range of criteria regarding the quality of the learning experience for students.
- 1.3. These decisions are made by the Board of Trustees in the context of carrying out their primary responsibilities of fostering student achievement and well-being, and ensuring effective stewardship of school board resources.
- 1.4. The Board is responsible for providing schools and facilities for students and for operating and maintaining these schools and facilities as effectively as possible to support student achievement and well-being.
- 1.5. In some cases, to address changing student populations, the Board may consider undertaking pupil accommodation reviews that may result in school consolidations and/or closures.
- 1.6. The Board supports a fair and transparent process for undertaking pupil accommodation reviews including meaningful community dialogue and participation among all stakeholders.

- 1.7. This Policy outlines the process the Board will follow to complete a pupil accommodation review or modified pupil accommodation review that is consistent with the Ministry of Education *Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline*, March 2015.
 - 1.8. This Policy applies only to schools offering elementary and/or secondary regular day school programs.
2. The guiding principles of this Policy include, but are not limited to:
- 2.1. student achievement;
 - 2.2. student well-being; and
 - 2.3. school board financial stability and sustainability.
 - 2.4. Prior to commencing an accommodation review, the Board is committed to:
 - 2.5. Developing a long-term capital and accommodation plan, informed by any relevant information obtained from local municipal governments and other community partners, which takes into consideration long-term enrolment projections and planning opportunities for the effective use of excess space in all area schools.
 - 2.6. Investigating alternative accommodation strategies that support the guiding principles outlined in Section 2.6, including but not limited to:
 - 2.6.1. modifying attendance boundaries to balance enrolment between overutilized and underutilized schools (achieved through a boundary study and must be less than 50% of the school's enrolment);
 - 2.6.2. relocation/redistribution of programs to balance enrolment between over utilized and underutilized schools (must be less than 50% of the school's enrolment);
 - 2.6.3. offering to lease or licence underutilized space within a school to a coterminous school board;
 - 2.6.4. finding community partners who can pay the full cost of operating the underutilized space; and/or
 - 2.6.5. decommissioning or demolishing a section of the school that is not required for student use to reduce operating costs.
 - 2.7. If none of the alternative accommodation strategies outlined in Section 2.2.2 are deemed viable, the Board may determine that a pupil accommodation review process take place which could lead to possible school consolidations and/or closures.
 - 2.8. The selection of a school or group of schools for an accommodation review will be considered if one or more of the following conditions apply:
 - 2.8.1. current and projected enrolment within the attendance area requires fewer classrooms than available at the school;
 - 2.8.2. current and projected enrolment within the attendance area exceeds the number of classrooms available at the school and to construct additional spaces is cost-prohibitive;
 - 2.8.3. current and projected enrolment within the attendance area exceeds the number of classrooms available at the school and more than 50% of the students are eligible for transportation;
 - 2.8.4. there are safety and/or environmental concerns related to the building(s), site(s) or location(s);
 - 2.8.5. the school is operating in a leased or licensed facility;
 - 2.8.6. the school is unable to deliver core curriculum in a fair and equitable way;
 - 2.8.7. declining enrolment has created a negative impact on learning opportunities for students at the school;
 - 2.8.8. program and learning opportunities could be enhanced by reorganization involving the school or group of schools;

