

# school buildings

Maintenance of school buildings continues to be one of the greatest pressures facing school boards.

Half of Ontario's schools are at least 45 years old and have faced a decades-long backlog in repairs and renovations.

## 2007 survey results:

- ❑ Half of Ontario's school buildings were built at least 45 years ago.
- ❑ 56% of schools had at least one general upgrade (e.g., replacing a furnace, carpeting or painting walls) or a renovation/addition complete or in progress.
- ❑ 27% of schools are still waiting for a general upgrade, renovation or addition that is required but not approved.
- ❑ 42% of schools have at least one portable classroom.

This year, more than half of Ontario's school buildings had some form of upgrade, ranging from replacing furnaces and roofs, to painting walls and adding new carpeting. And over a quarter of schools were renovated or built new additions. But hundreds of other schools continue to wait for general upgrades or renovations.

Anecdotal information from schools reveals the extent of the issue. For every one school that reported satisfaction with the state of their building, there were two reporting concerns about backlogs in

repairs and inadequate school maintenance.

## Planning ahead

The Ministry of Education has conducted a school-by-school facility review and identified a range of repairs and renovations needed in Ontario's schools.

The review also identified the schools that are more expensive to repair than to replace. These schools are referred to as "prohibitive to repair" and many will be replaced or closed over the next few years.

Under the Good Places to Learn program, school boards are required to make capital plans for at least the next five years, outlining where repairs, renovations and additions will be made, where schools will be replaced, new schools built, or schools closed.

## Gap in funding for school maintenance

Boards continue to report that actual costs to maintain schools are far above the amounts set in the funding formula.

According to a Ministry of Education presentation prepared for the CEO/CFO conference in January 2007, 48 of Ontario's 72 boards say they spend more on school operations than they receive from the province.

In 2006, the province adjusted provincial funding for teachers' salaries to more closely match what boards actually pay. No corresponding action has been taken to ensure that the amounts boards receive for non-teaching salaries match what boards pay.

### **Taking care of Ontario's investment**

In their policy manual, the District School Board of Ontario North East states "School buildings are the property of the taxpayers of the community... and are to be there to be used to their maximum by the students and the community at large."

They are places of learning for students during the school day and can be used by the community for both recreation and education after school hours. Ontario has billions of dollars invested in these properties, but to ensure that investment is protected, it may require new models for funding school buildings.

**Q.** If Ontario's school buildings belong to everyone in the community, what adjustments could be made to ensure they are adequately maintained and efficiently used?

### **what schools tell us...**

"Nous avons besoin d'un 'Extreme School Makeover'!"

*An elementary school in the CSDS Franco-Nord*

"We've had over \$600,000 of repairs, replacements and room renovations including our boiler/heating system, washrooms, 4 classrooms and our library."

*An elementary school in Hastings & Prince Edward DSB*

"Our roof leaks."

*An elementary school in Toronto DSB*

"We have been 200 students over-capacity since we opened 3 years ago. We use every classroom space every period. Sometimes our library and/or cafeteria is used as a classroom. Our community has always insisted that our students would have training on machinery that allows them to step into apprenticeships. Thus we desperately need an addition to our Tech studies area. At this time the addition has not received approval from the ministry."

*A secondary school in the Upper Grand DSB*

"The board and the community partnered to create a better facility. Our high school now has a \$3 million gym that was completed this year after a fire in 2003."

*Grand Erie DSB*

"Our playground equipment is being removed this fall due to safety hazards. It is not likely to be replaced unless we fundraise for it."

*An elementary school in Ontario North East DSB*

"We need a new facility - gym too small; not enough library and computer room. We are slated for closure and a new building in combination with another school 8 kms north. It would be great to put this wonderful group of students in a new facility they could be proud of and ultimately deserve."

*An elementary school in the Thames Valley DSB.*