



School Council Guide



A Bold Multi-Year Strategic Plan for Grand Erie



Our Vision

Learn

Lead

Inspire

Our Mission

Together, we build a culture
of **learning**, **well-being**
and **belonging** to
inspire each learner.

Explore the future of Grand Erie at:

granderie.ca/learnleadinspire

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ABOUT US

Grand Erie Parent Involvement Committee (GEPIC)

Grand Erie believes parent involvement is one of the keys to Learning, Leading and Inspiring. The purpose of GEPIC is to support, encourage and enhance

meaningful parent involvement at the Board level to improve student achievement and overall well-being. GEPIC acts as an advisory body and provides an important link between parents and School Board Trustees as well as the Director of Education.

GEPIC helps build parent engagement by providing

information and advice to the Board on parent involvement as well as communication with parents. GEPIC develops strategies and initiatives the board can use to engage more parents to support their children's learning at home and at school. GEPIC shares information with, and supports, the work of all school councils.

School Councils in Grand Erie

Purpose of a School Council

School councils play a vital role in the education of all Grand Erie students through their work to promote and improve student achievement and school performance.

School Council Policy

Grand Erie's policy for school councils (SO2 – School Councils) is located in the Bylaws, Policies and Procedure section of the board's website at granderie.ca

The two most important items in this policy are: every Grand Erie school must have a school council; and, school council elections must be held within the first 30 days of the school year.

Membership of a School Council

Parents/Guardians must constitute the majority of members on school council. Grand Erie recommends school council membership reflect the diversity in each school.

School council members must be elected on a yearly basis and must consist of: parent/caregiver members; the school principal; one teacher employed at the school; one non-teaching employee at the school; one student (for secondary school councils); and, one or more community representatives.

A person is qualified to be a parent/caregivers member of school council if they have a child attending the school. A person is not qualified to be a parent/guardian member of school council if: they are employed at the school; or, if they are employed elsewhere within the Board (unless reasonable steps are taken to inform

those voting of their employment status).

A person employed by the Board (e.g., a lunchtime supervisor) cannot be appointed as a community representative unless they are not employed at that school, and other members of school council are informed of their employment.

Each of the above-noted representatives are voting members of school council. Note: all parents/guardians are welcome to attend school council meetings; however, only elected members are eligible to vote on agenda items.

Roles and Responsibilities of the School Council Chair

The school council chair is elected yearly. They must be a parent/guardian who is not employed by the Board. In addition to performing the same duties as other school council members, the chair is responsible for: arranging the meetings; preparing the agendas (in consultation with the principal); running the meetings; and, ensuring minutes of all school council meetings are recorded and maintained.

School Council Elections

School council elections must be held within the first 30 days of each school year.

Guidelines

- All school council meetings are public, meaning they are open to anyone who wants to attend.
- A school council has the right to hold its meetings in the school.
- School council meetings should be held in an accessible place that is convenient for all members
- School councils must meet at least four times a year.
- School councils focus on the bigger picture, and discuss issues that impact the entire school community.
- School councils must never discuss individual students or staff members.

Child-Minding at School Council Meetings

Grand Erie recognizes the importance of removing barriers for parents who wish to be involved. Child-minding reduces barriers and promotes parent attendance at school council meetings.

Ideas to promote child-minding, include: certified babysitters; an early childhood educator or teacher at the school; or, a partnership with the nearest before- and after-school program provider or child-care provider. Costs associated with child care are to be paid for by the school and/or school council.

School Council Meetings

Beginning of Meeting

- Arrange chairs and tables to encourage inclusiveness.
- Call the meeting to order at the designated time.
- Confirm that the minute-taker is present and ready to record.
- Have a process to record attendance.
- Include introductions at every meeting.
- Review and approve the agenda. Have a process to decide how items can be added to the agenda, or how they will be addressed at future meetings.
- Review and approve the minutes of the previous meeting.
- Have a process for discussing items, making motions, and making decisions.



