



**The Hamilton Mountain
Heritage Society**
(Founded in 1996)

P.O. Box 60506, Mtn Plaza R.P.O.,
Hamilton, ON, L9C 7N7
hamiltonheritage1@gmail.com

Hamiltonheritage.ca

March 17, 2015

Pam Reinholdt,
Interim Director of Education and
Secretary of the Board
Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board
20 Education Court
PO Box 2558
Hamilton ON L8N 3L1

Dear Ms. Reinholdt:

Recent media coverage has again brought to the attention of the Hamilton Mountain Heritage Society HWDSB Policy No 2.3: Naming/Renaming a School in Whole or in Part. Several times in the past we have written to the Board of Trustees about this policy and our concerns with it. We now wish to address this with the newly elected Board of Trustees.

Our Executive appreciates the policy as it pertains to the naming of completely new schools. The process allows the community to choose a name that has significance to them and perhaps honour a person or event of significance.

When a school is being built to replace another on the same property we feel the name should be retained for the school to remain and continue as a vital, easily identifiable member of that community.

We strongly disagree with the Board's decision to consider renaming schools that are centres of their communities, have a long-standing presence, and are part of past-students' identities merely because some students are transferring from closed schools. We do not believe this was the intent of the policy and view the process as hurtful and a waste of valuable resources.

When a student moves from one school to another, because of change of residence, grade level, or a school closing they expect that school to have a different name than the one they previously attended. That would be the norm. A child attending the same school year after year should not expect the name of that facility to suddenly change - that's absurd. Alumni of a school would not expect to revisit their alma mater, which is the same building they attended, to find the name different - that's baffling.

The implementation of the policy could have a negative impact on the students and staff of the receiving school. Would acceptance and integration of students from two or more schools not be better served by retaining the name of the receiving school and, at the same time, honouring the

name(s) of the school(s) from which students are coming? This can be effectively done through the naming of the accepting school's library or gymnasium after that of the closed school(s). It would be far better to model for our children compromise and problem solving, rather than imposing decisions designed to appease a few while, in practice, negatively impacting many.

The Educational Archives and Heritage Centre of the HWDSB has an established practice of retaining important archives and artifacts from schools which have closed. Many of these items are forwarded to the receiving school, providing the transferred students a level of comfort when these items become an obvious part of their new environment. A wonderful example of this practice is the Honour Rolls that were brought from Brantdale School, which closed in 1977, to Queensdale School, where they remain on display until this day. The rolls are a silent, but positive reminder of the heritage of Queensdale School, and its debt to Brantdale School.

As taxpayers, we are concerned with the fiscal cost of renaming existing schools: from school uniforms to repainting logos, from pens to cheques. The cost will be enormous and it will entail a questionable use of public funds.

We are very disturbed by the disregard for our heritage this process shows. The five Mountain schools cited in this latest round of renaming reviews, Franklin Road, G. L. Armstrong, Pauline Johnson, Queensdale and Ridgemount were all so named for good reasons. G. L. Armstrong was named to honour a man who served the Board of Education for the City of Hamilton for over 30 years. It is desirable to avoid a repeat of the recent, contentious process (2014), which saw the name of another outstanding and long-serving former trustee, George R. Allan, replaced under the guise of political correctness. Pauline Johnson was a noted Canadian performer and author. Queensdale derives its name from that area of the Central Mountain known as "Queen's Survey" and has been long standing for more than 65 years. By replacing any of these names the message is that our heritage is not important, and that is not a lesson we want our young people, or our community at large, to learn. One of the objectives of the Hamilton Mountain Heritage Society is to increase appreciation of our local heritage: we invite the HWDSB to join us in that pursuit.

It is interesting to note that at the same time the HWDSB is considering renaming schools to accommodate new students attending those buildings, the Hamilton Bulldogs are welcoming not just a few new players, but an entire new roster from a different league without wasting a moment to consider changing the beloved and recognizable name "Bulldogs".

We urge the trustees to revise HWDSB Policy 2.3: Naming/Renaming of Schools in Whole or in Part.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin McKee, President

Cc:

Ontario Historical Society
Ancaster Township Historical Society
Dundas Valley Historical Society
Glanbrook Heritage Society
Head-of-the-Lake Historical Society
Stoney Creek Historical Society
Trustees of the HWDSB