- 2.8.9. teaching and/or learning spaces are not suitable to deliver the curriculum needed to serve the students and the community and retrofitting is cost prohibitive;
 - 2.8.10. the school is experiencing increased building maintenance expenses and/or requires major capital improvements; or
 - 2.8.11. the consolidation of two or more schools meets the goals and objectives of the long-term capital and accommodation capital plan.
- 2.9. Reviews of pupil accommodation will conform with Board policy made pursuant to the *Community Planning and Partnerships Guideline* issued by the Ministry of Education.
- 2.10. Decisions regarding school consolidations and/or closures will be made within the context of supporting the Board Improvement Plan for Student Achievement (BIPSA) and making the most effective use of school buildings and education funding.
- 2.11. The Board of Trustees will make the final decision regarding any pupil accommodation review.
- 2.12. The accommodation review process as outlined in *Administrative Procedure 4860 – Pupil Accommodation Review* will allow the Board of Trustees to make an informed decision regarding the future of a family of schools through consultation with an informed local community, based on a broad range of criteria including, but not limited to:
- 2.12.1. the impact of the current and projected enrolment on program/curriculum delivery and the operation of the school(s);
 - 2.12.2. the current physical condition of the school(s) and any repairs or upgrades required to ensure optimum operation of the building(s) and program delivery; and
 - 2.12.3. the impact on the student, the Board, the community, local and regional municipalities, and community partners.
- 2.13. At the conclusion of the review process, including consideration for the Board's long-term capital and accommodation plan, the Board of Trustees will:
- 2.13.1. accept the recommendation(s) in the staff report as presented;
 - 2.13.2. reject the recommendation(s) in the staff report;
 - 2.13.3. modify the recommendation(s) in the staff report; or
 - 2.13.4. approve a different outcome.
- 2.14. If a pupil accommodation review results in a school closure decision, the Board will decide the appropriate course of action regarding its property holdings. The Board may decide to:
- 2.14.1. declare that school as surplus, potentially leading to the future disposition of the property (all dispositions are governed by O. Reg. 444/98);
 - 2.14.2. decide to use a closed school for other school board purposes; or
 - 2.14.3. hold the property as a strategic long-term asset due to a projected future need for the facility.
- 3.** The following parameters apply to all accommodation reviews conducted pursuant to this Policy. All decisions under this Policy will comply with the following parameters:
- 3.1. The pupil accommodation review process shall consist of the following:
 - 3.1.1. The completion of School Information Profile(s) prior to the commencement of a review (details of the information to be contained in a School Information Profile is to be outlined in *Administrative Procedure 4860 – Pupil Accommodation Review*);

- 3.1.2. The preparation of and submission of an initial staff report to the Board of Trustees;
 - 3.1.3. Board of Trustees approval to undertake an accommodation review process (for a modified accommodation review process refer to Section 4.4);
 - 3.1.4. The establishment of an Accommodation Review Committee, including its Terms of Reference (details regarding the role and membership of the Accommodation Review Committee is to be outlined in *Administrative Procedure 4860 – Pupil Accommodation Review*);
 - 3.1.5. Consultation with the Regional Municipality of Waterloo, each of the affected local municipalities, and community partners that expressed an interest prior to the pupil accommodation review (details regarding the consultation process is to be outlined in *Administrative Procedure 4860 – Pupil Accommodation Review*);
 - 3.1.6. A minimum of two (2) public meetings to consult with individuals from the school(s) under review and the broader community;
 - 3.1.7. The preparation and submission of a final staff report to the Board of Trustees, including a Community Consultation section;
 - 3.1.8. An opportunity for public delegations to be heard by the Board of Trustees;
 - 3.1.9. The presentation of the final staff report, including a compilation of feedback from public delegations (if any);
 - 3.1.10. A final decision by the Board of Trustees; and
 - 3.1.11. The establishment of a Transition Committee (details regarding the transition process is to be outlined in *Administrative Procedure 4860 – Pupil Accommodation Review*).
- 3.2. Schools should only be subject to a pupil accommodation review once in a five-year period, unless circumstances including but not limited to the following necessitate a review:
- 3.2.1. The school is unable to deliver core curriculum in a fair and equitable way due to a significant change in enrolment;
 - 3.2.2. There are safety and/or environmental concerns related to the building(s), site(s), or location(s);
 - 3.2.3. The school requires time-sensitive building maintenance expenses and/or major capital improvements that may be cost-prohibitive; and/or
 - 3.2.4. Special circumstances have resulted in the Board's inability to use the building(s), site(s), or location(s) to accommodate students.
- 3.3. A modified pupil accommodation review process may be approved and initiated by the Board where two (2) or more of the following conditions are present:
- 3.3.1. the distance to the nearest available accommodation (Board elementary and/or secondary school) is less than five (5) kilometres;
 - 3.3.2. the utilization rate of the facility is less than or equal to 50% of the on-the-ground capacity of the school (calculated as enrolment divided by on-the-ground capacity);
 - 3.3.3. the number of students enrolled at the school is less than or equal to 125 students;
 - 3.3.4. the Board is planning the relocation (in any school year or over a number of school years) of a program, in which the enrolment constitutes 50% or more of the school's enrolment (this calculation is based on the enrolment at the time of the relocation, or the first phase of relocation carried over a number of school years);
 - 3.3.5. there are no more than three (3) schools subject to the pupil accommodation review process; or,

3.3.6. the entire student population (and boundary) of a school that is subject to a pupil accommodation review process can be accommodated in another school.

