

I have read many news articles lately on how the loss of community schools have negatively impacted many communities. There is no doubt that the well-being of many of these communities is inextricably linked with local schools. The discussion surrounding the closings is not just operational or financial, but deeply personal. There has to come a growth of realization that the depletion of our industries whether it be related to education, farming or whatever, will lead to long term hollowing out of entire communities. The ones that will pay for our lack of vision unfortunately are our children.

In 1961 when the Burton School was originally built, Burton was a small community with a very scattered population. The school was, at that time, able to house all Kindergarten to Grade 5 children who lived in both Burton and Swan Creek. Since that time, Burton has grown tenfold. We became one of the fastest growing districts in the province. It is important to note that Burton is the 2nd largest district in the province.

As a result of our continued growth, children in Burton and Swan Creek were diverted to other community schools as the school in Burton was not able to meet the needs of the children within our District. Not once since 1961, has the District looked at upgrading or providing any major renovations to the Burton School, other than in 2011 when the community gathered together to save the school and a new septic system was put in.

There is no doubt that the closure of the school is going to have a negative impact on the Burton Community. We have enough people living in our community, without amalgamating with any other areas around us, to be an independent community. A new school will lead to daycares, ball parks, school teams, community growth and, most importantly, a happy healthy community. The District has the ability to take that away from us. Currently, there is projected new development of housing towards the Shirley and Greenfield Settlement. There is also talks of riverside condominiums within the community. The closure of the school will have a negative impact on our housing market and the growth of our community as young families with small children will be reluctant to move into the community mostly due to the long bus drives that their children will have to endure.

Our goal from the get go has been to give the children in Burton the opportunity to develop a sense of commitment and belonging to their community; to encourage growth and development of our community; and to maintain the Burton Community identity. Our high number of transient and elderly demographics, leaves Burton very vulnerable to the system. Sometimes our greatest weakness can be our own ignorance. Where we are today is a result of the political control we have always adhered to. At one point do we say enough is enough.

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