

Frequently Asked Questions

Updated Sept. 5, 2016

What is a Long-Term Accommodation Plan (LTAP)?

A long-term accommodation plan is designed to address student accommodation and program needs over the next 15 years taking into account projected student enrolment, facility utilization, facility condition, transportation, new school construction, boundary adjustments and student programming.

Why do we need a Long-Term Accommodation Plan?

The Ministry of Education requires that all school boards complete long-term accommodation plans to increase operating efficiencies, manage excess capacity in schools and ensure stable enrolments for strong programming opportunities for students. All school boards in Ontario are in varying stages of this process.

Is the plan set in stone?

The 2016 Long Term Accommodation Plan was developed by Ameresco Asset Sustainability Group Inc. The recommendations were received by Trustees, but do not commit the Board to any specific course of action or timeline. To begin the process for any specific project Senior Staff are required to present an Initial Staff Report or an Administrative Report to Trustees for Board approval. Trustees must approve either a Consultation or Pupil Accommodation Review of school(s) before any discussions concerning consolidations, closures, new schools or program/boundary changes can occur.

The LTAP will be updated every year in the spring to include revised enrolment projections and space allocations. As well the full LTAP will be updated from time to time. At present the full updates are planned for the 2018-19 and 2022-23 school years.

Who is Ameresco Asset Sustainability Group Inc.?

Ameresco Asset Sustainability Group Inc. is a consulting firm that was hired by the Limestone District School Board to prepare and present a fifteen(15) year Long Term Accommodation Plan

Ameresco Asset Sustainability Group Inc. (AASG), a subsidiary of Ameresco Canada provides asset management consulting services primarily to customers in the education, municipal, social housing, government, healthcare and commercial sectors. Founded in 2000, AASG's head office is in Toronto, with branch office locations in Calgary and Vancouver.

The staff members bring considerable breadth of experience and support related to the development of education sector capital planning. Collectively they have worked with fifty-one (51) of the 72 school districts in Ontario.

When could we see changes?

In September 2016, the Board will meet with municipal and community partners to share the plan and to receive and discuss relevant planning information. Senior Staff are required to present an Initial Report or Administrative Report concerning a specific project to Trustees for Board approval, before any public discussions of consolidations, closures, new schools or program/boundary changes can occur. This may occur for one or more projects in the fall of 2016.

Does this mean school staff will lose their jobs?

Previous school consolidations and closures have sometimes affected staffing. Any changes to staffing would follow normal procedures under current collective agreements.

Isn't this all about saving money?

Limestone currently has more than 4,000 surplus pupil spaces. The continued decline of the pre-school and school-age population in our region will result in lower enrolment. Smaller enrolments lead to multi-grade classes and fewer programming and extra-curricular opportunities for students. Also, there is insufficient funding to meet the maintenance and repair needs of Limestone schools while maintaining a balanced budget, as the Board is required to do. Although facility partnerships may provide opportunities for schools to rent surplus space, this does not address programming pressures or reduce surplus pupil spaces.

What happens next?

In September 2016, the Board will meet with municipal and community partners to share the plan and to receive and discuss relevant planning information.

What is involved in cost recovery?

Boards are not expected to take on additional costs to support facility partnerships, although boards will continue to use their discretion in supporting partnerships based on their student achievement strategy. On a cost-recovery basis, the fees charged to partners should cover the operations and capital cost, including administrative costs and property taxes (if applicable), to the board of the space occupied by the partner. Additional costs to perform minor renovations to protect student safety, provide appropriate washrooms, and otherwise make the space suitable for use by facility partners should be borne by the partners. Financial expectations are outlined in the Board Policy #20 and details would be further discussed in Partner/Board staff meetings .

How are enrolment projections calculated?

Baragar Systems is engaged by Limestone DSB and many other school districts across Canada and the United States to provide enrolment projections. The following is an overview of the enrolment projection methodology

All data is calculated as of September 30 of each year (October 31 in Ontario), and the projections are calculated effective September 30 of each future year. The enrolment projection methodology does not use Census data, but current data from other sources (for each school as well as the jurisdiction overall).

I. Birth Data

- Vital Statistics (birth registry) of the province is the data source. The annual number of births since 1990 to the present. (Approaching 100% accuracy in terms of population coverage)
- Trends vary significantly from school to school, and because the projections are done at the school level, birth projections are the first step in the enrolment projection methodology.

