

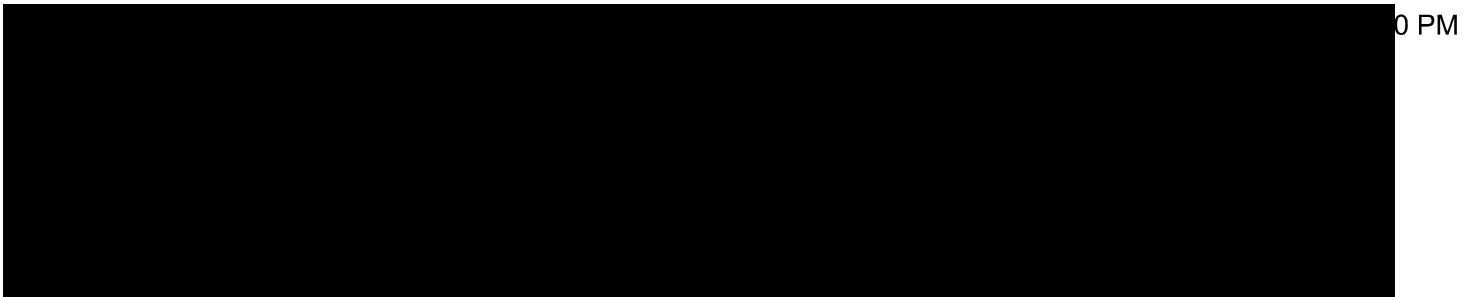
GUIDING OUR FUTURE: Direct Communications

This document includes copies of the emails and letters received by the Peace Wapiti School Board.



Beaverlodge Elementary School

1 message



0 PM

Good Afternoon Board of Trustees and Administration of Peace Wapiti School Division

Please see attached information regarding the current situation at Beaverlodge Elementary School. It has been evident from the meeting's attended that a number of the Trustees may appreciate some further information on this topic. We are pleased to see that Peace Wapiti is lending their attention to this and we trust that you will find the present state of affairs is not benefiting the children of Beaverlodge and surrounding area, nor is it benefiting Peace Wapiti School Division.

Thank you so much for your time,

Beaverlodge Elementary School Council

3 attachments**Letter to Trustees-Dec 13, 2022.pdf**

340K

**Key Points.pdf**

1228K

**Support from Town Council.pdf**

313K

Beaverlodge Elementary School/Peace Wapiti School Division are losing their Student Body and Faculty within the Community of Beaverlodge. In 2016 the Beaverlodge St. Mary's Catholic School Division built a new K-9 facility. Subsequently there has been a significant decline in Beaverlodge Elementary's existing K-6 student base as well as their enrollment at the kindergarten level. This in turn has resulted in a reduction of funds and consequently a reduction in teachers and programming. It is well known amongst the parents of school age children within the community of Beaverlodge that families are choosing the St. Mary's Catholic School for their children over Beaverlodge Elementary School. The resounding reason for this is that St. Mary's offers the only 7-9 option within the community of Beaverlodge.

Proposal:

We are proposing that Peace Wapiti School Division allow Beaverlodge Elementary School the opportunity to maintain their Grade 7 & 8 students and the existing Beaverlodge High School offer the Grade 9 education. This would allow Peace Wapiti the opportunity to be competitive and provide Grades 7-9 to students within the community in which they reside.

(Key Points Continued Next Page....)

Key Points:

- Reduction in Beaverlodge Elementary School Students
 - Since 2016 Beaverlodge Elementary has lost :
1 Kindergarten Class, 1 Grade One Class, 1 Grade Two Class
 - Beaverlodge Elementary has seen a decline in enrollment in the last 6 years:
2015 Beaverlodge Elementary had 395 students enrolled.
2022 there is currently 294 students enrolled.
 - St. Mary's have added 4 portables since it was built in 2016 to accommodate increased enrollment.
 - St. Mary's policy is if one family member wants to enroll then all siblings must enroll as well. This pulls students directly from classrooms of Beaverlodge Elementary School K-6.

- Reduction in Beaverlodge Elementary School Teachers
 - A reduction in students results in a reduction in funds and therefore a reduction in teachers.
 - In 2021 34 Grade 2's had to be combined into 1 Classroom half of the day due to no funding for a second Fulltime Grade 2 Teacher.
 - Currently 2022 1 Grade 5 class is being taught by 4 Separate Teachers for core subjects again due to lack of funding for a second fulltime Grade 5 Teacher.

- Safety
 - 3 Bus loads of children travel up a very busy single lane highway all winter. This stretch of highway is much busier with oversized commercial vehicles than it was over 50 years ago when this process began.

➤ Travel Time

- Junior High age children who reside in the rural areas around Beaverlodge can potentially spend between 2.5- 3 hours on a bus per day.
- Specifically the time it takes to transfer buses between schools in Beaverlodge and finally arrive at the current Junior High is 45 minutes per day.

➤ Community Displacement

- During these 3 years the kids are absent from all local community events.
- Currently Beaverlodge Elementary K-6 and St. Mary's K-9 students are able to attend events such as Art Walks, Street Performers, Olympian Parades, as well as utilize Recreational Facilities. These include the Swimming Pool, Fitness Center, and Cultural Center to name a few. Beaverlodge Junior High age residents miss out on this opportunity and therefore lack a sense of community at a very influential age.

➤ Educational Continuity

- The ability to maintain relationships between students, educators and families plays a vital role in confidence and success of students. Losing this connectedness could have negative effects on mental health and overall emotional wellbeing.
- Currently Beaverlodge Junior High age students not only move to a new school and a new community they experience broken connections and are placed in unfamiliar surroundings.
- Due to the time it takes to bus the Beaverlodge resident Junior High students they only receive 20 minutes of a break per day. This is a large reduction from the 50 minutes per day they are used to and recommended.

➤ Logistics

- Busing the majority of a student population to combine with a smaller student population doesn't make sense.

➤ Cost of Bussing

- Bussing cost is an ongoing issue for Peace Wapiti
- Currently there is a Lack of Bus drivers in the Peace Wapiti District

➤ Extra-Curricular Activities

- Having students attending school in a different community from where they reside cuts down on the ability for some to take part in extracurricular activities. Some working parents are unable to travel to retrieve the children after school for activities, practices etc.

➤ Space is Available

- Current infrastructure is underutilized. Beaverlodge Elementary School is operating at 59% and Beaverlodge High School is operating at 61%.
- As Proposed both Beaverlodge Elementary K-8 and Beaverlodge High 9-12 would *still* only be at approx. 80% utilization.
- Twenty years ago the recommendations were made by a third party that Beaverlodge Area maintain their Junior High aged students stating
“thus the cost, safety concern and time required to bus the Junior High students from Beaverlodge to Hythe would be eliminated.”

➤ Beaverlodge is a Thriving Community

- Beaverlodge is the only community of their size within the Peace Wapiti District that does not offer K-9. Hythe Regional is the *only* Regional Junior High in the Peace Wapiti School Division.

Dec 13, 2022

Board of Trustees and Administration
Peace Wapiti School Division
8611-108 Street
Grande Prairie, AB T8V 4C5

RE: Statement of Beaverlodge Elementary School Council

Current Situation: Kindergarten to Grade 6 at Beaverlodge Elementary School, Grade 7-9 at Hythe Regional School, Grade 10-12 at Beaverlodge Regional High School

Proposal: Kindergarten to Grade 8 at Beaverlodge Elementary School, Grade 9-12 at Beaverlodge Regional High School

Our School Council believes that by offering public education for all grade levels in the Town of Beaverlodge, Peace Wapiti Public School Division would remain competitive in attracting and retaining students and teachers for generations to come. Since the opening of the new K-9 Catholic School in Beaverlodge, Peace Wapiti has seen a large decline in student population in Beaverlodge Elementary School. It is this fact that initially spurred our School Council to revisit how public education is offered for the residents of the town of Beaverlodge and surrounding area. In speaking with many the families who chose to move their children to the Catholic School Board for education, we became more aware that people were moving for the simple reason that this school offered Grade 7-9 in their home community.

In looking at the larger picture, attached are a number of key points as well as benefits that the students of Beaverlodge and catchment area would reap in being able to continue their education in Beaverlodge from Kindergarten to Grade 12:

In addition to the benefits for the students, Peace Wapiti would also see the benefit of decreased costs of bussing students to and from Hythe while creating an attractive model for public education in the community of Beaverlodge. We would also like to note that the current infrastructure of Beaverlodge Elementary School and Beaverlodge Regional High School have sufficient space to accommodate all of the students from Kindergarten to Grade 12.

Thank you for your interest on this topic.

Sincerely

Beaverlodge Elementary School Council

December 5, 2021



Re: Support of Public Education in the Town of Beaverlodge

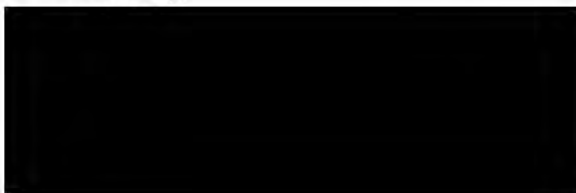
On Monday November 28, 2022, the Town of Beaverlodge Council (Town Council) unanimously passed a motion supporting the principle of pursuing public school education, for grades 7 to 9, within the Town of Beaverlodge.

Town Council agrees that the Beaverlodge Elementary School Council proposal of Beaverlodge Elementary School offering grades 7 and 8 and Beaverlodge High School offering Grade 9 education has merit and is worthy of further discussion on its feasibility.

Fundamentally, Town Council feels that a town the size of Beaverlodge should have the ability to accommodate public education from Kindergarten to Grade 12. This is in the best interests of our children, their families and our Community.

If you require more information, please contact [REDACTED] by email at [REDACTED] or by phone at [REDACTED]

Sincerely,



January 18, 2023

Dear Peace Wapiti School Board,

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter. I have a lot on my mind at this time, yet felt compelled to share my thoughts on this important matter.

As you may already know, I have been a teacher and administrator with PWPSD for the past 23+ years. The majority of which have been in Hythe. I was fortunate to do a one year Acting Principalship at Wembley Elementary. It was an absolutely amazing year, yet my heart pulled me back to HRS. Prior to my years with Peace Wapiti I spent eight years in Grande Cache and a year in Australia. My entire working life has been dedicated to education.

Throughout this time, the guiding question that my decisions have consistently been based upon is, "Will this be good for our students?" They are the entire reason we work in schools. They should be our focus.

With considerations being looked at by the board regarding Beaverlodge Jr High students leaving HRS I am compelled to share the many reasons why this is not good for our students from an educational perspective.

- Reduced student numbers in both Hythe and Beaverlodge will split resources and funding resulting in fewer option classes, fewer teachers with subject-specific expertise, fewer educational assistants, reduced likelihood of offering K&E classes, reduced preparation for high school, etc.
- Splitting resources and funding would make it highly unlikely to maintain the current rich and varied educational experiences currently available at our regional school. Fewer teachers, especially teachers with subject-specific expertise, inevitably leads to diluting educational programming and experiences. Teachers are expected to do more with less.
- Reduced student numbers in both Hythe and Beaverlodge will reduce the likelihood of having competitive sports teams, or sports teams at all, as well as experienced coaches on staff. Community coaches are sometimes available, yet require a teacher supervisor. With reduced staff numbers this may not be viable.
- With reduced coaching and team related skill-development, the likelihood of sports scholarships or playing on college or university teams would be greatly reduced.
- Limited opportunities for friendships that span communities.
- Less friendships across communities during the formative years, making the transition to high school more challenging. This could negatively impact high school completion rates.
- Less cultural diversity. Less tolerance. Less compassion.
- Less focus on building community relationships, cohesiveness across communities and cultural understanding.

In addition to this list, I have repeatedly experienced students and families being thankful for their child having a fresh start in a new school with new staff and a broader pool of students to

build friendships with. For some students it is a pivotal time to create a more positive reputation and place an increased focus on their education.

For many students their friendships and sports teams are what motivate them to come to school. With these areas severely reduced will they look elsewhere for their education? Will they see fewer reasons to stay at either school? Is this truly best for our students?

When I walk through the halls of HRS and visit classrooms I see happy kids who are interacting, learning, creating broader perspectives, challenging themselves and building their social skills and compassion for others. They are learning to be accepting of other cultures and people who are different from themselves. They are developing the skills they will need to be successful in a diverse world beyond the borders of Hythe and Beaverlodge.

There are limitless positive experiences happening at HRS each and every day. To dismantle this and potentially destroy it would be devastating on so many levels. This is not best for our students.

And truly, as such a large school district, many students do not attend school in their community. Many of our students travel on buses to their schools.

Maintaining the pooled resources and rich learning, social and athletic opportunities a regional school can offer is worth a short bus ride, in a similar way that it is for those students traveling to regional high schools.

In closing I want to share a poster I saw at a Grande Prairie Public School during a basketball tournament. The universal guiding principles listed are important and worth considering.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,





Every Student Succeeds

MISSION

The Grande Prairie Public School District is a learning community in which every student succeeds.

UNIVERSAL GUIDING PRINCIPLES

For everything we decide and do, we will hold ourselves accountable and we will ask:

Is it good for students?

Will it build trust and good relationships?

Will it help us improve?

Is it a responsible thing to do?

Are we being open, honest and ethical?



To Whomever it May Concern,

January 25, 2023

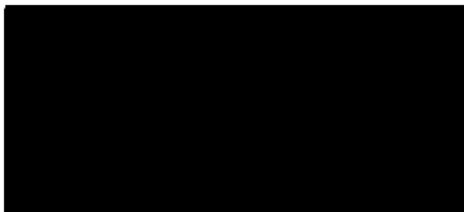
I am writing this letter to inform you of my strong belief that Beaverlodge Elementary School (BES) students should continue to attend Hythe Regional School (HRS) for grades 7-9. I have a unique perspective because although I teach junior high at HRS, I am also the parent of students who attend BES and HRS.

One of the major advantages of having both Hythe and Beaverlodge students attending HRS is the strong academic program we can offer a larger student population. HRS has a wide range of challenging and engaging courses, as well as courses that meet the needs of challenged learners. Because of the needs, we are able to offer 'Knowledge and Employability' courses which enable struggling students to experience success at their own academic levels. Due to our higher student population, we receive funding to offer specialized courses such as Cree, and other electives such as music, art, drama and cultural courses. Because of our large student population and the number of staff members in our building, experts in these fields are able to lead these classes.

In addition to our strong academic program, we also offer a wide range of extracurricular activities including sports teams and clubs. These programs provide students with the opportunity to explore their interests and develop new skills. The extracurricular opportunities may not be available in smaller schools because there is a smaller number of students who have similar interests. Also, having few participants will result in our sports teams being less competitive with the larger city schools.

Hythe Regional School offers students the opportunity to experience a diverse student population. Being exposed to different cultures and backgrounds can help students to develop an understanding and appreciation of different perspectives and ways of life. This can foster cultural sensitivity and empathy, which are important skills in today's globalized world. Studies have shown that students in diverse schools tend to perform better academically. This may be due to increased exposure to different teaching styles and ways of learning, as well as a more stimulating and engaging learning environment. A diverse student population is a reflection of the real world, where people from different backgrounds and cultures interact and work together. By attending a diverse school, students are better prepared for the diverse workforce and global society that they will encounter later in life. This can help promote a more inclusive and just society.

In conclusion, I feel that the benefits of strong programming, the range of extracurricular opportunities and exposure to diversity far outweigh the disadvantages to Beaverlodge students attending junior high school at HRS. HRS saw an increase in enrolment this school year, particularly in grades 7-9. Why would we make dramatic, unnecessary changes to a thriving school?



January 25, 2023

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing this letter to support leaving Hythe Regional School as it is. I am first and foremost a parent of past students; a member of the surrounding Community of Hythe and I am employed at HRS in the role of a speech educational assistant.

Our school has always been able to offer unique and individual programming due to the levels of funding we are able to access. If you reduce student numbers some of this programming will be lost which unfortunately, means that the student is left as one with the most to lose.

The learning opportunities are only a portion of the benefits. Students are exposed to new social situations and peers which enables them to form new friendships and expanding their educational opportunities. They learn lasting life skills of working with new situations as well as learning how to handle new challenges in everyday life.

This battle has been ongoing for many years and needs to stop. Peace Wapiti School Board made the decision to build and expand HRS to accommodate all area students. It was decided that Beaverlodge would go to Hythe for grades 7 – 9 and then Hythe would travel to Beaverlodge; adding Wembley and Elmworth to the school. These centralized locations afford more students increased opportunities and more diverse educational programming.

Let's address the Racism issue as it is a very strong and valid point. I have personally heard people say that they don't want their kids being exposed to certain people groups. I would like to bring it to the forefront - this issue is not new and has been plaguing our communities for years. The beauty of a Regional School is that it brings a diverse group of students together as one unit or group. Our HRS family models to students and teaches them to work with accepting others with different cultural experiences.

I feel strongly that the benefits of leaving HRS as it is will far outweigh any negative effects.

Sincerely,

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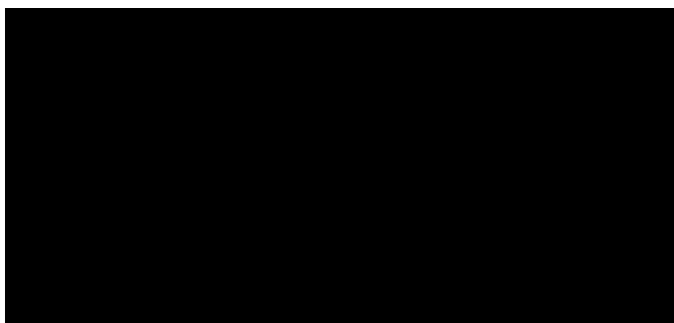
Fwd: Schooling in Beaverlodge.

1 message

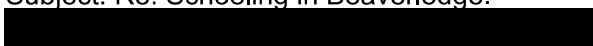


Fri, Feb 24, 2023 at 10:37 AM

For engagement report



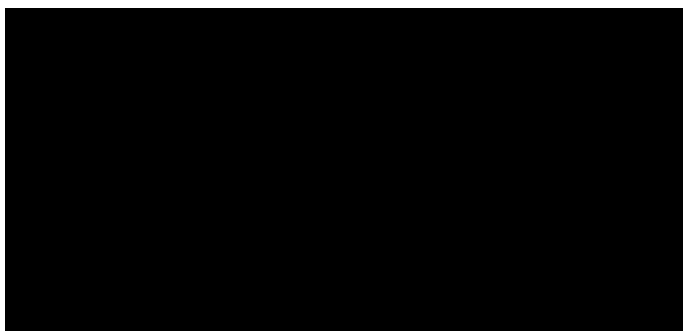
Date: Wed, Jan 25, 2023 at 10:09 AM
Subject: Re: Schooling in Beaverlodge.



Good morning 

Thank you for sharing your ideas with us. We will be sure to capture this in our final report to the Board of Trustees. If you'd like to join the online conversation, we invite you to add this option to the [All Our Ideas tool](#), or you can fill out our [online survey](#).

Have a wonderful week,



On Wed, Jan 25, 2023 at 10:04 AM [REDACTED] wrote:

Just reaching out to recommend having all encompassing grades EVS through Grade 12 to be absolutely available in Beaverlodge. Based on population between Hythe and Beaverlodge, it never made any sense to be busing kids all the way to Hythe. This takes so much time away out of kids lives, and creates so much extra busing.

The population in Beaverlodge is significantly higher, so there lies the practical decision to have all the grades available in this town.

Regards,

[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone



Fwd: Guiding Our Future Letter

1 message

Dear Peace Wapiti School Board Trustees:

There has been a lot of talk about the rearrangement of students between Beaverlodge Elementary School (BES), Beaverlodge Regional High School (BRHS), and Hythe Regional School (HRS). I have been a teacher at HRS since moving to Alberta in 2010. In that time, I have seen many junior high students successfully pass through our doors here at HRS. I also have had the privilege of working with newer teacher that are former student of mine

HRS might be the only regional junior high in the district, but that has always worked out well. By having the junior high, we are able to offer many programming opportunities that would otherwise be unavailable to students at either BES, HRS, or even at BRHS for our junior high students. Here are just a few of the advantages of keeping junior high students at HRS:

- We are able to offer Knowledge and Employability classes that would not be feasible for schools with smaller populations to offer. (We have slightly larger core classes for some students to allow those that need the K&E program to receive the instruction they need and deserve)
- We offer a variety of option classes - Cooking in Cree, Drama, Photography, Sports Wellness, Culture Connections, Travel, Art, and many others. This variety would not be possible with a smaller population and less funding.
- We have great sports teams for the students to join. With splitting the junior high students between three schools, we may not have the number of students necessary to run these teams at any of the schools. Not to mention, will we have staff volunteers who are willing to take on this extra responsibility?
- If the schools were to split, I do not see other extracurricular activities happening such as school dance, computer club, our Panther Olympic, etc because there may not be enough student who are pre-occupied with an interest in the activities
- Here at HRS, we have teacher in junior high who are specialists in their subject area. By splitting the staff to different locations, will the student still be able to get instruction from core teacher who are specialists?

