

Ministry of Education

Ministère de l'Éducation



Capital and Business Support
Division

Division du soutien aux immobilisations
et aux affaires

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Memorandum to: Directors of Education
Children's Service Leads, Consolidated Municipal Service
Managers (CMSMs) and District Social Services Administration
Boards (DSSABs)
Secretary/Treasurers of School Authorities

From: Didem Proulx
Assistant Deputy Minister
Capital and Business Support Division

Subject: **Launch of 2023-24 Capital Priorities Program**

The Ministry of Education ("the ministry") is pleased to announce the launch of the 2023-24 Capital Priorities Grant Program (CP). Schools and child care centres are crucial in supporting the well-being and positive development of students and children. As part of the provincial government's efforts to build and invest in infrastructure, the Ministry of Education is committed to finding solutions to speed up the construction of new schools through enhanced design standardization, reduced approval requirements and greater transparency and accountability to support high-quality instruction in healthy, safe and modern learning facilities. The Ministry of Education recognizes the importance of working together with its partners, including school boards and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to meet the government's commitment to helping build modern schools faster to support the needs of growing communities, to better utilize school capacity, and ensure value for taxpayer dollars. As a result, the 2023-24 Capital Priorities Program has been enhanced to reflect these key government commitments.

2023-24 Capital Priorities Program Submissions – At a Glance

- The submission deadline for all capital funding requests is **October 20th, 2023**. No submission will be accepted after this date. Funding announcements will be made in Winter 2024.
- Business Case templates, Program Guidelines, Design Catalogue and other supporting material are available for download from the SharePoint site shared in the email to the school board.
- School boards will submit proposals through the Capital and Business Support Division SharePoint site.
- For the 2023-24 Capital Priorities program, school boards are asked to:
 - Submit detailed project proposals to address **current** accommodation needs related to:
 - Accommodation Pressures,
 - School Consolidation,
 - Facility Condition, and
 - Access to French Language schools.
 - Provide high level summary information on **future, longer term growth needs** related to the Housing Supply Action Plan municipal growth plans.
 - Provide a priority ranking for the proposals.
- School boards have an opportunity to request Child Care Capital funding for child care projects associated with a larger Capital Priorities project.
- The detailed project submissions for needs will need to include fully completed business cases that identify a utilization equal to or greater than 100% (including areas schools) in the 5th year after the proposed school opening date , provide a positive investment return (Net Present Value greater than \$0), or identify students that do not have access to a French Language school. Projects are also expected to include a completion date with a clear and detailed schedule for milestones and deliverables.
- School boards are encouraged to identify opportunities to work together on joint-use project submissions.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

As with previous years, project submissions must demonstrate a critical and urgent pupil accommodation need in order to be considered for funding approval. These pupil accommodation needs may include Accommodation Pressures, Replacement Schools and French Language Access. In addition to addressing pupil accommodation needs, projects may also include the creation of new licensed child care spaces.

URBAN AND INNOVATIVE SCHOOLS

The ministry recognizes that intensification in high density urban areas poses unique challenges. Finding suitable land for the construction of a school is challenging and expensive. As residential

development is expected to continue to be high in urban areas, school boards may not be able to construct schools according to the traditional model. The ministry encourages school boards to pursue opportunities to explore new, innovative ways to build schools – such as vertical schools and podium schools. The ministry looks forward to working with you on advancing these and numerous other initiatives that are part of the ministry’s ambitious capital agenda to ensure funding, programs and supports continue to meet the needs of students and school boards across the province.

NEW: PROJECT READINESS ASSESSMENT

Starting this year, school boards are asked to complete a project readiness assessment and provide a summary of key project milestones. In this new assessment section, the ministry is requesting detailed information regarding site identification, design plans, project timelines and cost estimates. Priority will be given to projects that are best positioned to be completed in a timely manner. Submissions will require details regarding sites planned or acquired, design plans with cost estimates, and a clear schedule with project milestones indicating a path to project completion.

