

**DATE:** November 6, 2018

**TO:** Board of Trustees

**FROM:** Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

**SUBJECT:** Mature Community Consultation Process  
Response to Request for Information #025

**ORIGINATOR:** Dr. Lorne Parker, Assistant Superintendent

**RESOURCE  
STAFF:** Kim Holowatuk, Carla Stolte, Chris Wright

**REFERENCE:** September 11, 2018, Board meeting (Trustee Dunn)  
[Closure of Schools Regulation](#)

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#### **ISSUE**

The following information was requested:

*“The Administration provide an outline of the series of steps for school consolidation/school closure considerations, including a timeline for public engagement, and requests for information such as a community impact statement from the City of Edmonton. As well, include an outline for reports and recommendations to come before the Board of Trustees in the form of Capital Plan items and amendments, and school closure motions required by the School Act.”*

#### **BACKGROUND**

School closures are regulated by the *Closure of Schools Regulation* within the *School Act*. The regulation directs (Attachment I):

- The process begins with a motion to consider the closure of an identified school(s) brought before the Board of Trustees (the Board).
- Consultation with the public must occur after the Board motion to consider closure of the school(s) as outlined in *the Act*.
- The Board may then consider motions to close.
- The Board motion to consider the closure of the school(s) and the Board motion to close the school(s) must occur within the same school year.

Since 2014, Administration has been engaging stakeholders regarding school closures and consolidation in a new way. The process outlined in the *School Act* is limiting in providing opportunity for meaningful stakeholder engagement to take place. The process that has been used in the District since 2014 (Attachment II) allows for more time to educate stakeholders about infrastructure challenges and to understand stakeholder values. It allows District staff to collaborate with stakeholders to develop community supported solutions.

This newer process adopted by Administration is grounded in the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Core Values and practices and not only fulfills, but exceeds, the legislative responsibility for stakeholder engagement outlined in *the Act*.

## CURRENT SITUATION

Each engagement process must be responsive and meet the needs of the communities involved. Meaningful collaboration is only possible with no pre-determination of closure scenarios from the outset. The engagement process (Attachment II) followed for school consolidations/closures may include the following steps:

### Administration identifies clusters

Evaluation criteria used to identify clusters:

Enrolment and programming	Facility	Other Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total school enrolment</li> <li>• Program enrolment</li> <li>• Current programming</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Net facility capacity</li> <li>• Number of unused student spaces</li> <li>• Facility utilization</li> <li>• Facility condition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Junior High clusters</li> <li>• Historic closures/designation</li> <li>• Implications of new facilities</li> <li>• Municipal census data and plans</li> <li>• Student residency patterns</li> </ul>

There is no decision at this point about which schools may be closed.

### Approach communities and identify stakeholder values

Once clusters are confirmed, stakeholders are invited to participate in person or online to understand challenges and to share local knowledge and identify values that are important to the community.

Meetings allow for large group learning. Presentations give context and outline challenges and small group facilitated conversations encourage dialogue and enhanced learning. For those unable to attend a meeting, information and opportunities to provide input are shared online.

### Respond with information and possibilities

Stakeholders are again invited to participate in person and online, to review what we heard and to consider possibilities developed based on the feedback received.

### Collaborate to develop solutions

Feedback received is used to determine how collaboration will happen. In the most recent projects, stakeholders signaled that representative working committees were desirable. The municipality is given the opportunity to participate and provide additional data and information related to community impact. The length of time for collaborative work is responsive to the level of complexity and the needs of stakeholders.

### Share ideas and collect feedback

The collaborative work is then shared with the greater community of stakeholders for feedback. It is at this point that Administration may develop recommendations. Should the community require more time, dialogue or options, the process may circle back to another period of collaborative work.

### Report to community

When a community supported solution or concept is reached, it is shared through a comprehensive public report.

## Recommendations to Board of Trustees

Administration will recommend that the Board consider the preferred concept either as an inclusion (April) or amendment (October) to the *Three-Year Capital Plan*, depending on when engagement is complete.

The Board of Trustees will approve or not approve the recommendation(s).

## Funding Announcement

The Provincial Government determines funding for all capital projects. The period of time between inclusion of a concept in the *Three-Year Capital Plan* and the announcement of funding is unknown.

## Motion to consider closure

Once funding has been announced, Administration will bring forward to the Board of Trustees motions to consider closure of each of the schools identified through the preferred concept.

## Motion to request exemption

At the same time as the motion(s) to consider closure are brought forward, Administration may ask the Board to consider a motion to request exemption from sections 4 to 7 of the *Closure of Schools Regulation*. These sections include public notification and consultation. Given the robust engagement that has already occurred, these particular requirements are deemed redundant.