- When students first come to junior high, they all receive a fresh start with teachers they have had little to no experience with. We, as Junior High teachers, are given notes from previous teachers, but often do not read them until we have been able to get to know our students and quite often look at the notes and ask if these notes are about that student.
- Students get to make friends with other students that they may not have met otherwise. For some students, making these new friends is the best thing that could have happened to them.
- We hear from parents all the time how grateful they are for our junior high and the difference it has made in their children's lives.
- Having the junior high at HRS allows for all students to better understand themselves but also those around them. We have an inclusive community with people from many different cultures, races and backgrounds. Everyone is welcome, accepted and celebrated here.

When I was in school, the school I attended was a K 8 and then we had grade 9 12 in a high school. When we reached 7 and 8, this became a junior high setup like we have here at HRS. We had a student from surrounding school join us for the 2 year before high school. This provided a great opportunity to meet new people and become friends, because we had been with the same kids since kindergarten. This also allowed us to prepare for high school by having teachers who were specialists in their areas, and have different options available to us that we never knew existed in elementary school.

It would be a shame to dismantle the junior high in Hythe simply because the enrollment at BES is lower than they want. If these changes happen, yes, BES will have an increased enrollment, but HRS would be close to closing as we would be at less than 50% occupancy. Is it fair to change the layout of the three schools so one can increase their enrollment while another's enrollment decreases beyond the level of any of the current schools?

Most of the information I have been seeing and reading is one-sided; it is in support of either of the plans that would dismantle the HRS junior high. No one has spoken or written about the effect it will have on the student in Hythe, just the effect on those in Beaverlodge. As you make your decision, please keep in mind what is best for all of our student. We as educators and the student have and should always remain our top priority. Education is not only what you learn in the classroom, it is the other experiences as well. With smaller populations in each school, students will be missing those opportunities.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Our children are the future, let's give them the best chance we can to make it amazing for them.

Sincerely,



**Fwd: Beaverlodge- Hythe School Issue**

1 message

Mon, Jan 30, 2023 at 2 09 PM

Please add to the folder and the content agenda for Feb 2

Forwarded message

Date: Mon, Jan 30, 2023 at 1 56 PM

Subject: Beaverlodge- Hythe School Issue

To Whom it May Concern

I am sending this email concerning the present school issue you are dealing with. This "issue" between the two communities has been around for at least 75 years and it never dies. Periodically it rises again. So here we are again.

I strongly believe those wanting to change what is presently a successful delivery of good solid education, need to be open and honest and quit the political dance. The real reason for this renewal movement is that some parents don't want their children attending classes with the Horse Lake children. They do not have the courage to say so in public but it washes and is again on the street, in coffee shops, etc.

The individual can cite transportation as a concern. Provincially there are students riding buses longer and further than the status quo.

Attending school in your own community is another issue. Many of the students in question have family in both communities so they do feel at home. Is this a student concern or one of the parents?

Bullying is also an issue I hear. As a retired teacher, I have taught in five different school divisions and dealt with bullying in them all. Bullying is unfortunately part of our culture and therefore part of school life. From my experience in Hythe Elementary, the root of the bullying issue were birthed at home, not with the student. Perhaps there is a lesson there.

Also I've been told some Beaverlodge students were afraid to go to Hythe because of the students from Horse Lake. Both teachers and parents instilled this fear. If you need proof of that, please feel free to contact [redacted] at [redacted].

I could go on but I'm sure you get the picture I'm drawing. The students at Hythe Regional are a thriving group of young people who, for the most part, work well together, are proud of their school, are building lasting friendships and, to my knowledge, are not asking nor want change.

Education is about providing the best we can for all children. Dividing the Junior High students would have some very negative consequences in programming, port delivery, and option delivery to name a few. I strongly feel your job is to determine what is educationally best for all children, not satisfy the political agenda of parents.

I do not envy your position or your task at hand. Regardless of your decision, people will be upset. I do however believe, as an educator, you will meet, discuss, and make decisions based only on what is the best for the student.

Mr Speager knows from his experience in Hythe, that the system is not perfect, not system is but it is working well. Don't try to fix what is not broken.

Respectfully submitted,

[REDACTED]

I would love to attend your open meeting but am out of country.

I

[REDACTED]



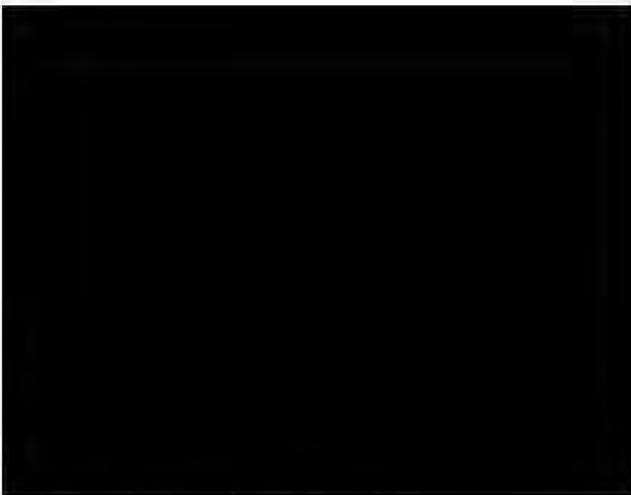
Fwd: Beaverlodge/Hythe School Survey

1 message

Fri, Feb 24, 2023 at 10:35 AM



For engagement report



Thank you for your response.

While this is true, it's unfortunate that this information is buried in the document portion that most folks don't know about, or don't want to read. The struggles that may occur at BES are directly stated in the survey.

It has been noted in discussion with community members, that this is not clear and is confusing. It would be more appropriate to create a survey with similar structure on all option rather than having to search for certain information.



Thank you for the feedback [REDACTED] The website does offer a wide range of supporting information that outlines the broad and diverse programming that is offered at Hythe Regional School and that splitting the

students would make this more challenging.

Guiding Our Future

in our supporting information we do include the following:

How does the attendance of Beaverlodge students enhance the educational experience for all students at Hythe Regional School?

It allows for broader programming, and builds relationships, connections and empathy between students. The larger student numbers offer opportunities for stronger sports teams and extra-curricular activities.

If Beaverlodge students stopped attending Hythe Regional School, how might that negatively impact the programming, culture and climate?

The smaller junior high student numbers would limit programming for students at every location. The expertise of specialized teachers would be lost. Students and staff might feel more isolated, and the students would miss out on building more relationships. Sports teams would also be more challenging to operate due to difficulty finding coaches/supervisors.

It is also our hope that this feedback does come back through the engagement process so that the Board of Trustees has a full understanding of how people feel about the prospect of making any changes to junior high programming in the communities of Hythe and Beaverlodge. We are also hopeful that the additional resources we have provided allows for each person to provide informed feedback.

Thank you

[REDACTED]

On Mon, Jan 30, 2023 at 1:30 PM [REDACTED] wrote:

Dear [REDACTED]

I am writing to express concerns I have with your current school survey for Beaverlodge and Hythe.

If the reader were not aware of the history, the amazing opportunities that HRS brings to its students, the variety of specialty teachers, the K&E classes and the fantastic melding of two communities, one would think the first two choices were fantastic. As you know, the first two choices would make it infeasible to offer as many classes and supports, it would cause the separation of the communities and result in a loss of teachers at HRS. I am very curious as to why none of the negatives toward HRS nor the definite loss of teachers in Hythe has been noted in the first two options, but in the "keep things as is" choice, it is mentioned that there may be a loss of jobs for BES staff. The options have not been well-written and do not allow for the significant losses to be noted in each choice.

I would like to request that the options be revised to include all positives and negatives in each option so that it is a fair representation of the voter's choices.

[REDACTED]



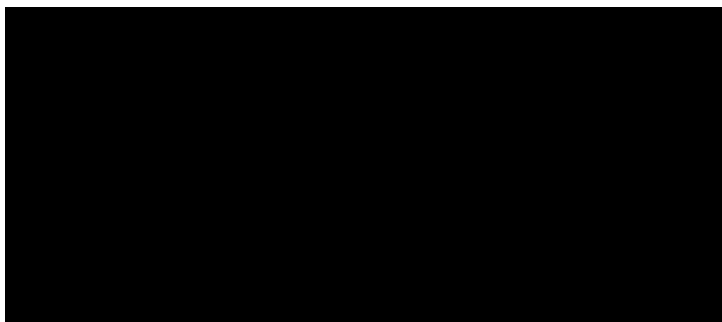
Fwd: Concerns

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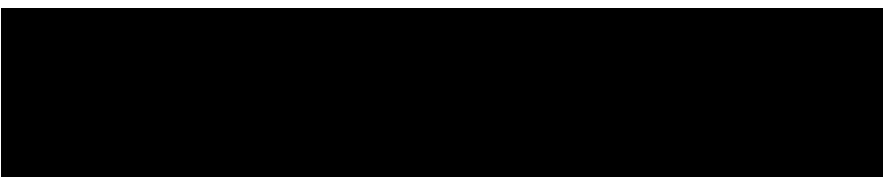
Fri, Feb 24, 2023 at 10:37 AM

For engagement report



----- Forwarded message -----

[Redacted]
Date: Mon, Jan 30, 2023 at 1:53 PM
Subject: Fwd: Concerns
[Redacted]



----- Forwarded message -----

[Redacted]
Date: Mon, Jan 30, 2023 at 1:50 PM
Subject: Concerns
[Redacted]

Dear Peace Wapiti School Board Members, Trustees and County Council Members,

It has been brought to my attention that the board is considering eliminating the regional model at Hythe Regional School. This would involve splitting the junior high students so that Beaverlodge kids would remain in Beaverlodge and the same would happen in Hythe. I am very disappointed that this issue has been brought up again. There are many negative consequences for such a split.

Firstly, a reduction in the number of students will mean a reduction in the number of specialized teachers, EA support for those with special needs, indigenous programming, and cultural events. Secondly, their ability to participate in extra-curricular sports would be significantly limited or non-existent. There simply wouldn't be enough knowledgeable teachers to coach, It would be almost impossible to create any 'A' level teams. For some children school sports are a significant outlet. Not everyone can afford to go to Grande Priarie for sports. What would happen to these children when they no longer have this positive outlet? Finally, one of the many reasons I love working at Hythe Regional School is the unique ethnic diversity we have here. That diversity helps children of all ages develop an appreciation and empathy for different cultures. Most importantly, it helps reduce if not eliminate fear. It is fear, and a lack of understanding that fuels all forms of racism.

Thank-you for taking the time to listen to my concerns.

Sincerely,

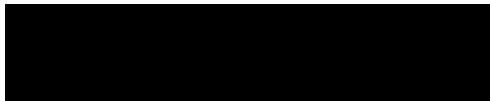




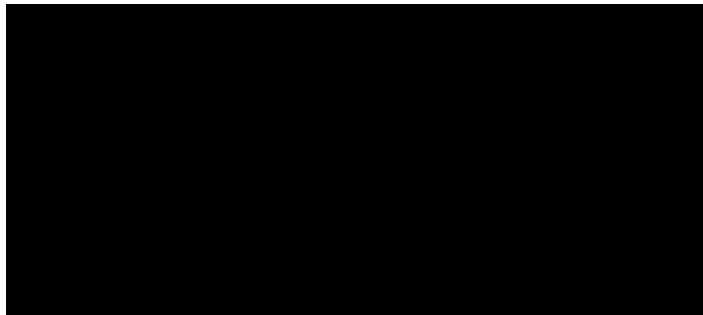
Fwd: Beaverlodge junior high

1 message

Fri, Feb 24, 2023 at 10:35 AM



For engagement report



----- Forwarded message -----

[Redacted]
Date: Wed, Feb 1, 2023 at 10:46 AM
Subject: Fwd: Beaverlodge junior high
[Redacted]

for our file

----- Forwarded message -----

[Redacted]
Date: Wed, Feb 1, 2023 at 10:43 AM
Subject: Fwd: Beaverlodge junior high
[Redacted]

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:



Date: January 31, 2023 at 4:45:52 PM MST

[Redacted]
Subject: Beaverlodge junior high

Thank you [REDACTED] for being the school board rep for this ward.

My husband [REDACTED] I are both retired teachers with Peace Wapiti. [REDACTED] taught for over 30 years at Sexsmith, Hythe Jr High and Beaverlodge Elementary. I taught at BRHS (chemistry and sciences) for nearly 16 years as well as provided substitute services since 1982 to present. We had three children go through the current system and pushed for them to remain close to home about 20 years ago. Sending bus loads of children on a busy two lane highway (for over 50 years) is a dangerous and unnecessary expense.

I was one of the first students to be bused to Hythe (from Halcourt) in the mid 1980's. This added close to an extra hour to my day and prevented me from participating in any school or community functions. Being farmers my parents were unable to pick me up so any extra curricular school activities were out of the question. Also those long days prevented us from participating in numerous activities in the community during school nights.

When our children reached their junior high years we also noticed how hard it was to have them do extracurricular school teams. As junior curling coaches in Beaverlodge we lost many participants once the students left our community.

With the new Catholic school in town numerous families are now picking this school as an option and will continue to chose this option as long as we do not have a junior high in our community.

The time to return our junior high students to Beaverlodge is long overdue. Having students remain in Beaverlodge would also increase the number of students having the opportunity to make team tryouts, or be in school leadership etc.

[REDACTED]



Fwd: Wants vs. Needs "Beaverlodge Elementary School Engagement Survey" correspondence

1 message

Thu, Feb 2, 2023 at 8:00 AM

Please add to the NEXT cow consent agenda.

----- Forwarded message -----

Date: Wed, Feb 1, 2023 at 6:45 PM

Subject: Wants vs. Needs "Beaverlodge Elementary School Engagement Survey" correspondence

To whom it may concern;

On Tuesday, January 24 I was completely caught off guard when my social media feed displayed the "Beaverlodge Grades 7 to 9 Public Education" document created by the Beaverlodge Elementary School Council. It was quite a surprise to see that the BES Council had prepared a document full of questionable "resounding key reasons" for why they support moving students out of Hythe Regional School (HRS) and a portion into Beaverlodge Elementary School (BES) and a portion into Beaverlodge Regional High School (BRHS). While I have many conflicting opinions on this document, I understand it was not put out by Peace Wapiti Public School (PWPSD) division, however I would like to note that the division has not made any effort to separate themselves from this document either.

While I understand every group is going to use the statistics that will furthest support their point, I would like the School Board, PWPSD, to be prepared to answer the questions that I have formed from the claims of these facts

1. BES has seen a reduction in student population of 100 since the 2015-2016 school year.
 - Is this a regular fluctuation pattern? According to the 2016 and 2021 census there has been a decrease in population by 80 people in the ages 0-14 from 525 (in 2016) to 445 (in 2021) within the town of Beaverlodge. Would the fact that there are actually less people in the demographic that the school serves be considered when making claims that the school has lost over 100 students.
 - I request that the student population numbers for HRS, BRHS and BES from the last 10 years be made available in the next level of information that is provided by PWPSD
2. Reduction in Beaverlodge Elementary School Faculty
 - I believe this is a factor that all schools are facing. I would like to enquire how adding two more grades to the school will increase teachers for grade 2 and 5
 - Multiple teachers in one grade is a problem that many schools face, my son has 3 teachers in Grade 3 at HRS – this is not a challenge unique to BES. Every school would want more teachers.
3. Space is available
 - I would like the PWPSD to explain this further – BES Council believes that because the Utilization is at 59% that means there are empty classrooms available for 2, 4, 6(?) more classes. This is in fact not true. If the plan is to combine classes to make extra classrooms this would be counter-intuitive to their complaints of classroom sizes of 34 students.
4. Student Safety
 - I recommend that PWPSD denounce this statement that is being claimed by the BES Council. If PWPSD agrees that it is not safe for students to travel on PWPSD busses they must notify all parents, not just BES parents of this or make a statement that it is in fact safe.
 - PWPSD cannot claim that bussing is unsafe for Beaverlodge Students but is safe for students from the Valhalla, Horse Lake First Nation, Hythe, Elmworth and Wembley to attend BRHS.

- Parents chose to live in Beaverlodge, and I assume they live **in** Beaverlodge otherwise their concern of riding the bus from a county residence would be invalid as they would have chosen to live there knowing that bussing was the only transportation option for their students. If they are not comfortable with **their** student riding the bus they could drive their student to school, transfer to the K-9 school already present in Beaverlodge or consider moving to a community where there is a school within walking distance.

This goes on and on and I have attached the original documents in this email for your viewing. In my opinion there are a lot of extreme claims that are based on falsehoods, partial statistics, or the opinion of the few. I recognize that this document was not published by PWPSD however I implore you to speak to the statements made here that do impact student education, student safety, and the role that PWPSD has in it.

Guiding our Futures document

I had to search for this survey and document after seeing the social media posts from the BES Council and it surprised me that I was seeing it for the first time however, the documents created by the BES Council had statistics from it even though they became available the same day. This leads me to believe that they were closely involved in the development of this "independent" survey.

I am appalled by the bias in this document and the survey questions that are clearly customized to the preference of Beaverlodge community members. I again wonder if the BES Council helped to create this document and survey. To support my opinion of the bias I will direct you to a couple of statements; How can "continued student enrollment declines in Beaverlodge remain a possibility" be a consideration under scenario 3, Leave school configuration as is? That should be a consideration for all schools! It could also be a consideration that the student enrollment **increases** in Beaverlodge remains a possibility. What a statement to be endorsed by PWPSD. Under the BES Council's preferred option, number 2, it says words like "optimal" and talks about a replacement school in the future – big surprise there. This document is insulting and frustrating to anyone who is actually concerned about quality student education and social development opportunities.

"The Guiding our futures" document title page claims that it is exploring junior high programming in Beaverlodge and Hythe yet it speaks to nothing in Hythe except depleting the demographics. When the document repeatedly states that HRS remains K 9 it is giving the impression that it will not change when in actuality, it would be devastated by a change of this magnitude. The document also neglects to mention how these changes will actually impact programming, which everyone can deduce that reducing your demographics in Alberta's education system does not mean it will bring improvements. This document may as well have been called "Exploring Funding Increases for BES and creating a NEED for a new school (to have enough classroom space for Junior High students)".

PWPSD is working with a public consulting firm and will be meeting with communities impacted by this conversation. I ask that when you meet with the communities you will be able to provide information on the following:

- What do the negative impacts look like? Do not hold back, this is just as, if not more important than any of the "Resounding Key Reasons" the BES Council presented.
- Realistically, if the BES Council is successful in their movement, what does that look like today, what are the class sizes in each grade at each school?
- How many teachers would Hythe lose? What does this look like as far as specialty teachers? Will we have English majors teaching Science and Math? Will it just be one teacher for all subjects like they have in Elementary?
- How many teachers would Beaverlodge gain? Will there be multiple teachers for each class or will it revert to elementary style where the students stay in one classroom and have one teacher teach all subjects?
- Where would grade 7 and 8 classes fit in the school – are there actually enough empty classrooms in BES **today** to put these students into?

MONEY Questions

- What are the funding thresholds in relation to utilization? Are tuition and out of province students included? If they are **not** included, tell us what the utilization is at HRS and how it will relate to funding. It is not fair to show statistics in a document with no meaning behind it.
- What would the costs be to PWPSD to bring the BES to a place where they would have enough room for k-8? Would that be modules? Understanding that the province is not scheduled to build a **second new K-9** school in Beaverlodge at this time.
- Would PWPSD truly consider removing students from a well-structured and proven Junior High program in Hythe to put them in new costly modules 11 KM away on claims that bussing is not safe? Resulting in reducing quality programming at both schools and encouraging over sized classes and modular classrooms at the one? **How is this fiscally responsible of the school board or the province?**

I am very much looking forward to Peace Wapiti Public School Board speaking to the questions I have brought forward. This conversation is one that has repeated itself throughout the history of these communities and my hope is that this process is not lengthy, costly, or results in a sub par quality education for the future families of our communities. A debate like this tends to tear communities apart and while Hythe, Horse Lake First Nation and Beaverlodge are a few kilometers apart our communities collaborate in many areas and have shared resources to maximize the benefits for all. I feel a split of resources would negatively impact the student experience and a long debate and investigation will destroy community relationships.

