



support every child
reach every student

PUPIL ACCOMMODATION REVIEW GUIDELINE (PARG) CONSULTATIONS

November 2014

Purpose of Consultations

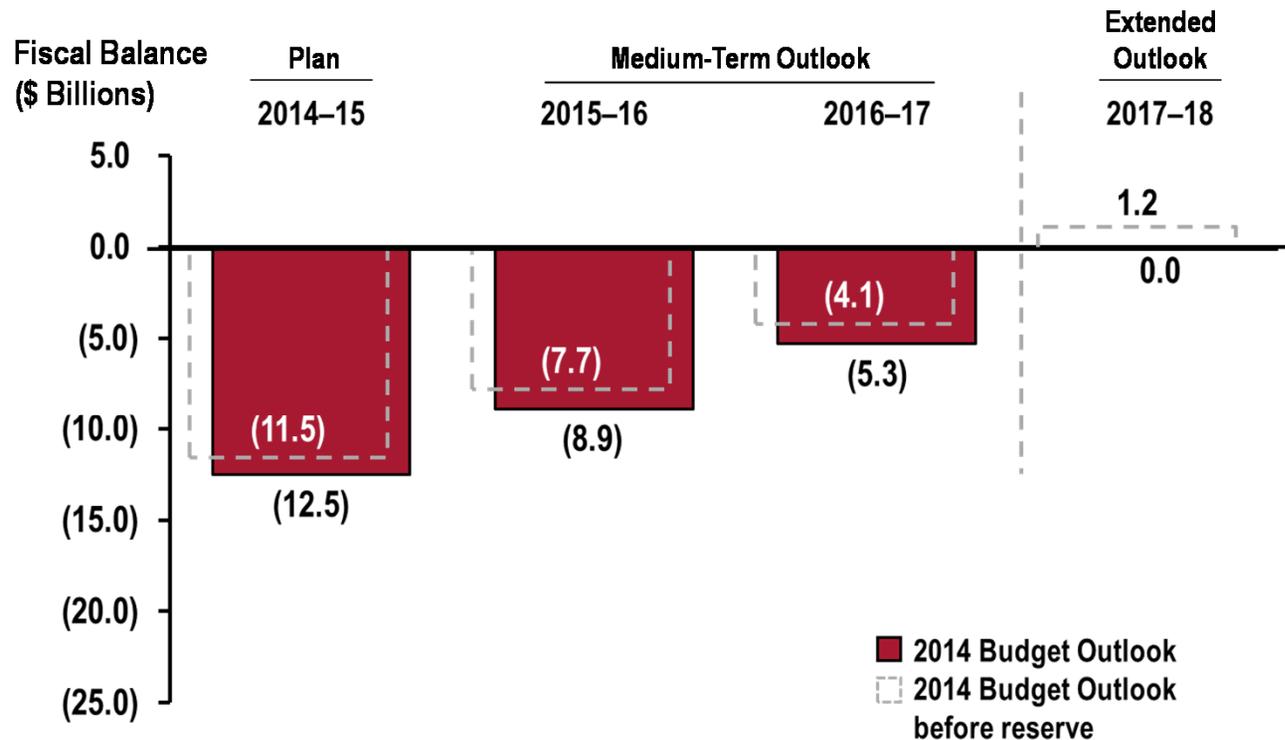
- To provide background and context for the Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline (PARG) review.
- To identify the key issues and main areas for proposed changes to the PARG.
- To discuss PARG review consultations questions.



Ontario's Fiscal Context

- The 2013 Ontario Budget has a deficit reduction plan to balance the Budget in 2017-18.
 - As part of the deficit reduction plan, individual ministries have been given saving targets within their ministry allocations.

The Path to Balance: Ontario's Plan to Eliminate the Deficit



The Ministry of Education's (EDU) Fiscal Context

- ❑ The 2013 Ontario Budget announced that EDU would consult on efficiencies and modernization measures to best use available funding to support student achievement.
- ❑ In an era of fiscal constraint and declining enrolment, the education sector has a choice to continue supporting underutilized school space or shift its focus on improved student achievement by offering the best program choices available.
- ❑ At present, almost 70% of Ontario's schools receive direct or indirect financial support to offset costs associated with space that is idle or not being used for core educational purposes.
 - In 2014-15, over \$1 billion in Grants for Student Needs (GSN) funding will directly or indirectly support underutilized school space.
 - Almost 600 schools in Ontario are less than half full. In the GTA alone, there are about 140 half-empty schools and almost 70 very small schools.
- ❑ School Board Efficiencies and Modernization (SBEM) consultations have included questions about how best to direct funding to support students, rather than underutilized space.



