

## **Closing Neighbourhood Schools Maims Community Soul**

by **Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Sunday, November 21, 2010**

<http://politicsrespun.org/2010/11/closing-neighbourhood-schools-maims-community-soul/>

What kind of soul destruction happens to a community when the BC Liberal K-12 privatization agenda, tax cuts and defunding force school boards to close schools?

Carlito Pablo wrote an excellent piece last week explaining how vulnerable communities are to the Liberal Party's slash and burn social service defunding using the closing of the K-5 College Park Elementary School in Port Moody a few years ago as an example.

But he included new data that shows more reasons why merely maximizing demographic efficiency isn't good policy for society:

A Vancouver school board staff report released in October noted that although enrollment has declined in the city in the past decade, "elementary enrollment is projected to flatten out over the next three years, and then increase by 2013".

via [School closure left a big gap in Port Moodys community | Vancouver, Canada | Straight.com.](#)

If you have any concern for schools closing anymore after almost 200 have been closed already, you need to read the piece above. And if your neighbourhood school isn't closing, one nearby may be and you should really consider stepping in solidarity with those under that threat.

I was quite moved by the College Park piece and I have quite a bit to add that complements the views it contains:

Though a strip mall existed for a time in the 1970s, I was always happy that College Park didn't have a mall, shopping centre or cafe.

College Park had trees, trails, lots of kids, a lacrosse box, fields and an outdoor pool. I started kindergarten the year College Park opened and found my 6 years there to be a profound benchmark of what community was supposed to be about.

I've seen less and less of it in the last 30-odd years not only when I taught high school in District 43, but more now living in East Vancouver.

It is an embrace of community vibrancy and commitment to neighbourhood relationships that create the bedrock of stability for our children.

The Liberals have spent a decade encouraging privatization in part by defunding the system leading to the closure of over 200 schools by next year. Those were policy choices based on defunding government

revenues through tax cuts.

It's time to fight back and demand just taxation and investment in our social infrastructure.

I took my children through College Park last spring to show them all the landmarks of my childhood and while it was no ghost town, its soul had been horribly maimed.

If we allow these closures to continue we are inviting decay into our communities. Isn't 200 closed schools throughout the province enough to get us to act?