

**Response to Questions posed by the Queen Elizabeth School Community
December 18, 2008**

Before answering the specific questions the purpose and timing of the Accommodation Review process in relation to the Board's Capital Plan Submission should be discussed.

School Boards were given the opportunity to submit capital plans to the Ministry of Education in response to the Provincial Government's announcement that \$500 million was being allocated for capital construction within the education sector.

The elimination or other use of excess capacity within the Board's schools and across Ontario is a major focus for the future. The unused or duplicated space where consolidations are possible is viewed as an opportunity to "right size" school facilities. This is exemplified in the proposed consolidation of the three French Immersion schools into one new facility in Timmins. As pointed out in the Board's presentation the new school would be some 44,000 square feet as compared to the current 77,000 square feet. As well as "right sizing" the facilities, given that none of the schools are considered "prohibitive to repair" the opportunity to put forward the replacement of schools that are currently 89, 71 and 52 years of age is something that the Board determined was its number one priority.

An Accommodation Review is required only because the existing physical school facilities will close. All other aspects of the schools will remain if the potential synergistic opportunities are taken advantage of by the greater school community.

It should also be noted that if one of the existing sites were predetermined by the Board to be the site of a new school, an Accommodation Review for that school would not be required. The Board felt that the process should include all schools and therefore purposely did not nor has it predetermined the location of the new school.

Much of that which is being put forward by the Queen Elizabeth School Community will appropriately become the focus after the Ministry has agreed to allocate funds to the project. Currently there is no indication when this will occur. It is not financially prudent to spend a significant amount of money pre-approval. At this time acceptance and approval of the concept is the first step. The benefits and challenges put forth in the Queen Elizabeth School Community's presentation help to focus on this.

In answer to the specific questions posed by the Queen Elizabeth School Community we present the following:

Question #1: Why is the location of the new school such a secret with the public?

The location of the new school is not a secret with anyone because a site for the new school has not been determined. The initial planning stage which follows the general acceptance of the concept will further pursue this issue. Vetting of potential sites by the Accommodation Review Committee is possible as both processes; the Accommodation Review and the initial planning stage will run parallel. Once the Board has received notification of an allocation for a new school the determination of a new appropriate site will take place. With the Ministry's guideline for Primary & Junior Schools being a site size of 5 acres (2 hectares), the many possibilities including existing sites can be considered.

Question # 2: Why would the Board consider the current Coronation site in light of the following factors?

- 1. There is no residential development in the south end.**
- 2. The west side of Coronation is surrounded by a gravel pit & former scrap yard.**
- 3. It is the least populated area of Timmins and bussing costs would be the greatest.**

It is incumbent on the Board to consider all possible sites. The factors mentioned may well be considered and discussed in the initial planning stage. To eliminate any site at this time would be presumptuous as there are benefits to the Coronation site as well.

Question # 3: Can we get a level of assurance that a portion of the cost savings (say 25%) from the combined schools goes back into the classroom.

The whole purpose of “right sizing” the school system is to make more money available for the education of our students. Rather than paying for the heating, lighting and cleaning of excess space, the money will be used for resources that will directly improve the opportunity for improved student achievement and student success. Whether it is additional teaching staff, special education or information technology resources, our annual budgeting process ensures that all available “money” is spent in the most appropriate fashion, therefore a guarantee, even if the Board were to consider this it would be redundant.

Question # 4: Can we get a level of assurance that the Board will formally establish a school site and construction committee open to all stakeholders.

The Board has in the past with major capital projects established a committee made up of Trustees, the appropriate Board Senior Administrators and other staff, and School Council Representatives/and or Parent Representatives who work with the Architects and Engineers to ensure that the facility will meet the requirements of the school community. We would expect this to be the same with this project.

Question # 5: Have any of the schools under accommodation review been tagged as Prohibitive to Repair as per the Ministry?

None of the schools in this accommodation review have been identified by the Ministry as prohibitive to repair.

Question # 6: Why are we not customizing the Generic Valuation Framework to the schools being evaluated?

The Generic Valuation Framework is a tool to ensure that all items have been considered in the review process. It is not necessary to customize it and if pre-maturely customized could lose much of its value as part of the final review.

Question # 7: Why isn't the Accommodation Review Data presented at the October 15th meeting not posted on the Board website yet?

The information presented and the minutes of the meeting are normally placed on the Board website quickly. In this case it did not occur, and we apologize for this oversight.

Question # 8: On the Board website there is a posting that suggests the board presented information to parents at the September 8th information session at QE, when in fact that never happened. Why?

The presentation on September 8th dealt strictly with the accommodation review policy and process and putting in place the context and the reasons why an accommodation review was necessary in this instance.