



Chronicle, Peter McCabe

**PIERREFONDS COMPREHENSIVE** High School teacher Chris Eustace took his students outside for English class to escape poorly air conditioned school building during a hot and humid day last Friday.

# High school heats up

*Outdoor classes held to protest air conditioning*



# Outdoor classes held to protest air conditioning

BY RICHARD BELSON  
*The Chronicle*

Pierrefonds Comprehensive High School staff and students are breathing a sigh of relief after last week's heat wave broke over the weekend.

## PIERREFONDS

It was a classic case of bad timing, as some of the summer's hottest days happened to coincide with the first few days of school at the Lester B. Pearson School Board, which only accentuated PCHS's broken-down air conditioning system.

After about a year of complaining about problems with the school's temperature regulation systems to the school board, some PCHS teachers finally took matters into their own hands last Friday.

To many driving by the Pierrefonds Boulevard school, it may have looked like a new alternative learning method, but in reality, the teachers of the school took their students outside to give them a break from the 28-plus degree temperatures inside the school.

"We did this to get the attention of the board," said teacher Chris Eustace, a member of the Pearson Teachers' Association.

"They have refused every single request we have made. I hope this has enlightened them to the situation, and increased their sensitivity

to our plight," he added.

Eustace pointed out that Friday's outdoor classrooms did not constitute a walkout but it was instead an attempt to provide a healthier environment for students to learn in.

Pearson chairman Marcus Tabachnick said that the unforeseen heat wave effected all of the board's schools, most of which are not even equipped with air conditioning.

"All our schools are hot right now," he said Friday.

"To say they are uncomfortable, yes, they are uncomfortable, but to say they are unlivable, that is ridiculous," he added.

Eustace maintains, however, that because the school was built with no windows in classrooms, the lack of air conditioning is more grave a concern at PCHS than in other schools.

PCHS governing board head Caroll-Ann Case said although the governing board has no mandate to intervene in this matter, she is quite happy with how the school's administration handled the situation Friday.

"As a parent, I rely on the principal to keep the best interest of the students. I feel the administration

made a good decision to try and get some kind of relief for the kids," she said.

In a memo released Friday afternoon to PCHS staff, principal Neil Fitzpatrick authorized teachers to purchase fans costing up to \$25 each if they felt it would help the heat situation in the classrooms.

The suggestion is a small-scale alteration of a request Eustace made at a Pearson council meeting last month, where he asked for 70 fans to be installed in the school to allow for some air circulation.

Tabachnick said Eustace's fan suggestion would be nothing but a waste of time.

"All that is going to do is push the hot air around, which won't help anything," Tabachnick said.

Eustace also requested a full-time nurse be placed on staff at the school as well as unlimited bottled water for staff and students until a new \$500,000 air-conditioning system is installed.

Tabachnick said the goal is to have the new system in place this fall.

Eustace said that when he arrived at the school early Friday morning, all the doors were open, which allowed the most ventilation the school has seen in recent months. That move brought the temperature down to 27 degrees.

"It did help the temperature and got some fresh air into the school, but now there is a security issue," he said.



TABACHNICK  
No to fans







# Legal Notices

## LESTER-B.-PEARSON SCHOOL BOARD

### CALL FOR TENDERS for chiller replacement at Pierrefonds Comprehensive High School

**OWNER:**  
Lester-B.-Pearson School Board  
257, Beaconsfield Boulevard, Beaconsfield, Québec  
Telephone : (514) 697-2480 • Fax : (514) 697-5919

**PROJECT :** PIERREFONDS COMPREHENSIVE HIGH SCHOOL,  
CHILLER REPLACEMENT  
13800 Pierredonds Blvd., Pierrefonds H9A 1A7

**ENGINEERS:** Les Consultants L.B.C.D.  
40 Sainte-Cécile Street  
Salaberry de Valleyfield, Québec J6T 1L7  
Telephone : (450) 371-5722 • Fax : (450) 371-6955

The Lester B. Pearson School Board, Owner, is calling for tenders for the above works to be completed before May 1, 2001.

Drawings and specifications and other contract documents may be obtained from the Engineers' office, upon telephone request, effective September 6, 2000, on deposit of a non-refundable amount of fifty dollars (\$50.00), all taxes included, either in cash or by cheque payable to the Owner.

A site visit of existing conditions will be held on September 20, 2000, at 15:30; all bidders are encouraged to attend.

