



**DURHAM CATHOLIC
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**
Learning and Living in Faith

Regular Board Meeting
Monday, September 23, 2024

Public Delegation

Delegation by – Mr. Oliver McLaren

Topic – Proactive School Safety

Hello Everyone, :)

Thank you for your time and allowing me the opportunity to express my concerns as a parent. I was significantly more nervous the last time I delegated just over a year ago, but I see some familiar faces having become more active in my kids' parent council and DCPIC, so I'm hoping to stay within my time limit this time. :)

We are grateful for you all for your ongoing dedication to Catholic Education, our core values, students and parents.

Proactive school safety remains a concern for many parents including myself.

The vetting and filtration process by which kids can bring dangerous weapons into school premises needs to be audited in conjunction with the DRPS and strategic partners such as Security professionals, Fire Services and Mental health practitioners. We cannot wait until something tragic happens before we act. Our property taxes cover police, fire and education and we would like to see a re-assessment of how funding is allocated and what areas would perhaps be of greater importance to enhance school safety. Parents want to ensure budgetary spending is being allocated to areas that meet student needs and priorities.

In light of the unfortunate ongoing school shootings plaguing our neighbours to the South, Durham Police recently confiscating over 16 firearms through Project Burton: thousands of rounds of ammunition, 184 charges and 32 arrests, coupled with the apparent ease with which kids can gain access to dangerous weapons, laws with minimal conditions that seemingly release suspected offenders awaiting trial especially if they are juveniles, CMHA reporting in a recent study an increase in mental health, anxiety and depression among teens especially post covid, CAMH reporting an increase in substance abuse shown in recent studies among younger youth demographics, DRPS citing gang affiliation and recruiting using bullying tactics and evolving to now include intimidatory and oftentimes

aggressive forms of theft of other students personal belongings by teenagers, its not farfetched to deduce that our youth are trending in the wrong direction. Not all threats made to schools in the past have been substantiated nor reported through print or other media or even local edsby channels.

I , in collaboration with other parents of Students at St.Pauls and Father Leo J Austin, are asking that more be done to enhance security protocols across all DCDSB elementary and high schools. Some suggestions:

1.**Active Shooter drills and procedure manuals** need to be developed. I'm aware we do the usual hold and secure and routine fire drills, but more is needed.

2.**A Proactive School Safety** committee formed to include members of the DRPS, The Board, Security experts,Mental health practitioners, Parent Volunteers, Principals, Teachers and a Student Representative.

3.**EACH SCHOOL ought to have its very own SRO or two. (School Resource Officer)**. I had the pleasure of meeting with our school SRO Officer Allison Lamb last week as well as another member of the Durham Police and they both agreed more is needed. Officer Lamb shared that she presently covers 29 schools across Durham Region. She has expressed her support for this effort by parents. I have reached out to the office of the new Chief of Police Peter Moreira as well as his deputies Chris Kirkpatrick and Kim Yeadle to see how we can have a deeper dialogue around this effort. . Officer Lamb also mentioned that efforts were underway to get additional SRO's but would still fall significantly short of the numbers needed to meet ratios. Much like we have ratios of students to teachers per class , we need to administer the same metrics regarding allocating SRO,s per school population. I have also engaged our local Councillors Chris Leahy and Maleeha Shahid to help garner support.

4. **Metal Detectors or infared/thermal scanning technology** that would work to help detect any guns or knives in backpacks. Similar to what is used at many

government offices, the airport, court houses, Stadiums and sporting events, even Canadas Wonderland. Why aren't these already stationed inside every school , where our most vulnerable students and teachers and staff gather daily. The police are only minutes away when seconds count. Again, a committee would be a great starting point to work out the logistics and cost .

