

# Jerry J. Ouellette, MPP Oshawa

## Aspects of Schooling

I volunteer for my local school's kiss and ride program and help out when I can like so many other volunteers. Do you ever wonder why a brand new school is built and within a couple of years or even sooner portable classrooms are utilized? It actually makes sense when you discover the reasoning.

Projections for new growth areas take place and a school size for the expected people moving in takes place. In new building developments there are higher numbers of young families and it is challenging to calculate the number of classes and sizes for growing areas; hence you have to wait until there is some sort of leveling of the growth. If an area of high growth with many children and new attendees begins to level off such as our neighbourhood, how does the school plan and operate once all the kids, originally in the area, now out grow the local school grades and move on? Do you shut down that school or do you start bussing in kids as most local residents want to remain in their original neighborhood.

The school must plan at a level that will maintain a minimum occupancy level over the long term. At one point there will be high numbers of kids, usually at the start of a new school's construction, and then the numbers start to fall off. So in order to fill the period of time when the numbers are high the school board brings in portables to accommodate for those high student years. Beau Valley Public School on Ritson Road is a great example with many portables. What's going to happen once all those kids graduate from there? In order for schools to operate in a cost effective matter it must operate at a minimum occupancy around 70% or it's not cost effective to fund the school. It is actually cheaper to bus kids around than operate a school at a low occupancy rate.

Another method of adjusting for growth and declines is changing the school boundaries with shifting population and demographic trends. In the extreme, you would register kids the previous spring to determine who moved in an area or out of an area to decide which kids went to what school and for which grades. This would make decisions tough to determine and would be difficult for families and the school board. And this does not factor in the current government's classroom capping that adds even more portables.

School boards try to calculate the best long term stability for the school and maintain minimum occupancy levels to maximize cost effectiveness and fill in the higher rates of occupancy with portables. It is more complicated when neighborhoods like mine are turning over, remember it started in 1955, and all the new young families are once again moving in.

Try and plan for that, 50 years ago! Not as simple as we all thought.



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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jerry J. Ouellette". The signature is stylized with large, flowing loops for the letters.

**Jerry J. Ouellette**  
**MPP Oshawa**