The tenders (the original and 2 copies) in sealed envelopes addressed to the undersigned, will be received at the Owner's office, 257 Beaconsfield Boulevard, Beaconsfield, until 10 a.m., local time, on September 27, 2000 to be opened in public at the same place, the same day and the same time.

Tenders must be accompanied by the certified cheque in the amount of 10% payable to the Owner, or by a tender bond issued by a company with a Canadian issuer's licence, in the same amount, valid for a period of sixty (60) days from the opening of the tenders date. This tender bond must be exchanged, upon signature of the contract, for a performance bond and an indemnity bond for wages, material and services. When these deposits are in the form of bonds, each one must correspond to 50% of the contract amount and when they consist of certified cheques, each one must correspond to 10% of the contract amount.

Will be considered for granting of the contract, only the tenders submitted by contractors having a place of business in Québec or, when an inter-governmental agreement is applicable, in Québec or in a province or territory part of this agreement, and having, where relevant, the required licence under the Building Act (R.S.Q., c. B-1.1).

The Bidders will be responsible for the choice of their subcontractors, for their financial soundness as well as for the content of their tenders.

All the tenders must be pursuant to the provisions of the Regulation respecting construction contracts for immovables of school boards, effective since August 16, 1990.

The Owner does not bind itself to accept any tender.

*Catherine Prokosh*  
Director General  
Lester B. Pearson School Board

*That's it.*

# LBP airs ventilation woes

By Monik Graham

It's been 32 years since the ventilation system has been changed at Pierrefonds Comprehensive High School, Pearson Teachers' Union president James Wilson told Monday's Lester B. Pearson School Board meeting.

"This may not seem a large problem in other schools, but PCHS has no windows, so fresh air cannot circulate. PCHS has a heating and cooling system that requires a massive overhaul," Wilson insisted.

Last Aug. 26, the board told schools to check their ventilation systems. Although air quality tests were administered, PCHS was not tested because principal Neil Fitzpatrick assured the board that the cleaning had been done.

Christopher Eustace, a 32-year veteran teacher at PCHS and a representative on the governing board, refuted Fitzpatrick's claim and said, "I have been there 32 years and I know for a fact that the system has never been cleaned. This needs to be a priority."

At the request of the union, Daniel Hogue, director of equipment services, last week evaluated PCHS's ventilation systems and verified they had never been cleaned.

Cleaning the system is expensive and time-consuming. A cost estimate to clean the ventilation system at Lindsay Place High School is approximately \$80,450. With 17 air ducts, PCHS's system could cost the board close to \$90,000.

Chairman Marcus Tabachnick said cleaning the systems will be looked after as "Health concerns are a priority for this school board"





## EDITORIAL

# Nightmare on Maple Avenue

**Pearson school board owes it to Macdonald High students to get the funding it needs from the Education Ministry**

**T**here's an ancient African proverb that says it takes a village to raise a child. Today, one can also say with some certainty that it also takes an entire community to keep a school from falling apart.

Macdonald High School in Ste. Anne de Bellevue has fallen in such disrepair that its frustrated governing-board chairman called on the media just over a week ago. He sought to publicize the poor condition of the 96-year-old Maple Avenue facility, where torn curtains adorn classrooms, insulation falls off gym ceilings, lockers are dented and washrooms are vile, foul smelling and decrepit.

The Lester B. Pearson School Board and its predecessor, the Lakeshore School Board, must be held accountable for the condition the school lies in today. The teachers and parents of students at the school also had to have witnessed first hand what was going on that led to this mess. The school community can and should raise a fuss to lobby the school board for badly needed repairs. It is then up to the school board to manage its budget to get the most urgent work done first. As the board juggles its annual capital-works budget, it can only do so much. If it spent its entire annual repair budget on Mac, it wouldn't necessarily be fair to students at other schools, even if those facilities are not in as horrible a state. A lot of the problems likely

piled over the years up at Mac due to budget constraints. While the school board administers its schools, it's up to Quebec's education ministry to make sure the condition of schools in this province don't drop to a third-world level. The problem at Mac isn't with the education students are being handed, it's more with the condition of the building where they have to learn.

Looking for someone to blame at this point is fruitless. It's up to the Pearson board to meet with frustrated parents (which they will do next Monday) and devise a solution that will bring Mac up to standard. Board officials must also make it abundantly clear to Quebec that more funds are needed, for Mac and most likely, some other local schools as well.

While most Pearson schools need upgrades of some kind, the problems at Mac seem just a little bit worse than the rest of the crop — though the dank, windowless classrooms of Pierrefonds Comprehensive High School are far from ideal. The Pearson board is competing with private institutions to attract parents — whose view of the public system was tarnished by the woes at Mac.

