

Ministry of Education

Ministère de l'Éducation

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2010: B1

MEMORANDUM TO: Directors of Education

FROM: Karen Maxwell
Assistant Deputy Minister (A)

DATE: February 11, 2010

SUBJECT: Encouraging Facility Partnerships

The purpose of this memorandum is to introduce a new *Facility Partnerships Guideline* (attached) for school boards. This *Guideline* is based on feedback to a draft released in August 2009 to boards, Partnership Table members and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario.

School boards around Ontario have successful facility partnerships involving co-terminous boards and other community partners. Some boards have co-built facilities, while others have successful lease, license and joint-use agreements for partners to utilize part of a school facility.

Several recommendations in the Declining Enrolment Working Group's 2009 report focused on the importance of encouraging more partnerships between boards and community partners for the benefit of boards and students. This new *Facility Partnerships Guideline* responds to those recommendations and to the broader public imperative to use our education infrastructure wisely. The Declining Enrolment Working Group also identified key principles for partnerships that have guided this policy. The report can be viewed at: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/dewgReport.html>

The new *Facility Partnerships Guideline* encourages school boards to work with their community partners in order to share facilities to the benefit of boards, students and the community, and to optimize the use of public assets owned by school boards. This *Guideline* is intended to assist boards in establishing more facility partnerships with community partners, specifically during school hours, in new and existing school facilities where students are being taught. We expect that the outcome of this process will be that school boards across the province will have a more consistent and transparent approach to the development of facility partnerships.

School boards' primary responsibility is to support the achievement and safety of students. Boards have the authority to make decisions regarding their school facilities and the use of their facilities that are consistent with the *Education Act*, municipal zoning and other legal restrictions. Under the *Facility Partnerships Guideline*, boards will

continue to declare space surplus, where appropriate, and will continue to comply with Ontario Regulation 444/98, which grants priority treatment to co-terminous boards and other public entities when disposing of surplus property through sales or leases. This *Facility Partnerships Guideline* introduces an additional notification process for space in schools that has not been declared surplus to a board's needs and for new construction and significant renovation projects.

In order to encourage new partnerships, school boards will remove only 50 percent of the capacity of space occupied by partners from their on-the-ground capacity in the School Facilities Inventory System (SFIS), if the space is occupied for six months or more of the school board's fiscal year. Existing partnerships will remain as currently reported in SFIS. Boards can reinstate capacity when partnerships come to an end and the space is once again available for education purposes.

Compliance Timelines

Boards are expected to develop or revise their facility partnerships policy, or policies, in accordance with the Ministry's *Facility Partnerships Guideline*. The board-approved policy, or policies, should be posted on the board website no later than May 30, 2010, along with a list of available space and/or co-building partnership opportunities. Once boards have approved their policy, they are to notify the Ministry. This notification can be sent to BSB.GPL@ontario.ca. Boards are expected to hold public meetings once a year in order to exchange information with interested community partners regarding available spaces and/or potential co-build projects and community needs. The first of these public meetings must take place no later than June 30, 2010, and may be held as part of a board's regular board meeting.

The Ministry will monitor boards' success in implementing facility partnerships policies and creating new partnerships. The Ministry will review the existing legislative and regulatory framework with a view to further supporting successful facility partnerships.

Impact of Other Ministry of Education Initiatives

Over time, the Ministry introduces initiatives which can have an impact on school facility utilization. Boards will consider how to continue to support these initiatives in their plans for potential facility partnerships.

For example, the Community Use of Schools program encourages community partners to use school facilities outside of school hours. Boards are expected to consider how best to develop facility partnerships during the school day, while continuing to support the Community Use of Schools program. The Early Learning Program (full-day learning for 4- and 5-year olds) was announced on October 27, 2009. Boards should consider the impact of this initiative in their planning for facility partnerships.

Ongoing Supports

In order to further encourage the development of facility partnerships, the Ministry of Education, with the support of other ministries, is asking staff and government funding recipients to consider using space in schools and co-building with schools; to ask to be included on the notification list of local school boards; and to encourage a dialogue with school boards where co-location may be an option. We hope that this will help create additional partnership opportunities in your communities.

The Ministry believes that a board's community outreach coordinator/s (funded through the Community Use of Schools program) can play a key role in encouraging and supporting facility partnerships by coordinating with the potential facility partners.

The Ministry of Education will support contact between boards and interested community partners, when required. To facilitate communication between boards, other ministries and their funding recipients, we ask that boards provide the Ministry of Education with a contact name and number to whom we can refer partnership inquiries. Please send this information to BSB.GPL@ontario.ca.

Facility partnerships are supported by various parts of the *Education Act*, although some require the Minister's approval. Appendix A provides a high-level summary of relevant sections of the *Education Act*, which is to be used as a guide only and not as legal advice. Boards are expected to seek their own legal advice when entering into facility partnerships.

Contacts

Cooperative and collaborative partnerships are part of the foundation of a strong, vibrant and sustainable publicly funded education system. The Ministry hopes that this *Facility Partnerships Guideline* will assist boards and communities in building successful partnerships.

For questions about the Ministry's *Facility Partnerships Guideline*, please contact Amy Olmstead at 416-326-9921 or Amy.Olmstead@Ontario.ca or Nancy Whynot at 416-325-4030 or Nancy.Whynot@Ontario.ca.



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cc. Superintendents of Business
Chairs of the Board