4. The modified pupil accommodation review process consists of the following steps:
 - 4.1. The completion of School Information Profile(s) prior to the commencement of a review;
 - 4.2. The preparation of and submission of an initial staff report to the Board of Trustees;
 - 4.3. Board of Trustees approval to undertake a modified accommodation review process (for a regular accommodation review process refer to Section 4.1);
 - 4.4. Consultation with the Regional Municipality of Waterloo, each of the affected local municipalities, and community partners that expressed an interest prior to the pupil accommodation review;
 - 4.5. A minimum of one (1) public meeting to consult with individuals from the school(s) under review and the broader community;
 - 4.6. The preparation and submission of a final staff report to the Board of Trustees, including a Community Consultation section.
 - 4.7. An opportunity for public delegations to be heard by the Board of Trustees;
 - 4.8. The presentation of the final staff report, including a compilation of feedback from public delegations (if any);
 - 4.9. A decision by the Board of Trustees; and
 - 4.10. The establishment of a Transition Committee.

5. In all cases any minimum timelines set out in the Ministry of *Education's Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline* (version in effect at the time of the announced decision to initiate an accommodation review) will be followed.
 - 5.1. There are specific circumstances where the Board is not obligated to undertake a pupil accommodation review. These include:
 - 5.1.1. where a replacement school is to be built on the existing site, or built or acquired within the existing school attendance boundary, as identified by the Board;
 - 5.1.2. where a replacement school is to be built on the existing site, or built or acquired within the existing school attendance boundary and the school community must be temporarily relocated to ensure the safety of students and staff during the reconstruction, as identified by the Board;
 - 5.1.3. when a lease for the school is terminated;
 - 5.1.4. when the Board is planning the relocation (in any school year or over a number of school years) of grades or programs, in which the enrolment constitutes less than 50% of the school's enrolment (this calculation is based on the enrolment at the time of the relocation, or the first phase of relocation carried over a number of school years);
 - 5.1.5. when a school is being repaired or renovated, and the school community must be temporarily relocated to ensure the safety of students during the renovations;
 - 5.1.6. where a facility has been serving as a holding school for a school community whose permanent school is over-capacity and/or is under construction or repair; or
 - 5.1.7. where there are no students enrolled at the school at any time throughout the school year.
 - 5.2. In the case of an exemption, the Board will inform each of the school communities about proposed accommodation plans for students before a decision is made by the Board of Trustees.

- 5.3. Board staff shall prepare a report to the Board of Trustees setting out the circumstances supporting the exemption to the accommodation review process in respect of the school or schools under consideration for such exemption.
- 5.4. Within five (5) business days following the date of the Board of Trustees' decision to proceed with an exemption, the Board will provide written notice to:
 - 5.4.1. the Regional Municipality of Waterloo, and each of the affected local municipalities through the Clerks Department (or equivalent); and
 - 5.4.2. other community partners that expressed an interest prior to the pupil accommodation review.
- 5.5. Within five (5) business days following the date of the Board of Trustees' decision to proceed with an exemption, the Board will also provide written notice to:
 - 5.5.1. the Conseil scolaire Viamonde's Director of Education;
 - 5.5.2. the Waterloo Catholic District School Board's Director of Education;
 - 5.5.3. the Conseil scolaire de district catholique Centre-Sud's Director of Education;
and
 - 5.5.4. the Ministry of Education through the office of the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Financial Policy and Business Division.
- 5.6. A transition plan will be put in place following the Board of Trustees' decision to consolidate, close or move a school or students in accordance with this section.

6. Policy, Procedure, & Guideline Integration and Alignment

- 6.1. *Administrative Procedure 4860 – Pupil Accommodation Review* has been developed in accordance with this Policy. Any accommodation review process that the Board undertakes must have due regard to *Board Policies*, *Administrative Procedures*, and to the Ministry's *Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline (PARG)*.