

Ministry of Education

Minister

Mowat Block
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1L2
Telephone (416) 325-2600
Facsimile (416) 325-2608

Ministère de l'Éducation

Ministre

Édifice Mowat
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1L2
Téléphone (416) 325-2600
Télécopieur (416) 325-2608



November 18, 2014

His Worship Robert Bratina
Mayor
City of Hamilton
2nd Floor - 71 Main Street West
Hamilton ON L8P 4Y5

Dear Mayor Bratina,

Thank you for your letter about school closures and accommodation reviews, which was also forwarded to me by the Honourable Premier Kathleen Wynne. I am pleased to reply.

The primary responsibility of school boards is to foster student achievement and manage resources effectively. School boards are in the best position to determine local pupil accommodation arrangements for the delivery of their programs.

In the fall of 2013, the ministry held consultations as part of the School Board Efficiencies and Modernization Strategy. The feedback we heard was that boards continue to struggle with declining enrolment and excess school space and unless this is addressed, it will continue to be a problem for years to come. However, we know that efficiencies are possible and that school boards have the resources and expertise to find those efficiencies.

In order to ensure the sustainability of our publicly funded education system, we will be working with school boards to adjust and plan for savings measures, such as school closures and consolidations.

But we also know that implementing changes in how school space is used takes time. As a result, we are taking a measured and phased approach when it comes to making better use of school space.

Recently, we established a new four-year, school consolidation capital program, to help boards manage their school space more efficiently. This funding will be allocated to boards based on a review of their business cases submitted for new schools, retrofits and additions that support consolidation.

The pupil accommodation review process is an important part of the process of making better use of school space. We heard from school boards and parents that the current process has not been meeting their needs and that better tools are required.

Accordingly, we recently started a review of the Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline, which was last revised in 2009. This guideline provides direction to school boards on how to conduct public accommodation reviews to determine the future of a school or a group of schools.

We will be developing options to make the accommodation review process more flexible for school boards, while at the same time ensuring that communities have meaningful input. Consultations with our education partners have begun and we expect to consult more broadly this fall and release a revised guideline later this year.

Thank you again for writing and sharing council's request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Liz Sandals". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

Liz Sandals
Minister

c. The Honourable Kathleen Wynne
Premier