

September 8, 2000

**P.C.H.S.**

**Students**

**and**

**Teachers**

**BEAT the HEAT**

**with**

**CLASS**

Submitted by: Chris Eustace  
Teacher  
P.C.H.S.

(including cover: 13 pages)

PIERREFONDS COMPREHENSIVE HIGH SCHOOL  
SCHOOL COUNCIL EMERGENCY MEETING

THURSDAY, AUGUST 26, 1999 ←  
11:15 AM

PRESENT: N. Fitzpatrick, S. Allard, J. Riley, C. Eustace, S. Sayfy,  
A. Minotti, S. Goulet, K. Miller, D. Montpetit

SUBJECT: Oppressive Heat at PCHS

MOTION: Whereas the lack of air-conditioning has caused the heat  
temperature to rise above 30 degrees C.

Whereas the humidity level is above 51%.

Whereas assurances were given by the Board that the situation  
would be rectified by last Tuesday, August 17, 1999, and to  
date, there has been no improvement.

**Be it moved that for the safety and health of our students  
and personnel, PCHS not open its doors to students until the  
air conditioning is functioning and no longer posing a  
health threat.**

**Unanimously approved.**

jt



**Pierrefonds Comprehensive High School  
Governing Board 1998-1999**

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**Lester B. Pearson School Board  
257 Beaconsfield Boulevard,  
Beaconsfield, Que.  
H9W 4A5**

**August 26, 1999 ←**

**Attention: Catherine Prokosh, Director General  
Subject: Air Conditioning at P.C.H.S.**

**Dear Mrs. Prokosh;**

I wish to express my disappointment in the lack of progress in rectifying the inoperative air conditioning system at P.C.H.S. This system is not a luxury but a necessity in times of excessive heat since there are no windows nor adequate air circulation. This poses a very real health threat to both students and staff.

The P.C.H.S. governing board supports the recommendation that the school not be opened should the air conditioning not be functioning properly leaving our school with unacceptably high temperatures.

**Respectfully yours,**

**Caroll-Ann Case  
Chairperson, P.C.H.S. Governing Board 1998-1999.**

cc: Mr. Neil Fitzpatrick, Principal, P.C.H.S

# New air system

Students and staff of Pierrefonds Comprehensive High School will finally have relief, and it will cost the Lester B. Pearson School Board almost \$500,000.

The school, touted as an evolutionary step for educational facilities when it was opened in the 1970s, has very few windows and is susceptible to ventilation-related problems.

These problems have been plaguing the building for years, but have become more apparent since the ventilation system completely broke down earlier this year.

"It's a large school building. At the best of times it is hard to heat and cool," said Pearson chairman Marcus Tabachnick. "The whole system was terrible and it finally broke down."

Work on the school will begin later this month and should be

completed this fall.

"We are confident that the systems that are being put in place now will address both temperature and humidity and keep them well within the norms by the time it's done," Tabachnick said.

Students and staff have complained about temperatures as low as 13 degrees in winter and as high as 30 degrees during spring and summer months due to the ventilation problems.

The governing board at the school had demanded chilled bottled water for all the students, a full-time nurse in the school at all times and 65 fans to aid in the air circulation in each classroom as an interim solution until the new system is installed.

But Tabachnick said the school board has no plans to meet the bottled water or fan requests.

Not accurate  
I made the  
request.  
Blm ✓

(enlarged)

CHRONICLE Aug 16/00





**Pearson Teachers Union**  
**Syndicat des Enseignant(e)s de Pearson**



**F A X**

**To:** Ms. Catherine Prokosh      **cc:** G. Rosa  
**From:** Jim Wilson                      N. Fitzpatrick  
**Date:** 31<sup>st</sup> August, 2000              R. Carter - Staff  
                                                                                                  C.A. Case

**U R G E N T !**

The teachers at Pierrefonds Comprehensive High School are becoming increasingly concerned about the excessive heat and humidity at the school. Given the present weather conditions, they demand that immediate action be taken by the board to resolve this issue. The situation is proving intolerable and prevents both learning and teaching taking place.

