

In 2010, a group of interested citizens in Burton formed a committee now known as BACA, the "*Burton and Area Citizens' Association*". One of the committee's mandates is to keep the citizens of Burton informed of issues regarding the community. In March 2011, BACA hosted a public meeting to see what concerns and issues people in the community had. The Burton School was listed as a key asset to the community and one that drew people to live here.

The Burton School was constructed in 1961. Today children who attend Kindergarten to Grade 2 within the catchment area of #174 to #765 Route 102 attend the school. The current infrastructure barely meets the needs of these students.

In 1961 when the school was originally built, Burton was a small community with a very scattered population. The school was at that time able to house all K-5 children who lived within the eastern part of the Burton LSD which includes both Burton and Swan Creek. Since that time, Burton has grown tenfold, and the school remains the same. This resulted in the children living in Burton and Swan Creek being diverted to other community schools as the school in Burton was not able to meet the needs of the children within our District. When the question is asked as to why more parents are not currently supporting the local school, the answer is not only to look at the declination of the current school infrastructure, but also at how over time the school population was diverted to other community schools even though the families continued to reside within the Burton District. This has not been the case with any of the other outlying schools.

Currently, the Burton LSD is a combination of various communities which include Burton, Swan Creek, Geary, French Lake, Haneytown, and Waterville. Burton has the second highest district population in the province. Questions and concerns have been addressed by concerned citizens from both Burton and Geary due to the geographical division of the district in that the Town of

Oromocto lies between the two communities. This often results in a lack of district wide support for either area since people are often not even aware they belong to the same district.

Currently, there are approximately 163 students attending the Geary School from Kindergarten to Grade 5. This combination of students come from the southern part of the Burton LSD which include Geary, French Lake, Haneytown, and Waterville. In Burton alone if you were to include all Kindergarten to Grade 5 students from #1 to #780 Route 102, there would be over 150 students. This does not include K-5 students living in Swan Creek, which is part of the Burton District.

Currently there are 986 mail boxes in Burton alone and approximately 50 residents picking mail up in Oromocto. There is also continuous new housing and road development. On an average of 3 – 4 people per household, this would give Burton alone 3000-4000 residents living in the community. If you were to include Swan Creek which is part of the Burton District, this would definitely be close to the 4000 mark, if not more. Demographically, Burton is a community with many young transient military families. This prototype of demographics will ensure continued use of a public school within our community.

The future of our community is one of growth, therefore, closing the only school for the area is short sighted. Planning for the future needs of the area makes more sense than knee jerk reactions to immediate funding issues. Lincoln students are now housed quite comfortably in the Oromocto schools although they will be moving back to a brand new school in their community. One can only assume this new building is being constructed with the future growth of the Lincoln community in mind without concern for the current fiscal situation the government finds itself in. As citizens of another community that is growing, we expect our political and educational leadership to be as forward thinking about our school

needs as they appear to be about Lincoln and Geary. We recognize that new construction is not paid for by Districts, but while Lincoln houses its students in the Oromocto schools for up to two full years while their new school is built, the cost savings from not operating the old Lincoln School could be utilized to sustain the Burton School. Lincoln students were housed together in Oromocto schools to allow them to maintain their sense of community. Burton would like the same opportunity to keep their children together.

If School District 17 were to take our school from us, this would have a huge impact on our community. People, schools, community centres, and churches are what holds communities together. Our community group took on the task of assessing the community's interest in keeping the school open, and we have found that this is exactly what people want. Should the current building be closed, it is unlikely that a school will return to the community in the near future which is why we believe it needs to remain open.

On September 17, community volunteers hosted a School Support and Community Fun Day to raise the awareness of the Burton School. Hundreds of people attended this event, most of whom were in support of maintaining the school.

Our recommendations to School District 17 are as follows:

- That Burton be considered as a center for elementary education by increasing both the grades offered and the geographical area to include all of Burton and Swan Creek which is within the Burton LSD;
- That the current school structure be sustained until such time that the provincial government's budget is sufficient enough to build a new school in the community;
- That correspondence relative to the school's disposition be distributed to all homes in Burton and not just homes of current enrolled students.

In May 2011, at BACA's Annual General Meeting, an elected *Committee on the Sustainability of the Burton School* was formed. We plan on continuing with this committee to encourage the development of a proper educational structure for this community.

Thank you.