During Meeting

- Follow the agenda. Discuss one item at a time.
- Keep the group focused. Stop discussion, if necessary, to keep the meeting moving forward.
- Keep an eye on the clock. Be aware of the length of discussions. Keep the agenda moving forward.
- Encourage participation by all members.
- Develop a process to allow everyone a chance to speak and contribute.
- Keep track of those trying to speak. Be fair in recognizing speakers.
- Try to bring out all sides of an issue.
- Ensure there are no unanswered questions from the group.
- Remind members of behaviour norms, as necessary. Make an effort to keep order and maintain appropriate decorum.
- Offer advice or suggestions, if necessary.
- Give the Chair the authority to close off items by summing up the discussion.
- Clarify and summarize, when appropriate.
- Move the group towards a decision.
- Put aside problems or new issues that are raised during the course of the meeting that sidetrack the agenda. Have a process for getting these items on future agendas.
- Be clear about follow-up actions and assign responsibilities.
- Share and delegate responsibilities as much as possible to keep the workload manageable.
- End the meeting on time or agree to extend the meeting for an agreed upon time.

School Council Agenda Sample

School Council Meeting

Date and Time

Meeting Location

1. Welcome introductions
2. Confirm minute-taker
3. Review and approve current agenda
4. Review and approve previous meeting minutes
5. Guest speaker
6. Business from previous meetings
7. Chair's report
8. Principal's report
9. Student Council report
10. School-generated funds report
11. School Improvement Plan (SIP)
12. Sub-committee reports
13. Grand Erie District School Board update
14. Next meeting date
15. Adjournment

School Council Meetings

End of Meeting

- Make sure assignments are clear.
- Confirm the date, time, and place of the next meeting.
- Identify any items that will be on the next meeting's agenda.
- Encourage feedback on the meeting's effectiveness.
- Debrief or adjourn the meeting.

After meeting

- Check with the minute-taker to ensure minutes are clear before distributing.
- Help others carry out the decisions made during the meeting.
- Follow-up with agreed-upon commitments.

Guidelines for Keeping Minutes

- State whether it is a regular or specially-called meeting.
- Give the name of the Council and the time, date and place of the meeting.
- State the name and position of the person chairing the meeting and who the minute-taker is.
- Note whether or not minutes of the last meeting were approved.
- List the names of members who are present, those sending regrets, and those absent.
- State the names of guests, and where they are from.
- State whether committee reports were given. If so, include summaries of these reports in the minutes.
- Record discussion.

- State all motions, recommendations or decisions, and whether or not they were approved.

Record Suggestions or Motions

- Give the names of people who make motions or suggestions, and the names of people who second the motions (if school council uses the motion format).
- Summarize the discussion of each recommendation.
- Make note of any announcements.
- Record what went on at the meeting.
- State the time the meeting ended.
- The Chair should review the minutes before sending them out to the rest of the members.
- Review the minutes for errors or omissions at the next meeting.



Was it an Effective Meeting?

- The meeting had a purpose.
- Creative ideas, alternatives, or solutions were generated.
- They were able to share different points of view.
- They contributed to the discussion.
- Their input was valued by others.
- They are willing to work together again.
- They are committed to the decisions made and the actions taken.

Helpful Resources

Grand Erie District School Board

"School Council" section of granderie.ca

Ministry of Education's Parent Section

<https://www.dcp.edu.gov.on.ca/en/>

Making Decisions

Making Decisions

Running a school council meeting can be formal or informal.

All meetings, however, require some ground rules to help everyone work together and reach a decision. A set of operating bylaws will help school councils work effectively.

All school councils make decisions. Deciding how decisions will be made is the first step for a school council. There are two ways of making decisions: the less formal way is by reaching consensus; the more formal way is by voting.

Reaching Consensus

When reaching consensus, members have to put effort into trying to find alternatives everyone can agree with. Since everyone helps with the final decision, all members have the chance to influence and understand the decision. As a result, the final decision may be reached with less conflict than with a formal vote. School council chairs should ensure everyone is heard equally.

Consensus...

- Gives all members a voice in decisions
- Builds on differing opinions, perspectives and values
- Allows for flexibility in finding solutions
- Can result in better-informed, more creative and balanced decisions
- Creates a sense of common purpose
- Allows all members to maintain the integrity of their personal values, while also agreeing to a new solution

Consensus does not mean:

A unanimous vote; everyone's first choice; or that everyone agrees.

Steps to Arrive at Consensus

- Identify the issue or problem.
- Relate the issue to goals.
- List the alternatives or solutions.
- Explore and weigh the solutions in terms of helping to meet agreed-on goals.
- Choose the solution that best meets the goals.