Please remove the bias from future publications and remember that Hythe Regional School is an important part of this conversation.

Sincerely,



Concerned Parent

Guiding Our Future PWPSD

6 attachments



BES Council Doc Page 1.jpg.jpg
418K



BES Council Doc Pg 2.jpg.jpg
301K



BES Council Doc Pg 3.jpg.jpg
326K



BES Council Doc Pg 4.jpg.jpg
317K



BES Council Doc Pg 5.jpg
252K



GUIDINGOURFUTURE-BackgrounderDocFinal.pdf
2013K

February 1, 2023

Re: Hythe Regional School

Dear Peace Wapiti School Board,

Hythe Regional School (HRS) is a top-notch, wonderful school that I am proud to have graduated from and very proud to work at. My husband and my children are also proud graduates. Is it a perfect school? No, but it is a school that embraces and celebrates all students. We work very hard to be able to provide programming that is tailored to meet the learning needs of each of our students. Parents, students, and visitors have repeatedly told me how welcoming and caring our school is. Many parents have come to me and told me that they were originally hesitant to send their child to our school because of the "rumours" they had heard, and how they were glad they ignored the rumours, as their child had an amazing experience at our school.

We are a school that celebrates diversity and all cultures. We work hard to provide an environment that promotes Truth and Reconciliation and to help disprove some students' pre-existing prejudices. I know that we would like to pretend that racism has nothing to do with this proposal, but to completely ignore it would be a disservice to all of our students and communities. Anyone who has spent any amount of time at the local arenas and other gathering places, knows that racism is a component. I worry that if the separation of our students occurs, local racism will be given new life. Our school allows students from all backgrounds to learn and develop an understanding that we are all different, and yet we are all equal.

HRS offers unique classes like Cree, Cooking in Cree, and Knowledge and Employability classes. These unique classes are widely utilized by students from all of the communities. Our student numbers allow us to have the opportunity to offer those classes, along with specialized teachers and programming, because of the funding we receive for our large student population. We are also able to offer a wide assortment of mental health supports. Students from all of the communities use these supports equally. To be honest, the thought of any of our students losing access to any of these supports is frightening. As it is, we could use more mental health support.

Having a regional junior high is a unique schooling option that allows our students the time to learn, grow and mature, before entering into the high school setting. I have grave hesitations about students entering into the high school environment any earlier than needed. A junior high setting allows the

students a chance to have a bit more control over their learning environment, and a feeling of independence, without all the additional freedom that comes with high school.

I fully understand that it would be nice and more convenient for the Beaverlodge students to be in their own community. I get that. However, to do so takes away all of the support and academic benefits of a regional school. If the regional school was in Beaverlodge, I would have the same arguments for keeping it regional. This is not about what is more convenient or what is best for a community. This is about what is best for our students academically, socially, emotionally, and developmentally. My hope for what comes from this is that all Peace Wapiti schools begin to support and promote one another. We need to look at what we can be doing differently to have parents want to keep their students at BES and at HRS. Both schools have amazing attributes and teachers, we need to be advertising what is great about these schools, instead of trying to find what is wrong with the schools. It is very disheartening to read some of the comments online and in the surveys that I know are not true, but are being put out there to discourage parents from looking at HRS as the great school that we know it to be.

As teachers, we put our heart and soul into our students, and genuinely want to do what is best for them academically, socially, and emotionally. We are pushing to stay regionalized because we know the many benefits regionalization brings, because it is best for our students, not because it is best for a specific community. Even though, fiscally it makes more sense to keep the regionalized school in Hythe as that is where the regionalized facility was built over ten years ago.

I would also like to add a concern (one that I hesitate to mention as I know this would not be the intent) with how parts of this process are being conducted. Hythe, Kelly Lake and Horselake are smaller communities, and within these communities are individuals who are members of a marginalized cultural group. With Truth and Reconciliation, we need to be cognitive that many of the parents and the elders have had bad experiences with past school systems. Many may not be comfortable with attending meetings, writing letters, or doing surveys. I worry that there are components that may be perceived as elitist and dismissive of their ways and vulnerabilities.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter. I appreciate your time.



**Fwd: Guiding Our Future survey**

1 message

Fri, Feb 24, 2023 at 10:33 AM

For engagement report



----- Forwarded message -----

Date: Wed, Feb 1, 2023 at 8:37 PM
Subject: Re: Guiding Our Future survey

I wish this information right here would be put into the actual survey preamble before people filled out the questions.

If Beaverlodge students stopped attending Hythe Regional School, how might that negatively impact the programming, culture and climate?

The smaller junior high student numbers would limit programming for students at every location. The expertise of specialized teachers would be lost. Students and staff might feel more isolated, and the students would miss out on building more relationships. Sports teams would also be more challenging to operate due to difficulty finding coaches/supervisors

I'm sure it is in the backgrounder information document but not in the survey document itself which is all some people are reading.

As for the bias, it is in the wording of the actual survey questions and with some of the information prior to the question. If you are not intentionally looking for information about Hythe and look in the backgrounder information document, it is easily overlooked. I just wanted to let you know about the unfair bias that I think exists. I have heard that several parents have spoke to the Hythe School Council regarding this matter of bias in the questions so I wanted to pass it along. I want the survey to be fair for all parties involved. If the survey questions aren't fair because of the bias then the results will be skewed and/or misleading.

Thank you
[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone

On Feb 1, 2023, at 10:06 AM, [REDACTED] wrote:

Good morning [REDACTED]

Thank you for your feedback. The website does offer a wide range of supporting information that outlines the broad and diverse potential impacts that could come from splitting the students. [Guiding Our Future](#)

In our supporting information we do include the following:

How does the attendance of Beaverlodge students enhance the educational experience for all students at Hythe Regional School?

It allows for broader programming, and builds relationships, connections and empathy between students.

The larger student numbers offer opportunities for stronger sports teams and extra-curricular activities.

If Beaverlodge students stopped attending Hythe Regional School, how might that negatively impact the programming, culture and climate?

The smaller junior high student numbers would limit programming for students at every location. The expertise of specialized teachers would be lost. Students and staff might feel more isolated, and the students would miss out on building more relationships. Sports teams would also be more challenging to operate due to difficulty finding coaches/supervisors.

It is also our hope that this feedback comes back through the engagement process so that the Board of Trustees has a full understanding of how people feel about the prospect of making any changes to junior high programming in the communities of Hythe and Beaverlodge. We are also hopeful that the additional resources we have provided allows for each person to provide informed feedback.

Thank you,



On Mon, Jan 30, 2023 at 5:46 PM [REDACTED] wrote:

To whom it may concern,

In my opinion, the survey that was sent out pertaining to the three different scenarios was very biased with the wording in favour of the Beaverlodge community. No where does it clearly outline what the potential effects would be for the Hythe school in the survey besides the 43% capacity number. To get more accurate responses, there should be no bias in the wording of the questions.

Thank you



Sent from my iPhone

**Fwd: Letter of concern**

1 message

Fri, Feb 3, 2023 at 1:44 PM

Please add to the file and then to the next council agenda

Forwarded message

Date: Fri, Feb 3, 2023 at 1:43 PM

Subject: Letter of concern

Dear Peace Wapiti School Board,

The proposal to split the students of the Hythe and Beaverlodge communities in Junior High is extremely problematic from my teaching perspective.

Firstly, reduced student numbers mean less staff, which means fewer specialized teachers and less support staff for the students.

Secondly, the sports teams would be extremely limited by reduced numbers of students and teachers. Smaller schools have less sports opportunities and fewer teachers willing to offer trained coaching.

Third, and finally, it is wonderful to see the positive intercultural interaction in Hythe Regional School. With fewer students and subsequently less diversity, the development of tolerance and understanding is limited. The diversity at HRS has a strong hold of the Truth and Reconciliation calls to action #62 to #65 and they are as follows.

62. We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to:

- i. Make age appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten to Grade Twelve students.
- ii. Provide the necessary funding to post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms.
- iii. Provide the necessary funding to Aboriginal schools to utilize Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods in classrooms.

- iv Establish senior level positions in government at the assistant deputy minister level or higher dedicated to Aboriginal content in education.

63. We call upon the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada to maintain an annual commitment to Aboriginal education issues, including:

- i. Developing and implementing Kindergarten to Grade Twelve curriculum and learning resources on Aboriginal peoples in Canadian history, and the history and legacy of residential schools.
- ii. Sharing information and best practices on teaching curriculum related to residential schools and Aboriginal history.
- iii Building student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect.
- iv. Identifying teacher-training needs relating to the above.

64. We call upon all levels of government that provide public funds to denominational schools to require such schools to provide an education on comparative religious studies, which must include a segment on Aboriginal spiritual beliefs and practices developed in collaboration with Aboriginal Elders.

65. We call upon the federal government, through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, and in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, post-secondary institutions and educators, and the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation and its partner institutions, to establish a national research program with multi-year funding to advance understanding of reconciliation.

It also negatively impacts the smooth transition to a high school environment where diverse communities are coming together. If this understanding and tolerance can be fostered in a Jr High setting, as is currently the case, high school transition is much easier.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter of concern.

[REDACTED]

With gratitude, I acknowledge Treaty 8 Territory and Region 6 Metis Nation of Alberta, the traditional homeland of the Cree, Dene and Metis peoples.

I honour all our ancestors, Elders and Knowledge Keepers that walked these lands for generations. I am grateful to have the privilege of residing and working in this territory.

Let us remember when we walk on this land, all those that were here before us, are here now and will be here in the future.

**Fwd:**

1 message

Mon, Feb 6, 2023 at 8 40 AM

[REDACTED]

Please add to the folder and the next COW content agenda

Thank you,

[REDACTED]

Forwarded message

Date Sat, Feb 4, 2023 at 10 51 PM

Subject

[REDACTED]

To Whom This May Concern,

I am a born and raised community member of Hythe and proud to be an educator at Hythe Regional School

Unfortunately, the line has been drawn in the sand yet again, causing a long-term divide between communities, friends and families because of the proposed changes to Hythe Regional School. This conflict has a deep history and causes heartache and stress each time it resurfaces.

I was a student at Hythe Elementary School and Hythe Regional Junior High School before the new school was built and renovated. I was also bussed to Beaverlodge for high school (approximately fifteen minutes each way). I had a positive experience in each of the schools and I consider myself lucky to have experienced such diverse and valuable learning opportunities. Each school brought new friendships, teachers, experiences and everlasting memories. Ultimately, my career led me back to Hythe Regional School as a teacher. This was the place where I felt my teaching philosophy of connection, diversity, and inclusion most existed. The staff show up each day, prioritizing the needs of their students creating not only an educational institution but a safe and comprehensive environment. I am passionate about our school and its future. Our current and future students deserve the same opportunity that I had.

As we see in many other small schools in our district, due to funding, academic courses, Knowledge and Employability courses, and diverse options are either not available or teachers

face the challenging task of planning and delivering multiple accommodations or structured lessons to one class. Small student populations decrease the funding a school can access, and in this case, it would ultimately break up the specialized staff currently at Hythe Regional School; reducing the quality of education provided. Following the COVID-19 pandemic and considering the new curriculum on the horizon, is adding more challenges and changes to the students and staff at Hythe Regional School the best option?

Many staff members at Hythe Regional School drive from Grande Prairie daily because of the powerful inclusivity, specialized opportunities, and diverse student population. Our school population offers diverse cultural experiences for all members of our school community. These opportunities are valuable as they allow our young people to gain knowledge and understanding of how other people live; something that will benefit them throughout their lives.

While I recognize that there is room at Beaverlodge Elementary School for these students, the current elementary school is not appropriate for junior high students. There are few student bathrooms, a small gym that is already fully booked throughout the day with the elementary classes, and the technology and furniture are not tiered to accommodate older students. Hythe Regional School was built to accommodate older students while maintaining the necessary separation from elementary students. Additionally, our junior high students are able to mature in an environment that still closely monitors their behaviours and academics while easing them into responsibility.

The quality of sports and athletics is further enhanced by the facility at Hythe Regional School. What will happen to our sports teams? With fewer students, it is highly unlikely for competitive teams to be a viable option. This could seriously limit the skill development offered, which directly translates into fewer opportunities for scholarships or positions on college or university teams. Many students build their skills and are able to develop together, translating our athletes into competitive high school athletes. Again, will this cause students to look elsewhere to have these choices? Considerations like this were prioritized in the planning process when Hythe Regional School was renovated, and should still be of focus.

It deeply concerns me that the education offered to our children will not be close to what is currently offered, especially for our Hythe, Horselake, Kelly Lake and surrounding area students. I want the best options for all of our young people. I do not want services split and diluted. I don't want their futures compromised for reasons that make no sense and that have previously empowered and protected students.

Hythe Regional School brings communities together and offers excellent opportunities for all students educationally, socially, emotionally and athletically.

Keep Hythe Regional School as it is for our young people and their futures.

Sincerely,



A concerned community member and teacher

Sent from my iPhone

**Fwd: Information presented**

1 message

Fri, Feb 24, 2023 at 10:32 AM

For engagement report



----- Forwarded message -----

Date: Mon, Feb 13, 2023 at 2:56 PM
Subject: Re: Information presented

Hello

Thank you so much for reaching out and sharing your concern about the information included in our online survey and on our website. We recognize that, if implemented, any change to junior high programming would impact all three schools and appreciate your note to that effect. We have updated our materials for the community conversations this week to reflect that two of the scenarios (1 and 2) could potentially lead to declining student numbers at HRS and fewer program options for students at both BES and HRS. We've also made this change in our online survey and on our website.

I want to thank you for sharing your perspective and invite you to join us at one of the three community conversations that we are hosting this week (more information online [here](#)) to continue the discussion about junior high programming.

Please reach out with any additional questions or comments.

Thanks again,



On Sat, Feb 4, 2023 at 9:12 AM [REDACTED] wrote:

Good morning,

I have reviewed all the information on the website, and have read all the scenarios. I just wanted to let you know, I find the information presented very biased towards Beaverlodge. Nowhere does it state any negatives for Hythe, or at least not very many. It simply states that Hythe will remain the same, which we all know is not true. I worry that people are only receiving one side of the story. How can this be fixed?

Thanks,

[REDACTED]



Fwd: Guiding Our Future- Hythe Regional School

1 message

Thu, Feb 9, 2023 at 12:22 PM

Please add this to the folder and the next content agenda

Forwarded message

Date: Thu, Feb 9, 2023 at 11:21 AM

Subject: Guiding Our Future- Hythe Regional School

Good Morning,

I am writing a letter to the staff at Peace Wapiti, and the Minister of Education, in regard to the Guiding our Future conversation that is happening between HRS and BES. I am in a unique situation because I work in Beaverlodge Elementary as an Educational Assistant, and have two kids enrolled in Hythe Regional School.

Hythe is a community that serves many cultures; kids from all over the local country attend our school. Relationships are established at a young age, and continue on through the formative years of education. HRS has been established for years as a Regional School, serving elementary and Junior High students who come from all over the Peace region. They have a strong Indigenous student population, and are known to be welcoming to everyone that comes in their door. Not only Horse Lake, but HRS also serves students from Demmit, Kelly Lake, Valhalla, and Lymburn, to name a few.

Because of this discussion that is happening about Guiding our Future, I worry what this will look like in terms of segregation. I have heard HRS referred to as a "Native School" from people in Beaverlodge. However, I have seen firsthand how inclusive HRS school spirit is. They offer diversity, and cultural inclusion. Much of the HRS population is made up of students from surrounding towns and hamlets, and they add a culture to the community that BES cannot offer. I cannot say how much I have enjoyed the drumming circle at HRS Assembly, and hearing land acknowledgement, seeing students join in the Jigging dance, or having my kids come home saying the phrases they have learned in Cree. If you take the Junior High kids into Beaverlodge, and keep them exposed to their own local community, they are missing out on understanding different backgrounds at a younger age, when they are impressionable and open to learning. I fear that racial discrimination will become a bigger problem as the kids get older, especially if they are not exposed to each other. I worry that the Horse Lake community will feel segregated if Jr High kids are pulled from Hythe, and that will cause further issues between the communities.

I have seen the slogan posted in Beaverlodge Parent Council Facebook page saying "Our Kids, Our Community". Beaverlodge wants to remain their own community, separate from others, depending solely on themselves. That is not being inclusive. That is not what a community means. To me, the word Community means a group of people who work together for a common goal. Tight-knit relationships, growth, exposure, and supporting each other are all important aspects. Community is the epitome of what HRS enables. My own kids have made many friendships with kids from the different communities represented at HRS, and these will continue throughout their lives. Exposure to culture and community at a young age allows friendships to be made and cemented. Something that will not occur if they are only introduced at a High School level. "Our school, our kids, our community" is not something that I want my own kids to learn. This just solidifies my belief.

that children should be exposed to different cultures as kids, so they have time for ingrained beliefs and stereotypes to be changed.

If Junior High is pulled from HRS, I worry what this will do to the classes and teachers themselves. If BES receives the Junior High kids, Hythe isn't losing just the Beaverlodge kids, they are losing kids that live in the country that are under BES' catchment. This will have a severe impact on the enrollment numbers of HRS. Enrollment numbers will be smaller, maybe even smaller than expected, and the school will be utilized at a lesser percentage. This means that classes will be cut. For example, instead of two groups of grade 7 kids in manageable sized classes, there will be one overly large sized class. That means one less teacher spread between x number of students. Less one on one if a student needs help. One less staff to be the eyes and ears of the kids in the school. Not only that, but with less teachers comes less coverage for specialized classes. I have no doubt that teachers and aides will all work tirelessly to keep educating to the best of their abilities, but what kind of quality education will become of this? Is the Gym teacher then expected to teach French, and Music? HRS needs this Junior High to remain as it is. We need our specialized teachers, we need our classes to remain a manageable size, and we do not need to lose the quality of education that we want for our kids.

Not only does HRS offer specialized classes/teachers, they also offer extra curricular academics that BES cannot. Volleyball, Basketball, Badminton are all sports they offer. They teach Cree, they have Cree cooking classes (even a full sized kitchen to run it in!). They have a computer lab/class. All of these will be compromised if the Beaverlodge (and area) kids get pulled.

BES has lost some students over the years. Town populations change. Families move to other areas for jobs, kids get older and want to move away for school, people have fewer kids etc. The population of Beaverlodge has gotten smaller. BES itself is older. For whatever reason, parents are choosing to send their kids to St. Mary's. They offer religious teachings, they are more conservative. They have a new, vibrant staff. They have a new building. BES cannot offer the same things that HRS can, nor is St. Mary's the only reason why BES is losing kids. All the "extra" things that BES can currently offer will be compromised if they accept Junior High. They will lose speech classes and Fine Arts due to space. Gym time will be severely compromised, as classes will have to share the current gym. BES is short on bathrooms, as it is. The sensory room for the kids with special needs will disappear, or be moved to a much smaller space. How can multiple kids with special needs express themselves in a safe manner, if they are all crammed into one small room? EAs and teachers work tirelessly to support them as best as they can, but if space is limited, they can only do so much.

Another key point up for debate is gaining experiences through exposure. By attending Junior High in a neighbouring community, they are gaining the experience of being the "new kid" to other people. This allows them to have a fresh start they may be so desperate for, that they weren't given in their regular school. I have heard personal reports of kids who are bullied by their peers, and going to HRS opened up the path to new friendships who were accepting of them. Another personal story I heard is of a student who identified as non binary, and felt awkward with their peers. Once they attended HRS, they found several other kids who could identify and acknowledge them. There are disadvantages of being with the same peers from JK to Grade 6, especially if you do not fit in with that group. Attending HRS allows a bigger pool of classmates to bond with, and create new lasting friendships. Meeting new teachers also allows students to be treated more fairly, not based on previous siblings, or a student's childhood personality. They can have a fresh start and feel comfortable. If kids remain in the same community for too long, they lose that feeling of new experiences. Even if BES grows to accept Grade 8/9 students, these kids are all from the local community and are not receiving fresh starts they may be desperate for.

Attending Junior High in a new setting also prepares these students for High School. If a child attends the same school from JK to Grade 9, without being exposed to a new group of kids from neighbouring towns, they will have a culture shock when they start High School in Grade 10. Attending Junior High at HRS helps them with this. Meeting new specialized teachers for different subjects prepares them for changing classrooms, and being part of a larger population. There is a certain feeling that some kids can feel when they're the oldest in their school, and it can be a refreshing change when they realize they are not. It can get them to pay more attention, instead of relying on the same teachers and friends that have known them since they were little. Also, if kids are not exposed to new groups of kids, they can become set in their friends, and it can be as unwelcoming to be a genuine "new kid" in a well established clique.