SBEM Strategy

- ❑ From the SBEM consultations, EDU identified five key elements:
 - 1) revising GSN grants and allocations to encourage school boards to make more efficient use of school space;
 - 2) revising the PARG to make the process more effective for school boards and the community;
 - 3) providing more capital funding to support consolidations and right-sizing of school facilities;
 - 4) providing funding to school boards to build planning capacity where there is a need to address underutilized schools; and
 - 5) consulting with the education sector on a regular basis on issues related to the GSN, including issues related to making more efficient use of school space.

- ❑ Based on the SBEM strategy, the 2014-15 GSN announced:
 - changes to financial supports for underutilized space (e.g., Top-Up calculations);
 - revisions to the PARG;
 - investments in the School Consolidation Capital program to support efficient use of school space; and
 - investments in Capital Planning Capacity.

- ❑ EDU continues to look for efficiencies through the SBEM strategy.
 - EDU requires up-front investments in priority areas to achieve long-term savings.



Context of the PARG Review

- ❑ The PARG, linked to the school board planning process for excess space, is being revised to support the SBEM strategy.
(See slides 7 and 8 on school board planning process for excess space.)
 - The PARG, serving as a province-wide baseline and minimum standard, provides direction to school boards on how to conduct pupil accommodation reviews to determine the future of a school or group of schools.
 - It is anticipated that PARG revisions will help create more flexible and efficient accommodation review processes while ensuring communities have the opportunity to provide meaningful input.

- ❑ EDU's 2014 mandate letter acknowledged that it will be engaging stakeholders on two other aspects linked to the school board planning process for excess space.
 - 1) Community hubs – Expected to promote efficient use of public assets, build better ties between schools and municipalities and other community organizations, and ensure more viable schools are able to remain open.
 - 2) Land use planning/green space – Envisioned to have municipalities and school boards work together to protect green space in growing communities.

- ❑ EDU will be reviewing and seeking stakeholder input on the community hub and land use planning/green space initiatives as well as Ontario Regulation 444/98 of the *Education Act*.
 - Ontario Regulation 444/98 of the *Education Act* governs the disposition of surplus school property. It outlines preferred government agencies that are circulated before surplus school properties are put on the open market, as well as the valuation of these properties.



School Board Planning Process for Excess Space

- ❑ On a regular basis school boards review their accommodation needs based on its long-term accommodation/capital plan and student achievement strategy approved by its trustees.

Step 1: Planning for Effective Use of Space

- ❑ When an area is identified as having long-term excess capacity compared to forecasted enrolment, before considering school closure(s), school boards respond to changing circumstances to best support their student achievement strategy, such as:
 - Operate programs and facilities more efficiently.
 - Share staff between schools (librarians, principals, special supports).
 - Move attendance boundaries and programs to balance enrolment in urban areas.
 - Consolidate schools, where schools are within reasonable proximity.
 - Combined grades; move grade 7 and 8 students into secondary schools.
 - Share facilities with coterminous school boards.
 - Find community partnerships or tenants.