The board has a legal responsibility to provide a safe and secure working environment for both teachers and students (see Article 51-4 of "An Act respecting occupational health and safety").

The board has ignored requests for the temporary placement of fans and is seemingly ignoring the difficulties being faced by personnel in the school. The Pearson Teachers Union suggests that, at a minimum, the board consider the immediate use of professional days so that the matter can be properly addressed.

Feuillets de transmission par télécopieur		Date	# of pages / Nbre de pages	
Post-it™ Fax Note		7871B		
To / À	N. FITZPATRICK		From / De	PTU
Co./Dept. / Cie/Service		Co. / Cie		
Phone # / N° de tél.		Phone # / N° de tél.		
Fax # / N° de télécopieur		Fax # / N° de télécopieur		

17095, boul. Brunswick Blvd., Kirkland, QC H9H 5G6 Tel.: (514) 426-4949 Fax: (514) 426-4952

NB: Very important meeting today after school (2:30) in the teacher's lounge concerning this problem (R.C.)

August 31, 2000  
(10:00 p.m.)

To: All Teachers

From: Chris Eustace – Pearson Teachers' Union and  
P.C.H.S. Teacher Rep (in Rick Carter's  
absence)

Concerning: Meeting with Neil Fitzpatrick regarding excessive heat,  
humidity, the learning environment of students and working  
conditions of teachers.

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Present were: Rick Carter, Derek Montpetit, Chris Eustace and  
Neil Fitzpatrick

After a meeting attended by 61 teachers and an action plan that was voted  
51 - 2 , Mr. Fitzpatrick was informed of the following:

1. Teachers were exasperated and very angry at the Board for their complete lack of foresight and no action plan regarding the present situation at P.C.H.S.
2. Mr. Fitzpatrick was reminded that the school board in May transferred the P.C.H.S. summer school session to St. Thomas High School. In short, the school board recognized the problem.
3. On August 2<sup>nd</sup> the school board was informed that there could be a problem for the opening the school year. A request was made for bottled water, fans and a full-time nurse. These requests were **denied**.
4. Earlier in the day the Pearson Teachers Union sent a fax to the Directorate that the Board consider the immediate use of professional days so that the matter could be properly addressed. We would still be fulfilling the mandatory 180 teaching days of the school year. At the time of this writing no answer was given.
5. Teachers requested Mr. Fitzpatrick consider a mini rotation of our schedules and the busses be called in for 11:00 a.m. tomorrow. We also suggested that any lost time in our mini rotation could be made up later in



the school year. He said "no" as he was convinced that the Directorate would also say "no".

Given that the Governing Board chairperson on August 26<sup>th</sup>, 1999, requested, in writing, that the School Board postpone opening day because "... of the excessive heat since there are no windows or adequate air circulation. (and) This poses a very real health threat to both students and staff. ...", we agreed that in all likelihood the Directorate would again say "no".

6. Because of all the refusals of the School Board to the simplest of requests we decided (51 to 2) that at 10:40 tomorrow we would bring all our students to the cafeteria and monitor them until the end of the day. The cafeteria was chosen because we can open all exits and get some air circulation.
7. We emphasized this was not a walk out.
8. We stressed that the students would be supervised until the busses arrived.

.....

At around 4:00 p.m., I phoned Mrs. Case, Governing Board Chair, to inform her of all the preceding. Mrs. Case informed me that some parents had already phoned her about the situation and that one parent heard on a radio talk show that student(s) had passed out. I told her that I knew nothing about this but I emphasized to her that teachers were not walking out but we are very angry with the Board and the Administration for not having an emergency preparedness plan and that the teachers "innately feel responsible about the health and welfare of our students." Council of Commissioners August 2, 2000. (c.e.)

**Colleagues:** In light of what Mrs. Case told me regarding the radio talk show, it would not surprise me if the media were to show up. It is imperative that the students be supervised. Please be reminded that students are not to leave school property until the busses arrive.

