



April 12, 2019

Ref: 209332

All Boards of Education

All:

I am pleased to bring your attention to the Ministry of Education's new approach to long-term capital planning for boards of education. The Ministry's guidelines for the development of Long-Range Facilities Plans (LRFP) for school districts have undergone a significant revision from the initial version that was produced in March 2017 under the previous administration.

Government is focused on building and expanding schools, with record levels of operating and capital funding. In contrast, the previous government used the LRFP to overemphasize "capacity utilization" as a means to force mass school closures. We are changing the guidelines for drafting LRFPs to speed up the planning process, so we can focus on investing in students and schools. We have already removed the old government's 95% utilization requirement, and now I'm pleased to announce we are making even more changes to give school boards more flexibility and autonomy.

Going forward, the Ministry will no longer need to approve a school district's LRFP. We will no longer expect LRFPs to be evidentiary documents that are needed to justify individual project funding requests. The new guidelines no longer use terms like "requirements" or "mandatory". Instead, we encourage you to use the LRFP as a broad visioning document, much like a Local Area Plan or Official Community Plan (OCP). The purpose of an LRFP is to help guide local decisions and I encourage you to have a much broader focus than a typical capital submission. I appreciate there are several districts with draft LRFPs well underway. While I certainly don't expect those districts to begin the process anew, I would encourage those districts to consider the guidelines for future LRFP drafts.

The changes to the LRFP guidelines are meant to give boards the flexibility and space to lay out a wide-ranging vision for their districts, rather than a rigid and prescriptive process. To help you manage your existing facilities and allow school facilities to play a larger role in the community, LRFPs should have a much broader focus than just enrolment and capacity utilization. LRFPs should emphasize potential changes to programming to support the natural movement of students, analyzing changing demographics to neighbourhoods, and account for other important facility uses such as childcare, before-and-after school care, and community uses of school buildings. Local boards can create their own LRFPs and use those plans to guide their submissions to the Ministry

Like an OCP, LRFPs are developed by local officials to guide medium and long-term planning. Locally elected boards of education are in the best position to consider needs of the current population, and how their communities may grow and change in the years ahead. Like an OCP, an LRFP should serve as a

guide to outline how a board of education intends to manage existing schools while planning new facilities that will meet the anticipated needs of their communities.

Robust community consultation is vital to a successful LRFP. Consultation with the community, especially local Indigenous communities, is a key requirement and will help boards develop plans that reflect the needs and aspirations of their communities.

The revised Long-Range Facilities Plan Guidelines are included as an appendix to the Capital Plan Instructions for 2020/21, which were recently published by the Ministry in March 2019. Superintendents will be notified in the Deputy Minister's Bulletin published on April 12, 2019 about the issuance of the latest LRFP Guidelines. This document may be accessed on the Ministry's Capital Planning webpage at: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/administration/capital/planning>

I hope you will find these changes to the planning process helpful as you continue to deliver on positive outcomes for students. With an improved LRFP, I believe we will be able to deliver even more of our record capital investments; building, expanding, upgrading, and keeping schools open for students and communities throughout B.C.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rob Fleming". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and "F".

Rob Fleming
Minister