Step 2: Accommodation Review

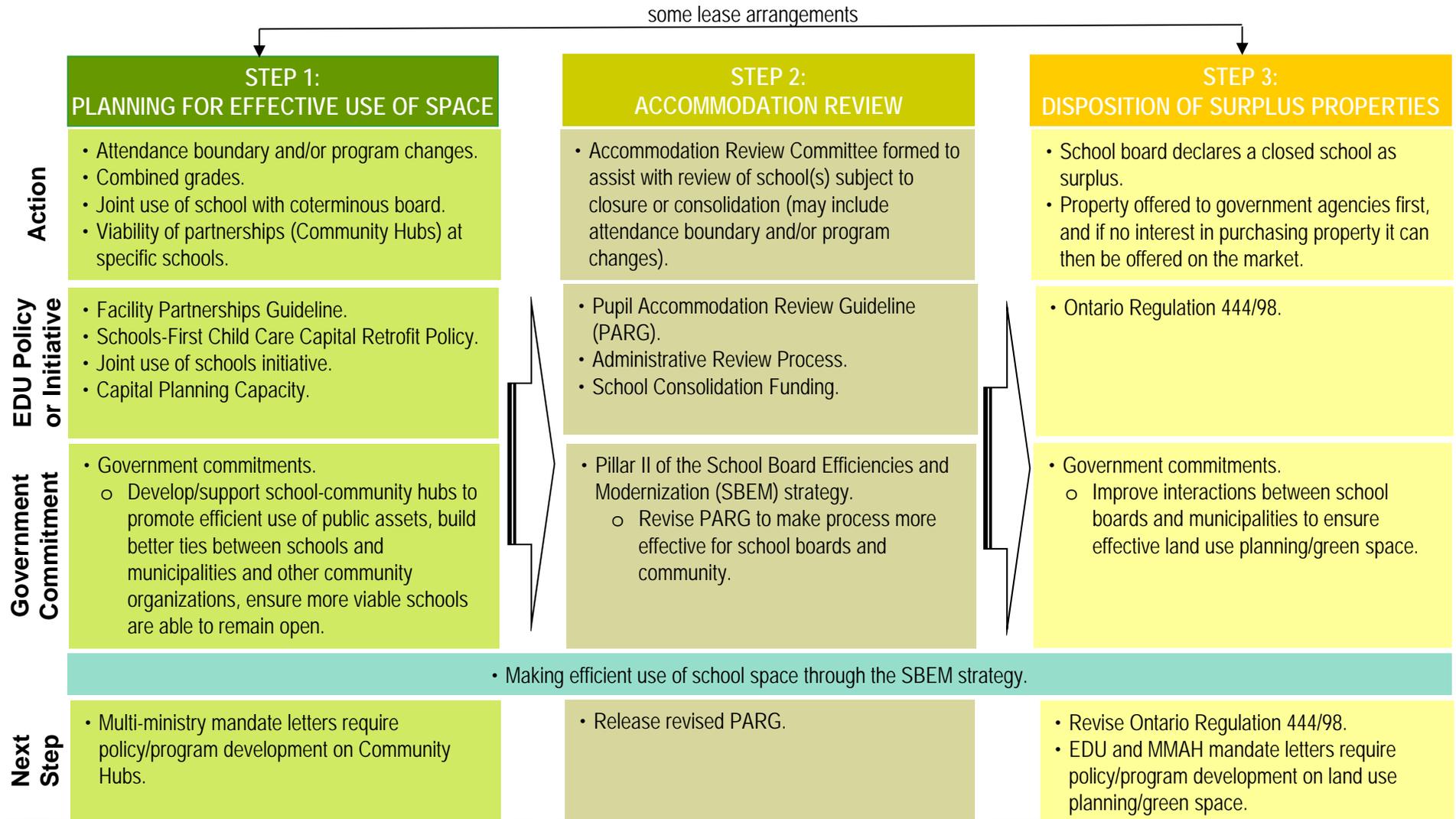
- ❑ An outcome may be that a family of schools undergo the accommodation review process with possible school closure(s) to support the school board's student achievement strategy and to make the most effective use of their school buildings and funding.

Step 3: Disposition of Surplus Properties

- ❑ If school(s) are scheduled for closure after the accommodation review process, school boards may declare a closed school as surplus under Ontario Regulation 444/98 of the *Education Act*.
 - If no government agencies are interested in purchasing the property, it can then be offered on the market.
 - EDU has no legislative authority to compel school boards to sell their surplus properties.



School Board Planning Process for Excess Space



What EDU Has Heard To Date on the PARG

School Boards

- The process is contentious in that the committee is expected to make one recommendation and pits communities against each other in an effort to save their school.
- The process is inflexible with its “one size fits all” approach.
- The process is lengthy and creates a drain on school board resources (i.e., money, staff).

Municipalities

- Municipalities have no formal role in the process except as an accommodation review committee (ARC) member or public delegations.
- School closures in small or remote municipalities have larger community and economic impacts.

Parents/Community

- Trustees do not always make a decision that reflects the ARC report.
- School boards do not provide enough information or respond quickly.
- School boards have accommodation solution in mind before the process commences.
- Participating on an committee is exhausting, and a waste of their time.



Summary of Need for Current PARG Revisions

- ❑ Based on feedback from various stakeholders, the PARG needs to be revised:
 - to make the accommodation review process more flexible and timely for school boards;
 - to be a less contentious process so that it does not pit communities against each other; and
 - to provide for sufficient information for well-informed community consultation and decision-making processes.

- ❑ School boards will need a more effective accommodation review process in light of the focus on ensuring spending supports students and not empty spaces.

- ❑ The PARG and the accommodation review process should also be re-evaluated to align with EDU's goals by focusing on the following key principles:
 - 1) Student well-being
 - 2) Academic achievement
 - 3) School board financial viability/sustainability



Capital Advisory Committee (CAC)

- ❑ Starting in 2014, EDU has been consulting with school board officials on EDU's CAC before opening up the PARG review consultations with other stakeholders.
- ❑ The CAC is comprised of 15 school board representatives at a staff level from both rural and urban areas across the four school board types (Public English, Public French, Catholic English, and Catholic French) that have capital and planning expertise.



