

MAJOR SCHOOL CHANGE POLICY

Questions & Answers

In December 2006, the Quebec Government adopted Bill 32, which modified the Education Act. Section 212 of the Education Act now specifically states that the “school board shall adopt a policy on the continued operation or closure of schools; and changes to the level of instruction, and on the cessation of preschool education services provided by a school.” In addition, a number of questions were asked. These questions and their answers are provided below:

1. Why are there five conditions that begin the Major School Change process as described in Item 2?

The first two bullets meet the requirements of the Education Act, Section 212.

The last three bullets are not included in the Education Act, however, the Lester B. Pearson School Board, by tradition, consults extensively with its communities. The Board believes that the best interest of our students is served when we work together with our communities, provide opportunities for sharing information and listening to each other’s concerns. In order to continue this tradition, the last three bullets, which were part of the previous Major School Change Policy, have been included in this Policy.

In the event that a change affects a minimum ten (10) percent of the current student population of any school, decisions taken will be included as part of the Major School Change process. When less than ten (10) percent is affected by any of the last three bullets, decisions may be taken by Administration after conferring with the Council of Commissioners and the Governing Board(s) of the school(s).

2. What is the difference between a Public Consultation Meeting and a Public Hearing?

Section 212 of the Education Act states that, “The policy must include a public consultation process, to take place prior to any change, that must provide for... at least one public consultation meeting and the related procedure;”

In order to be consistent with the Education Act, the term “Public Consultation Meeting” is used in this Policy. There is no difference between a Public Consultation Meeting and what we previously referred to as a Public Hearing.

3. Why does the Major School Change process begin in March instead of August as it did in our previous Major School Change Policy?

The Education Act states that “the policy must also specify that the public consultation process must start with a public notice of the consultation meeting, to be issued

1) not later than July 1 of the year preceding the year during which the school would be closed; or

2) not later than April 1 of the year preceding the year during which a change(s) to the level of instruction provided by a school, or to cycles or parts of cycles of the level of instruction, and on the cessation or addition of preschool education services provided by a school”

Since this Major School Change Policy includes both the changes that could lead to closure and/or changes to the level of instruction, the timeline begins at the end of March, reflecting the earliest required start of the process stated in the Education Act.

4. When can Briefs be submitted?

Once the consultation process begins, any consultee may submit one or more Briefs at any time. The deadline for submission of all Briefs is October 31st.

5. Could scenarios be presented by the Board part way through the Major School Change process?

Our Council of Commissioners has been committed to avoiding any discussion of possible scenarios until after the submission of all Briefs and the Public Hearings so as not to prejudice the process.

6. Why has an October meeting for consultative partners been added to the timeline?

October is an opportune time to present the latest information to newly formed Governing Boards and other consultees.

7. Several consultees suggested that a November 15th Brief deadline would be preferred. Why has the Brief deadline been changed to October 31st?

The October 31st deadline provides more time for the Council of Commissioners to analyze and assimilate the information provided in the Briefs especially if decisions are to be taken in December. In addition, the Major School Change process is beginning in March, five months earlier than previously, thus providing more time to gather information and write Briefs.

8. Why is the reconsideration process not part of the Major School Change Policy?

Every decision of Council is subject to a process of reconsideration. The process is part of the Internal Rules of Management Procedure 1.1 found under By-Laws & Policies on the Board website.

9. What is an example of a “Change in the use of a school building”?

An example of a change in the use of a school building would be a relocation of an elementary school in its entirety to another building.

10. Why does the Policy not include a review of the Major School Change decisions?

The review of these decisions is part of the mandate of the Pupil Place Needs (PPN) Committee and this review is current and on-going.