

Ontario's Plan to Strengthen Rural and Northern Education

Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline (PARG) Community Planning and Partnerships Guideline (CPPG)

In the spring of 2017 Ontario Ministry of education conducted a consultation titled Ontario's Rural Education Strategy. As a result of the consultation and feedback received from all stakeholders, the Ministry of Education has committed, as part of the plan, to revising its Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline (PARG) and Community Planning and Partnerships Guideline (CPPG)

In that many Home and School Associations are located in rural and single school communities; thus the impacts of school closures directly impact these Associations, **the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations** has the following suggestions for PARG and CPPG guidelines:

- 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
- 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 current PAR timeframe should be extended beyond the minimum five months and the minimum number of public meetings should revert to the four public meetings that were required by the previous PARG.
- The minimum modified PAR timeline of three months should be eliminated.
- Accommodation Review Committee (ARC) membership should include a member of the municipal council
- Accommodation Review Committee(ARC) membership should include one person appointed by a Home and School Association that is a member of the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations, where the association is a member of the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations, is established in respect of the school
- The initial staff report must include at least three accommodation options (a recommended option, an alternative option and a status quo option)
- The initial staff report must include how the options will impact the school board budget, increased student programming and achievement, and increased student well-being
- An ARC should have the ability to add another option to be considered during the review process
- When another option is added to the review, the timeframe and the number of meetings should be extended by 30 days or one meeting at a minimum
- The initial staff report must include the impact on the community and the local economy, where there is a recommendation of a school closure in a rural or single school community

- Throughout the PAR constituents, parents and municipal leaders should be allowed to communicate directly with school board trustees (explain the possibilities, considerations, options) to ease the process in furthering public trust and confidence in public education
- Meetings required by the CPPG should permit elected municipal officials to communicate directly with school board trustees
- That in the development of the initial staff report, school boards should collaborate with the municipality regarding the impact on the community and the local economy, as this relates to where there is a staff recommendation of a school closure in a rural or single school community.
- 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 schools planned to be recommended for accommodation reviews during the upcoming five-year period at a minimum, and shared publicly
- A school board's capital plan for the upcoming five-year period at a minimum, 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 meaningful two-way sharing of capital plans, community plans and economic development 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.

Let's not lose site of the feedback provided at the Rural Education Strategy Consultations held in the spring of 2017, in particular;

- Many also noted that rural schools have unique needs and advantages –a one-size-fits-all approach to funding is inadequate
- there is a need for a separate funding model for rural schools; the current per-student funding model is seen to put rural schools at a disadvantage
- establish a clear definition of rural and remote schools that allows flexibility.

Promising Practice: North Middlesex Local School Advisory Committee

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.

Highlights from the: North Middlesex Local School Advisory Committee, Terms of Reference

- To enhance awareness within the Municipality of North Middlesex regarding the exceptional local secondary school.
- To explore the impacts related to student outcomes.
- To act in an advisory capacity when formulating public input into local school board policy/budget, serving as a means to build public consensus on matters related to the local school.
- To explore issues related to retention of North Middlesex students.
- To provide the North Middlesex community a forum for discussion, in greater depth, matters related to economic growth impacts on all local schools.
- To seek collaborative solutions related to student retention at North Middlesex schools and to provide advice on the best means to ensure ongoing collaboration.
- To act as a bridge Municipal leaders, parents, the local school, and the local School Board.
- To advise Council related to various policies and budget items especially where these may impact youth outcomes through the local school.
- To identify and develop opportunities to strengthen existing or introduce new programs and services that will benefit and attract students to North Middlesex

Respectfully Submitted,



Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations