

Relocatable Classrooms

WHAT IS THE ISSUE AND OPPORTUNITY FOR SASKATCHEWAN?

Relocatable classrooms (also called portable, modular, or temporary classrooms) are commonly used in schools for a variety of reasons: enrollment fluctuations, school construction/renovations, and emergency response. They can provide flexibility and are a necessary solution for some situations, but they have also created pressures. School boards want to ensure that all students and staff have high-quality learning environments.

Our members adopted a resolution in 2024 to conduct a cost analysis of relocatable classrooms and answer questions about their long-term costs and effectiveness. To gain a better understanding of the current state of relocatable classrooms, we collected data from all 27 school divisions and conducted an analysis to identify key issues and opportunities for consideration.

“There are about 1,700 relocatable classrooms in Saskatchewan and 85% of them have never been moved. The stated ‘relocatable’ benefit of these classrooms ultimately does not address the underlying problem of insufficient school infrastructure.”

SOLUTIONS:

The following solutions are being recommended to the Ministry of Education to help address the issues and opportunities related to school capacity and facilities:

- **Expanded Permanent Construction:** plan for permanent renovations/additions to address sustained enrolment growth instead of utilizing relocatable classrooms. The initial costs of construction are similar, but the long-term operating costs are lower with permanent renovations/additions as they are typically of higher quality and more integrated with the existing structure.
- **New School Construction:** design and plan the construction of new schools to address future long-term enrolment growth beyond the current design policy.
- **Policy Changes:** revise the policy related to determining capacity to address the issue where the artificially improved utilization metric reduces a school's priority for future funding, infrastructure upgrades, or permanent expansion.
- **Information and Transparency for Major Capital Projects:** provide more information on how capital projects are prioritized and selected to support long-term planning.
- **Preventative Maintenance and Renewal Funding:** increase PMR funding to two per cent of school value allocated annually.
- **Funding Program for Smaller Schools:** establish a separate funding program for smaller, rural, remote and northern aging schools to complete renovations.
- **Relocatable Classroom Program Update:** clarify and define the program to support only the temporary use of relocatable classrooms in favour of the above solutions for more permanent infrastructure – including a plan to replace the aged relocatable classrooms.