

Dear Mr. Hope,

Please do NOT close both schools in Honey Harbour. At least keep one open, or combine them!

It makes zero sense to bus kids over an hour away for school every day. Small schools are worth it, even if they may not be the most “efficient” monetarily (which is debatable). What could be more worth investing in than the quality of kids’ lives and educations? In my mind, a good quality of life and education involves your source of education being close enough to home that you can a) build a community around it and b) have time to do your homework and extra-curriculars after school AND get enough sleep before school.

The Honey Harbour Association (HHA) has supported the development of Honey Harbour since its founding in 1908. Our Association has demonstrated the need and spearheaded the implementation of regional schooling, postal and telephone services, hydro, roads, policing, fire protection, environmental stewardship, and better government. It was the Association, led by Colonel Duff, which saw the creation of the Public School on North Bay in the 1920's that served our community for some twenty years before moving to a road access site in ‘downtown’ Honey Harbour.

There are over 12,000 residents and transient boaters that annually use Honey Harbour to access their water-based residences and moorings. Closing both our schools, rather than looking at local co-location, will not only destroy the social fabric of the Honey Harbour community, but also the economic engine and well-being of the service providers such as marinas, contractors, grocery stores, lodgings, restaurants, outfitters, fishing guides, Libraries, boutiques, Beausoleil Island National Park, and our Church. Many of the local families will move away to be closer to their children's schools.

The Honey Harbour and Port Severn area is slated for residential development of over 400 various types of housing units over the next few years. What attracts families to settle in a community is access to local education, employment opportunities and diverse recreational activities. What attracts retirees and seasonal residents, as well as visitors, is not only the wonderful geography, but also the services provided by the local businesses.

The HHA believes that the current School Boards’ Accommodation Review process is not reflective of the reality of our rural school and community life. They do not take into account all the educational, social and economic aspects of school closings on small rural communities. Further, our Association requests that the Minister of Education initiate an immediate moratorium on the Accommodation Review Process until such time as a review of the above-mentioned impacts on the community be studied, completed and the results and recommendations be considered.

The residents of the Township of Georgian Bay contribute over 5.2 million dollars for the education of their children, and yet the Ministry wants to close both of our Honey Harbour schools! Greater consideration and due diligence needs to be given to provide local schooling in exchange for the funding provided, rather than bussing the students many hours away daily and

dismantling the social and economic fabric of the Honey Harbour Community.

We strongly encourage you to carefully consider the wide-ranging impacts that school closure will have on the Honey Harbour community. It will be devastating. We question if our children's education will actually be any better at a larger school, and cannot imagine that it will be worth two to three hours in a bus each day. Imagine the impact on our children's health with all that extra sitting. Finally - how much money will actually be saved by the closure of our schools? Hours of daily bussing versus maintenance of an existing school.

Please do not close the schools in Honey Harbour. Let our children learn where they live and play.

Sincerely,
Kristin Koetsier