Hopefully this action may help toward the betterment of all in this unwanted situation.



2/2  
7/3







CHERYL HNATIUK, GAZETTE

Jeremy DiDonato sweats out his math test in the 28C heat outside on the lawn of Pierrefonds Comprehensive High School yesterday.

# The shortest of field trips

## Broken air-conditioning forces classes onto Pierrefonds school's lawn

**ALYCIA AMBROZIAK**  
The Gazette

From afar, the scene at Pierrefonds Comprehensive High School yesterday was almost bucolic — students gathered in groups on the lawn and under trees, listening and taking notes as teachers conducted outdoor classes.

But it was no picnic. The recent spate of hot weather — Environment Canada reported 28.4C at noon yesterday — combined with a broken air-conditioning system in the school and windowless classrooms forced more than 1,000 students and staff outdoors, searching for a spot in the shade.

Few local schools are equipped with air-conditioning, but it's needed at Pierrefonds Comprehensive. Opened in the 1970s, it was built with few windows and none in the classrooms, following standards at the time which were aimed at reducing outside distractions.

While spokesmen for the teachers' union blamed the Lester B. Pearson school board for procrastinating about repairing the air-conditioning and for refusing to supply fans and bottled water, school-board officials said they have

been on the case since the end of last school year. Meanwhile, students were happy to be out of their classrooms and in the light breeze.

"It's hot and stuffy in the classrooms. We can't concentrate," said Katherine Vinette, a Grade 8 student. "I'm glad they sent us outside, especially because there's a little bit of wind today, so that helps."

**"I'm glad they sent us outside. There's a little bit of wind today so that helps."**

Other students concurred. "Being outside is cool," said 13-year-old

Nancy Mead. "When the air-conditioning worked it was fine inside, but now the classrooms are just too hot."

Principal Neil Fitzpatrick said teachers were given the option of taking students outdoors. All of them decided to do just that.

Fitzpatrick said he was optimistic the weather would cool down enough over the weekend to allow students back into their classrooms. If another hot day strikes, "we'll just have to go outside again," he said.

Chris Eustace, a teacher's representative at the school, said teachers took their charges outdoors because the conditions were a health risk.

"We asked for fans, they said no; we asked for water, they said no; we asked for a nurse on standby, they said no; we asked for a mini-rotation schedule, they said no," Eustace said. "The school board should be embarrassed and ashamed for its procrastination and lack of foresight. They were aware of this situation a year ago."

Board chairman Marcus Tabachnick said requests for bottled water and fans were refused because there were water fountains in the school and fans would not do much more than push hot air around. "I sympathize with them but they have to understand, we're doing what we can," Tabachnick said.

Giordano Rosa, representative of the board's Region 3 where the school is situated, said engineers have spent the summer studying how to replace the air-conditioning system, which broke down at the end of the last school year.

"Once the engineers give us their report, we'll have to go to tender — it's a \$500,000 job — and then the project can start," he said. "But that won't be until October."



September 5, 2000

**Student Behaviour on September 1, 2000**

Dear Colleague:

I don't know where to begin regarding this subject except to say that in a telephone conversation I had on August 31 with Mrs. Case, (Governing Board Chair), we were convinced that many of our Senior students would leave school and take an extra long weekend.

They didn't. Frankly, looking back at my youth I probably would have left at the first opportunity.

We were organized and the children so well behaved. To illustrate this: During the last period of the day when I wished the students to "Have a good weekend", I was reminded by some of them that we **had** to return to class and take attendance.... We did.

Many of you suggested, during first class on Tuesday, that we ought to thank them in one form or another for their conduct. Someone suggested to say so during their first class. Someone else suggested to write a word or two on the blackboard. Another teacher told me we should put up posters etc....

We might remember these are the same students <sup>who</sup> that were the vanguard of the student movement (this time last year) supporting teachers during our problems with the Provincial Government.

