

**Ministry of Education**

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Ontario

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Dear colleagues,

We are writing to share an update with you on the ongoing work across government on Ontario's commitment to revise the Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline (PARG) and strengthen integrated capital and community planning. We are also pleased to announce a new engagement focused on the challenges facing education planning in urban areas experiencing rapid population intensification.

***Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline (PARG)***

While strengthening the PARG is a key element of the province's Plan to Strengthen Rural and Northern Education, revisions to the PARG will apply to all school boards. As you know, the draft revised PARG that was shared publicly on February 9, 2018, reflected the feedback received by the ministry in fall 2017, during the first phase of consultations. The ministry's aim in revising the PARG is to create a stronger, more collaborative process that better promotes student achievement and well-being and better recognizes the community impact of school closures. Thank you to everyone who contributed valuable input through the online portal or played a role on either the Minister's Reference Group or the Technical Working Group.

As you know, in response to initial feedback received in fall 2017, the draft revised PARG included:

- Additional public meeting(s), which extends timeframes, for a standard pupil accommodation review
- Limiting use of the shorter, modified pupil accommodation review (PAR)
- New information requirements for the initial staff report
- Promotion of community input in the pupil accommodation review process and inclusion of student voice
- Streamlining the administrative review process by allowing e-signatures
- Development of ministry supports.

On March 23, the Ministry of Education concluded its second phase of consultations on the draft revised PARG. The key themes emerging from all of the feedback suggested that the ministry focus on: improving the clarity and consistency of information presented by school boards; providing more opportunities for public discussion, where needed; and, providing additional supports to improve information sharing between school boards and community partners.

Based on feedback received, the Ministry of Education has also made the following revisions to the PARG:

- Consideration of elementary student input into the accommodation decision
- Extending the timeframe for the first public meeting from 30 to 40 business days
- Requiring the municipal/community partner meeting to take place prior to the first public meeting.

The final PARG has now been posted to the ministry's website.

To support school boards in providing clear and consistent information, the Ministry of Education will work with its partners to develop templates and guidelines to assist boards in conducting pupil accommodation reviews, including templates for the initial staff report and the economic impact assessment.

The ministry aims to release these materials before fall 2018 to inform school boards' local consultations with communities and municipal governments on their local pupil accommodation review policies. While these tools are being developed and finalized in collaboration with our partner ministries and education and municipal stakeholders, there will continue to be no new pupil accommodation reviews, unless they are required to support a joint-use school initiative between two coterminous school boards.

### ***Integrated Capital and Community Planning***

Throughout the numerous consultation sessions, the need for improved community and capital planning was highlighted. In response, the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the Ministries of Infrastructure; Municipal Affairs; Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs; and Economic Development and Growth, will work together to assess how the province encourages and supports integrated local planning.

Feedback from the Minister's Reference Group was instrumental in pointing out the need for a new type of community planning table that looks beyond organizational mandates and builds on existing relationships. To address this feedback, we are pleased to announce the development of a Voluntary Integrated Planning and Partnerships Initiative (VIPPI) to provide flexible support to local partners that wish to enhance their collective capacity for integrated capital and community planning.

A call for proposals will be issued this summer seeking approximately three communities, representing a mix of urban, rural, Northern and Francophone communities, to participate in VIPPI. Each community will be required to identify partners to participate in a local integrated planning table that should include, at a minimum, school boards and municipalities and relevant local partners that reflect each area's unique needs. The Ministry of Education will provide a facilitator to lead a series of sessions spanning approximately one year to align with various planning cycles. The goal of this initiative is to generate a collection of best practices for integrated planning by having all participants share and discuss capital and community planning processes and relevant data and to inform future amendments to the CPPG.

### ***New Supports for School Boards' Integrated Planning***

We are pleased to announce that we will be offering additional capital supports to school boards to better support projects that involve community partnerships. As a first step, we will introduce immediate new supports for school boards working with their communities to share and co-build facilities.

The Ministry of Education will provide boards with seed funding of up to \$40,000 to assist with the planning of projects that involve a municipal or community partner. Currently, the ministry offers seed funding to support coterminous school boards that wish to pursue joint-use opportunities. The ministry will also provide funding for a project manager to assist with approved projects as they move forward.

Understanding that we must continue to ensure that school boards and communities have flexible support that can respond to local needs, the Ministry of Education will also look for opportunities to support integrated planning through the capital funding processes, with a focus on better aligning the timing of capital decision-making processes with community needs.

### ***Community Planning and Partnerships Guideline (CPPG)***

The Ministry of Education also remains committed to updating the CPPG within the next year to enhance planning and reporting practices, after we have consulted with our partners through the Minister's Reference Group. Until the new CPPG is in place, school boards should continue to use the existing CPPG and to convene their annual Community Planning and Partnerships meeting(s).

### ***Strengthening Supports for Urban Education***

During our rural and Northern engagements, we have heard from a number of stakeholders regarding the unique challenges related to growth and intensification that are unique to our province's large urban communities. This includes the challenges faced by school boards and municipalities with planning, partnering and building schools in these changing communities and the financial tools available to support this work. In response, the Ministry of Education is pleased to announce the following:

- **Urban Student Accommodation Engagement:** The government will undertake an engagement this fall focusing on supports for pupil accommodation in urban areas experiencing rapid growth and intensification, which will include Education Development Charges.
- **Land Priorities Enhancement:** The government will increase the amount of funding available through its Land Priorities program from \$60 million to \$100 million this coming year. This will support land acquisition for all boards, including those dealing with rapid enrolment growth in urban, densely populated areas within their boundaries.

We wish to extend a sincere thank you for your valuable contributions in shaping key provincial policies and initiatives over the last year. We are confident that our collaborative efforts, to date and yet to come, will result in better outcomes for our students and local communities.

Sincerely,



Indira Naidoo-Harris  
Minister of Education  
Minister Responsible for Early Years and Child Care



Bob Chiarelli  
Minister of Infrastructure



Bill Mauro  
Minister of Municipal Affairs