Another fact to consider is that if BES does accept Junior High, they will lose their CSW days. This will in turn, affect staffing because many staff prefer to not work Fridays, and this is generally a day where we are short staffed as it is. Kids are umbrella'd together so there can be one staff for 2 or 3 kids. This can be stressful, leading to overworked, burned out staff. Personally, if I have to book appointments, I try to book them on days

that there is no school. Weekends are limited, but CSW Fridays come in handy for those, and I get an extra day to rest up, and prevent staff burnout. Covid 19 affected the mental health of so many individuals, myself included, and that extra day every couple weeks makes a huge difference.

Beaverlodge is also commenting on the transportation between both schools. Hythe has been the sole Regional Junior High for so many years, and Beaverlodge has been the sole Regional High School. Transportation is involved, obviously, as kids need to commute to each town for their school. But it is inaccurate to say that it is "unsafe" because of the traffic on the highway. This is an excuse. I drive that highway every day, and have had no problems. Driving, or taking the buses is a part of rural living. Riding a school bus is a consequence of choosing to live in a remote area. When was the last Peace Wapiti bus accident on that highway? Kids who live in the county areas often still need to be on a school bus to get to BES, and spend a portion of that ride on the highway. Driving on the highway, specifically, is essential to travelling the region. Another point to consider is that parents who say it is too dangerous for school, will also commute all over the Peace Region every day for shopping, or for their kids' extra curricular activities elsewhere. Dedicated parents drive to Grande Cache, Spirit River, Peace River, Valleyview, even Edmonton all the time for these events. There is extreme bias in Beaverlodge's point about it being dangerous. In addition, if these parents say that it is unsafe for their Beaverlodge kids, then why is it considered safe for the Hythe kids when it comes time for High School?

Financial reasons also play a part in this decision. Hythe currently has a fully functioning school that has ample room for all the classes, kids, and programs it offers. HRS has other unique rooms that BES cannot offer, such as two science classrooms, a fitness room, a kitchen, and a makerspace. Space is well utilized currently, and there is room for growth as well. Beaverlodge wants a new school, but they don't NEED one. I feel that Beaverlodge has bias, and would like to have their own K-9 because of HRS' remodel in 2009, and St. Mary's is new. There is already a great school in Hythe that offers K-9, and is in the same district as BES. To build a new school in town that takes kids from HRS will only stretch resources, and quality of education will take a downturn. It would create competition and friction between the two schools that is unnecessary, especially since both schools are in the same district.

Let us also consider the loss of the transportation grant that Peace Wapiti currently receives. There is a potential loss of \$121,500 that the district will not receive if the busing is cancelled between Hythe and Beaverlodge for Junior High. Beaverlodge does have the only local Regional High School, and they also offer their own amenities that are useful to both communities.

I live in Hythe, but work in Beaverlodge. I have seen both communities at work, and been impressed with them at different times. Hythe's population may be smaller, they may be considered a retirement community, but the amount of kids that have come to Hythe because of the school, has been growing. I do not want HRS to change. I want it to remain a community that offers and celebrates so many cultures, and has a Junior High. If this program change goes through, I am terrified about what it will do to my community itself. Will less people see it as necessary, and stop sending their kids? What will happen to the school building if it's under utilized? What will happen to my community if parents stop sending their kids?

I expose my kids to experiences in both Hythe and Beaverlodge, but I am passionate about my kids' education at HRS. I know they are receiving the best care, being taught by well qualified teachers, and learning new skills that are not available anywhere else. Please consider keeping the current school system as it is. It has served the communities so well, and continues to do so. Changing things will, I fear, create resentment and racial discrimination, while risking the quality of education of our young ones.

Thank you,





Fwd: Supporting our Community School

1 message

Wed, Feb 1, 2023 at 10:59 AM

Please add to the folder that has been started and to the NEXT column content agenda

Date: Wed, Feb 1, 2023 at 10:54 AM

Good morning,

My name is [REDACTED]. I am an [REDACTED] Beaverlodge, and I currently have two children attending Hythe Regional School. As you can imagine, I am in a bit of a tough situation, working in one school while supporting my girl's education in a different school.

I just wanted to say that I have been so pleased with my girl's experience at Hythe Regional, they have flourished under the care of their teacher, and the amazing Educational Assistant that they have working in their classroom. The support they have received, and attention that is available to them when needed, has been appreciated. As a parent, I am noticing that Hythe is meeting my expectations and am happy to have my children enrolled here.

As a parent, I am concerned about what could happen to my girl's education if Beaverlodge gets it with a new junior high. Some of my concerns are about what happens to the school, if Hythe is at the 43% capacity that the document is saying? How many specialized teachers will we lose, if enrollment is even lower than stated? What programs will we lose, what teachers will be shuffled around to fill in the gap left by smaller classes and fewer teachers? I am confident that the teachers will all be working tirelessly to make the school experience a positive as possible, but what will this look like in terms of quality education? Will my girl, and every other student that is loving Hythe, suffer because of lack of specialized teachers?

The fact that Beaverlodge is raising this issue again is concerning to me. In my mind, we have a perfectly functional regional school that is working. It offers cultural diversity, different options of extra-curricular activities, it offers computer classes, cooking, Cree etc. If we lose our student enrollment numbers, all of these amazing classes are affected. Students are pulled, classes get smaller, teachers lose jobs, and we lose our specialized courses/teachers. Not only do we have a perfectly operational Regional school already, it does not make financial sense to build a new one in the neighbouring community. I fear this will create resentment, schools will continue a rivalry, and instead of working together for the growth of community involvement and inclusion, schools and communities will be pitted against each other.

Ultimately, I want my kids and other kids to have quality education, and I am concerned what will happen to our community school, and the community itself, if this change with Junior High occurs. In my mind, let Hythe remain the sole Regional Junior High program, and let Beaverlodge have the main Regional High school. Please accept this as my plea to keep the program running as they are, I am passionate about my kids' education, and I do not want that compromised.

**Fwd: Transportation grant.**

1 message

Fri, Feb 24, 2023 at 10:32 AM

[REDACTED]

For engagement report

[REDACTED]



----- Forwarded message -----

[REDACTED]

Date: Thu, Feb 9, 2023 at 1:51 PM
Subject: Re: Transportation grant.

[REDACTED]

Thank you for the email.

Any grant money we receive for transportation students is spent on transportation. It is used for driver training, salaries, bus purchases, support infrastructure, and maintenance. Transportation funding can vary from year to year based upon grants such as rates for student funding for transportation, fuel subsidy grants and other expenses such as MELT Training [Mandatory Entry-Level Training] that was brought in as a requirement for bus drivers to obtain.

If transportation funding is in deficit then funds are diverted from other areas such as instruction so that we can transport students to and from school safely and in a timely manner. PWPSD has run a deficit in transportation for a number of years so that the service provided to students and families meets the highest of standards and balances ride times for students and families.

As for budgets, all budgets are formally approved in public Board Meetings. Our website has the Audited Financial Statement for 2021-2022 and the current budget posted as public documents. It can be found under the "media" tab under "Division Reports"

I hope this helps answer some of your questions.

[REDACTED]

On Thu, Feb 9, 2023 at 9:10 AM [REDACTED] wrote:

Good morning,

I am writing about an inquiry into the transportation grant. I was wondering if we would be able to see where the grant money is spent and what exactly would be affected if this grant is taken away?

I am concerned that the arguments are turning into money and not about the well being of the students. I understand that we need money to provide great experiences for our students. I am inquiring about what exactly will be taken away from transportation/ PWPSD.

I am also a concerned taxpayer and am now concerned that our government is giving away over \$100,000 for something that doesn't cost nearly close to what the grant is given for.

Thank you for your time with this matter.

**Fwd: A concerned Hythe grandparent**

1 message

Fri, Feb 10, 2023 at 2:00 PM

Please add to consent agenda and the folder.

----- Forwarded message -----

Date: Fri, Feb 10, 2023 at 12:22 PM

Subject: A concerned Hythe grandparent

Good afternoon PWPSD trustees!

I am writing as a concerned grandparent of 4 children in the local Hythe Regional School. I am a resident of the Hamlet of Hythe.

The current discussion that is happening in the Guiding Our Future document does not take into consideration the effects on the communities of Hythe and Horse Lake. To mix the students from the different local communities (Hythe, Beaverlodge, Horse Lake) is a good step before high school. It will help alleviate some of those socially awkward days and years.

These are all rural communities and bussing for school is a fact of life. The safety record of the buses in this region is amazing. Thank you to all the dedicated school bus drivers!

Hythe, Horse Lake and Beaverlodge are all communities too small to offer all levels of education- it is imperative that we work together and utilize resources in a stewardly manner.

I look forward to attending the meeting scheduled in Hythe on February 15th.

I ask that you consider the best option for the students!

Sincerely,

February 10, 2023

Dear Peace Wapiti School Board,

All over Alberta there has been a constant erosion of local services to rural communities and small towns as medical, social service, legal, and educational services become more centralized in larger centers. This trend can only be limited if smaller communities work together to save those services. The most effective way to do this is by eliminating the competition between smaller communities and considering a true regional strategy that works towards the good of all citizens involved. This necessitates abandoning historical rivalries, many of which have been around for decades.

Over 40 years ago the citizens of both Hythe and Beaverlodge areas realized that there were not enough students in each community to offer high-quality education at the grade 7 to 12 levels. In the spirit of providing what was best for all students it was decided that two regional schools would be built, one in Hythe for grades 7-9, one in Beaverlodge for 10 -12. This solution provided higher numbers for both, translating into more funding and staffing for both Core and Optional classes and better extracurricular opportunities. This arrangement has worked very well since, and has been shown to be truly a solution that provides the best education for all regional students.

The Beaverlodge Elementary School has experienced a drop in enrollment recently, and is presently conducting a campaign to increase student enrollment by removing the Beaverlodge area 7-9 students from Hythe Regional School and placing them in BES and BRHS. At first glance this appears to be an easy and effective solution, until you begin to look at the immediate effects and the potential long-term results. Instead of creating a regional community strategy, it looks at only the questionable value to one community to the detriment of all the others involved. Much of this is politically driven and does not consider what is truly the best for ALL students in the west part of the County of Grande Prairie. In fact, there are negative consequences to students at all levels in all regional communities.

Possible negative consequences, BES

- The staffing ratio for the K-6 students will not increase with the addition of 7 and 8. With 4 Jr High classes added there is in fact the distinct possibility of a 6/7 or 7/8 split grades.
- BES has extra classrooms which are not being used for home rooms. At least three of these are now being used for specialty rooms such as fine arts, arts, and special Education. These rooms would be needed for Junior High homerooms, so special facilities would be reduced.
- BES is currently a Compressed School Week facility, meaning that they get 9 Fridays off each year to make up for extended hours. This would no longer be the case as their day would be shortened.
- Gym facilities likely double booked for classes
- Washrooms, playgrounds will be more congested with a broader age range of students

Negative Consequences BRHS

- Beaverlodge Grade 9 students put onto the semester system. More intense learning placed upon them in shorter periods of time
- High School teachers covering any Grade 9 classes would have to continue to teach during exam weeks, or schedules during those times would be severely affected.
- Grade 8 Shop times would be affected as 2 separate schools would be sending students as classes.
- Provincial Achievement Tests will be administered at BRHS. On the semester system students. This means that PATs will be administered twice yearly for BL students, with likely increased stress on students and parents

- Grade 9 students will be exposed to a high school culture early. While some of this may be positive, there will also be influence get involved with high school age social activities like drinking, smoking, drugs, etc. Additional supervision of Grade 9 students will be required during breaks, especially the parking lot. Junior High students at HRS are presently supervised at all times. At present, HRS is a closed campus. Students are required to remain at the school during lunch breaks. BRHS would have to monitor Grade 9 students or include them in the lunch break open policy.

Negative Consequences for Hythe Regional School

- Utilization drops to under 50% in spite of student numbers remaining consistent for previous years. This low utilization could lead to the loss of all junior high students.
- Staffing reduction, teachers, and support staff terminated or transferred
- Too few students to field competitive sports team
- Loss of special events and programs due to reduced per-student funding

Negative Consequences for all 7-9 Students

- General staffing would continue to be on a per-student ratio. This would mean that the staff presently supported at HRS would be redistributed among three schools, with the availability of specialized teachers and support staff for those students substantially reduced. Flexibility for teaching assignments would also be lower.
- Funding for special cultural, social, and other programs would be split, with resulting decreases for Junior High specific events, including dances.
- Athletics would be greatly impacted. Intramural and interschool programs would lose the depth allowed for under the present system. The population to draw teams from would be much smaller in all three schools. Teams would be less competitive and A and B teams would likely not be possible. BRHS charges for athletic extracurricular programs, so any grade 9 students who wish to play will do so at a cost. Grade 9 students would also be much less likely to be able to make the competitive intraschool teams.
- Socialization between young people from the various communities in the West County would be delayed. Beaverlodge elementary students would remain with the same cohort until Grade 9, Hythe area and Horse Lake students until Grade 10. Many friendships that have traditionally developed in Jr. High would not materialize. The sense of united community within our rural setting would be reduced.
- Truth and Reconciliation – HRS in partnership with Horse Lake and Western Cree Council presents frequent special events to foster the spirit of Truth and Reconciliation. This would be reduced for HRS students, and essentially eliminated for Beaverlodge area students to the detriment of all of us.

Effects upon Peace Wapiti School Division

- Increased costs of the transition. BES would need new resources, equipment, desks, supplies to accommodate higher grade levels. BRHS would require Grade 9 resources.
- Loss of Provincial Transportation Grants for busing students to HRS. This grant is presently about 137 thousand dollars.
- Laying off or reducing hours for bus drivers currently on the BL-Hythe run twice daily.
- Increased short-term costs to administer the transition from the status quo.

Other Considerations

- Once BRHS has been established as a regional 9-12 school there will be probably long-term pressure to make all West County schools into K-8 schools, drawing grade 9 students from Hythe, Valhalla, Elmworth,

and possibly Wembley into Beaverlodge. This would affect all of those schools, even to the point of making some of them no longer viable as k-8, or even k-6 in some cases.

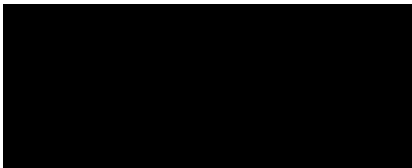
- A major item on the BES proposal is the purported danger of busing students to Hythe on Highway 43. Peace Wapiti has an impeccable busing safety record. The last bus accident on that road was 20 years ago involving a bus and a Hythe High School who was NOT using the busing system, lost control and collided with that bus. In fact the overall number of serious accidents on that section of highway has dropped constantly in recent years. Beaverlodge parents routinely drive their children to activities in Grande Prairie and beyond for activities on roads with much worse records.

Summary

Hythe Regional school currently has 206 students enrolled in Junior High. Numbers have remained static despite the drop in students coming from Beaverlodge. Thanks to this enrollment the school offers a wide range of academic programming with specialized teachers and support staff. It also offers a multitude of resources and special activities, including a full sports program. In a 2022 survey an overwhelming majority of Jr. High students at HRS expressed satisfaction with the academic, social, and extra-curricular opportunities available at that school. Regional Junior High and High school has been an effective and efficient solution for all of the west Peace Wapiti area for financial, educational, and community population issues. If its not broken, why try to fix it? We need to consider what is best for all our children, not making decisions on the basis of divisive political agendas.

Thank you for your consideration on this very important matter. I would be happy to discuss this further if you have any questions or comments. My contact information is listed below.

Sincerely,





February 8, 2023

Peace Wapiti Public School District Trustees
8611A - 108 Street
Grande Prairie, AB T8V 4C5

To Peace Wapiti Public School District Trustees,

I am writing today on behalf of the teachers of Northern Spirit ATA Local 6 who will be impacted by the Guiding our Future project. Teachers at Hythe Regional School (HRS), Beaverlodge Elementary School (BES) and Beaverlodge Regional High School (BRHS) have expressed concerns about the cost of this project and the design and use of the online ideas voting platform and survey. I have heard from many teachers who are being mentally affected because of the division and uncertainty that has been created in their community.

The online voting platform quickly became a place for community members to complain about BES and the junior high at HRS. Some of the comments were completely untrue and defamatory towards the staff at both schools. Many teachers, have felt personally attacked by several of the "ideas" put forward on that platform and are very concerned about how these "ideas" and their ratings are going to be used by the board moving forward.

We have some concerns about the survey instrument that is being used to collect data from stakeholders and are wondering how the board is going to ensure that the data being collected is reliable and valid. This public survey can be taken by anyone, anywhere. Further, the survey can be taken multiple times by the same person. For example, I was able to access the survey a second time, from the same computer, after a simple cache clear of my browser.

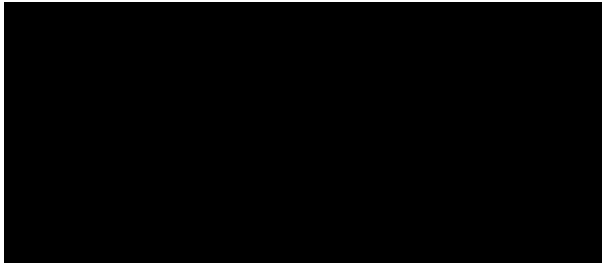
In addition to concerns about data validity, teachers have raised a concern that the survey is missing some information that makes the survey appear biased towards scenarios 1 & 2 and may prevent stakeholders from being able to provide an informed opinion. The considerations for scenarios 1 & 2 never included the fact that the transportation grant has a net income of over \$120,000 for the transfer bus route and that this would be lost if either of these scenarios was approved. It is our belief that this should have been disclosed as it is important information for stakeholders to consider. Wording for scenario 2 considerations include "Would be an optimal choice if the Board was considering a K-8 replacement school in Beaverlodge;", which could be seen as using biased language. In contrast, considerations for scenario 3 include the following:

- No changes in transportation grants.
- Continued student enrollment declines in Beaverlodge remain a possibility.
- Teaching staff at BES has been reduced from 19 full-time positions in 2018 to 15.55 in 2021 (a reduction of 3.45). This has led to some combined classes in elementary in non-core classes.

Mentioning the transportation grants in this scenario, for the first time in the survey without any other information, will likely lead some readers to think that this is actually going to continue to cost the board money, which is false. Stating that there will be enrollment decline and staff reduction in Beaverlodge for scenario 3, but not also including this in scenarios 1 & 2 is misleading. K-6 enrollment at BES might still decline in either scenario 1 & 2 since a study was not conducted to determine the actual reason for the decline of the BES K-6 student population over the last decade. Also, adding students that are in grade 7 and 8 to BES is not necessarily going to result in any changes to elementary non-core classes needing to be combined. Again, misleading readers to believe that scenario 1 & 2 would relieve this issue.

Our concern is that the data from both the ideas voting platform and the survey are not going to be enough for trustees to make an informed decision on this significant issue. Teachers are the professional educational experts. We hope that teachers' voices are going to be heard and genuinely considered during this process. I look forward to learning about how the data collected will be validated and used by trustees.

On behalf of the teachers of Northern Spirit ATA Local 6,



February 12, 2023

PEACE WAPITI PUBLIC SCHOOLS

RE: Guiding Our Future - HRS

I am writing you in regards to the proposed changes to Junior high school placement in the west county. I believe it would be extremely detrimental to both communities to split these students. Here are some of the reasons I am in agreeance to keep all the students in junior high in Hythe.

1. I fear funding would be cut for the Hythe school and the Beaverlodge school due to PWPSD having to split funding between both schools. Therefore, having a decrease of options and tools to help our children succeed.
2. Having come from a small school with barely enough kids for an extra-curricular sports team it is very hard to compete and not destroy all future hopes of keeping these kids active when their school does not have enough kids to even make a team. Never mind the extra coaching staff that will be required if there are enough kids at each school to make a team.
3. HRS has already renovated/upgraded and has the programming to handle all of the junior high students. This allows these students more hands-on learning in the appropriate classrooms.
4. My children under all of the current options would stay in Hythe until Grade 9 but if that was not the case, I would NOT be in favor of my grade 8-9 children going to a high school with semester classing.
5. I cannot get on board with the argument that parents find it difficult to drive to Hythe for extracurricular when most parents especially in this area are already driving their kids EVERYWHERE for the other extracurricular such as hockey, gymnastics, dance, karate, etc...If you have children you will have to drive we all live in rural Alberta.