**For your convenience, there is a sheet of Bristol board underneath this paper. If you wish, write some words to show our appreciation and pin it up anywhere in the school. Masking tape and markers are beside the telephone in your staff room.**

I think the students would appreciate this..... Thanks



P.S. My eldest son, living in B.C. (class of '81 P.C.H.S.) called to tell me that our story was seen on BCTV at 5:30 on a news show called "Canada Tonight". (He said that we looked pretty good)

P.P.S. There will be a report placed in your mail box later today. It will deal with events and meetings held on September 1, 2000.



September 6, 2000

To: Teachers of P.C.H.S.

From: Chris Eustace – P.C.H.S. Teacher Representative

Copies: Neil Fitzpatrick - Principal  
Catherine Prokosh - Director General L.B.P.S.B.  
Marcus Tabachnick – Chairman L.B.P.S.B.  
Jim Wilson – President P.T.U.

**A REPORT CONCERNING EVENTS of SEPTEMBER 1, 2000 at P.C.H.S.**

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**'Extended Recess' Meeting -- Teachers' Lounge:**

The P.T.U. teacher representative called this meeting. Present were over 50 teachers and joined later by N. Fitzpatrick and two representatives from the School Board. Teachers had agreed that the teaching and learning environment had become intolerable and classes would be held outside. The teachers were there to fine-tune the action plan that would go into effect at 10:40 a.m. It was decided that students were to go to class, attendance would be taken, class taken outside, brought back to class at the end of the period and attendance taken again.

The administration, who extended recess, was present to officially approve the action plan.

Mr. G. Rosa, Regional Director, who was in the building at the time, did not attend this meeting. No reason was given.

**'Senior Lunch' Meeting – Board Room:**

G. Rosa – Regional Director	D. Montpetit – Teacher
R. Mills – Director of Educational Services	T. Pellegrino – Teacher
D. Taylor – Director of Community Services	C. Eustace – Teacher
N. Fitzpatrick – Principal	
B. Walker – Interim – Vice-Principal	

(In light of events in and around the school, this meeting was called on a very short notice. Derek Montpetit and I were led to believe that the School Board had accepted our proposal of a mini-rotation schedule as part of an emergency preparedness plan for P.C.H.S.).

1/2 ...  
19/3



The tone for this meeting was very quickly set by Mr. Rosa's late arrival. The atmosphere was somewhat tense Mr. Fitzpatrick said a few words that indicated a proposal but he was abruptly interrupted by Mr. Rosa who said, "No, not now, later". Was Mr. Fitzpatrick, who was very understanding, going to talk about a mini-rotation schedule or about the late afternoon offering of fans to teachers? I don't know.

### Mr. Rosa

Mr. Rosa's opening remarks were that he was very angry and proceeded to give us his employment history. Following are some of Mr. Rosa's comments:

- Situation here not critical
- We need cool weather
- Had gone through enough regarding Terry Fox problem
- Would prefer to be in another school doing something else
- Should accept a new way of thinking of this Board
- Certain procedures must be followed
- Did not appreciate teacher ultimatums.....(???)
- Blamed teachers for bringing in the media – (TV cameras in school)
- P.T.U. rep would be "selective" in reporting to teachers

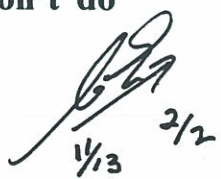
### Chris Eustace:

- Said that one of my main functions was to keep teachers informed and that I would report whatever transpires at this meeting.
- Told him for TV cameras to be allowed in the school they must be granted permission from the Board not the teachers. I emphasized that he knows the law and not to **misinform** the people around the table.
- Stressed that the Board refused all of our requests.
- Mentioned that a lot of this (attention) could have been avoided with the rental of some fans.

That is all I remember of any significance at this meeting. The bell rang. As we (the teachers) were leaving Mr. Rosa said "Chris, you're right"... (about the rule and TV cameras).

### Analysis of the Situation:

As Tom Pellegrino and I were checking our mail boxes, Tom said, "They won't do anything". I agreed and mentioned, "It was a complete waste of time."



1/13 2/2