

HALIFAX REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD Long-Range Outlook Action Plan

PURPOSE: To provide information to the Governing Board regarding the proposed Long-Range Outlook Action Plan.

BACKGROUND: In October 2014 the province approved the provincial School Review Policy for use by all school boards. The policy contains sixteen directives (A to P) boards must follow during a school review process.

Directive A states: “A school review may be considered when a Long-Range Outlook has been completed by a school board, as required by the education act and outlined in Appendix A: Preparing a Long-Range Outlook.”

The policy further states that “A school board’s decision to review a group of schools is informed by, and a school review is conducted in the context of, the information contained in the Long-Range Outlook.” The circumstances identified in the Outlook which may lead to a review of schools are also listed in the School Review Policy.

The Halifax Regional School Board (HRSB) staff presented a complete Long-Range Outlook to the Governing Board on April 22, 2015. After approval by the Governing Board, staff obtained feedback from school communities through on line submissions and engagement with the School Advisory Councils.

Specifically, SAC’s were asked three questions at Family of Schools meetings throughout May 2015:

- *What enrollment trends do you notice about specific schools in your Family; about the Family in general?*
- *What do you notice about the capacity of the school building in your Family?*
- *Is there other feedback you would like to provide?*

Responses were collected from each Family of Schools. The comments received have been reviewed by staff. This information along with the data from the Long-Range Outlook is used by staff to support recommendations for actions to implement facility planning processes such as school reviews, boundary reviews, grade configuration and capital construction requests over the next five years.

The HRSB web site questions were:

- *What thoughts do you have about the information presented in the Long-Range Outlook? What do you believe is the most important to guide the Board’s future planning decisions? Where would you start?*

- *Any specific comments about a particular school or Family of Schools?*

There were only 14 respondents to these web site questions.

CONTENT:

HRSB staff has developed a prioritized list of actions for Family of Schools to address the Board's facility needs.

As described in the School Review Policy Directive A, there are six circumstances described that might be identified in the Long-Range Outlook and may lead to a school review by a School Options Committee. These include:

- a school or group of schools is unable to, or projected to be unable to, provide a suitable and equitable range of learning opportunities for students, due to declining enrolment;
- reorganization involving a school or group of schools could enhance program and learning opportunities for students;
- reorganization involving a school or group of schools could optimize use of school facilities across the school board;
- a school's combination of teaching or learning spaces is not suitable to provide programs/is not accessible/does not serve the community, and retrofitting and/or enlarging the facility may be cost prohibitive;
- one or more of the schools in a group is experiencing higher building maintenance expenses than average for the school board and/or is in need of major capital improvements; and
- safety and/or environmental concerns are associated with the building.

In considering the circumstances described above, HRSB staff has reviewed the information in the Long-Range Outlook pertaining to utilization of program space and age/condition of infrastructure as the main factors to establish a prioritized action list.

Assessment of enrollment capacity and utilization of space shows that there are schools within HRSB that have increasing and decreasing enrollment which is impacting optimal use of school facilities across the Board.

Overutilization of schools requires alterations to program space (sometimes changing its intended use) or portable classrooms to accommodate increasing numbers of students. There are areas within the Board where enrollment is already above capacity at schools and is projected to continue to increase. These situations may require a reconsideration of catchment areas and requests for a new school.

Underutilization of schools results in a surplus of space and inefficient operation of facilities. There are schools within HRSB that have steadily declining enrollment. While not as urgent as increasing enrollment, it does also require consideration to optimize use.

With *aging infrastructure*, as an increasing number of school buildings reach or go beyond their intended design life cycle, the value of maintenance and deferred maintenance increases. If not addressed then major capital improvements such as renovation or replacement of schools is required. HRSB has many schools that would be considered as aging infrastructure beyond their intended life cycle and must begin the process of identifying these schools for review to determine a replacement or consolidation and closure strategy.

Other factors to be considered regarding the future state of schools include optimal enrollment sizes, grade configuration, student transportation, culture, geography, equitable learning opportunities, residential development, fiscal accountability, community partnerships, and more. These will become part of the discussion and decision during the action processes listed below.

The action plan below is a prioritized list of school reviews to be performed by School Options Committees. The action plan sequence was determined considering the Long-Range Outlook and the factors discussed above. Each proposed review will be initiated by a *Recommendation to Review* report from staff for approval by the Governing Board. The first two actions are recommended to be started in the 2015-16 school year with the remainder to follow as resources can support.

In summary the recommended actions over the next five years for each Family of Schools include:

School Year	Family of Schools	Action	Rationale
<u>2015-16:</u>	Citadel	School Options Committee	Capital
	Cole Harbour District	School Options Committee	Optimize use
	Eastern Passage	School Options Committee	Optimize use
<u>2016-20:</u>	Charles P. Allen	School Options Committee	Optimize use
	Citadel High	School Options Committee	Capital
	Dartmouth	School Options Committee	Optimize use
	Halifax West	School Options Committee	Optimize use
	J.L. Ilsley	School Options Committee	Optimize use
	Millwood	School Options Committee	Optimize use
	Sir John A. Macdonald	School Options Committee	Optimize use
	Lockview	School Options Committee	Capital
	Prince Andrew	School Options Committee	Optimize use
	Musquodoboit Rural	School Options Committee	Capital
	Eastern Shore District	School Options Committee	Optimize use
Sackville	School Options Committee	Optimize use	

The Auburn Drive, Duncan MacMillan and Bedford/Forsyth Education Centres Families of Schools are not included on the list above. They are considered not to have circumstances that would warrant a review by a School Options Committee at this time.

COST: N/A.

FUNDING: Funding for future processes is allocated within the HRSB Operations Services budget and will be confirmed through the staff report to the Governing Board that accompanies each process approval request.

TIMELINE: The first three action items are recommended to be started in the 2015-16 school year with the remainder to follow as resources can support.

APPENDICES: N/A

RECOMMENDATIONS: It is recommended that the Governing Board receive the Long-Range Outlook Action Plan for information.

COMMUNICATIONS:

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