5. **FUNDING**..The 2024-2025 Ministry of Education Core Education Funding (Formerly Grants for Student Needs) stipulates and im quoting Mr. Andrew Davis ,Assistant Deputy Minister of Education Labour and Finance .

https://efis.fma.csc.gov.on.ca/faab/Memos/B2024/B05_EN.pdf

“Strengthening transparency and school board accountability Core Ed includes a refreshed enveloping framework to support improved school board accountability and to provide assurance to parents and stakeholders that certain funding is protected for key priorities, while continuing to ensure flexibility for school boards to support their unique needs. While funding may be allocated through a specific fund, **school boards have flexibility within the accountability framework**, as noted below. The following new requirements are being made to strengthen transparency and school board accountability: •

The Student Safety and Well-being Allocation under the Learning Resources Fund is being limited to student safety and well-being expenses.

The Learning Resources Fund supports the costs of staffing typically required outside of the classroom to support student needs, such as teacher-librarians / library technicians, guidance counsellors, mental health workers, school management staff as well as Non staffing classroom costs.

The province provides funding to school boards based on a number of factors. However, most funding can be moved from one category to another, which means

that many funding decisions are made at the board level. There are a few exceptions, where funding may not be moved.

In June 2023, the Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act, 2023 was passed to enhance the province's education system, including ensuring transparency and strengthening accountability for parents and families.

6. **Dean of Discipline**: I had suggested this last year and the idea seemed to have garnered some support but nothing much has materialized since. A dean of Discipline position for each school. In Jamaica where I attended high school, there was one individual tasked with the sole responsibility of handling disciplinary breaches and triaging with the principal and admin. The oftentimes received vital information and developed key relationships with the students but also firmly suggested and applied consequences. The Dean of Discipline would also monitor hallways, check washrooms and be an extra set of eyes while class is in session.,

I spoke with one parent recently who shared something a teacher who works in the district shared, which is why bother to correct any students bad behavior when you risk being labeled or worst disciplined, so they let a lot slide by so as not to jeopardize their pension nor job security. It hints to the social climate we are in where the tail is wagging the proverbial dog, inmate running the asylum. I have heard this too from many teachers frustrated with the state of school rules not being fully enforced .

7. **Which leads me to VAPING.** Again another topic raised last year, yet the trend continues.

According to the Government of Ontario, Under the [Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017](#), you cannot smoke or vape in any enclosed public space. Smoking or vaping in any school is strictly prohibited. The same applies to outdoor grounds, including playgrounds and sports fields adjacent to said schools. If you smoke or vape or use weed/marijuana where it is not allowed, you may be charged with an offence and subject to a fine (\$1,000 for a first offence, \$5,000 for any further offence) if convicted.

- It is posted on school buildings that public areas within 20 metres of the school's grounds is off limits for vaping or smoking., Yet kids continue to do this with little or no consequence, they are doing it **inside** the bathrooms, this s a clear violation of school and provincial rules and by laws and ought to be met with the same consequences outlined above. The Board has the power to suspend or expel students for progressive disregard for this behavior. Parents cannot continue to enable this behaviour and be willing participants as they too are aiding this negative cycle. One parent i spoke with agreed that the enforcement of school policy is lacking and needs to be reiterated.
- One parent suggested installing vaping detectors to serve as a deterrent but also a loud alert for anyone vaping. Sounds good to me.
- Kids expelled from one school are simply sent to another school board , this is also a cycle that needs to be assessed as oftentimes the troubling behaviour continues or escalates, compromising other kids' safety.

8. Kids have been going around robbing other kids for their shoes, sweaters, hats , phones, jackets and reselling them on popular online sites. These occurrences oftentimes go unreported by the students due to fear of bullying or threats to their safety by the aggressors. We need to encourage our students to report all acts of bullying and theft which is a crime and these should then be turned over to DRPS for further follow up.

9. **Finally, is there a way to look at modernizing our cafeteria and lunch**

room meal options for schools. We are limited to high starch content and only one lunch period whn i understanmd there used to be 2 many years ago. A lot of kids opt to leave school in search of alternative lunch choices. Warm meals with healthy CANada food guide proportions would be a great addition to school canteens. Perhaps there are service providers that can submit tenders to undertake.

Thank you, Oliver McLaren