From [Closure of School Regulation](#):

### **Exemption from requirements**

*1.2(1) The Minister may, on the written request of a board or on the Minister's initiative, exempt a board from the requirements of sections 4 to 7 in respect of a closure that occurs*

- (a) as a result of the board's inability to comply with section 57(2) of the Act, or*
- (b) for health or safety reasons.*

*(2) The Minister may, on the written request of a board, exempt the board from the requirements of sections 4 to 7 in respect of a closure if the Minister is satisfied that the board has consulted with the community regarding any change in grades and programs in one or more of the schools operated by the board. AR 257/2003 s4;170/2004*

## Motion to close

Should the Minister grant exemption from sections 4 to 7 of the *Closure of Schools Regulation*, the Board will then be asked to consider motions to close. When approved, the Board Chair will inform the Minister in writing.

### **KEY POINTS**

- Administration has developed an engagement process grounded in the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Core Values and practices that not only fulfills, but exceeds, the legislative responsibility for stakeholder engagement outlined in the *Closure of Schools Regulation*.
- Each community is unique and the process is responsive to community needs.
- Administration does not direct consideration options/scenarios, but rather reflects desired outcomes developed through a collaborative process with community.

### **ATTACHMENTS and APPENDICES**

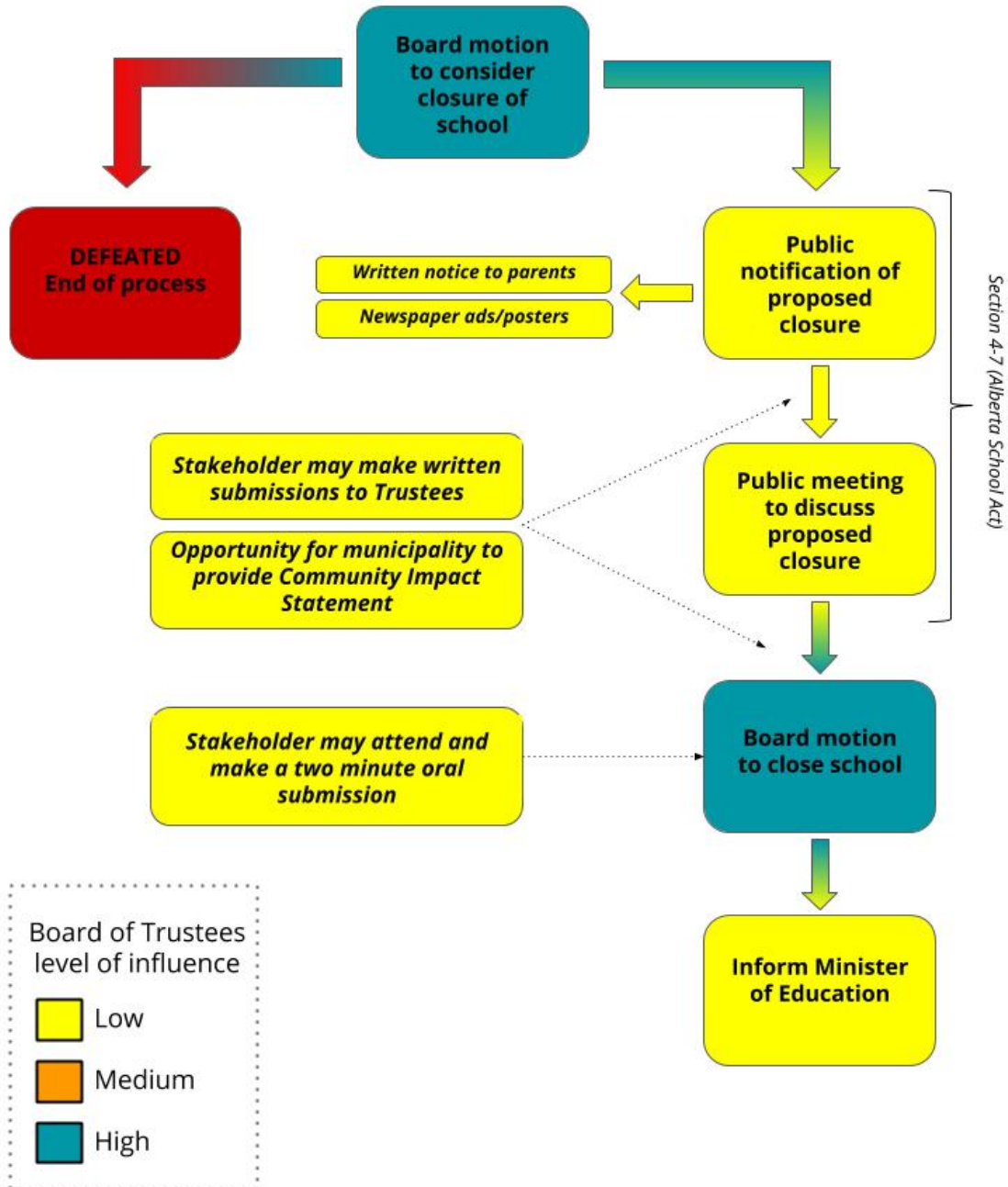
- ATTACHMENT I School Closure Process in Alberta
- ATTACHMENT II EPSB School Consolidation/Closure Process

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### School Closure Process in Alberta (required by the School Act)

*\*Process of school closure is to begin and end in the same school year*





### EPSB School Consolidation/Closure Process