Consensus-Building Phrases:

- "Let's begin by getting a reaction from everyone in the group."
- "Let me repeat what I think I heard you say."
- "Has everyone had the opportunity to express an opinion?"
- "Let me see if I can pull together a recommendation."
- "Do you want to table this question and discuss it again?"

Once a decision is reached by consensus, a school council may choose to formalize it through a motion. The result of the vote should be unanimous.



Encouraging Discussion/Generating Ideas

Encouraging Discussion

CHAIR INITIATION

The Chair invites a wide range of people to speak, and all who wish to speak are given the opportunity.

PAIRING

People are randomly paired off to discuss an issue and then report back to the group.

TABLE-GO-ROUND

The Chair invites each person around the table, in order, to speak to an issue.

THINK, PAIR AND SHARE

Participants spend time writing their opinion on a topic, discuss it with a partner and then share with the group.

BRAINSTORMING

The following ideas help brainstorming become an effective problem-solving tool:

1. Work with the entire school council
2. Ensure that everyone is clear on the issue
3. Invite ideas from all school council members, recording them on a chalkboard or flipchart
4. Accept all ideas, without comment
5. Encourage quantity, not quality. The more ideas, the better
6. Modify and combine ideas
7. Ask members to rank the ideas they feel are best

Generating Ideas

ROUND TABLE

This process is similar to brainstorming, but with the group divided into smaller groups of four to six people. Each group is given a time limit. They record all ideas on a flipchart and report back to the main group after the time limit has expired.

BRAIN WRITING

This is similar to a round table, but with more individual participation. Index cards are given to each group and each group member is asked to write down one idea per card. The cards are then exchanged, with new ideas or comments added. A facilitator summarizes and groups the ideas/comments.

CAROUSEL BRAINSTORMING

Post chart paper around the room, each with a different question or topic. Have participants work in groups to add ideas to each chart as they move around the room.

Methods for Decision-Making and Priority Setting

After ideas are generated, the following strategies can be used to help make decisions and set priorities:

PRO/CON ANALYSIS

Participants develop possible solutions for an important issue that needs to be resolved, and focus on the advantages and disadvantages of the alternatives.

VOTING

Each member votes on what they consider the three best ideas by putting a coloured sticker or check mark beside the ideas they think are best. The highest number of stickers or check marks will determine the ranking.



School Improvement Plans

Each Grand Erie school is mandated to have a School Improvement Plan. This plan is a road map that supports changes needed to improve student learning, and shows how and when these changes will be made. School Improvement Plans are strategic. They help principals, teachers, and parents answer the question: what is the most urgent student learning need for us to focus on right now?

The School Improvement process is guided by Grand Erie's Multi-Year Plan and its goal of *Learning*,

Leading and Inspiring. The School Improvement Plan encourages staff and parents to monitor student achievement levels and school environment. With up-to-date and reliable information on how well students are performing, schools are better able to respond to the needs of students, teachers, and parents.

A School Improvement Plan is a mechanism through which the public can hold schools accountable for student success. It can also measure improvement. One of the first steps

in developing an improvement plan involves teachers, school councils, parents, and other community members working together to gather and analyze information about the school and its students so that they can determine what needs to be improved.

As the plan is implemented, schools continue to gather data. By comparing the new data to the initial information on which the plan was based, schools can measure progress.

Community Use of Schools

School use during the day, and up to 6 p.m. on weekdays, is booked through the principal.

A school council that would like to use any school space after 6 p.m. or on a weekend, must have the principal book this space through Community Use of Schools.

NOTE:

Schools are available to book by members of the community after 6 p.m. and on weekends. As a result, it's important that school councils book their required space through Community Use of Schools as soon as possible to ensure the space is available.

There is no rental fee for school-sanctioned events, however, custodial fees may be applied. For questions relating to school rentals visit the Grand Erie Community Use of Schools webpage at granderie.ca.



School Council Annual Report

Near the end of every school year, school councils are asked to report on the successes, accomplishments, and challenges they had during the current year.

Budget and Reporting Procedures

Each year, Grand Erie District School Board provides every school council with funding:

- To be used towards any cause that will benefit the school in any way. This could include: improving the school environment, engaging the community, or contributing to the achievement of students.

- To help encourage and increase parent involvement. Parents are important members of the education system and their involvement is crucial.