II. Population of Children by single year of age (ages 1 to 17)

- Human Resources Canada (Family Allowance database – 1990 to 1992) and Canada Revenue Agency (Child Tax and Universal Child Care Benefit databases – 1993 to current year) are the data sources. The annual number of children aged 1 – 17 by single year of age (1,2,3,4 etc.). Though Statistics Canada is not the source for these databases, they have performed a study measuring the coverage of the data, and have concluded that the database is over 98% accurate in terms of population coverage.
- Not only is the number of children aged 1,2,3 etc. provided, but from this data, the net impact of migration is measured annually by age group. For example, for the preschool age group, the number of children aged 2 to 5 each year is divided by the number of children aged 1 to 4 the previous year. This quantifies the net impact of migration resulting from the new families moving into the area and into new housing as well as used housing, versus those moving out. Assumptions about future migration by age group form the second part of the projection methodology.
- The current population from age 0 to age 17 is “aged” by applying “age group specific” migration rates to the current population. This results in a projection of the number of children for each year of age for each of the next 15 years. This base population is the key variable affecting enrolment projections.

III. Enrolment by School, Grade, and Program

- The source of data is the Student Information System (SIS) of the School District
- The students are first separated into the programs in which they enrol (e.g. Regular program, French Immersion, etc.);
- The students are then sorted within program by whether they attend their designated neighbourhood school, or whether they attend another school in the District.
- The data is aggregated and then the “in catchment” enrolment by grade is compared to the “potential registrants” by age (for example, the number of children enrolled in kindergarten are divided by the number of children aged 5 living in a school’s catchment area). This measure is called a “Participation Rate”. Participation rates by grade are provided historically such that trends can be discerned.
- Once the “in catchment” enrolment has been projected, the “Out of Catchment” component of enrolment is projected. Such data is maintained historically such that trends can be observed. Assumptions about the size of the incoming group (e.g. kindergarten) are made. Once assumptions have been made concerning the ‘entry’ grade in a school, a “Retention Rate” is applied on a grade by grade basis. A history of such retention rates are reviewed first and, then assumptions made concerning future rates.
- The “magnet program” enrolments are also a component of the projection. The methodology is similar to the “Out of Catchment” methodology. However, the “entry grade” assumptions takes into account the changes in the projected number of children in the appropriate age group (e.g. for kindergarten, the reference group is age 5). In the case of middle/junior schools and the secondary/high schools, a “feeder flow” methodology is used to establish the enrolment in the “entry grade” (i.e. grade 9 French immersion in a 9 to 12 school being “fed” by French immersion grade 8 classes in two middle/junior schools).

Enrolment projection is not an exact science but is an important tool for use in reviewing and planning human, material and facility resource allocation.

What is a Facility Condition Index (FCI)?

The Facility Condition Index (FCI) is a benchmark used by the Ministry of Education to compare the relative condition of schools across the Province and determine whether it is more economical to fully modernize an existing school or to replace it. FCI is a standard tool used by architects, engineers, and facility planners.

A school's FCI is calculated by dividing the value of the school's deficiencies by the replacement value of the school.

Example: Value of Deficiencies = \$3,250,000 Replacement Value = \$5,000,000
 $\$3,250,000 \div \$5,000,000 = 65\% \text{ FCI}$

Each school is thoroughly inspected every 5 years by professional personnel contracted by the Ontario Ministry of Education. Following the inspection information about the condition of a school is entered into a provincial data base. Also incorporated are the events needed to maintain the school building based on industry standards and costs. The school board personnel update the data base as needed maintenance is completed. A higher FCI percentage does not indicate that a school is unsafe or that the wellbeing of students and staff is endangered. Schools are monitored monthly for health and safety issues by on site staff. Each facility is also inspected regularly for maintenance issues by Board Facility Services Staff. As well third party professionals are often employed to inspect some areas of the schools such as roofs.

All boards in the province receive funding for the maintenance and repair of schools based on the number of pupils in the board. This funding decreases with declining enrolment. There is insufficient funding to meet the maintenance and repair needs outlined in the data base events for each of the schools.

The Ministry of Education recognizes this shortfall and is directing some additional funding – School Condition Improvement Funding, toward this issue. However the monies will still not cover the event costs. The Ministry of Education is encouraging Boards to consolidate schools and rebuild schools if needed.