In conclusion I am in agreeance with the option to keep things the same. We already have a renovated school to handle all of the west county junior high why change something that works. Thank you for your attention.

SINCERELY,

[Redacted Signature]

[Redacted Address]

February 12, 2023

PEACE WAPITI PUBLIC SCHOOLS

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

RE: Guiding Our Future - HRS

I am writing you in regards to the proposed changes to Junior high school placement in the west county. I have heard numerous statements from acquaintances in regards to the Beaverlodge Elementary School. It would be great to get clarification on these statements and if they are true, it should be taken into account before we add more children.

1. The school was built in the 1950's and is full of Led paint and asbestos.
2. There is no sprinkler system in the Beaverlodge Elementary and in the case of an emergency they would have to get water from across the street.
3. To add the Junior high to this school you would be removing classrooms from elementary current programming. Thus, impacting the education of the elementary students already attending this school.

I have been following along and reading the literature as it becomes available, and by my estimation all arguments from the Beaverlodge school could be used as an argument by the Hythe and Wembley schools as well as the residence of Horse Lake, Valhalla and Elmworth in regards to their school kids.

There are challenges when it comes to the allocation of resources in rural Alberta however, I do not see shifting existing problems from one community to another as a responsible solution. To my knowledge the existing situation was formulated as a compromise for the two communities to keep both communities sustainable and viable.

In conclusion I am in agreeance with the option to keep things the same. We already have a renovated school to handle all of the west county junior high and there seems to be no valid reason to uproot the current system to place these junior high students in an older smaller school.

SINCERELY,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

PWPSD Trustees,

I have been a member of the Hythe and Beaverlodge communities my entire life. As a child I attended Beaverlodge Elementary School and transitioned into Hythe Regional Junior High. As an adult I began my career as a teacher at Hythe Regional School and worked in that building for 11 years.

As a student, I loved the idea of going to a new school and meeting new teachers and peers. After being in the same school with the same classmates, same teachers, same classes, and same rules for 7 years (including Kindergarten), it was time for a change. I was somewhat shy and did not feel as though I had a core group of friends my age in my hometown. It was exciting to enter a new community and be exposed to new people. To this day, I have friends that I would not have connected with in the same way had we not met until high school. Because of the population of it being a regional school, we were able to have competitive sports teams with at least two teams per gender per sport. There were also clubs that students could participate in after school such as Debate, Jeopardy, Drama, and more. This could not have occurred had the population of students and staff been lowered.

As a teacher, I have never worked in an atmosphere so filled with love. When I first started at HRS, many of the junior high teachers that taught me were still working in the building. This shows a true commitment to the community. Staff would (and still does) spend much of their free time cheering their students in their non-school activities all over the county. As someone who worked at HRS for 11 years, I am saddened to hear the rumours and comments being made towards the educators, the education being provided, and the school in general. Hythe Regional School has worked hard to provide the level of education that they do. They are able to provide subject specialised teachers who have taught in their area of expertise for extended periods of time. There are no empty spaces on the junior high side in HRS at this time. They are all being used to help students navigate through their day. A full computer lab, two science labs, a Cree classroom, a weight room, an art supply space and a Indigenous cooking class space. The building has an amazing sensory room that has been used to help students with needs of all kinds find regulation, find quiet, and find peace. These features would not be as easily accessible if the school population were to decrease due to staffing changes.

Hythe Regional School has 3 of the most amazing Indigenous liaisons available in Peace Wapiti. The school is lucky to be able to have all of their liaisons in house. Other Peace Wapiti schools do not have this luxury and have to share liaisons between schools. The Cree program has been very successful for all students who attend junior high in Hythe. They open the class up to ANYONE who wants to learn the Cree language in grade 7 and those students continue to move through CSL throughout their 7, 8, 9 years. This is not just Hythe students but Beaverlodge as well. Many students choose to learn Cree instead of French.

Junior high is the most difficult period of life. Many students would not survive (literally and figuratively) if not for the kind, caring, compassionate humans in the Hythe Regional School building. They have built a welcoming, safe environment for all students, no matter their backgrounds or beliefs. Dissipating the grade 7, 8, and 9 community could be detrimental to many youth. As youth mature, it becomes more difficult to build new friendships in the same way- having students meet for the first time in high school could create issues.

As I compose this letter, I am feeling defeated and attacked. I have taken a leave from HRS this year to try something new, and it was truly the hardest thing I have ever done. The students, the staff, and the school as a whole, made me the teacher that I am today. It was, and continues to be, home to me. I am proud to tell people that I taught Junior High at Hythe Regional School for an extended number of years. Through the 11 years I was there, I felt like I was able to connect with many students and parents from all over the area. I loved being connected to people from all surrounding communities and I enjoyed seeing the friendships created between students from each place.

I hope you are able to look at all of the scenarios without the rumours, mistruths and prejudices clouding your thoughts. Look at the pros and cons of each choice. Look at the people that will be affected; the students, the staff, and the community. Listen to the voices of the ones who have experienced things first hand, not the ones who are shouting the loudest.

Thank you for taking the time to read all of the letters of support,

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

**Fwd: Thank you for your time.**

1 message

Wed, Feb 15, 2023 at 7:01 AM

Folder, consent agenda and share with dialogue partners.

----- Forwarded message -----

Date: Tue, Feb 14, 2023 at 10:49 PM

Subject: Thank you for your time.

Hello,

I hope it is ok that I am writing this as an email rather than writing a second letter. And I want to warn you that this is more about feelings.

I have lived through the Beaverlodge vs Hythe issue being brought up two previous times before this time. Each time the conflict brought a level of social devastation to the communities. This may sound like hysterics, but it honestly isn't. The damage the last couple of times caused stayed at the surface for many years. And now, this time around I am seeing the hurt and anger rise up again. Just yesterday I had students in my office telling me that they hate everything about Hythe. When I encouraged them to give their reasons, they didn't really have any, and actually left acknowledging that there was a lot of good. At the Hythe arena the other day, the clock glitches out and a parent from Beaverlodge loudly exclaimed "well that's typical for Hythe, everything sucks". At the Beaverlodge another parent loudly discusses everything they hate about Hythe and another parent reacts angrily back. I know people who are no longer visiting stores or talking to acquaintances because of unkind things said. There is also a lot of rumours and half truths being shared by some. Myself and Stacey both had read and heard about posts on social media that discredited all the amazing work we do together in transitioning students from BES to HRS. The work we do with the students and the families truly is a successful partnership, but according to the posts shared on social media it is always a failure. I truly do not believe we have had a failure, we have had challenges, but we work through them together.

When this issue was brought up again, I was truly worried because I remembered last time. I remember listening to someone stand up in the town meeting back then and state that Hythe did not deserve a junior high because all of the athletes and smart students came from Beaverlodge and many people clapped at that. When I student-taught in Beaverlodge I had kids ask me if the water was really green and if it was true that the students from Horselake jumped everyone. I then taught those same students at HRS and they had fantastic experiences at Hythe and none of them drank green water or got jumped.

It took years to heal the rifts caused by the last drive to split the schools. We had gotten to a place where the communities were working well together and supporting each other. This cohesion now seems to be rapidly disappearing. We are hearing more negative, derogatory, and racist comments in our hallways than I can ever recall. What totally saddens me is that all this hurt and anger is being brought up again, so soon after it was decided that the regional school would be in Hythe and a school was built to accommodate this decision. This is a school that is still considered to be new in the eyes of the province.

Hythe is not better than Beaverlodge and Horselake. Beaverlodge is not better than Hythe and Horselake. Horselake is not better than Hythe and Beaverlodge. We need to all be working together to provide the best educational experience we can. An educational experience that includes academics, socialization, social awareness, mental health and physical health. What should be about kids has been turned into being about communities, and almost seems to be a political orientated thing rather a student directed thing.

I understand the wanting your students in your hometown, and I know the majority of individuals from all the communities are kind and caring individuals who are remaining true to their best self. Sadly they aren't the ones we hear.

Thank you for your time. I know this is long and I know it won't change anything, but this has been weighing on my heart, and I know what we are hearing and seeing is affecting many of the teachers in Hythe, and is most

3/6/23, 11:57 AM

Peace Wapiti Public School Division Mail - Fwd: Thank you for your time.

definitely affecting the students.

Kindly,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



Fwd: Letter In Support of keeping BES/HRS/BRHS in the current scenario.1 message

[REDACTED] Wed, Feb 15, 2023 at 5:42 PM

Consent and file

----- Forwarded message -----

[REDACTED]
Date: Wed, Feb 15, 2023 at 3:59 PMSubject: Re: Letter In Support of keeping BES/HRS/BRHS in the current scenario.
[REDACTED]

Good afternoon [REDACTED]

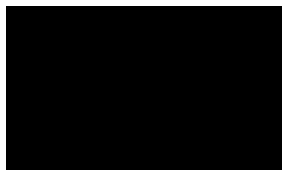
I want to thank you for taking the time to provide your perspective to the PWPSD Board. Please consider participating in the on line survey and a community meeting as well. We will be working hard with all the facts and data to make a solid decision on this important topic. Again, thank you for your perspective. Take care.

[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone

On Feb 15, 2023, at 2:59 PM, [REDACTED] wrote:

Thank you for taking the time to read and regard my attached letter.

 **Support in HRS current scenario**

February 15, 2023

Dear Peace Wapiti School Board,

My name is [REDACTED] and I was a teacher with the County of Grande Prairie and with Peace Wapiti School Board for 33 years. I loved every moment of those 33 years. I taught in LaGlace, in Hythe in the Elementary and Junior High and in Beaverlodge Elementary. I experienced a very rewarding and enjoyable career. I was also lucky enough to do some contract work with Peace Wapiti after my retirement. Many times while I was working in Beaverlodge I would think to myself how nice it would be to have our own Junior High. Oh the things I could plan in my role as Vice principal, oh the fun it would be to have the help of Junior High in the younger classes in my role as a classroom teacher, oh how great would it be to have mentors for our special needs kids. I often dreamt on and on about how great this would be.

About 23 years ago we thought we would be given the chance for this to happen. There was excitement in the school and in the community of Beaverlodge. Yes my kids could stay in town, yes I don't have to worry about them travelling on the bus, yes I could easily follow their progress and help them with special ed programming. And finally a resounding yes that in my position as administrator and special ed. Teacher, Counsellor and classroom educator I would be able to see some of my wishes and dreams come to fruition. We could grow our school and continue to be one of the top ranked schools in the Peace Wapiti School Board. Alas my dreams were shattered.

So now fast forward to today. Again I have dreams but these are different. I dream that I can see my 8 grandchildren attend school in their own community. I dream that as an educator I can volunteer in their school. I dream that I can continue in my role as town counsellor to make opportunities available to all of our Beaverlodge students and to my grandchildren. I dream that they will truly learn about being a community member, a volunteer and a valued member of our larger community. I want them to attend the art walk, to volunteer at community events to see our Olympic Gold Medalist in a parade. I want them to dream about what is possible and what can be attained in a wonderful, vibrant, active community. Please just give them that chance.

Now finally go back in time approximately 52 years ago. I was in Grade 8 and we were going to have a whole bunch of new kids join our school. We didn't understand politics or reasoning behind this. We just knew there would be more kids. I was very athletic and so tried out for all of the teams. I was the only Hythe girl my age that made the volleyball team and the basketball ball team. I had to make new friends. In reflection this continued on through high school as well. 52 years ago there were two active grocery stores, restaurants where we could go and eat before games. There were teachers committed to coaching volleyball. Basketball, badminton, track and field and even hockey. This is not the case anymore. Parents are coaching, volunteers are coaching and they want to do it in their home community.

I am a town councillor in Beaverlodge. I grew up in Hythe and attended school there until Grade nine. My husband is from Beaverlodge and he attended school there as well. I have 4 children all who attended school there and were educated by some truly wonderful teachers and with some very good administrators. I have taught in LaGlace which has a junior high, in Hythe which has a junior high and I have done contract work in Eaglesham School which has junior high, in Sexsmith where there is a junior high, and in Rycroft where there is a junior high. I was able to witness the importance of a K to 8 or K to 9 school community and how well everyone related with each other . I was also able to see how beneficial the community was to the school and the school to the community .. I only want the chance to see, feel and experience this in my own community Beaverlodge.

Please allow us to educate our own children and grandchildren in our own community. Please look at the statistics. Please see clearly what is happening to Beaverlodge Elementary school. Please do what is right for our children.

Sincerely,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the sender.



Fwd: thank you

1 message



Wed, Feb 15, 2023 at 9:22 AM

Please add to the folder and consent agenda as well.

----- Forwarded message -----



Date: Wed, Feb 15, 2023 at 9:13 AM

Subject: thank you



On behalf of my staff, parent council , and community I wanted to thank all of you for your presence last night. My staff and [REDACTED] and I really appreciated your support.



**Fwd: Beaverlodge-Hythe Junior High**

1 message

Fri, Feb 24, 2023 at 10:31 AM

For engagement report



----- Forwarded message -----

Date: Wed, Feb 15, 2023 at 10:08 AM

Subject: Re: Beaverlodge-Hythe Junior High

Good morning

Thank you very much for your email. We understand there are benefits and drawbacks to each possible scenario and we appreciate you taking the time to share your thoughts and feelings with us.

You have raised some very important questions and the Board will take every piece of information we receive into consideration when they work together to make this very difficult decision.

Once we have compiled all the feedback and information received through all our communication channels, we will share our report to the Board on our [Guiding Our Future](#) webpage. Until then, if you have any further questions or thoughts please reach out.

Have a great rest of your week.





On Wed, Feb 15, 2023 at 9:55 AM [REDACTED] wrote:
To Whom It May Concern,

I've started and deleted this email many times over the last couple of weeks. Due to uncertainty in my own opinions, uncertainty of facts, uncertainty of gossip, and uncertainty of which result would ultimately be best for our area.

If you had asked me months ago where I stood, it was firmly in support to bring JR high to Beaverlodge. No questions asked.

But now I have a lot of questions and concerns.

Ideally, it's still my best case scenario for many reasons. Only now, there are expectations that come along with it. And I'm not sure if they will happen or not.

So, let's start with why I'm in support of the JR high being in Beaverlodge. Most of all, it's home. Even though we live rurally, my kids attend/attended daycare, elementary school, do their extracurricular activities and it's where I work. I have friends who live in Beaverlodge. We frequent the businesses as regularly as we can. I would feel safe if my children ever needed help. We have emergency plans in place of trusted homes/businesses. Not to mention, the RCMP detachment and hospital are right there. I don't know a single person who lives in Hythe. And I'm unfamiliar with the Hamlet because I don't spend my time there.

Next, Beaverlodge has many wonderful opportunities for the schools to take advantage of. The pool and rec center, the skating rink, curling rink, Art & Cultural Center, public library, ag grounds, baseball and soccer fields, even a local dance studio. And of course, the Beaverlodge High School. Beaverlodge has hosted many community events that quite often the elementary school has been a part of and high school students have the freedom and ease to also take in.

Spending additional time on the bus is not ideal. My family is already on the bus for 30 minutes each way just to get to the Beaverlodge Elementary School. The extra time crammed onto a bus and shipped down the two lane highway is something I would like to avoid if possible. There are many days that I worry. And it's not about the bus driver. It's about the others on the road. Poor driving conditions, people driving too fast, distracted, impaired, or the big trucks driving tired. It's not a risk I would willingly take.

I have loved being involved with my children and BES. I've volunteered and been a part of many classes and activities as a parent helper. Last summer I was asked to do a photography lesson with each grade for their McNaught Homestead session. I also started a lunch time Lego Club when my oldest was looking for a non-sport extracurricular activity at school. It's still going on now even though he's in JR high, and COVID shut it down for 2 years. I like to help and be a part of the school community. Getting to know other kids and their families. Because I work full time, it's not as easy to commute to and from another community to do those things.

Now for the questions.

IF Beaverlodge does get to keep our JR high students in our town - there are a lot of things I really feel need to happen.... or what is the point? Will the students (K to 7/8) lose non-core subjects/activities? Fine arts? PE? Option-type classes? Right now, my elementary aged child does Go Noodle in their classroom if they can't get the gym for PE. How much harder is it going to be if we add 2 full grades to the school? Can we look into using town resources such as the pool, skating rink, curling rink, fitness center, playing fields, etc? Are PWSD, BES, BRHS and all of the parents and community members ready and willing to put resources in so that these kids don't lose the little nuggets of joy that school can bring? My JR high kid loves the fun courses like photography, outdoor ed, etc. If he would lose this just to come to this school, then I am not 100% sure I can support that. School isn't just about sitting in a desk and learning about the core subjects. I know that this

takes money and volunteers to make happen. Are our teachers willing to take it on? Are we able and willing to throw money at it? Who can help out with this stuff? Community members / volunteers? The ability to offer non-sport activities has already been something I have been bringing up to BES. There is a real lack of non-sport activities available to the kids. Not every kid wants to play basketball or volleyball. Some kids are drawn to other activities like art and STEM activities. So if there is already such a struggle to find volunteers and funds to take this on - where will it come from?

BES is losing enrollment. That is a fact that has been presented. And I understand that when enrollment goes down, so does funding for staff and so on. This is VERY concerning. So from there, the questions are:

Why is our enrollment dwindling? Is it only because of the bus ride to Hythe? What does St. Mary's have that our school doesn't? What are they doing that we SHOULD/COULD be doing? Are there activities that BES needs to look into? Do they have a sense of community and togetherness that we're lacking?

I feel like there is a huge disconnect between Beaverlodge and Hythe. I felt it when my child moved to Grade 7 there. I feel like I was not informed much about the transition. It was like I should have known everything. And Hythe families probably do know how it all works. But us Beaverlodge families definitely felt like we were grasping for any sense of information.

If things stay the same going forward, I really want to see the schools work together to ensure that families feel supported and connected. BES and HRS need to work together to ensure that the transition for students and families are smooth and supported. It can't keep being a fight. Is there that same disconnect between HRS and BRHS? I don't know.

Things I'm not worried about at all:

- * losing CSW. I work full time. Even when there is no school, I'm not at home with them anyways. When they were both in Elementary and very little, I had to find a sitter for them which was inconvenient. Going to school 5 days a week I believe sets them up better for life.
- * the whole "making new friends" argument. My Jr high kid didn't have a lot of friends in BES and when he went to HRS, he just gained new bullies. Not every kid goes on to create all these new relationships. Kids will meet other kids in various ways throughout their life. Extracurricular (hockey, dance, karate, 4H, etc).
- * Sports - if it's important to people - which I believe in this area it is.... they will find a way and make it work. Sports are important to a lot of people (not to me, to be honest). There is rarely a parent or community member who won't give their all to make a sport team happen.
- * Having grade 9s in the high school. I attended a Grade 7 to 12 school in Alberta. There are a lot of schools in this province that have a mix of JR and SR high students under one roof.
- * The majority of the teachers and staff at BES & HRS are fantastic. My kids love the staff at their schools.

There are a lot of numbers floating out there on both sides and there hasn't been anyone to publicly fact check everyone. Which argument is correct? Like: Bussing kids to and from Hythe costs X every year - and then the other side argues that we'll lose a significant grant which would affect more than just the JR high kids. So which is worse?

The emotions run high with this. I'm not from this area originally so it's been a learning curve to navigate that type of relationship between towns. Especially when they are so interwoven with the schools. I have heard from locals that this is an ongoing argument and fight. So I'm really trying to make sure I'm blocking out the noise and trying to think clearly and openly.

Our kids deserve to be protected, supported, encouraged and cared for. Who they become in this life is determined by how we (adults) do this for them. And every kid is different. My two kids are very different. We need teachers and staff who are going to continue to nurture them no matter what. We need a community who is going to fight for them not just now, but no matter what the result is. And they need to continue to fight for the students going forward. We need to be a positive influence on them and each other.

I know I'm just one parent. And I know there are a lot of people out there screaming at the treetops about For / Against. I just hope that some are asking questions and really thinking it through. No matter the decision, there are going to be a lot of people unhappy and a lot of things to figure out and work through. It will take a village and I hope we can all come together to make this a positive experience.

**Fwd: BES vs HRS vs BRHS scenarios**

1 message

Fri, Feb 24, 2023 at 10:30 AM

For engagement report



----- Forwarded message -----

Date: Wed, Feb 15, 2023 at 4:23 PM

Subject: BES vs HRS vs BRHS scenarios

Hi,
Unfortunately, I am out of town this week and not able to attend any of your public forums. I am a pass trustee of the Peace Wapiti school division, I served for 10 years (2007-2017) on the board and this was an issue on the table at that time.

