

Good morning everyone. My name is Rachel Smith. I am a small business owner in Beechwood. I am mother to three beautiful children and aunt to five more beautiful nieces and nephews. Most importantly today, I am a Monquarter. To quote someone not so famous, "There are two types of people in the world, Monquarters and wannabees".

I am truly disappointed that we are standing in this building as opposed to the school sitting vacant next door. The one that we fought so hard for five years ago. The school that would accommodate kindergarten through grade eight, plus house a cutting-edge Early Education Center. A school with the space for our children to learn, to grow and to thrive. A school that this province could be proud of and a model for rural education in NB.

I'm not going to lie, I have stepped aside to let others lead this charge over the past few years, as my own children are no longer directly affected by the decisions that you make regarding these schools. But the more I thought about it, the more I felt it was important for me to speak today. You see, like so many people in this room, I grew up here. I went to school here. I chose to return here, to raise my family here. And, god willing, my children will have that choice when the time comes for them to raise their own families.

If you had been here five years ago, before all this began, you would have seen a school filled with a rich history, strong community engagement, and, above all, happy thriving children.

In fact, the year before the first sustainability study began, a small group of students, led by Gerald Sullivan and Katie Saunders experienced their first WE Day. Gerald and Katie were so excited about the possibilities and those kids did not disappoint. They came home with big dreams of changing the world. They set their sights on a lofty goal, and with a whole community behind them, in a mere matter of

months that small group of students had managed to raise enough money to build an entire school in Nicaragua. How ironic a few short months later the first sustainability study on the Bath Middle School was announced.

At the onset of that first study the “then” members of the DEC immediately saw the great things that were happening within the school and Early Education Center, and soon changed the scope of their study to include the elementary in the hopes of combining all the students into the larger building. It was an outcome that everyone agreed would be in the best interest of the children of the community.

I’ve always been fascinated with history. With where I came from. If we could have walked those halls together five years ago, I would have pointed to the photos on the wall of past students. So many of my own community relationships in a display of history.

There’s Mary Ellen Corcoran. She was my grade five teacher. She helped me through the very first speech I ever gave right here in this very room. Although she’s retired now, she still volunteers on a regular basis in the school. And from what my niece tells me she makes a pretty mean soup.

Fred Guest is up there. Bus driver Extraordinaire. When my son was diagnosed at the age of six with type one diabetes, shortly after returning from the hospital we ran into Fred in the grocery store. He scooped Garreck up in a huge bear hug and told him how happy he was to see him feeling better. Skip forward ten years, and after suffering from some of his own health issues, Fred has retired. At Christmas time this year my sixteen-year-old daughter insisted we bake some cookies to take to Fred. She felt he needed to know he was missed, and she felt he needed a little visit.

George Crain is up there. This man has worn many hats through all the years I have known him. He's been a bus driver, handyman and fixer of the unfixable, coach. Referee, Lions member, volunteer and so much more. He was my hero this Christmas when I procrastinated until two days before Christmas to get a tree. He met my husband, in a field, chainsaw in hand, to save the day.

Chester Hannah is up there. If you are over 35, and came through this school, chances are you were taught by this man. He can be remembered most vividly by his neutral colored suits he wore and the urgency in his step. I can remember him calling out questions as he walked down the hall and expecting answers before he even walked in the door. One thing was for sure, he saw potential in every single student he taught and pushed every one of us to reach that potential.

May Dad's picture is also on that wall. He was in the last graduating class of the Bath Regional High School. I would point out his long hair, his devil may care smile, and the fact that his photo is fittingly placed next to the principal. I'm sure they had developed quite a relationship over my father's academic career. I'd also point out that he became a farmer, local business owner and strong role model for myself, my siblings and our children. Teaching us a strong work ethic, conviction without compromise and charity and compassion for others.

This is just a short list of people in this community who have impacted our lives. This room is filled with dozens more. In this room filled with parents, grandparents, farmers, business owners, doctors and politicians, there are different religions, beliefs, and political views, but there is one thing we all can agree on. This school is the heart of this community and this community is the heart of this school.

and income levels

I would like to share a few quotes from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The first one is this:

“Intelligence plus character – That is the goal of true education”

That character does not come from a textbook. It cannot be Googled or bought. It comes from the relationships we build in our community. Our community is strong and unique and deserves to remain that way.

The last DEC counsel that was here five years ago recognized that. They recommended closing this school, moving all the children next door and keeping this community together and strong. Unfortunately, that has not happened yet. And here we sit five years later and in much worse condition than we were. I hold in my hands a list of “School Challenges” that I believe were identified by the DEC when they first came to Bath this time. Sean has touched on them already, so I won’t read them out. But I do want to reiterate that every one of these challenges is met by finishing the upgrade next door and moving the kids back there.

I ask you today to make the recommendation to finish the upgrades. I also ask you to do so with a great sense of urgency as the conditions and challenges that we are faced with now are good for neither students nor educators.

Thank you all for your time today and I will leave you one last quote from Dr. King.

“The time is always right to do what is right”

School Challenges

- Smaller populations do not allow for flexible classroom compositions.
- Physical space is limited.
- Elementary gym for middle school students
- The library is not attached to school, it is in a portable.
- Office is a makeshift classroom renovated
- Storage, restrooms are shared with pre-k and middle students
- No changing rooms
- Speech therapy is done in the hallway by the bathrooms with the upstairs students (noise, no privacy, distracting to the students).
- ISD has to float around between offices to find private spaces to work with students.
- The SIW worker has no office or private space to work one on one with a student (in the computer lab right now, which does not work if there is a class in there).
- Teachers have no space to do assessments with students (other than sitting in the hallway, or if it's not a library day we could go outside to the portable, which is not convenient).
- The gym is small and does not accommodate middle school curriculum and sports.
- Kitchen is small and cramped, but the volunteers make it work!



*Excited. Involved.
Prepared.*