NEW: DESIGN STANDARDIZATION

The Ministry of Education recognizes the importance of ensuring that school board capital assets are used effectively and efficiently to meet the government’s commitment of helping build modern schools faster to support the needs of growing communities, so that students can attend school as close to home as possible. In June 2023, the *Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act* amended the *Education Act* to provide authority for the Minister to require school boards to use particular functional specifications, designs or plans when constructing, renovating or making additions to school buildings or premises, speeding up approvals and helping get new schools built faster.

Design standardization will help save time, avoid unnecessary costs through scope control, remove duplication of design development; cost avoidance through acceleration, and streamlined approvals.

Since 2010, the ministry has had functional design and space standards reflecting classroom capacity loadings and curriculum requirements. All school boards are required to design within ministry space standards and funding benchmarks. The ministry is now moving forward with further enhancements in design planning that will require school boards to submit designs for new school requests that will result in greater opportunity for construction efficiencies including costs and scheduling.

The ministry recognizes that many school boards use various measures in their design planning process to find efficiencies. This includes using standardized repeat designs that are scalable and modified to accommodate sites for both new elementary and secondary schools. There are also instances where school designs are also being used amongst school boards.

With the support of various school boards, as well as information collected through the Rapid

Build Pilot, the ministry has developed an EDU Design Catalogue of new school builds that have been completed or are currently in progress. The catalogue includes schematic designs of elementary and secondary schools from 8 school boards based on the following criteria:

- All designs are aligned within current ministry space benchmark requirement
- All designs have been approved/tendered since 2021 to reflect current costs
- Project costs are aligned and consistent with current market conditions in the average range of \$360-\$400/sq ft excluding unique site costs.
- Designs represent a variety of pupil place sizes to provide scalability
- School boards have received permission from the Architects for inclusion

The catalogue is intended to evolve as ministry staff continue to work with boards and identify additional designs used by school boards through the Capital Priorities Program.

The catalogue will be used as a primary tool for school boards to identify potential project designs for their project submissions. Recognizing that the catalogue does not encompass all design needs, there remains options for school boards to identify other project designs, as applicable (i.e. school board's own repeat design, additions, renovations, podium/vertical builds, etc.).

NEW: BOARD PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

As part of the Capital Priorities evaluation process, school boards will be assessed on their performance history delivering capital projects, including the following:

- Adherence to project timelines
- Time to completion
- Cost overages
- Existing inventory of active projects
- Adherence to space benchmarks
- Capital Accountability Framework compliance

NEW: ENHANCED ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK

As a result of the ministry's Lean review of its Capital Accountability Framework, the ministry has redesigned the accountability framework for the major capital construction projects. The ministry's new streamlined process will reduce administrative burden while allowing for a clear path for project success.

- Successful projects will result in a Project Commitment which will include a clear schedule, budget and scope of the project as submitted by the school board and agreed upon by the ministry. The Project Commitment will establish ministry expectations for successful project delivery.
- School boards will be responsible and accountable for implementing appropriate measures to ensure that projects are completed within the schedule, budget and scope established in the Project Commitment.

- The ministry will meet with school boards to review project progress reports on a regularly scheduled basis to monitor the progress of approved projects.
 - Projects that are progressing within the parameters of the Project Commitment will not be required to obtain any further approval from the ministry and will be able to proceed through key project milestones to project completion including design, tender, and construction stages.
 - During a project's development, however, school boards that encounter issues that puts the project at risk of not adhering to the Project Commitment, may require ministry approval to revise the Project Commitment. This could involve schedule delays, increased costs or changes in project scope. In extreme cases, the project may be subject to cancellation.
 - At the end of the project, per the Project Commitment and confirmation by the board, the project will be designated as closed. A letter will be issued by the ministry with reconciliation of the total project costs. At the Ministry's discretion, unspent funds will be considered as offset for active projects or will be reallocated back to the ministry.
- The new accountability framework will also be applied to the existing pipeline of projects. Over the coming months, Capital Analysts will work with school boards to develop Project Commitments for existing projects.