Examples of How to Use Parent Involvement Funds:

- Provide an information session on a topic of interest to the school community.
- Where the school serves a diverse community, multicultural programs and events can serve not only to welcome all parents, but also to share and enjoy a wide range of traditions, cultures, sports

and other activities. For example: hold an international dinner with foods from around the world.

- Set up a Parent Resource room or board with information about the school, the school council and the education system. Include a parent lending library and other parent-focused resources.
- Add a social 'meet and greet' component to school council meetings. For example: 15 minutes of refreshments and networking at the beginning of each meeting can create a welcoming atmosphere and help parents and community members feel connected and included.



Fundraising Guidelines

Roles and Responsibilities of the School Council Chair

- Works with the principal to ensure that the sources and uses of school-generated funds comply with Board policies
- Ensures fundraising activities involving students and/or the school are compliant with Board policies and no direct or indirect benefit is derived by any member of the school council
- Ensures all financial transactions flow through the school bank account and are recorded in the school banking software
- Ensures school council members are aware that where conflicts of interest exist, they must be disclosed
- Reviews, signs and dates the annual school council financial reports
- Elects and ensures the Treasurer understands his/her responsibilities for receipts and disbursements as well as banking records and record keeping. It is recommended that the school council treasurer position be for one term, and does not exceed two years
- Works with the principal to ensure that processes are in place to adequately control funds and ensure security over cash and records of the school council
- Reviews records of the school council periodically
- Ensures the Treasurer presents the financial report at school council meetings
- Ensures all records and financial reports are available for review at the school

Activities that Support Student Learning

- Student equity events or cultural events
- Read-a-thon program
- Education Week celebrations
- Classroom field trips for experiential learning
- Guest presentations
- Subject-themed achievement nights (e.g., Math Night, Literacy Night)
- Support for the Welcome to Kindergarten orientation program
- Student Transition Program for Grade 8 students
- Outside music instruction
- Lending library



Insurance and Liability

Lottery Licence

Each school may only have one licence and the applicant is to be the parent entity, not the school council, a student class, or school department. School councils are not permitted to request a lottery license on behalf of the school.

Liability Insurance

Ontario School Boards' Insurance Exchange (OSBIE) liability policy protects the school councils and volunteers from liability arising while working within the scope of duties for the Board.

The policy does not protect school council volunteers for liability arising from their involvement in activities that are not under control of the school principal or designate.

Some examples of School Council activities not covered under the General OSBIE Liability Policy:

- Wine and cheese socials
- Homecoming class reunions, including functions where alcohol is served
- Fundraising events that include high-risk activities, as determined by the Board

Note: inflatables or parade activities are no longer supported by the Grand Erie District School Board as functions of a school-approved activity.

School councils are able to purchase liability insurance from the Ontario School Board Insurance Exchange (OSBIE). Board funds are not available to purchase the policy.

Accident Insurance

The Board does not provide accident insurance for volunteers or students.

Student accident insurance is available through Insure My Kids (www.insuremykids.com) or by calling **1-800-463-KIDS (5437)**.

It's important for parents to understand that the Board does not provide insurance for students against any accidental death, disability, dismemberment or medical expenses that may occur as a result of an accident during school activities, including sporting events and class trips.

Insure My Kids protection plan is made available to parents, at a low cost, to provide benefits for dental injuries and other accidents which may occur through participating in these types of activities.



Did You Know?

School Councils planning to show a movie as part of a fundraiser must have the appropriate license.



Equity and Inclusiveness

All students, parents and community members are welcome and respected in Grand Erie schools and facilities. Diversity and equity are encouraged, and inclusive education is essential. The Board strives to maintain a learning and working environment that supports fairness, justice and equality for all students, staff and the community.

The Board recognizes and values diversity of race, colour, creed, sexual orientation and ethnicity. Expressions of racial, religious or ethno-cultural intolerance or bias in any form will not be tolerated.



