

Ministry of Education
Office of the ADM
Capital and Business Support
Division
900 Bay Street
20th Floor, Mowat Block
Toronto ON M7A 1L2

Ministère de l'Éducation
Bureau du sous-ministre adjoint
Division du soutien aux immobilisations et
aux affaires
900, rue Bay
20^e étage, Édifice Mowat
Toronto ON M7A 1L2



September 20, 2017

Dear Ms.

Re: Request for an Administrative Review of the Pupil Accommodation Review which included Quinte Secondary School

This letter is in response to your request for an Administrative Review of the Belleville PAR undertaken by the Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board, which included Quinte Secondary School.

Due to the importance of accommodation decisions to students, families and communities, we share your desire that accommodation review processes follow the policies developed and approved by local school boards and that community members have the opportunity to form opinions and to have them presented and understood. Based on the ministry's review of your administrative review request package, the ministry has decided not to appoint a facilitator in this case.

When reviewing an administrative review request, the ministry gathers documentation to identify whether requirements of a board's accommodation review policy were met during the board's pupil accommodation review process. The ministry also assesses whether the documentation indicates that the steps taken by a board were sufficient and reasonable within the context of a public consultation.

I will take this opportunity to address each of the points that you have raised.

In your petition, you state:

1. That the board lacked oversight by presenting options to the Board of Trustees that lacked detailed information, particularly regarding the costs of consolidating schools, such as retrofit costs and FCI ratings.

2. That the board presented accommodation options to the Board of Trustees which lacked detailed information and full justification, including proposed program changes and transition plans.
3. The board did not notify the public in writing of its final decision, nor provide the rationale behind the decision.
4. That trustees had a predetermined outcome in mind, to close Quinte Secondary School and keep Moira Secondary School open, and did not fully consider information presented to them.

Regarding the first item, you indicate that the board did not provide sufficient information to the Board of Trustees regarding the schools under review, including the costs of consolidation, renewal needs and FCI ratings. The board responded that they provided trustees with all of the information required for them to make informed decisions. The documents provided include:

- School Information Profiles for each school;
- Capital Planning Forecasts for each school;
- Condition Assessment Reports from VFA (third-party hired by the ministry to assess the condition of school facilities in Ontario) for each school;
- Trustees received board staff's Initial and Final reports with summary details about school capacity, utilization, facility renewal costs, and estimates of savings due to consolidation, Q&A's, delegation summaries, and correspondence from the public. The Initial Staff report contained renewal costs for both Quinte Secondary School and Moira Secondary School.

Upon review of the board's PAR policy and the documents provided by the board to trustees, the ministry finds that the information provided by the board responds to all of the disputed deficiencies in this item. The ministry is satisfied that the board adhered to its PAR policy regarding this item.

Regarding the second item, you state that the board presented accommodation options to the Board of Trustees which lacked detailed information and full justification, including proposed program changes and transition plans. The board responded that they provided trustees with information regarding accommodation options, programming information and transition planning through both the Final and Initial reports:

- The Final Report included alternative options generated through the ARC process, which included a recommendation analysis for each school and Q&A's for the community.
- The Final Report had a detailed Program Plan for Belleville schools.
- The Final and Initial Reports outlined transition plans for various scenarios, contingent on the final decision. A transition plan could not be finalized until the trustees made their final decision on June 19, 2017. There is no provision in the

board's policy that indicates transition plans must be finalized by the date of the final decision.

Upon review of the board's PAR policy, and its Initial and Final Reports, the ministry is satisfied that the board adhered to its PAR policy regarding this item. The board provided relevant details regarding accommodation options, program changes and transition plans. The board's PAR policy does not require the board to finalize the transition plan before the end of the PAR. Given the various possibilities for the final outcome of a PAR, a transition plan cannot be confirmed before the trustees make their final decision.

Regarding the third item, you state that the board did not notify the public in writing of its final decision or provide the rationale behind the decision. The board states that their PAR policy doesn't require them to disclose the rationale for the decision in the resolution or the final motion. The board meeting was public and petitioners could attend to hear the board's deliberations before the board made a decision.

The board responded that once trustees made their decision, the board notified the public with the following:

- 1) Students and families were informed of the decision on Tuesday June 20, the day after the final vote, via a bulletin on the board's website at <http://www.hpedsb.on.ca/2017/capital-planning-bulletin-9-decisions-have-been-made-now-what/>.
- 2) The bulletin above was also uploaded to the websites of all effected schools via the board's newsfeed.
- 3) More details regarding the decision were posted on the board's website via <http://www.hpedsb.on.ca/board-meeting-updates/public-board-meeting-update-144/>

Finally, in response to a fourth item, which is raised in your letter accompanying the petition, you state that trustees had a predetermined outcome in mind and did not fully consider the information presented to them. While this item is outside the scope of an administrative review, the board responded that the final decision was not identical to the initial or final recommendations, which indicates that a predetermination was not made by the board, and that the board considered the input received during the process. Trustees were provided with initial recommendations from board staff, which were subject to changes based on feedback from the PAR process, as reflected in the Final report. The board states that the final decision will essentially close both Moira Secondary School and Quinte Secondary School, once a new school is built. There will be a new school for both Quinte and Moira students with a new name and location, which will be determined based on consultation with the community of Belleville and Mohawks of Bay of Quinte.

Although this fourth item is outside the scope of an administrative review, the ministry has assessed your letter and the board's response. Trustees have the right and responsibility to make pupil accommodation decisions; they are not obligated to follow the recommendations in the Initial or Final Staff Report. The option to close Quinte Secondary School was presented during the PAR process. ARC members and the community had the opportunity to provide input about Quinte Secondary School's potential closure to trustees. The documentation and evidence provided by the board indicates reasonable community participation and input was gathered and shared with trustees. In addition, the board also provided detailed information regarding the schools and accommodation options to trustees through the documents referenced in the first item of this petition.

I appreciate the level of engagement that members of the Quinte Secondary School community have shown through this process. I encourage parents and guardians of students to remain involved as the board continues to transition students during the new school year. The continued involvement of parents and guardians will help to ensure that the needs of all the students involved in this accommodation review are met.

Should you have further questions, please contact Sumita Kanga, Policy and Issues Analyst, Capital Policy Branch, Ministry of Education, at 416-326-9445.

Sincerely,

Original signed by:

Joshua Paul
Assistant Deputy Minister
Capital and Business Support Division

cc: Mandy Savery-Whiteway, Director of Education, Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board

Denis Chartrand, Regional Manager, Ottawa Regional Office, Ministry of Education