

March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Mayor Cam Guthrie and City Clerks,

**Better Beginnings... Better Futures**, so encouraging to think this was possible. Back in the 90s the Shelldale Community needed this program because they recognized that children in the area were at risk. Onward Willow became a support to assist them to experience better beginnings in the hopes of having a better future. The building that once was Shelldale Public School turned into Shelldale Centre and became a resource for multiple people, helping them to access for their needs much easier.

Shelldale Public School was a **safe haven** for vulnerable children who were at risk. They went to school every day to get a break from their home environments. Teachers created a Perfect Attendance Award because many qualified. For most it was the only award they would receive, but boy were they proud!! They came to school not feeling well because there they would be respected, appreciated, loved and encouraged every day to be a better person and succeed. Teachers hoped they'd see there was a greater path in life for them to follow. They tirelessly encouraged them to make goals and work hard to achieve them. Success could be theirs if they only believed and worked hard.

But a school day is not long enough for kids at risk. Most of their days are spent back home in toxic environments. Their basic needs of life are not met. Yelled at, hit, degraded, ignored and not fed nutritional food. Lack of encouragement equals no self confidence. Children were being modelled negative behaviour and then struggled at school using that behaviour. The teachers of Shelldale had a very challenging job, but they were not on their own when **Better Beginnings... Better Futures** became part of the neighbourhood.

Shelldale Centre encompasses the **Better Beginnings... Better Future** ideal for these families. It has helped strengthen their lives. Positivity, encouragement, acceptance, inclusion **and the building still represents a safe haven!**

So now I ask you...**What are you thinking?!?!?!?!?** A housing project being built for people with drug addiction and those who are chronically homeless. Why would you even consider building that next to a school, daycare and community centre where staff in these buildings continue to strive every day to bring calm to the lives of these vulnerable children. Their full focus is on positive outcomes.

Give your head a shake!! The Shelldale area is turning around. These children **don't need the negative** influence of adults who have made poor choices that screwed up their lives. They **need positive** role models and an environment that supports their goals and dreams.

You need to stop and rethink where you are wanting to build. You will crush **Better Beginnings... Better Futures**, Onward Willow and the Shelldale Centre. But most of all you will let children down!

Trevolyn Louttet

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