

Plan doesn't work

To the Editor,

Anyone who will read my plight and respond with a positive outcome.

My husband's friends, and community members, have spent many hours over the last few weeks reading, researching and discussing the Long Term Capitol and Accommodation Plan. While this plan does look good on paper, you need to be aware that it does not work in practice.

My daughter attends Coe Hill Public School. As a family, we spent two years driving here from southwestern Ontario to find a suitable community to raise our daughter.

The main reason we chose Coe Hill was for the school. The community we left had just closed five schools and built one school in its place.

After careful review, we decided that such a large school was unacceptable for many reasons. We sold a thriving business, two commercial buildings, and our home. We knew the financial constraints we would face in moving to such a small community.

We chose to live here because it offered a lifestyle we wanted for our family. We live below the poverty line, we drive used vehicles, and we have to be conscious of every dollar we spend. We gladly do this to provide our daughter with the best possible lifestyle in Ontario. We spend many hours in our community both volunteering and engaging in community events.

Our biggest concern with your plans for Coe Hill Public School, is that our daughter will be spending a minimum of two hours, five days a week, commuting to and from school. We feel this is unacceptable. The argument that you will have more funding for extra programming and support is unacceptable.

Children need adequate sleep, rest and nourishment to thrive, none of which will be supplied on a school bus two hours every day. Further, will that two hours be taken out of the school day or taken away from our family time? You currently have my child for six hours a day and now you want to add a minimum of two more hours to that. She sleeps for 12 hours. That leaves us with only four hours for meals, bathing, chores and community events.

When you add the stress of travelling every day it doesn't leave much for the family. I am at the school a minimum of four days a week in various volunteer capacities. Having to travel so far to volunteer would create too much of a financial burden on my family, so it would be one more thing we would have to give up.

Our daughter is thriving with the small town lifestyle choices we have made for her. She is above average in all academic areas. She is a kind and caring community member. She stands out as a person as do all the children she goes to school with. Many of her fine qualities come directly from living and going to school in a small town environment. If we had wanted the special programming, extra funding and someone else raising our daughter we would have stayed where we were. It was our choice to be here.

A long bus ride, together with a large school is not an option for us. After many discussions with other parents they feel the same. We are left with two options. First, we can uproot our family and find another small community. This would create even further financial strain on us, not to mention our daughter giving up all that she has come to know and love in Coe Hill. The second option would be to remove our daughter from the public school system. This seems like the most logical option.

After discussion with several families in the area, I am encouraged that Coe Hill would be successful in creating its own homeschooling group. With upwards of 25 of the current 62 students currently attending Coe Hill Public School, I am convinced we could run a very rewarding group without leaving our community.

In closing I am begging you to please consider the impact your vote will have on our community, our school, our children and our families.

Linda Patterson