



School Infrastructure Planning – Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and School Districts

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Why Is This Important?

- Over 97,000 students depend on 294 schools throughout our province. Almost \$1 billion was budgeted for school infrastructure over last decade.
- The Auditor General previously expressed concerns regarding deferred maintenance of New Brunswick schools.
- Aging school infrastructure will require significant investments to maintain. If funding gap continues, the Department may face tough choices to either lower the quality standards for educational facilities or possibly shut down schools.

Overall Conclusions

- The Department and school districts invest significant effort preparing the annual Capital Budget, yet funding decisions are not always evidence-based or objective.
- The major capital project assessment tool (for projects greater than \$1 million) is a positive step toward evidence-based decision making. However, weaknesses in Department's design and application of this tool calls into question the objectivity of capital investment decisions.
- Lack of a comprehensive long-term plan and lack of a protected stream of predictable capital funding result in a reactionary approach.
- There is no unified prioritization process for all types of projects within the capital improvement program (projects less than \$1 million).

What We Found

Insufficient school capital planning process

- No comprehensive province-wide long-term capital plan
- Department does not exercise effective central oversight of school infrastructure planning
- No comprehensive plan to address school deferred maintenance (around \$280 million)
- Short-term and reactive planning leads to sub-optimal funding allocations while school conditions deteriorate

Inadequate capital funding prioritization process

- Deficiencies in the process prevents Department from consistently making evidence-based decisions
- Funding of school repair and maintenance projects identified by school districts is not based on the conditions of our schools or industry standards

Override of recommended proposals

- Unexplained Cabinet approval of projects different than those prioritized and recommended by Department
- Department's recommended projects do not always match those generated by its project ranking tool

Insufficient and poor-quality facility condition data

- Insufficient and poor-quality data used by school districts and the Department in planning capital improvement projects identified by school districts
- No centralized province-wide database of major building components