

SCHOOL DIVISION REVIEW OF FACILITY-USE POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND AGREEMENTS

POLICY STATEMENT: School divisions are required to review, develop and implement policies that establish procedures, and joint-use agreements, for the use of public school facilities that maximize their use by school and community users and support the educational, recreational, social and cultural programming that can be offered during school hours as well as outside the regular instructional day. Compliance is expected by September 1, 2011.

As a result of its commitment to the recommendations from the Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures Task Force Report and the ensuing report from the Advisory Committee on Joint Use of School and Community Facilities, the Government of Manitoba has assessed current policies, procedures and agreements related to the shared use of schools and community facilities. As a result, a significant need has been identified for harmonized policies around facility use and the implementation of formal facility-use agreements, particularly joint-use agreements between schools/school divisions and municipalities/recreation commissions. These policies must contain clear procedures around key issues such as usage fees and costs, prioritization of users, booking procedures, supervisory requirements, liability, and insurance. However, these also need to reflect the needs of the schools and communities they represent, allowing for flexibility.

The Province has developed a resource to support school divisions, municipalities, and recreation commissions as they review, develop, and implement policies that establish procedures and agreements for facility use, to help maximize the use of school and community facilities. This resource, entitled *Community Use of Schools and School Use of Community Facilities: A Handbook for Reviewing and Developing Facility-Use Policies, Procedures and Agreements for Schools, School Divisions, Municipalities and Recreation Commissions* (the 'Facility-Use Handbook') can be consulted online at www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/reports/use_facilities/.

The Facility-Use Handbook presents several of the principal elements that require attention in regards to facility use, such as local policies, the types of agreements used, and the main items to consider in establishing facility-use procedures and agreements that promote optimal use. A self-assessment tool has also been provided along with two sample joint-use agreements to support this process. These samples are provided as examples adapted from existing agreements for planning purposes, and represent agreements between a city recreation department and a school division and between a town and a school division.

In addition to implementing the suggestions made in the Facility-Use Handbook, school divisions are also required to post their divisional policy on the public side of their website and ensure that the following is provided:

1. An application form for community users.
2. A listing of responsibilities and obligations of facility users (i.e. supervision, liability, facility rules, etc.).
3. A description of the application and selection process (please note that applications for long term use of facilities should not involve a first-come, first-serve process). Procedures should also be in place to ensure that personnel responsible for booking facilities is advised a reasonable time in advance whenever school spaces are not being used for school activities.
4. A description of the fee structure (which is not to be designed for gaining profit but only to recover the additional costs that community use of school facilities entails). For one-time or occasional use, school divisions should consider waiving fees for groups involving a majority (>50%) of children/youth or members of the school division/school community unless additional staffing is required, such as on weekends.