I am not a supporter of Beaverlodge elementary, versus Hythe regional, versus Beaverlodge regional high school, versus the Beaverlodge Catholic school. I am a supporter of community-based schooling.

Well I was on the school board, I did a lot of research into history, costs and into doing due diligence on behalf of all students.

Some of the comments that are coming out around the communities or false, misleading, and outright absurd. I would love to be able to meet face-to-face with the group that is presenting to the Peace Wapiti school board, before a package is submitted.

You can contact me at [REDACTED] or reply to this email.

To Peace Wapiti Public School District School Board,

I am writing this letter to inform you of my strong belief that Beaverlodge Elementary School (BES) students should continue to attend Hythe Regional School (HRS) for grades 7-9. I believe that I have a unique perspective because as a student I attended Beaverlodge Elementary School (BES) for elementary school, Hythe Regional Junior High School (now HRS) for junior high school, and Beaverlodge Regional High School (BRHS) for highschool. I have worked as a teacher at BES, HRS and BRHS (currently). My three children currently attend HRS in elementary school, and my oldest is going to continue at HRS for junior high in September. I feel all of these connections give me a well rounded view of the issues going on (which have been, unfortunately, going on for decades).

Hythe Regional School was newly refinished in 2009. It is a beautiful establishment that has a significant amount of room to accommodate Hythe and Beaverlodge grades 7-9 students. If Beaverlodge students stop coming to Hythe, this will result in a considerable waste of infrastructure and money for the Peace Wapiti School Division. HRS is large enough to comfortably host after school sports in their large gymnasium and any other activities that would benefit the surrounding communities and students (e.g. the special guests showcasing traditional Indigenous dancing). During the new construction of HRS, they were able to build 2 specific science rooms, a makerspace room for student exploration within their classes, a Cree classroom, fitness room, computer lab, sensory room and a kitchen for the lunch program. To accommodate junior high students at a relatively older school (BES), PWPSD will have to spend a substantial amount of money to upgrade their school.

Dividing the communities up for junior high would make it difficult to have after school sports because of low student enrollment. Hythe Regional has many teachers that volunteer for coaching these teams and other after school programs (e.g. computer club). Beaverlodge Elementary school has said that if students want afterschool sports, the parents need to volunteer to do this. After school activities (particularly sports) offer endless benefits towards a students entire wellbeing: connection, physical activity, confidence, improved social skills, fostering respectful interactions during times of competitive nature, and improved mental health. Out of school sports are considerably more expensive and less inclusive to potential participants, because of their socioeconomic status. Without after school sports, many of these students will not have the opportunity to reap the benefits of being in sports. All of these claims are supported by numerous peer review articles including the journal article, "Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics, 2010, 3, 176-193".

One of the scenarios is having grade 8 and 9 students at BRHS. From previously teaching junior high myself, I know these students are not typically mature or responsible enough to handle the requirements and culture of highschool. These are young adolescents that need to be protected from the possible influences of some older students (skipping classes, drinking, drugs, and other unfavourable activities). I personally have 18 year old students in my grade 10 science class. There will absolutely be cross grade influence, no matter how hard we try to keep them apart. BRHS being an open campus (the kids can leave school grounds at lunch) is highly problematic for a developing young adolescent. Besides negative influences, grade 8 & 9 students need the whole school year for their courses, not just semesters. Highschool semesters will further hinder the students who already struggle, and potentially cause unnecessary struggles for students who are currently thriving. They will have half of the school year to accomplish all of their outcomes for each subject.

I firmly believe that our communities are stronger together. For years HRS has been working tirelessly to build an inclusive community that is supportive of all ethnicities and cultures. HRS has a large

population of indigenous students, creating a beautifully diverse school culture. Because of the total number of student at HRS (a great number of them being from Beaverlodge), HRS is able to provide invaluable options for ALL students to integrate the Indigenous culture into the school: cooking in Cree, Cree as a second language (grades 4-9), and introduction to Cree for the younger grades. With a lower enrollment, I'm afraid there wouldn't be the funding to provide these opportunities. **In a time of fundamental reconciliation, dividing the communities is a substantial step backwards.**

Hythe Regional School also offers a junior high indigenous leadership group. The basis is engaging in cultural exploration tasks and learning opportunities to empower and enrich these student's lives through their Indigenous culture. Will this incredible opportunity be taken away with a lower enrollment if BES students no longer attend?

A few more points worth noting:

Regarding Hythe as a community, if BES students stop coming to Hythe for junior high, I fear that it will be the start of a downfall for the community. How will a significantly lower enrollment at HRS affect the economy of the Hythe community? Will this affect how many families will want to move to Hythe?

Our Hythe students are bussed to Beaverlodge for high school, how is this different from Beaverlodge students being bussed to Hythe for junior high?

BES is stating that their low enrollment is due to bussing issues to Hythe for junior high students. I personally know families that left BES to enroll in other schools, and the bussing was **not** the reason. We are trading one school with current low enrollment (BES) for another school that would then have low enrollment, even though it is a newer school that Peace Wapiti has spent an incredible amount of money on.

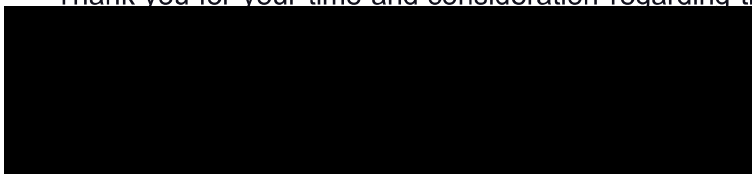
This proposed scenario of separating the communities is based off the low enrollment of BES. What happens if we separate the communities and the enrollment continues to decline at BES?

If we divide our communities for education, will this have a societal ripple effect through the communities? Will there be a divide in terms of Hythe vs. Beaverlodge? Will the past conflict between cultures return? We as communities have grown exponentially to reconcile the past regarding how the indigenous community was treated. Is this, again, a step backwards when you divide the students?

This situation directly affects not only the professional lives but also the personal lives of the staff at all 3 schools. Is the mental health and wellbeing of staff being taken into consideration?

Again, I strongly believe that our communities are better together. Together, we can continue to create the best possible learning experiences for both Beaverlodge and Hythe students.

Thank you for your time and consideration regarding this very serious matter:



To PWPSD School Board;

Page one of your background document states that your enrollment at Beaverlodge Elementary School has dropped, and many students are going to the Catholic School, and that bringing your Grade seven, eight and nines back to Beaverlodge will eliminate this issue. And Hythe Regional School would continue to be a K-9 school. Nowhere does it mention the detrimental effect that this would have on Hythe Regional School, no where!

Perhaps you need to take into consideration that not all Beaverlodge parents agree with the proposed changes. And does this not in fact mean there could still be unhappy parents in Beaverlodge, who would possibly choose other alternatives to public education. If Beaverlodge numbers are falling maybe a study needs to be done to find out why families are leaving. Is it just a shift in population or is there an underlying reason?

Unfortunately this independent information gathering system has illuminated the negative attitudes and messages of a few Beaverlodge Elementary School Council members, it is not representative of all Beaverlodge parents, which can in itself make the public system seem unattractive to people.

The safety issues that keep getting brought up are not issues at all. Peace Wapiti has an excellent safety record, one of the best in the province. Many students ride on buses to get to the schools initially before transferring, and yet this doesn't seem to be an issue. Students regularly ride on buses to play sports in other schools, but this isn't an issue. Students ride buses to go on field trips and this is also not an issue.

Just the nine miles between Beaverlodge and Hythe are deemed too dangerous for some students. Our bus drivers are very well trained and knowledgeable about road conditions and when it is unsafe to travel roads.

I'm not sure how 50 minutes is the number that was put forth for the time to transfer students between Beaverlodge and Hythe, as it is only nine

miles, and takes approximately 15 minutes one way on good roads. I don't think it is fair to include wait times at schools in this data, which is how I'm assuming they came up with this information.

The transferring of students between Beaverlodge and Hythe is currently funded by a transportation grant in the amount of \$137,000. The actual costs are approximately \$15,000. If students are not being transferred, Peace Wapiti will lose approximately \$121,000 in funding a year. How is this being fiscally responsible?

That and the ridiculous amount being spent on information gathering that is biased. The amount is enough to pay for about three years (at \$15,000/yr) of transfer bussing costs. This money certainly would have benefitted both schools in many other ways, specifically to support student learning.

Hythe Regional School offers a strong academic program that caters to the needs of all academic levels. We offer an excellent variety of extracurricular activities. We have a diverse population which allows all students the opportunity to create and nurture new and existing relationships. Students are learning about different cultures, and how to be accepting, empathetic citizens.

The board states its priorities are student learning, equity and wellness. Hythe Regional students were previously surveyed free from the current tensions, and the results indicated a status quo result, this is what they want. Why is there a consideration to fix a system that works, and has been for many years. Especially considering the enormous costs involved, the splitting of resources and negative impacts on programming and student supports.

I have worked for Peace Wapiti for 27 years and this "concern" has been brought up before. It caused stress and hard feelings between the two communities, families and friends, which was totally preventable.

Hythe Regional School builds community and operates in the best interest of all students.

The most important question should be, "Is this proposed change really in the best interest of all students and all families?" I say no, the survey was biased and there is no regard for the impacts to Hythe Regional students and staff, or the damage it could further cause to community relationships.

Please cast your vote in the best interest of students, because they should be our biggest priority, first and foremost.

Dear PWSD Board Members,

I have put a great deal of thought into how I was going to write my letter on this very sensitive subject. I thought maybe I would present the facts: funding loss, job loss, student loss, not having a sports team due lack of students etc. The list of losses is endless with what would happen for Hythe Regional students if Beaverlodge should get their request granted. Then I thought this is about so much more than just the facts. This hits on such a personal level that it is causing both mental and physical stress for both me and many others. I've heard so many say they are losing sleep. That this is all they can think about from the moment they wake up until they go to bed. Others have a constant burning knot in the pit of their stomach, and I have to say I'm one of those people. It is an awful feeling having to worry about what the future will look like for my children and due to this I have decided to approach this from a personal level and present my perspective. Hopefully, this can help shed some light on why taking Beaverlodge students away from HRS would be detrimental to the future of all children involved present and in the future.

When my husband and I built our forever home on land northeast of Hythe we did so with the understanding that our children (4 boys ages 11, 10, 6 and 3) would go to school in Hythe from K-9 (along with Beaverlodge) and then carry onto Beaverlodge for high school. If we had had any indication that the student numbers could drop so significantly, and Hythe would turn into a smaller rural school segregated from Beaverlodge we would have made different choices.

I have a unique perspective as I have been both a resident of Hythe for 19 years and a resident of Beaverlodge for 19 years. I was born and raised in Beaverlodge. I went to BES for elementary, HRJHS (now HRS) for Junior High and BRHS for High School. I experienced firsthand the transition from BES to HRJHS. I spent many hours in a commute to school which included transfer busing. I grew up 20 mins southwest of Beaverlodge. The school bus would pick us up at 7:15 and I was on the bus until close to 8:30 before I arrived at school in Hythe. Was that a long time to be on a bus one way? Yes! Is it a unique experience for long busing commutes for rural Alberta students even in today's world? No! Did it affect my education or devalue my experience? No! Maybe if commute time is the issue, then more buses should be added to routes.

Growing up in small town rural northern Alberta, HRS was and is a valued opportunity for all those who attended. For me, it enabled me to form new relationships at a young age by introducing me to a more diverse population than I had previously experienced at BES. It created an environment of inclusion that is an integral building block of a strong society. As a young child I was also introduced to those outside of my small town and this helped me to grow as a person. This is something I didn't figure out until I was much older, but it helped shape who I am and was a valuable addition to the education I was offered by attending HRJHS. I also received excellent instruction and guidance from some of the best teachers in Hythe. In fact, some of whom are still currently teaching today. I agree all of these things can be found in other schools but for me it provided unique experiences/opportunities that molded how my life has unfolded and I'm grateful for that.

Bringing the students together in grade 7 is very important for the social development. Kids learn how to branch out of their friend groups, interact with new people and create new conversations and relationships with new peers. A new group of children they haven't seen daily for the first 7 educational years. HRS students are also fortunate to be able to go to school with students from Horse Lake First Nation. These children all come together and learn through their interactions about diversity, inclusion, equity and embracing differences. Access to these relationships at a young age further shapes how they interact with and accept others.

A community is a group of individuals living together with same interest, attitudes and goals. I have always considered Beaverlodge and Hythe to be one community. I bank and get my mail in Hythe. I grocery shop, get livestock supplies, building supplies, attend pharmacy and eye appt's in Beaverlodge and the list goes on and on. I could access these goods and services in Grande Prairie for likely cheaper, but I want to support my local community. Since PWSD put the Survey out into the public (which by the way is EXTREMELY biased) I'm disgusted

with the Beaverlodge contingent of my community. The vitriol I've heard Beaverlodge residents express about Hythe and the Hythe community is beyond insulting. That fact that adults are so disgustingly vicious is quite frankly an embarrassment and those involved should be ashamed. Funny how I have spent half of my life in Beaverlodge and support Beaverlodge businesses daily, but I am told that I'm not a Beaverlodge community member?!

If you ask my eldest son what he is most excited about for next year going into Jr. High, he says the new kids he gets to see and hang out with. So now what?! I tell him that might not happen?! What do I say when he asks why? Do I tell him because they want to keep THEIR kids in THEIR community, or that they don't want THEIR kids riding busses to Hythe or do I say because the parents consider it too inconvenient to come to Hythe if they need to pick a child up? (The same parents who by the way are more than willing to take their children to football in Wembley or to dance/club volleyball etc in Grande Prairie). Or should I tell him because Beaverlodge parents don't want THEIR kids corrupted by the Hythe kids? What do I say? I use these examples because these are the very things I've been told as to why Beaverlodge wants this. I am VERY concerned that this pushy entitled group of adults are putting my children's educational opportunities at risk, and I wonder how this will affect their long-term mental health. I've not once heard anyone from Beaverlodge express these as their concerns. Keeping their children separated from my children or inconvenience are not a reason to change something that has literally worked for decades. I have also been informed by one of the Beaverlodge school council members in order to get a new school built they need the Jr highs for the numbers to make it happen. Is this true? Hythe has a beautiful school that was made for these students so why waste all that time and taxpayer money on something that isn't broken? But do you know what will be broken because of this? Families, Friendships, loyalties, community and so much more.

In closing I would like to ask, why before removing children from HRS was there not an investigation into why BES is losing children to other schools? If you've been told it is due to no other JR High option that is likely only 2% of reality. If that was the case, then why not be looking for other SR High school options as well? There is more going on here and it has nothing to do with HRS or the Jr High students. What if this goes through and BES student numbers still drop? What then?

All I ask is that when you vote for MY children's future you look at ALL the facts. Evidence clearly shows that keeping the Jr High together in Hythe is the best option for ALL children involved.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter. I hope this has given someone even the slightest insight as to why this is about more than just a Jr high school. Decisions made will affect all involved in the Beaverlodge/Hythe community.

Unity: Togetherness despite our differences, recognizing diversity and honoring inclusivity. Acting as one, moving as one all achieving the same purpose.



**Fwd: Guiding Our Future**

1 message

Fri, Feb 24, 2023 at 10:32 AM

[REDACTED]

For engagement report



----- Forwarded message -----

[REDACTED]

Date: Fri, Feb 10, 2023 at 2:59 PM
Subject: Re: Guiding Our Future
[REDACTED]

Good afternoon [REDACTED]

Thank you for your feedback. The website does offer a wide range of supporting information that outlines the broad and diverse potential impacts that could come from splitting the students. [Guiding Our Future](#)

In our supporting information we do include the following:

How does the attendance of Beaverlodge students enhance the educational experience for all students at Hythe Regional School?

It allows for broader programming, and builds relationships, connections and empathy between students. The larger student numbers offer opportunities for stronger sports teams and extra-curricular activities.

If Beaverlodge students stopped attending Hythe Regional School, how might that negatively impact the programming, culture and climate?

The smaller junior high student numbers would limit programming for students at every location. The expertise of specialized teachers would be lost. Students and staff might feel more isolated, and the students would miss out on building more relationships. Sports teams would also be more challenging to operate due to difficulty finding coaches/supervisors.

It is also our hope that this feedback comes back through the engagement process so that the Board of Trustees has a full understanding of how people feel about the prospect of making any changes to junior high programming in the communities of Hythe and Beaverlodge. We are also hopeful that the additional resources we have provided allows for each person to provide informed feedback.

We look forward to hearing your thoughts at next week's community conversation. Have a wonderful weekend.



On Fri, Feb 10, 2023 at 12:29 PM [REDACTED] wrote:

Good afternoon!

I am writing as a concerned grandparent and resident of the Hamlet of Hythe. Four of my grandchildren attend Hythe Regional School.

I find the Guiding Our Future document very biased towards Beaverlodge. The document does not take into consideration how the proposed changes would affect the communities of Hythe and Horse Lake.

Beaverlodge, Hythe and Horse Lake are communities that depend on each other. Not one of them can stand alone for education options for their students. It is imperative to work together.

I ask that you consider the needs of the students first. Please use financial resources in a stewardly manner.

I look forward to attending the scheduled meeting in Hythe on February 15th.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

**Fwd: HYTHE / BEAVERLODGE JR HIGH STUDENTS**

1 message

Tue, Feb 21, 2023 at 8:09 AM

Please add this to the consent agenda

----- Forwarded message -----

Date: Tue, Feb 21, 2023 at 7:54 AM

Subject: HYTHE / BEAVERLODGE JR HIGH STUDENTS

As you are aware, the regionalized school system in the West End of the County has been on-going since 1970. The inception of regionalization meant Hythe would no longer have high school within the community and Beaverlodge would no longer have junior high programming. For 53 years, this has worked well providing junior high education three years in Hythe and high school education three years in Beaverlodge. However, not long after regionalization, the movement to bring back Beaverlodge junior high students began and, at times, has become a very heated, very political and a very divisive issue among communities, friends and families.

For many years, the school capital plans of the former County of Grande Prairie School Board and then Peace Wapiti School Board requested a new K-9 school in Beaverlodge. This was largely due, in part, to misinformation presented to the Board by trustees and local politicians who were more concerned with community rather than what was educationally best for students. For years, PWSB was told the Beaverlodge population was experiencing strong population growth and should have their own junior high program back in their community. Not all the growth, though, was contributed to families with children; but farmers retiring to town. School boards certainly understand community growth is **NOT** the same as enrollment growth! Yet, this sometimes is not understood by the public at large.

As a long-time member of the community and former school board trustee, my three children and three of my grandchildren attended the then Hythe Elementary School and the "stand alone" Hythe Junior High School. Their many friendships forged between students of the communities of Hythe, Beaverlodge, Horse Lake and Valhalla (at the time) remain as fond memories and experiences for each of them. There was **no** division with students when it came to the politics of where schools should be placed and where programs should be delivered. In fact, a student survey was done in the late 1990's by the Hythe Junior High School Council. Students from all the affected communities were very clear they liked things the way they were and did not want it changed. And yet, still, this issue keeps coming up and it is very doubtful it is from the students themselves.

I realize Beaverlodge Elementary School has lost enrollment to St Mary's K-9 school in Beaverlodge. I have been told if a parent sends one child to St Mary's, all children in a family need to attend that K-9 which is unfortunate. I'm not sure why this loss of students has occurred; whether it be teaching staff changes at Beaverlodge Elementary, problems within the school, the nine mile bus route to Hythe for junior high (even though the high school students are bussed the same to Beaverlodge), or the integration of students with different cultures such as the "indigenous component". For years, the children from Horse Lake reserve and

some from Kelly Lake have attended school in Hythe. Members from each of those communities have said their children were more comfortable being educated in Hythe because of acceptance. As a society, it is our responsibility to educate all children in an equitable, stable, and safe environment. It is a fact, the longer indigenous children attend school, the better chance for their success and completion of their education. If maintaining the current **regional** junior high program in Hythe gives these children a level of comfort before moving on to high school, then I believe it needs to be addressed. Whatever the reasons of the Beaverlodge community to change the regionalized system, it cannot be overstated the potential negative impact it will have on the existing and future programming for students as well as the staffing in each community school.