CODE OF ETHICS

Every member shall:

- Be guided by the mission statement of the School Council
- Endeavour to be familiar with school policies and operating procedures, and support them
- Practice the highest standards of honesty, truth, accuracy and integrity
- Encourage a positive atmosphere, where individual contributions are encouraged and valued
- Limit discussion at the School Council meetings to matters of concern to the school as a whole
- Respect the confidential nature of some school business, and respect limitations that this may place on the operation of School Councils
- Not initiate or participate in discussions which focus on any individual that is normally inappropriate at a School Council meeting, except when warranted under specific requirements
- Consider the best interests of all students and the entire school
- Not disclose confidential information
- Use appropriate communication channels when questions or concerns arise
- Promote high standards of ethical practice within the school community
- Declare any conflict of interest
- Accept no payment for School Council activities

Community Partnership Incentive Plan

The Community Partnership Incentive Plan (CPIP) is a program that supports school-based projects by matching funds raised in the community with a contribution from the Grand Erie District School Board. Funds are used to match the money raised by a school from outside sources, such as donations and/or school fundraising activities.

Proposed projects must meet normal qualifications for work undertaken through the Pride of Place and Community Partnership Incentive Program (Policy FT13). The installation of outside work such as basketball standards, backboards and nets, baseball backstops and field upgrades are only a few examples of what is eligible.

To qualify, school principals must submit applications using the appropriate forms to the Facility Services Maintenance Supervisor. The application must include a description of the project, the overall project budget, and the amount of community funds the school is planning to put towards the project.

Communications



Communication is crucial for a successful school council. It's the main tool used to engage parents, run an effective school council meeting, increase parent involvement, and support various strategies to encourage learning at home.

Chair and the Principal

The need to develop a good working relationship between the school council chair and the principal

cannot be stressed enough. Trust, respect and open communications are the nucleus for an effective partnership and an effective school council. To accomplish this, the chair and the principal must establish an effective way to communicate outside of regular meetings. This includes such things as how each would like to receive information.

Chair and School Council Members

The chair must ensure council members are accessible to each other. Council members with questions, issues, or agenda items will need to know how to contact the chair. It's a good idea to develop a list of contact numbers, addresses, and email addresses for all council members at the beginning of the year, and to distribute this list to all members.

Helpful Resources

Parent Engagement Guidebook:

<https://granderie.ca/docs/default-source/family-resources-docs/school-council/parent-engagement-guidebook.pdf>

Communications

Social Media

Social media is encouraged for school councils to promote and share information. Grand Erie District School Board has social media guidelines for schools to use.

Visual Identity

One of Grand Erie's most valuable assets is its visual identity. It is crucial that all school councils use the individual school's identity as well as the Grand Erie District School Board identity in all materials produced.

School councils are obligated to follow the Visual Identity Policy and the visual identity manual.



School Council Advertising

All advertisements must be coordinated through the Board's Manager of Communications and Community Relations. School council members can request an advertisement by working with their school principal or by contacting the manager directly.

Event Planning and Organization

Grand Erie has a policy that guides event planning and organization. The Manager of Communications and Community Relations must be advised of all events, especially those where Trustees or other politicians are invited.

Once an event is submitted, it will appear in a weekly media advisory, sent to all local media, Trustees and senior administration. The event could also be considered for a school news story by the Communications and Community Relations team.

Communication Tips for Elementary Schools

- ✓ Generally speaking, getting information home to parents in an elementary school community can be achieved fairly easily, as children in these grades are quite dutiful about bringing home information.
- ✓ Include information in the school's monthly calendar and in the school newsletter.
- ✓ Use space on the school's website to highlight activities and accomplishments of the school council, and to promote parent involvement events and activities.
- ✓ Host information sessions.
- ✓ Remember to accommodate working parents/ guardians when setting up in-school council meetings.

Communication Tips for Secondary Schools

- ✓ Many of the strategies mentioned for elementary schools also work for secondary schools, although these students may not be as reliable in bringing home information. Regular communication with the school community is as important for secondary schools as it is for elementary schools.
- ✓ For effective communications, think creatively about ways to distribute information. For example, if a school council wants to get a newsletter home, find out when the principal is doing a mailing and have the newsletter prepared for inclusion with that mailing. Or, work with the principal to create a School Messenger message for parents.

