

To whom it may concern:

RE: Honey Harbour School Closure

I would like to express my concerns regarding the potential closure of the Honey Harbour elementary schools. As a long-time resident of Honey Harbour and a previous student at Honey Harbour Public School (hereafter HHPS), I have seen first-hand the value that these schools bring to the community of Honey Harbour and its youth population. Along with my own experiences and successes, the two schools have contributed substantially to the positive development of a number of my peers. For this reason I would ask that the forthcoming decision to close the schools be evaluated on more than a simple financial cost/benefit basis and take into account the repercussions that school closure might have on the children and community of Honey Harbour.

During my time at HHPS I was able to receive a level of education that I believe strongly rivaled or even exceeds that of my peers who attended larger educational facilities. The small number of pupils meant that each student was able to spend valuable one-on-one time with his/her teacher and that the content delivery could be adjusted by teachers to accommodate the needs of each individual student. Also, having been taught in a two-room setting allowed me to be exposed to higher-level concepts that allowed me to excel through the system and be challenged in a way that few other students have been. What this led to in my case was the opportunity to develop better reasoning, communication, and interpersonal skills. Ultimately it is without question that this unique educational environment has contributed to my successful completion of an Honours Bachelor of Arts and Science (with first class standing) and my continuing education at Georgian College in the Electrical Engineering Technologist program. HHPS gave me the basic tools that I needed to succeed academically, move towards an important career, and grow as a well-rounded and personable individual.

This kind of outcome is not limited to myself. I am aware of several of my peers—some who attended Our Lady of Mercy school and others who attended HHPS—who have gone on to some remarkable career and educational achievements and who would certainly attribute some of this success to their experiences at a Honey Harbour elementary school. Given that these schools could continue to provide the means for building bright futures for local youth, I believe that the decision on whether or not to close them should take into serious consideration what impact school closure may have on the quality of education for these local children.

Additionally, it is worth noting that the decision to close schools could have a significant impact on the Honey Harbour community as a whole. Availability of education is undoubtedly an important factor for parents when deciding where they would like to raise their children. If the schools in Honey Harbour are closed it may force parents to move closer to the schools their children are being sent to. A decline in population has obvious impacts on the well-being of the community (economic and other) that likely do not need to be outlined in great detail.

The schools also give students a chance to get involved in and contribute to the community of Honey Harbour—with fundraisers and other events being carried out throughout the school year, children are able to help bring together the residents and learn about what it means to give back to the community. If the schools close, some of the events that they put on will naturally come to an end and the sense of belonging will dissolve along with them. If the schools close, the community of Honey Harbour will lose a part of its residents and along with it a part of its spirit. This kind of impact must be

taken seriously and should be factored in to the decision-making process at hand.

When I hear about the ongoing discussions to close schools around the province, I understand from a pure financial perspective how this might make sense. I understand how schoolboards need to be able to evaluate the economic feasibility of some of their operations. That being said, I think that the decision-makers in this case need to be aware of how school closures might be a short-sighted and temporary solution that could cost communities and school children in the long run. I would ask that these same decision-makers take the time to seriously evaluate *all* the potential impacts of closing the Honey Harbour schools before they allow purely financial considerations to motivate their action.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Thomas Hewitt