Since educational funding is based on enrollments, rural students across the province may already be at a disadvantage in terms of what can be offered by school boards. The fact that a school's student body can be increased or maintained by amalgamating communities for the delivery of education will result in rural children being offered a more comparable education to that of children in larger centers. Beaverlodge Regional High School can speak to that with enrollment of students from Hythe, Beaverlodge, Elmworth, Wembley, Horse Lake, Valhalla and perhaps Kelly Lake & St Mary's. The higher the student body, the higher the funding level, the higher the quality of education to be offered. Consider the level of education delivery if each of those communities had their own high school!

I believe Peace Wapiti School Board does its best to deliver the most optimal educational experience possible to rural students. This must be paramount in the decision making of the Board for all its students and, in this case, guiding the future of education for the west end of the County for years to come. The issue of junior high programming between Hythe and Beaverlodge was thought to have been "put to rest" in 2003 when the PWSB voted 2/3 majority to maintain the current regionalized system and modernize the school in Hythe. This became a reality in 2005 when funding was received to complete the project and Hythe Regional School became a functional, modernized facility. However, here we go again; it is almost unbelievable! How regrettable it would be if history repeated itself and this issue creates a division between communities again. Each community needs each other for the betterment of all.

I urge the Board to maintain the status quo. I believe it is in the best interests of students today and in the future. Why fix what is not broken?

Respectfully submitted,



February 20, 2023

Dear Peace Wapiti Public School Board Trustees,

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter. With the Guiding Our Future information gathering process wrapping up on Friday, I once again feel compelled to share some additional thoughts on this important matter.

As part of my role as Principal of HRS I am often engaged with our school community in ways that those who are distantly removed may not be aware of. One aspect of this is talking with staff, listening to their concerns and working together to meet needs and facilitate wellness. The overwhelming feedback I have received from staff is that this information gathering process has resulted in a resurgence of old tensions between Beaverlodge and Hythe. Staff members have come to me in tears, unable to sleep, feeling under threat when going to public arenas and believing that their tireless work to provide an excellent educational experience for our students is not valued. While I am certain that none of this was intended, it is a very real result and has placed enormous stress on our staff.

Through this time it has also become evident that students are struggling with conflicting information and emotions. On the one hand, they are surrounded by friends from various communities who they sincerely enjoy being with on a daily basis. On the other hand, some students are being told by their caregivers that this cohesiveness is wrong and must come to an end. Many reasons are given and not all are kind or justified.

For many years Hythe Regional School has been a place where communities come together educationally, athletically and socially. It has been a place where these historical rivalries and hurts have been given the opportunity to heal. For the most part they were healing. Most folks willingly set aside differences and prior hurts in the name of doing what is best for their children. Several families were not even aware of these historical issues until now.

The power of one small group of vocal parents to create so much pain and division is extremely disturbing to me. Equally disturbing is the thought that the outward impression is given that this small vocal group represents the entire Beaverlodge community. This is not true. Many people, who have experienced the ugly nature of these divisive situations in the past, do not want to get involved. They don't want to strain relationships, lose friendships or feel pressured to side with one group over the other. It is safer to be silent.

When you last toured HRS, I believe the response was overwhelmingly positive regarding the atmosphere in our school, the building itself, as well as the excellent academic and athletic opportunities afforded to our students. Prior to the recent stresses placed on our staff and students, it was easy to see that we were all happy, productive and a true community of learners. Something so positive should not be dismantled. Something so positive does not just happen. It takes commitment, intentionality, vision, love and a lot of work. Our team excels at all of these things.

Hythe Regional School embodies all of the PWPSD Assurance Priorities of Student Learning, Wellness and Equity. As such, it should be supported in its current configuration.

Over the past while, this situation has been constantly on my mind. While I am not the authority on all things, I am confident in saying that I have a considerable amount of expertise regarding

education. My entire career has been in the field of education and it is my passion. Serving our students and families is my overarching 'why'. It guides everything I do.

This brings me to one unavoidable, pivotal question. Respectfully I ask - If Beaverlodge Elementary School is losing students, why are they not compelled to determine why this is happening and implement targeted strategies to address what is discovered, prior to dismantling a school that is working well? For if the underlying reasons why students are leaving are not determined and remedied, who is to say this trend will not continue, even with the addition of Jr High students artificially bumping up numbers?

Student numbers at HRS have been stable, and even increased slightly. The proposed changes would devastate our school and divide resources to the point of making Jr High programming in both communities diluted and less appealing to families. With the availability of diluted programming and athletic options split between two school sites vs full academic programming and stronger athletic team opportunities at St Mary, why would families choose to stay with the public system?

There is little to no evidence throughout history that division makes us stronger. Working together makes us stronger.

My hope would be that BES, specifically their School Council, would work with HRS the way we work with BRHS. We support the high school and encourage families and students to see the transition there from Jr High as rewarding and exciting and to see it as a positive step in their child(ren)'s educational journey. Similarly supporting the transition from BES to HRS would make both of our schools stronger. Based on the tone, and information being shared by the BES School Council, it is questionable if this is the case.

I would love to see the resources potentially being spent on restructuring, used to make our schools stronger, in their current configurations. That these resources would go toward student learning, mental health and wellness. Toward working together to make our schools better and more attractive to families. To stop putting time, energy and funding toward divisiveness. We are stronger together. We are better together.

Our students are why we are here. They are our future. Their education must be our priority. In closing, I have attached the HRS School Council brochure. It includes some important information that is worth considering.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

HOW THIS WILL IMPACT PEACE WAPITI SCHOOL DIVISION

- Increased costs of the transition. BES would need new resources, equipment, desks and supplies to accommodate higher grade levels. BRHS would require Grade 9 resources.
- Loss of Provincial Transportation Grants for busing students to HRS. This grant is presently about \$137 000.
- Laying off or reducing hours for bus drivers currently on the BL-Hythe run twice daily.
- Increased short-term costs to administer the transition from the status quo.
- Having a school building, which is virtually new and specifically designed for Junior High students, at 43 per cent capacity.
- With severely reduced specialized educational programming and sports alternatives, more and more families are likely to relocate to bigger centers, such as Grande Prairie, thereby reducing PWPSD student numbers.
- Once BRHS has been established as a regional grade 9-12 school there is likely to be long-term pressure to make all West County schools into K-8 schools, drawing grade 9 students from Hythe, Valhalla, Elmworth, St Mary and possibly Weemley into Beaverlodge. This would affect all of these schools, even to the point of making some of them no longer viable as K-8, or even K-6 in some cases. This could also increase grade 9 class sizes.

WE ARE BETTER TOGETHER!

Hythe Regional school currently has 206 students enrolled in Junior High. Numbers have remained stable despite the drop in students coming from Beaverlodge. Thanks to this enrollment the school offers a wide range of academic programming with specialized teachers and support staff. It also offers a multitude of resources and special activities, including a full sports program.

Socialization between young people from the various communities in the West County is very important in junior high and helps to create a sense of a united community within our rural setting.

The Regional Junior High and High school model has been an effective and efficient solution for all of the West Peace Wapiti area for financial, educational, and community population issues. If it's not broken, why try to fix it? Instead of basing decisions on divisive political agendas we need to consider what is best for ALL children.



Hythe Regional School Council

All over Alberta there has been an erosion of local services to rural communities and small towns as medical, social service, legal, and educational services move to larger communities. This trend can only be limited if smaller communities work together to save those services. The most effective way to do this is by eliminating the competition between smaller communities and considering a true regional strategy that works towards the good of all citizens involved. This necessitates abandoning historic rivalries, many of which have been around for decades.

Over 40 years ago the citizens of both Hythe and Beaverlodge areas realized that there were not enough students in each community to offer high-quality education at the grade 7 to 12 levels. In the spirit of providing what was best for all students it was decided that two regional schools would be built, one in Hythe for grades 7-9, one in Beaverlodge for 10-12. This solution provided higher numbers for both Core and Optional classes and better extracurricular opportunities. This arrangement has worked very well since, and has been shown to be truly a solution that provides the best education for all regional students.

The Beaverlodge Elementary School has experienced a drop in enrollment recently, and is presently conducting a campaign to increase student enrollment by removing the Beaverlodge area 7-9 students from Hythe Regional School and placing them in BES and BRHS. At first glance this appears to be an easy and effective solution, until you begin to look at the immediate effects and the potential long-term results. Instead of creating a regional community strategy, it looks at only the questionable value to one community, to the detriment of all the others involved. Much of this is politically driven and does not consider what is truly the best for ALL students in the west part of the County of Grande Prairie. In fact, there are negative consequences to students at all levels in all regional communities.

HOW THIS WILL IMPACT BEAVERLODGE STUDENTS

- The staffing ratio for the K-6 students will not increase with the addition of 7 and 8, with four Junior High classes added there is in fact the distinct possibility of a 6/7 or 7/8 split grades.
- BES has extra classrooms which are not being used for home rooms. At least three of these are now being used for specialty rooms such as fine arts, arts, and special education. These rooms would be needed for Junior High classrooms, so special facilities and programs would be reduced.
- BES is currently a Compressed School Week facility, meaning that they get nine Fridays off each year to make up for extended hours. This would no longer be the case.
- The BES gym is relatively small and would likely be double booked for classes. This affects K-6 students as well.
- Washrooms, hallways, playgrounds, etc. will be more congested with a broader age range of students.
- Too few students and staff to field competitive sports teams. Mixed teams may be necessary.
- Limited, or no, subject specialized teaching staff at BES for Junior High.
- Reduced cultural diversity.
- BES charges \$100/student for school fees. HRS does not have school fees for grade 7 and for grade 8 & 9 the \$65 fees are for CTF courses at BRHS.
- Grade 8/9 students would follow the semester system at BRHS. This results in more intense learning placed upon them in shorter periods of time. Absences may result in large gaps of learning.

- Grade 8/9 students will be exposed to a high school culture earlier than necessary. While some of this may be positive, there will also be increased influence to get involved with high school age social activities like drinking, smoking, drugs, etc.
- Additional supervision of Grade 8/9 students will be required at BRHS during breaks, especially the parking lot since BRHS is an open campus.
- BRHS charges for athletic extracurricular programs, so any grade 8/9 students who wish to play will do so at a cost. Grade 8/9 students would also be much less likely to be able to make the competitive intra-school teams.

HOW THIS WILL IMPACT HYTHE STUDENTS

- Utilization drops to under 45% in spite of student numbers remaining consistent for previous years. This low utilization could lead to the loss of most, if not all, junior high students.
- Staffing reduction, teachers, and support staff terminated or transferred.
- Limited, or no, subject specialized teaching staff.
- Too few students and staff to field competitive sports teams.
- Fewer students in grades 7-9 will result in reduced opportunities for students to socialize and make meaningful connections and friendships.
- Loss of special events and programs due to reduced per-student funding.
- Reduced cultural diversity.

**Fwd: Regional school issue**

1 message

Tue, Feb 21, 2023 at 1:04 PM

[REDACTED]

File and add accordingly, please.

----- Forwarded message -----

[REDACTED]

Date: Tue, Feb 21, 2023 at 12:24 PM

Subject: Regional school issue

[REDACTED]

Peace Wapiti School Board and Trustees,

I was surprised and highly disappointed to find out the Peace Wapiti School Board and its trustees were again going to entertain the age old topic of separating junior high students. Historically, this does nothing but cause dissention between neighbors, friends, and communities.

When will these people realize that as small communities, we need to work together with a regional approach and share amenities in order to survive and thrive.

I believe that the true issue, though no one has the guts to admit it is there is a small group of prejudice people that don't want their children mingling with first nations children.

In actual fact, the more diverse variety of people and experiences our children can be a part of makes them better prepared for the adult world after graduation.

Let's not forget IT'S WHAT'S BEST FOR THE STUDENTS, NOT THE PARENTS !!!!

IF IT AIN'T BROKE, DON'T FIX IT.

[REDACTED]

County of Grande Prairie

Dear PWSD School Board,

I was fortunate enough to have been a student at HRS and have since graduated from BRHS. I want to tell you about my experiences and why a Regional 7-9 School was so important to my education, my mental health and my lifelong friendships.

I attended HRS from K-9, when I was in Grade 6 my best friend moved away. I was devastated, I didn't have a lot in common with the other girls in my class, for one thing no one else played hockey like I did. Although I still had friends, I was lacking close friends who shared the same interests as me and liked doing the same things I did.

When I went into Grade 7 there was a whole new group of girls who I instantly connected with. This was life changing for me, like it is for so many other students. As a teenager, one of the most important things to you is your friends. The friends I made in Jr High are still my best friends today. These friendships may not have formed had we not met until Grade 10. I also shudder to think about how lonely Jr High could have been for me if HRS wasn't a Regional School. I know friendships are only one part of school but without them, it can be very difficult to want to come to school.

I now live in Beaverlodge and my children will attend BES and I hope with everything I have that they will be able to attend 7-9 in Hythe and then back to BRHS.

Please do not take a Regional School away from the 7-9 students from Hythe, Beaverlodge and Horselake.

Sincerely,



Former Student and Future Parent

**Fwd: A few thoughts to consider...**

1 message

Thu, Feb 23, 2023 at 9:19 AM

please find an email / letter to be added to the next consent agenda and to be included to correspondence to be compiled for Dialogue Partners.

Thanks

----- Forwarded message -----

Date: Thu, Feb 23, 2023 at 9:10 AM

Subject: A few thoughts to consider...

To: pwpsdengagement@pwpsd.ca <pwpsdengagement@pwpsd.ca>

Good morning,

My name is [REDACTED] and I would like to share some of my thoughts/opinions on the BES/HRS debate....

I grew up in Hythe so I was on that side as a child and now as an adult, I live on the Beaverlodge side and my oldest takes the transfer bus to Hythe and I have 3 other children soon to follow. As a child, having Beaverlodge come to Hythe was amazing. I met so many great friends who I still am friends with today. If those Beaverlodge kids hadn't integrated with us at the age of 13, I would have only had those 3 friends up until high school. Let's face it Hythe/Horselake demographic is small. Adding Beaverlodge to the mix is what is best for all small communities to bring them together. I feel like it has always been a debate for a few Beaverlodge parents that do not want their kids going to Hythe. They would like to exclude Hythe and Horselake.

Why was Hythe Student Council not aware of any of this debate ahead of time? I know Beaverlodge was aware this was coming....what was happening behind closed doors? The way the survey and literature was worded, seemed biased, in my opinion. It stated that teachers jobs in Beaverlodge would be eliminated but what about the effects that this would have on HRS teachers? How many jobs would be lost there? What other effects would this have on Hythe as a community and the school in itself? Would it eventually close? Would a perfectly good school go to waste?

What has always been the reason for keeping these kids in Hythe? This has came up multiple times in the past 50 years...there has to be some reason that it has always stayed the same. Has that changed? With social media these days, its hard not to get caught up in the debate, but it all comes back to what is best for the kids and not who can post the most on Facebook or who has a louder mouth. Is the reason BES numbers are dropping due to the kids not wanting to go to Hythe or maybe they don't want to go to BES? It is all speculation and until it can be proved, it is untrue. The highway is too dangerous...again, all speculation and not true. If you keep Beaverlodge kids in Beaverlodge, Hythe would be dangerously close to closing due to low enrollment...now we would be bussing all the Hythe and Horselake kids to Beaverlodge, seems like we would be going backwards

as Beaverlodge does not have room for all those kids. But again, there is a school 10 minutes away that is perfectly able to complete the job. People are only considering the now benefits and not the aftermath effects that will be coming down the line.

If the kids stay at BES for 7 and 8, where are they putting them? Those portables that currently house their Kindergarten and Pre-K are garbage. There is no bathrooms, half lockers and they are freezing in the winter. Not to mention the size of the gym can not accommodate Pre K – Grande 8. There is no way. Is there only 2 sets of bathrooms in BES? Surely, that alone would be a risk especially if Covid rears its ugly head again. And the next thing, if they do decide to keep 7 and 8, now they'll need new portables...which there is a perfectly good school 10 minutes away that does the job.

I am 100% in support of keeping the kids going to HRS.

Thank you for reading and have a great day.



Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows

February 22, 2023

To: PWPSD Board of Trustees

Re: Guiding Our Future - junior high programming in Beaverlodge and Hythe

The decision about junior high programming in our area will affect students in both Beaverlodge and Hythe, as well as Horse Lake, regardless of which decision is made. I am a Town of Beaverlodge parent, but my opinion about the best option can not be based simply on what might be personally most convenient for my own children. We must consider what is **best overall** for everyone affected, regardless of our personal biases and preferences. Everyone understands that Beaverlodge Elementary School has been losing a significant number of students in the last 6-7 years, due largely to St Mary Catholic School's policy of requiring all students in a family to switch to their school if parents want to transfer a junior high student. This is an unfortunate situation for BES no matter how you look at it. However, some Beaverlodge parents (many of whom I would call friends) are reacting out of their disappointment at this situation and advocating for a plan that will actually **hurt** all junior high students in our area.

When I heard a couple of years ago that there was a possibility of having a public junior high program in Beaverlodge, my first instinct was to immediately jump in and support the idea. My daughter (who was in Beaverlodge Elementary at the time) has special needs and the idea of not having to transition schools with her, and being able to keep her close to home, sounded much easier for us. But as I've looked further into the issue and discussed with parents and teachers from both communities, my conclusion has been that ***maintaining the regional junior high school is the best option*** for all students in our area.

The current model offers significant social benefits. The junior high school offers students a gradual transition from the safety and security of elementary towards eventually the increased independence of high school and beyond, rather than the sudden and potentially jarring transition straight from elementary school to a high school. Many Beaverlodge students benefit from a 'fresh start' at the junior high level. Hythe offers exposure to a more diverse student body, which is crucial to developing young adults with empathy and respect for those from different backgrounds. 'Educating today for success tomorrow' must also include consideration of our students' social and development.

The status quo model also provides far more supports in mental health and other areas than would be available at a Beaverlodge junior high school. Partly due to the number of total junior high students currently at Hythe, as well as the Horse Lake students included there which pull some federal funding, there is hardly a day where there is not a support worker of some type in the school, which benefits every student who needs assistance, including Beaverlodge kids.

Most importantly, overall educational quality is higher under the current system than it would be under the proposed scenario of having junior high in both Beaverlodge and Hythe. Currently, the number of junior high students at Hythe Regional School allows the school to have teachers who can specialize in one or two subjects, with students benefitting from this increased expertise and teaching quality. Splitting the total number of area junior high students between two schools will result in teachers at both schools likely needing to teach more than just one or two

subjects. The critical mass of students currently at Hythe also allows the school to offer additional programs such as the Knowledge and Employability program in grades eight and nine. If the eligible students for this program were split between Beaverlodge and Hythe junior highs, neither school would have the necessary resources to be able to offer this much-needed and valuable program. In-class EA help for coded students will also likely be less as there will be less funding for the coded students at each school in order to hire EA assistance.

Those advocating for 'Scenario 2' have argued that bussing Beaverlodge students to Hythe is dangerous and inappropriate. In fact, all students in our area currently bus to a school outside of their community for three years of their school career - Wembley and Hythe to BRHS for three years, and Beaverlodge to HRS for three years. This is an equitable situation for all - Beaverlodge students are not bussed any more than students from any other community in our area.

Scenario 2 supporters also seem to think that grades seven and eight could be easily integrated into the existing infrastructure at BES. In fact, junior high programming requires supplies and equipment that are not currently in place at BES, the acquisition of which could pull even more funding away from instructional staff. In addition, the gym at BES is not designed for junior high programs and extra-curricular sports.

As a Board of Trustees you hold responsibility for making educational decisions for the nearly 6000 students in our division. These decisions ***must*** be based on what is best for the overall education of the students involved, NOT on what parent group is best organized and can make the most noise. Moving Beaverlodge junior high students out of HRS to keep them in Beaverlodge will be detrimental to the education of both Beaverlodge and Hythe/Horse Lake students in many ways and I urge you to please focus on educational considerations as you make this decision.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Beaverlodge, AB

[REDACTED]

Dear PWSD School Board,

Feb 21, 2023

I'd like to start by saying how truly disappointed I am in our School Board for even entertaining the idea to divide our Regional 7-9 students. HRS is virtually a new school that was built in 2009, after a final decision was made by Peace Wapiti that keeping all 7-9's in Hythe was what was best for the students and has been very successful for several decades. This was a relief to the students, parents, staff and all communities involved. Whenever this issue surfaces it causes hardships, animosity and rifts within the communities, families, friendships and co-workers. The decision has been made time and time again that a Regional 7-9 School in Hythe is what is best for all the students.