Communications Ideas



Communication strategies to engage parents:	Effective communications to reach parents:
✓ Email, school agendas, school website ✓ Minutes available in the office/posted online ✓ Monthly school calendars ✓ Newsletters (electronic and print) ✓ Information letters (flyers) sent home (with youngest child) ✓ Outdoor school sign ✓ Council members attending kindergarten information sessions ✓ Social media, such as Facebook or Twitter ✓ One-on-one communications: a key opportunity to connect takes place at special events ✓ Bulletin board inside the school ✓ Visual presence at Meet the Teacher Night ✓ Open House events	✓ Email ✓ Website ✓ Outdoor school sign ✓ Flyers and posters ✓ Letters/notices home with children (or with report cards) ✓ Electronic newsletter ✓ Personal invitations (i.e., Grade 9 Night, Meet the Teacher Night or Family Fun Night) ✓ Surveys (online and print)

Five important questions to ask	Key items to consider when communicating
✓ What do we want to communicate? ✓ Why do we want to communicate this? ✓ Who needs to receive this? ✓ How should this information be shared? ✓ When should this information be shared?	✓ Who is my audience? ✓ What is my key message? ✓ What strategies will be successful? ✓ Who is responsible? ✓ What are the timelines?

Networking

Networking with parents from other schools in Grand Erie can lead to new perspectives and creative ideas. The charts below outline the Family of Schools located within Grand Erie. Each Family of School is associated with a secondary school and a municipal region.

Brant County

Paris District High School

- Burford District Elementary School
- Cobblestone Elementary School
- Glen Morris Central Public School
- North Ward School
- Oakland-Scotland Public School
- Paris Central Public School
- St. George-German Public School



City of Brantford

Brantford Collegiate Institute and Vocational School

- Agnes G. Hodge Public School
- Blanche E. Williams Public School
- École Confédération
- École Dufferin
- Edith Monture Elementary School
- James Hillier Public School
- Lansdowne-Costain Public School
- Mt. Pleasant School
- Walter Gretzky Elementary School

North Park Collegiate and Vocational School

- Brier Park Public School
- Cedarland Public School
- Centennial-Grand Woodlands School
- Grandview Public School
- Greenbrier Public School
- Prince Charles Public School
- Russell Reid Public School

Pauline Johnson Collegiate and Vocational School

- Banbury Heights School
- Bellview Public School
- Branlyn Community School
- Central Public School
- Echo Place School
- King George School
- Major Ballachey Public School
- Onondaga-Brant Public School
- Princess Elizabeth Public School
- Woodman-Cainsville School

Networking



Haldimand County

Cayuga Secondary School	Dunnville Secondary School	Hagersville Secondary School	McKinnon Park Secondary School
- Grand River Public School - J.L. Mitchener Public School - Oneida Central Public School - Rainham Central School - Seneca Central Public School	- Mapleview Elementary School - Thompson Creek Elementary School	- Hagersville Elementary School - Jarvis Public School - Walpole North Elementary School	- Caledonia Centennial Public School - Onedia Central Public School - River Heights Elementary School

Norfolk County

Delhi District Secondary School	Simcoe Composite School	Valley Heights Secondary School	Waterford District High School
- Courtland Public School - Delhi Public School - Teeterville Public School - Walsh Public School	- Bloomsburg Public School - Elgin Avenue Public School - Lakewood Elementary School - Lynndale Heights Public School - Walsh Public School - West Lynn Public School	- Courtland Public School - Houghton Public School - Langton School - Port Rowan Public School - Walsh Public School	- Bloomsburg Public School - Boston Public School - Waterford Public School - Teeterville Public School

Grand Erie Trustees

Trustees are officials elected to serve parents, students and community members. They are the link between school communities and the school board, ensuring Grand Erie meets the diverse needs of students and their respective communities. Among other duties, Trustees create bylaws

and policies, approve the budget, and appoint the Director of Education.

A list of Trustees is available on Grand Erie's website, along with their contact information at **granderie.ca**

Grand Erie District School Board Meetings are held on Mondays, once

a month. The meetings take place at 7:15 p.m. at the Education Centre (349 Erie Avenue, Brantford, Ontario).

Visit **granderie.ca** for a complete schedule of Board Meetings.

Board Consultation

Policies and Procedures

Policies and procedures are important resources that govern the operations of all Grand Erie schools. They provide statements and guidelines for parents and staff

regarding the administration of program, property, student, staff and Board matters.

Policies and procedures deal with all areas of school and board life. Policies help everyone in the school

community understand expectations. When a policy is being developed or reviewed, Grand Erie is committed to effective and meaningful consultation with the community.





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