

October 12, 2011

Lorna Knight, is the mother of a child who will be entering kindergarten in September 2012.

My family and I live in Burton. We chose this location because we love the freedom of a rural environment and were thrilled that a small school that catered to the younger grades was located in our immediate vicinity. There are many rural areas around Oromocto to live; some are blessed with a school and we chose Burton in part because of this fact. The school here is a very important part of this growing community. In many ways, if the school is shut down, I fear that new families to the area will choose other rural areas over Burton because of the lack of school. In the relatively short time that we have lived here in Burton, the area in which we live has grown and there are new homes being erected and occupied on a nearly regular basis. The population of Burton is expanding as more homes are being built. It would truly be a shame to limit this community's positive attributes by closing down the only academic facility located within its boundaries. My family is still quite young; however, next year, my youngest will be going to kindergarten and I have to admit that I am not looking forward to her having a long commute to school and a long school day because she must attend a school in Oromocto. Furthermore, knowing that she is located close to home gives me a peace of mind that no mother or father can put a price on.

The Burton school is an integral part of this community and, if anything, I believe that we should be looking into expanding the grades that can attend the school instead of closing down this facility. The school has always had a robust enrolment (for the population that it supports) and there is no reason to expect anything less in the future, especially with new developments and new roads being constructed. If the children who are currently attending this school need to be reallocated to Oromocto schools, will that not ensure that those schools will need larger facilities for a greater number of students? What will happen with bus routes? Will the small community feeling that exists in the Burton school be still felt when everyone is moved to a larger school and blended with other students? I fear that what drew us to Burton will be what turns new homebuyers away. The Burton school must remain open and perhaps with renovations and improvements so badly needed for this aging facility, it would be wise to investigate whether expanding the school to include more grades would be viable and perhaps would ease other school populations as well as make the Burton area more attractive to live in. In this day and age, should we not be looking forward to the future potential of this existing facility instead of determining a school closure?

As a parent and a proud community member, I urge you to consider the far reaching implications of this school closure as well as the immediate familial ones. This community is proud to have a school as part of it and I would love to be able to send my child to a local school where I, as well as my child, feel at home and welcome. Please keep the Burton School open.