HRS embodies what a school is all about, it's about giving all the students the best possible education, it's about fostering lifelong friendships, it's about learning to embrace diversity and it's about having empathy for other people. I have witnessed this firsthand, as a student of HRJHS (now HRS), as a parent of multiple children of HRS and as a staff member of HRS for over 22 years. I am very proud to be a part of something so wonderful and my children are proud as well.

HRS focuses on a quality education with targeted and enriched programming. We are able to offer such things as specialized teachers, K&E classes, Empowered Reading, Speech and LLI in both elementary and junior high. We also offer two options for second languages, 2 sensory rooms and a full extra-curricular sports program that is free to all students as well as a computer club. Programming like this would not be possible for Hythe or Beaverlodge if the HRS 7-9 students were split into 3 schools. HRS takes students to Beaverlodge for swimming lessons, Hythe Arena for skating, we now have a bowling alley to utilize as well as a Spray Park coming soon. HRS also has a huge property that also backs onto a field allowing lots of space for all the students to be outside whether it's their break or PE class. It also allows for a full track & field, cross country skiing and Outdoor Ed classes.

Grade 6 students from BES who transfer to HRS for Grade 7 get to have a 'fresh start'; new teachers, and a whole new group of friends. Even though HRS is a K-9 School, the K-6 and 7-9 are separate entities. Hythe Grade 6 students also get all new teachers, new friends and the same fresh start. Junior High is a very crucial age for friendships. Students are discovering who they are, what their interests are and who they want to be. If you divide the communities and the students, this will be detrimental to so many students. You will essentially be robbing them of so many academic, social and emotional opportunities. A lot of friendships made in Junior High continue into adulthood and many are life long, these kinds of connections are also what make people great community members as adults.

I would like to leave the Board with a few very serious questions to think about.

1. Why would you think it's okay to pull students from HRS to make BES happy when it would not only hurt the students but HRS as a school? Utilizations right now are almost exactly the same for each school involved in these proposed scenarios. BRHS 61%, BES 59% and HRS 61%, why would you change this when this is so even as it is? Peace Wapiti schools should be working together not trying to rip each other apart!!!
2. Why would you even consider spending the ridiculous amount of money it would take to make BES and BRHS fitting for Junior High students when the money was spent long ago to house them in Hythe? This is NOT fiscally responsible and all PW schools would suffer because of it. Not to mention the insane amount of money that was already spent to do a very biased survey. Regardless of what budget this money come out of, it could have been spent in a much better way!!
3. Isn't it your job as a Board of Trustees to do what is BEST for ALL Peace Wapiti students? Not what is best for a small group of parents?
4. Why do you never hear any feeder school parents to BRHS complaining about unsafe bussing? Or about wanting our own high school? Is it because all those parents know that a Regional 10-12 school is what is best for the children?? Why would you feel a Regional 7-9 is less important than a Regional 10-12? Also, is a highway only dangerous going one way?? I had full confidence in PW bus drivers sending my kids to Beaverlodge to High School every day for 3 years! If you feel the highway or buses are unsafe, should ANY students be riding them?
5. Does this splitting of communities and students not go against everything we as Canadians have worked towards with Truth & Reconciliation? It really feels like there is a racist dimension to this and it makes me very uncomfortable.

Thank you for your time and I truly hope your decision is based on what is educationally and financially responsible and most importantly what is BEST for ALL 7-9 students at HRS. Please do not take the Regional out of Hythe Regional School

Sincerely yours,



Parent, Community member & PW Employee

Dear PWSD School Board,

As a student who attended HRS from K-9 and graduated from BRHS, and I am saddened by the potential of splitting the HRS students up into 3 schools. I always had lots of friends in school, was an average student academically and excelled in all things sport related. I never liked school all that much, until I went into Grade 7 and I could play every sport.

PE was always my favorite subject, but once I started Grade 7, whole new doors were opened to me in the world of sports. The PE program at HRS was a game changer for me. We did all the standard PE things but we also got to try all kinds of new things like tchoukball, ping pong, juggling, dance, cross country skiing, badminton and track & field. All 3 years in J High I played on the extra-curricular teams, Volleyball, Basketball, Badminton, Cross Country Running and Track & Field where I went to districts and zones. My Grade 9 year was the first year HRS had a Golf team and we got Gold at zones. A Regional School also allowed me to go to school with all the kids I played hockey with.

After graduation, I went to Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops where I ran on the TRU Wolfpac Cross Country Running & Track Team. I was Captain my second year, won 2 scholarships and went to Nationals both years. I also received my Horticulture Certificate and Horticulture Management Diploma. Then I went to Olds College and played on the Olds Broncos Badminton team. While there I won a scholarship and Athlete of the Year for Badminton.

My point is that I know school is about getting an Education but for a sporty kid like me, the sports are what kept me going to school and were an integral part of me getting an education. Not only did it help in Jr High and High School, it helped take me to Post Secondary school as well. Sports are still a huge part of my life as an adult, which also helps with my mental and physical health. If HRS doesn't continue to be a Regional School, many of the sports opportunities will be taken away from students who are just like me. My life could have been very different had I not been exposed to all the extra-curricular sports in Grade 7-12.


Please do not take these opportunities away from future students. I genuinely thank HRS and BRHS for changing my life and helping me get a quality education while doing the things I love.

Thank you for taking what I have to say into consideration.

Yours sincerely,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the author.

Former student/Athlete/Horticulturalist



February 22, 2023

Dear Peace Wapiti School Board Trustees:

I moved to Beaverlodge from outside of Edmonton in 1993 to teach at Hythe Regional Jr High. I planned to only be in the area for a couple of years, but I am proud to say that I love my job and this school. I am still here today working at HRS as a junior high teacher, counselor and assistant principal. I live in Beaverlodge and both of my daughters, who are now at BRHS, attended HRS. I am writing this letter in support of Scenario 3 (leave school configuration the way it is) in regard to the options for Junior High Programming. I ask you to please consider what is best for the students and continue to have a regional junior high and a regional high school.

I was a staff member at HRJHS when this subject came up, previously. It was very stressful for the staff and students, and it caused a lot of conflicts affecting many businesses, friends, and families. Sadly, I am seeing these communities torn apart once again when we should all be working together.

I believe that junior high students from the surrounding areas need to be kept together to provide them with the best education possible. We are able to offer so much for these students, and I believe it would affect Beaverlodge and Hythe, negatively, if we separate the junior high kids. Some possible negative outcomes could be: losing transportation grant money, split classes, teachers forced to teach out of their specialization, less competitive sports teams, and fewer coaches. For the last couple of years, there has been a shortage of substitute EAs and teachers in the district, this will only be worse if we separate the junior high. I also believe that if you allow the Beaverlodge students to attend BRHS, you will have a number of students from the surrounding schools getting driven to BRHS to attend, decreasing numbers at those schools. At what point do we draw the line?

As a school counselor for many years, I have supported a number of students who didn't have a friend or that "group". These students couldn't wait for the fresh start of junior high. I always love seeing these students in grade seven finally have this companionship after struggling through upper elementary. Sadly, I have talked to grade 6 students from Hythe, Beaverlodge, and Horselake every year who were afraid to attend grade 7 because all they knew about the other students was what they had witnessed on the sports field or at the hockey arena in a competitive setting, which we know is not always positive. Once these students have been in grade 7 for a month, I like to check in and see how they are feeling, and every time they are pleasantly surprised, the transition is positive, and not at all what they were expecting. They love making new friends. We also have junior high students come to Hythe from St. Mary and Valhalla for a positive change.

If we separate the students, I worry about their mental health. Because of our numbers, we are currently able to offer many support services and programs to these students, that might not be offered in smaller schools. Junior high is a time of self-discovery, change, and peer pressure. These students need to experience independence, diversity, and new relationships. Teens need a place that is their own, where they can grow without pressuring the younger students and not being pressured by the older students. I do not agree with having the grade 7s and 8s with elementary or the grade 9s with high school students on a regular basis. I feel that people see HRS as a K-9 school when really it is a K-6 and a separate 7-9 school under one roof. They are confused at why their kids go to a k-9 in Hythe

when they could stay in Beaverlodge, but they do not see that these teens are in a space of their own where they can be themselves.

I have taught many of these people who want to keep their kids in Beaverlodge. These former students had a great experience at Hythe Regional, and many have thanked us for their time here and told us how much their own children enjoy it. Recently, I have had some of our Indigenous parents and students talk openly to me about their belief that the push behind this movement is racism. They believe that some people in Beaverlodge are trying to segregate Horselake students from the other students. I have had people tell me that they do not want their kids going to school with "Horselakers" and it is this ignorance that the school board needs to consider when making a final decision. As we continue towards Truth and Reconciliation, this is not acceptable.

I drive to Hythe every day and when my kids came to junior high they chose to ride the bus to spend time with their friends. I did not worry about their safety, and I certainly did not worry about the amount of time they rode the bus because 15 minutes is not long at all. There are many rural students who ride the bus much longer to get to school in our district. Students from Penson are bussed into Grande Prairie on roads that are less safe than the Hythe to Beaverlodge route so I don't see why this is even being discussed. I find it ironic that a lot of these people complaining about the distance and highway safety are some of the same people who are taking their kids all over the Peace Country for sports in horrible weather conditions throughout the winter.

HRS is a newer building with plenty of room for the needs of all the students. It would be fiscally irresponsible at this time to put money into renovations of BRHS and BES to accommodate students when that money is needed elsewhere. I also feel that this money spent on Guiding our Future could have been used to fund more support for students in need. I was disappointed with this process as many parents did not know "the facts" and I had parents and students tell me that they were told that they would be getting a new school in Beaverlodge if the students are kept in Beaverlodge. I do know that there are communities in our division that are on the capital plan and others that are in need of schools, so this is not even a consideration any time soon.

I understand that this is a big decision and there are many factors to consider. As a professional, I do what is best for the students on a daily basis, and I ask you to do the same. Do what is best for ALL of the students.

Yours in education,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the sender.

**Fwd: Concerned Beaverlodge Citizen**

1 message

Fri, Feb 24, 2023 at 2:05 PM

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] can you please include this one in the package for Dialogue Partners?

Thank you,

[REDACTED]



----- Forwarded message -----

[REDACTED]

Date: Fri, Feb 24, 2023 at 1:51 PM
Subject: Concerned Beaverlodge Citizen
[REDACTED]

Good Morning,

My name is [REDACTED] and I have been a long time resident of Beaverlodge, and have called Beaverlodge my home for 30+ years now. I attended Beaverlodge Elementary School from K-6, Hythe Junior High School from Grades 7-9 and back to Beaverlodge High School from 10-12. **I now have a four year old and 6 year old that attend Beaverlodge Elementary School.**

In regards to the community talks about the potential to bring Junior High Programming, I have completed the online survey, listed comments in the "All Our Ideas" section and attended the community event at the Beaverlodge Elementary School on February 14. I also wanted to take a moment and email PWPSD some additional thoughts I had that I didn't mention elsewhere.

I am very disheartened to see the community divide that has happened between Hythe and Beaverlodge (although I guess this has been the case for some time). In my opinion Beaverlodge has been professional when dealing with the matter. Beaverlodge has provided information on how people can get their voices heard and have given lots of data. Hythe on the other hand in my opinion has not. These are two small communities, so it's not hard to hear all the matters people have been discussing, especially when it is on social media. I have heard the teachers in Hythe have been voicing their own opinion directly to the students on the matter, which I feel is unacceptable. I have heard Hythe community members state that this is "segregation" and Beaverlodge Residents are "Racist". I find this all to be very appalling. I have attended school in Hythe and had friends in ALL communities in the area. That isn't the case here. It is not about racism or the students or the teachers in Hythe.

This about letting the Beaverlodge kids stay in their own community for their education. The only option for them to do that right now is to go to the Catholic School in Beaverlodge, which we have now lost 150 students to. I also do not feel it is appropriate that Hythe dispersed information that was not factual, just to make this look better in their favor. They were listing information in a brochure that stated what would happen to staffing and classes if changes were to be implemented, making assumptions. How can they state "facts" on something that hasn't even changed yet. They don't know how Peace Wapiti School Board is going to implement the programming. How Hythe has been acting through this whole process is making me not want to allow my kids to go to grades 7-9 there. I don't want them to be around that kind of negativity.

I want nothing more than for both communities to have what is best for THE CHILDREN. If there is available space in Beaverlodge to house the Junior High students, then I want that for my kids. I don't want to have my kids on the bus for 40 mins each day if they don't have to. If my kids are in need and I have to pick them up from school, I don't want them to have to wait for me to drive all the way to Hythe if I don't have to. I want my kids to stay in this community and experience this community. Beaverlodge is a thriving community and now over the years, it seems silly to have to bus them all the way to Hythe. It's time for change! The enrollment continues to drop, so what now for our community! I have been made to feel like I am a bad person, just because I want to keep my kids in my community and it shouldn't be that way. Everyone is entitled to their own opinion, and each person should respect that. Hythe unfortunately is not respecting us and is painting us out to be bad people. Bottom line is that all of this should be about the kids.

Thank you for taking the time to read this email and I hope that there will be change in the future.



Fwd: Is Peace Wapiti Isn't Missing the Point?

1 message

Fri, Feb 24, 2023 at 11:30 AM

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] can this also be included in the package to Dialogue Partners please.

[REDACTED] not sure if you want this in the consent agenda.

Darren

----- Forwarded message -----

[REDACTED]
Date: Fri, Feb 24, 2023 at 11:18 AM
Subject: Is Peace Wapiti Isn't Missing the Point?
To: <pwpsdengagement@pwpsd.ca>

Good afternoon,

Over the past weeks, I have watched two school communities engage in an information gathering process and see that the point of creating this conversation is being missed from many angles; I hope Peace Wapiti does not become part of this group.

The issue here is that the student population in Peace Wapiti is declining in our school catchment area (BES and HRS). This is a Peace Wapiti issue as a whole, not an issue of one school or another. Students lost at BES, will eventually become students lost at HRS as those grade levels move up through the school system over the years. It saddens me to see how what is best for Peace Wapiti is being overridden by people taking a side (BES or HRS). I am seeing these conversations ruin friendships, putting a divide in families and making people uncomfortable to share their point of view. As I look back over the past month of this information gathering, I have many things to reflect on. Below I have outlined my point of view on numerous topics:

Declining Student Population

This is the reason that BES Council is asking for Peace Wapiti to offer all grade levels of education in the town of Beaverlodge: BES has lost a quarter of their total student population! The issue is that our town is not getting smaller; the families of Beaverlodge and area are choosing the Catholic school district over Peace Wapiti. In speaking to many of the families who have chosen the Catholic school system, they simply answer that they would like to educate their children in their home community. I am a strong believer that actions speak louder than words, these families are telling Peace Wapiti that something needs to change. Considering there is room to add grade 7 to 9 to the existing infrastructure, adding these grade levels would create the opportunity for Peace Wapiti to offer all grade levels of education in Beaverlodge.

Student Safety and Mental Health

These topics are of high priority. Simply stated, why bus so many students down a busy, 2-lane highway when there is no need. There is room in the existing schools, use it and keep these kids off of the road. If Peace Wapiti chooses to leave the school configuration as is, when will we revisit this again? When an entire bus load of kids is seriously injured or killed? Let's avoid this situation because there is the means to do so.

Mental health is a topic high on the agenda of families and society as a whole. Having these students at as young as 11 being removed from their home community to attend school is not an ideal arrangement. These young students would greatly benefit from being able to maintain and continue building the relationships they have within their community. Allowing these students to be educated in their home community would empower them to feel part of their home community and not feel removed for their very critical junior high years.

Programming

I am a supporter of all extra programming that schools are able to offer. There seems to be a lot of focus on what programming HRS would lose if the Beaverlodge students did not attend junior high there. The issue is that BES has ALREADY lost a number of additional programs due to decreases in funding caused by a smaller student base. BES is no longer able to offer their programs that offered additional help in the areas of literacy and math. There is now a need to blend classrooms together for part of the day and have homerooms with 5 different teachers due to lack of funding for full time teachers. If the trend of losing students continues, more programs will continue to be lost at BES and, subsequently, at HRS in the future.

What is Best for the Majority of Students

It is very evident that there isn't an easy solution that would provide the best solution for schooling going forward for all students involved; however, Peace Wapiti needs to make a decision that would benefit the majority of the students. Most of the junior high aged students are from Beaverlodge; therefore, we need to offer junior high education in Beaverlodge to provide what is best for the majority.

Dollars and Cents

I am disappointed to see that the only information provided from Dialogue Partners in regards to funding is to do with a bus grant that would be lost. If we look at the bigger picture here of how much funding has been lost due to loss of student base, this is a much larger figure. This figure would continue to compound in the years to come as these lost students do not return to Peace Wapiti until they reach high school age.

Sports

The threat of less sports teams is a mute point. In my eyes, having two schools would allow there to be twice as many sports teams. I see schools the size of Elmworth field competitive sports teams, it can be done. In the end, both schools would still be Peace Wapiti; I would hope these two schools could work together if either school was lacking in numbers to have a sports team they could combine teams. The real threat to sports teams is the continued loss of students in the school board. Currently when HRS plays against the Catholic school team, there are a number of former BES students that play on that team. This will continue to increase if there is not a change.

CTS Courses at BRHS

I am confident that this could carry on as is. Both students from Beaverlodge and Hythe could attend CTS courses at BRHS in the same schedule there is now.

Logistics

Classrooms - with the loss of a kindergarten, grade 1 and grade 2 class within the last few years and the loss of a grade 3 class in recent history; there is sufficient classroom space for BES to accommodate additional grade levels. The statement on the FAQ that this change would affect fine arts and gym classes is untrue. There is also the capacity to house additional grade levels at the high school level. It is also my understanding that a portion of the junior high at HRS is portable classrooms; could these classrooms be moved if required?

Gym - concerns have been brought forward about the availability of gym space for additional grade levels. My son currently attends HRS and shares the gym with other classes during gym time, this could be arranged the same way at BES.

Bathrooms - concerns about not enough bathrooms to house additional grade levels at BES should not be of concern. There has been a loss of about 100 students, by adding two grade levels to BES this would be a maximum of 90 students which is still under the number of students that BES housed a few short years ago.

Hallways and Playgrounds - concern of congestion by adding students to BES is another mute point. BES once had this number of students. Also, just like any school with elementary and junior high, it would be easy to stagger entry and recess times.

Cultural Diversity

All of Canada is a melting pot of cultural backgrounds and ethnicities. BES and HRS would both continue to have a wide range of cultural diversity in each of their schools.

CSW

I don't believe that removing CSW days is even part of the same conversation as reconfiguring the schools. Currently the junior high students at HRS only have class from 8:50am-3:15pm and still have CSW days. There should not be a threat of students losing the CSW days due to the schools being reconfigured.

Staffing

If BES students were able to stay in Beaverlodge, there would still be the same number of students to teach in Peace Wapiti as a whole; therefore, the concern about Hythe staff losing their jobs is irrelevant. These staff members would still be required in Peace Wapiti, their job may just be at a different school. I would say that the concern of staffing should be in the continued trend of losing students. BES has already lost 3.45 teaching positions since 2018, this loss will eventually be felt at HRS. Peace Wapiti needs to attract and retain students in order to maintain staffing levels where they are currently at, offering junior high education in Beaverlodge would assist in this.

Lack of Professionalism

It was made clear by Peace Wapiti that their staff and administration were to act as "Switzerland" on this topic. I have had conversations with parents on numerous occasions in regards to how staff at HRS making comments about how a change to school configuration would adversely affect the students. To me this is not being neutral. Neutral would be providing the information and allowing students to make their own decision on how they would feel about this change. I have also been informed of a lack of neutrality from the people who spoke to the students before they were given the survey. If you are to place negative thoughts in a child's head and then ask them their opinion, are you really expecting an uninfluenced response? Once again, the presentation of facts and a neutral discussion would have provided a more accurate picture of what these students want. I also question why we are even asking the students. Children are not allowed to make decisions in any part of society that would greatly impact their life, so why here?

I am hopeful that Peace Wapiti will make this based on what is best for their school board as a whole. In the end, a school is like a business...your students are your clients and if you don't have any clients, you go out of business. There is a lot of talk around town on this matter and from what I hear, there will be a number of additional families who will move their students to the Catholic system if Peace Wapiti refuses to offer junior high public education in Beaverlodge. If this is Peace Wapiti's decision, the trend of decreasing enrollment, reduced funding, loss of programming and loss of teaching positions will continue. Adding to this, younger families are choosing to enroll their students in the Catholic system beginning in Kindergarten. I would like Peace Wapiti to take a long hard look at what their business looks like in Beaverlodge and make a decision that will make this business sustainable now and into the future.

Sincerely,