Key Issues and Main Areas for Proposed PARG Changes

- ❑ The following CAC key issues and main areas for proposed changes to the current PARG have been reviewed by the Minister of Education.

Key Issues

- ❑ The CAC identified five key issues to enable school boards to have a more effective process to undertake accommodation reviews:
 - 1) More focus on the affected students' achievement and well-being.
 - 2) Clarify community expectations of the public consultation process.
 - 3) A less contentious process that is reflected in the role of the committee.
 - 4) More efficient process with shorter minimum timeline requirements.
 - 5) A more flexible process to address local circumstances.

Main Areas for Proposed Changes

- ❑ The CAC is proposing six main areas of change to the current PARG:
 - 1) Role of the committee
 - 2) Committee membership
 - 3) Municipal involvement
 - 4) Timelines
 - 5) Optional shortened process
 - 6) Reports and School Information Profiles (SIP)



Current PARG and Proposed PARG Changes:

1) Role of the Committee

Current PARG	Proposed PARG Changes
1) Role of the Committee	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Committee provides options and votes on recommendation(s).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Committee would focus on being a conduit for information sharing between the school board and the affected school communities.• Committee would comment on school board administration's initial report which would contain one or more options, including a recommended option, with supporting rationale for each option.• No committee voting or consensus on a final recommendation would be required/sought.• Committee may provide other options with supporting rationale for each option.



Current PARG and Proposed PARG Changes:

2) Committee Membership

Current PARG	Proposed PARG Changes
2) Committee Membership	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Committee must include membership from the broader community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ARC members would be parent/guardian representatives from the school(s) under review and school board administration.• Broader community feedback would be sought through open public meetings or delegations.



Current PARG and Proposed PARG Changes:

3) Municipal Involvement

Current PARG	Proposed PARG Changes
3) Municipal Involvement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipalities can be involved as an ARC member with no other formal role. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More defined role for municipalities in the process. Two minimum methods of municipal involvement: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Technical support to school board administration for initial report and SIPs. 2) School board to formally invite senior municipal administration and/or municipal councillors to share information on the upcoming accommodation reviews. School board option to include municipal representation to be an ARC member, and municipalities would maintain the opportunity to attend and provide input through public delegations.



Current PARG and Proposed PARG Changes:

4) Timelines

Current PARG	Proposed PARG Changes
4) Timelines	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum of four public meetings over seven months. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shorten minimum process from seven months with four public meetings to five months with two open public meetings. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Decreased minimum requirement from 90 days to 60 days for the public consultation period. ➤ Decreased minimum requirement from 60 days to 30 days between school board administration final report and Board of Trustee vote (includes minimum of 15 days between public delegations and Board of Trustee vote).



Current PARG and Proposed PARG Changes:

5) Optional Shortened Process

Current PARG	Proposed PARG Changes
5) Optional Shortened Process	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One accommodation review process with no opportunity for a faster process to differentiate between local circumstances. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An optional shortened accommodation review process can be utilized. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Minimum process of two and a half months. ➢ No committee required. ➢ Minimum requirement of one open public meeting with no committee consultations, and public delegations before Board of Trustee vote. • Shortened process would be based on one or more prescribed factors specified in the PARG: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) distance to nearest available accommodation; 2) utilization rate of the facility; 3) number of students enrolled at the school; and 4) elective programming available at the school. • Factors would be customized for local school board circumstances, and could take into consideration differentiations in urban versus rural areas and elementary versus secondary schools. • Factors must be locally consulted on and Board of Trustee approved, and would become a part of the school board's local accommodation review policy.



Current PARG and Proposed PARG Changes:

6) Reports and School Information Profiles (SIPs)

Current PARG	Proposed PARG Changes
6) Reports and School Information Profiles (SIPs)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation(s) not needed in school board administration initial report. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School board administration's initial report must contain one or more options, including a recommended option, with supporting rationale for each option. • School board administration's initial report must include information on actions taken prior to process (i.e., partnerships, joint use of school with coterminous board, etc.) and supporting rationale why the actions were not suitable.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ARC report provides options and recommendation(s). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ARC report would be a summary of committee consultation feedback, including options developed by committee members with supporting rationale for each.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SIPs to consider value to the student, school board, community, and local economy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SIP would be an orientation document with school board and school data instead of four existing broad valuation considerations.



Discussion Questions

- 1) What are your key concerns with the accommodation review process?
- 2) What are your thoughts on the proposed six main areas of change to the current PARG?
- 3) What other adjustments could be made to improve the PARG and/or accommodation review process?

