

Ministry of Education

Ministère de l'Éducation

Capital and Business Support
Division

Division du soutien aux
immobilisations et aux affaires

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Date: September 8, 2025

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 2025-26 Capital Priorities Program

The Ministry of Education is pleased to invite school boards to submit proposals for funding consideration through the 2025-26 Capital Priorities program. This funding round will build on the momentum of two consecutive record investments in education Capital Priorities, totaling \$2.6 billion.

As you are aware, the Capital Priorities program provides funding to address boards' highest priority capital needs. With Ontario's population increasing steadily, there is a continued need to focus on shovel-ready projects that will help meet the needs of growing communities.

The ministry has been working closely with school boards, municipalities and other key partners to transform the education capital system to build modern schools faster, better utilize school capacity and enhance accountability and transparency.

Projects selected for funding in 2025-26 will reflect these priorities by demonstrating a need to: meet an accommodation pressure, provide access to French-language rights holders, or replace a school that meets certain conditions. In addition, the ministry will continue to assess and score proposed projects' readiness and use of standardized design.

2025-26 Capital Priorities Program Submissions – At a Glance

- The deadline for all capital funding submissions is **October 8, 2025**. No submission will be accepted after this date.
- 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 2025-26 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, with health and safety considerations; and
 - Access to French Language schools.
 - Provide high level summary information on future, long-term enrolment projections linked to municipal growth plans.
 - Provide a priority ranking for the proposals.

Consistent with the 2024-25 Capital Priorities program:

- Detailed project submissions must include fully completed business cases that identify an accommodation need, students who do not have access to a French Language school, or a need to replace a school due to its condition.
- The Accommodation Pressure metric will remain unchanged:
 - Current utilization (SY 2024-25) must be equal to or greater than 95%, including nearby area schools; and
 - For the proposed scenario with the new project, utilization for the project and area schools must reach 100% or higher by year five after the project's completion.
- Projects are expected to include a completion date with a clear, detailed schedule for milestones and deliverables. It is recommended that projects should include a Class D cost estimate. Boards are restricted from including any cost escalation in their estimations.
- School boards are encouraged to identify opportunities to work together on joint-

use project submissions.

- School boards continue to have an opportunity to request Child Care Capital funding for child care projects associated with a larger Capital Priorities project.

NEW for the 2025-26 Capital Priorities program:

- All school boards will benefit from a simplified business case template, which will allow boards to clearly articulate project need.
 - For repeat submissions, boards will be able to use a streamlined process.
- School boards leveraging repeat designs, either from the EDU Design Catalogue or from other recent projects, will receive a higher score than boards using new designs.
- Consistent with the 2024-25 Capital Priorities program, for replacement school proposals, the Net Present Value of the project must be positive, meaning that the replacement project should be more cost-effective than undertaking renewal work to the existing building. Further, replacement school proposals that demonstrate a time-sensitive health and safety need will be given priority.
- To better support northern and rural boards, teacherages may be included in planning considerations.
- To support enhanced decision making that takes into account the needs of French-language boards, a new French Language Access Evaluation Matrix will be introduced.
- For French-language school boards, this round of Capital Priorities can serve as a one-window intake opportunity for standalone Canada-Ontario Agreement on Minority-Language Education and Second Official-Language in Education child care proposals.
- **OPTIONAL:** School boards can include proposed school names as part of the intake process.

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.

PROJECT READINESS ASSESSMENT

School boards are asked to provide evidence of project readiness assessment. 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.

DESIGN STANDARDIZATION

The Ministry of Education recognizes the importance of ensuring that school board capital assets are used effectively and efficiently to support the needs of growing communities.

As part of the 2025-26 program, the ministry will continue to prioritize shovel-ready projects, including those leveraging repeat designs. Design standardization presents opportunities to help save time and money by accelerating the design and approvals processes.

Consistent with the last round of Capital Priorities, school boards must either submit a design from the EDU Design Catalogue or leverage another repeat design. Where a standardized design is not possible, the school board may be permitted to submit a new design. For further details on design submissions and applicable criteria, please refer to the “Project Submissions” section below.

URBAN AND INNOVATIVE SCHOOLS

The ministry recognizes that intensification in high density urban areas may require new and different approaches. As residential development is expected to continue to be high in urban areas, where finding suitable land for the construction of a school may be challenging, the ministry encourages school boards to pursue opportunities to explore new, innovative ways to build school, such as vertical schools and podium schools.

BOARD PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

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

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

PROJECT COMMITMENTS

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 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.

PROJECT SUBMISSIONS

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 -
 - i. Boards are restricted from including cost escalation in their calculations.
 - ii. Recommended, projects should include Class D cost estimates.
 - iii. Cost estimation documentation must be submitted with the proposal.
 - 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. Note: This does not mean Land Priorities funding will be provided automatically. Requests for Land Priorities funding will be assessed

- against current inventory of surplus property.
- c. Detailed information on costing estimates and assumptions made.
- d. Detailed project plan that includes timelines for key project milestones.
- e. Details on the submitted design, including when the design was last used, associated costs and supporting documentation.

3. Design

- a. School boards should submit, at minimum, schematic designs based on either:
 - i. EDU Design Catalogue; or
 - ii. Recent school board repeat design that at a minimum meets the following criteria:
 - Tendered since 2021
 - Board must provide documentation on project cost for the repeat build that includes prior cost and updated cost estimate for the future build. This includes construction costs + soft costs like permit fees and furniture and fixtures. However, the cost estimate excludes unique site costs/demolition and site preparation costs.
 - Design space has to align with ministry space benchmark requirements for the specific pupil places being requested, including complying with 90% of the total space benchmark. The design of school washrooms must meet ministry requirements for universal barrier free washrooms as well as gender specific multi-stall/communal washrooms.
 - The ministry will only consider minor modifications to a repeat design, including instances where design changes need to be made to accommodate the site or the design is scaled up or down to include or remove additional classroom spaces and required washrooms. Other modifications to a repeat design would be considered a new design. Submission of schematic design for original repeat and proposed design for new project.

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 Projections

- a. Boards are asked to provide details of their longer-term growth needs for addressing current and projected pupil accommodation needs and should be related to municipal growth plans.
 - i. Boards covering the Urban Growth Centres identified in *A Place to Grow* **are required** to submit long term enrolment projections with their 2025-26 submission. A list of areas can be found here: [Ontario's housing supply progress - Dataset - Ontario Data Catalogue](#)
- 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 **September**, on the following dates:

- September 11, 2025 – 10 a.m. to 11 a.m.
- French session: September 11, 2025 - 1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.
- September 12, 2025 - 10 a.m. to 11 a.m.

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:

- Christopher Wu, Manager, Capital Program Branch at 647-534-9048, or Christopher.Wu@ontario.ca,
- Sophie Liu, Manager, Capital Program Branch at 647-402-9597 or Sophie.Liu@ontario.ca, or
- Teuta Dodbiba, Director, Capital Program Branch at 647-229-5613 or Teuta.Dodbiba@ontario.ca.

We look forward to reviewing submissions that advance 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
Didier Pomerleau, Assistant Deputy Minister, French-Language Education Division, Ministry of Education
Andrew Locker, 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)
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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)