PROJECT SUBMISSIONS

2023-24 Submission templates, guidelines and design catalogue can be downloaded from the Capital and Business Support Division SharePoint site.

School boards will submit proposals through the SharePoint site to be considered for funding approval. A complete submission will include the following:

- 1) Business Case - Part A (Excel Template) will include:
 - a. Project Information
 - b. Closest Facilities
 - c. Space Template
 - d. Enrolment Projections
 - e. Child Care Joint Submission (If Applicable)
 - f. Child Care Space Template (If Applicable)
 - g. Cost Estimates
 - h. Submission Check

- 2) Business Case - Part B (Written Report) will include:
 - a. A written description of the project, including detailed information on the rationale, proposed scope of work and demonstration of why alternative options are not feasible.

- b. Evidence and details on how site identification and design plans and cost estimates were derived. Identify the Land Priorities funding needed. This does not mean Land Priorities funding will be provided automatically.
- c. Detailed information on costing estimates and assumptions made
- d. Detailed project plan that includes timelines for key project milestones.

3) Design

- a. School boards should submit, at minimum, schematic designs based on either:
 - EDU Design Catalogue; or
 - Recent school board repeat design which must have been tendered since 2021.

New elementary school projects should proceed under one of the two options above. For other projects where a repeat design may not be feasible, School Boards may be provided an exception and submit a new design. These projects include:

- additions/ renovations,
- projects with unique site constraints,
- podium or vertical schools,
- secondary schools, and
- schools in joint-use facilities.

NOTE: Projects submitted without a design **may be ineligible** for funding.

4) Long-Term Growth Needs (LTGN)

- a. Boards are asked to provide details of their longer term growth needs for addressing current and projected pupil accommodation needs linked to the Ontario Housing Action Plan and related municipal growth plans.
- b. Please see program guidelines for further information.

Please refer to the **Checklist** to ensure your board has included all required documentation.

INFORMATION SESSIONS

The ministry will host information sessions for the Capital Priorities Program in **August** and **September** on the following dates:

- Thursday August 24, 2023 - 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm
- Thursday August 31, 2023 (French) - 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm
- Thursday September 7, 2023 - 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm

These sessions will provide school board staff with support regarding the completion of Capital Priorities business cases.

MINISTRY CONTACT

If you have any questions regarding the Capital Priorities Program, or require additional information, please contact the Capital Analyst assigned to your school board or:

- Lesley Cunningham, Manager, Capital Program Branch at 647-404-1133 or Lesley.Cunningham@ontario.ca, or
- Sophie Liu, Manager, Capital Program Branch at 647-402-9597 or Sophie.Liu@ontario.ca, or
- Paul Bloye, Director, Capital Program Branch at 416-325-8589 or at Paul.Bloye@ontario.ca.

We look forward to working with you on advancing these projects and other initiatives as part of the Ontario government's commitment to meeting the needs of students and school boards across the province.

Sincerely,

Didem Proulx
 Assistant Deputy Minister
 Capital and Business Support Division

- c. Senior Business Officials
 Superintendents and Managers of Facilities Managers of Planning
 Early Years Leads
 CAOs of Consolidated Municipal Service Managers CAOs of District Social Services
 Administration Boards
 Holly Moran, Assistant Deputy Minister, Early Years and Child Care Division, Ministry of Education
 Roxanne Hotte, Assistant Deputy Minister (A), French-Language Teaching, Learning and Achievement Division, Ministry of Education
 Andrew Locker (A), Director, Field Services Branch, Ministry of Education
 President, Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'Ontario (ACÉPO)
 Executive Director, Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'Ontario (ACÉPO)
 President, Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques (AFOCSC)
 Executive Director, Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques (AFOCSC)
 President, Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association (OCSTA)
 Executive Director, Ontario Catholic School Trustees Association (OCSTA)
 President, Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA)
 Executive Director, Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA)
 Executive Director, Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE)
 Executive Director, Association des directions et directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes (ADFO)
 Executive Director, Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario (CPCO)
 Executive Director, Ontario Principals' Council (OPC)