

November 21, 2016 at 12:32 PM -0500

Dear Mr. Hope,

My family has been involved as seasonal residents in the community of Honey Harbour since 1911. Three generations have supported the education of the local children at school here through our property taxes, and we have been happy to do so and to see the schools thrive.

In recent years there has been an explosion of affluent, summer residences resulting in greatly increasing property tax assessment in the Honey Harbour catchment area. How then can it be that in 2016 there are insufficient taxes to support local schools? Why must two local schools be closed and children bussed great distances away instead of benefitting from this increased taxation?

As a parent, I would be appalled to be required to put my youngster on a very long bus ride, far away from home. This cannot possibly improve a child's well-being in any way. Bigger schools do not always mean better education.

As a retired teacher, I well know the state of mind and behavior that these students would be in upon arrival at school after a too long bus ride. The fatigue that would build and affect them both physically and mentally over many weeks would definitely become a factor in their learning.

Surely in the case of Honey Harbour where there are two schools, an accommodating sharing of one building could be arranged. This would save dollars for both school boards and would benefit everyone, without completely disrupting an entire community. The ripple effect of these closures would be devastating to many people, not only those with students who are immediately impacted. Facilities such as the town library, local grocery store, marina and maintenance businesses, to name a few whose personnel could be directly affected, would suffer, and in turn would affect me and my family.

Apparently this problem is occurring in many other small communities in Ontario. For rural residents, the local school is an important centre for family and community life, and as such should be strongly supported by all levels of government. The Accommodation Review Process should take these broader factors into account. If methods of provincial funding need to be changed, so be it, but do not settle for the easiest solution with no regard for those it affects the most.

I strongly urge you to deal with this situation with regard not only for the best outcome for the children, but also for the broader issues involved and the many people that will be impacted by your decision.

Yours truly,

Marion R. McLeod