While the Pearson board is seeking solutions to deal with Mac, it would be wise for them to stay ahead of the game and avoid another public-relations nightmare.



# THE CHRONICLE

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page A3

## VENTING OVER AIR QUALITY

### PCHS system poor: teacher

BY MARC LALONDE  
The Chronicle

A CLSC report critical of Pierrefonds Comprehensive High School's ventilation system is evidence the Lester B. Pearson School Board needs to overhaul it, a PCHS governing-board member said.

### PIERREFONDS

"The ventilation system is not conducive to a good learning environment for teachers or students," said English teacher Chris Eustace, who has taught at the school for 32 years.

"The temperature fluctuates wildly from one room to the other," said Eustace, a Pearson teachers' union representative.

"It's not my intention to criticize the school. I've been here 32 years, and I've had three sons graduate from here. However, the atmosphere does not provide a good place to teach or learn," he added.

The CLSC report, filed by occupational hygienist Yves Frenette, cites the school's massive temperature variations, which Eustace said can have students on different sides of corridors scrambling to either heat

up or cool down.

The report also said two of the schools' ventilation units have been broken for an undetermined amount of time and that mould has developed on the insulation around the ventilation ducts in the rooms housing the ventilation units.

In addition, the concrete edging around the school's fluorescent lights was found to be filled with apple cores, pizza, sandwiches and other foodstuffs, which Frenette said is decomposing and can produce mould that can be dispersed in the air. There is a significant amount of dust gathered in the school, and the ventilation system has not been cleaned in 32 years.

"The moldy insulation around some of the ventilation ducts inside the rooms housing the ventilation unit must be replaced. The garbage stuffed into the concrete edging must also be removed," the report stated.

Frenette added the school should have the ventilation ducts, diffusers and units cleared immediately — or things could get worse.

(See SCHOOL, page A2)

### School wants quick action

(From page A1)

"This cleaning should be done by a firm with documented expertise. If this is not done, air quality will not improve, but rather will deteriorate. In addition, all of the horizontal surfaces such as the tops of lockers, lights and pipes must also be cleared regularly. Thorough maintenance of the premises is essential for adequate air quality," the report states.

Jan Michaelsen, PCHS's governing-board chairman, said the CLSC report — released around the same time as another study done by air-quality firm Natur'Air Kiwatin, which also showed serious deficiencies in the air quality and heat distribution — means the Pearson board should tackle the problem immediately.

"Now we're looking for quick action. I don't want to paint the school board as the bad guy here, but 32 years of not having the ducts cleaned is a long time," he said, adding he thinks the problem of neglected school buildings is a provincial phenomenon.

"The Ministry of Education does not care about the state of its schools, and it does not fund school boards to the proper degree," he said.

What separates PCHS from other schools with similar problems is the lack of windows in the facility, said PCHS principal Neil Fitzpatrick. "That's the basic difference right there between us and other schools," he said. "Other schools can open their windows and circulate fresh air, but it hasn't been a problem. There are sometimes incidents of kids saying 'there's too much dust, or I'm feeling sick,' but no more than normal," he said.

PCHS Grade 11 student and president of the Lester B. Pearson central students' committee Nadia Sevo said she has noticed some temperature fluctuations but the dust in the ducts hasn't bothered her.

"Half the schools is cold some days, and half the school is warm. It's weird, but I haven't felt ill from the air quality. On certain days, it's either unbearably hot or unbearably cold, but not every day," she said.

Pearson chairman Marcus Tabachnick said he has not yet seen the report, but said the board has invested in PCHS in the past and will examine any reports thoroughly.

"I haven't seen the report, and I don't know what types of repairs would be needed. We'll check the report. I know we have spent a lot of money (\$500,000 for a new air-conditioning system in June 2002) on the school's ventilation system the last two years, and we're taking this very seriously," he said.



TABACHNICK  
Will check

7/4



# Radon detected in off-island classroom

by JIM DUFF

editor@hudsongazette.com

Lester B. Pearson School Board (LBPSB) plans to redo scientific tests in a few of its classrooms, after a first round

of testing indicated that they contained unsafe levels of radon gas.

"We've done all of the schools off the island of Montreal," assistant director-general Carol Heffernan reported during a meeting of school board commissioners, June 25. "At this point out of a couple of hundred dosimeters, there was one [off-island classroom] that indicated over 200 becquerels."

Radon is a naturally occurring gas that emits alpha particles that can damage lung tissue. In 2007, after scientific studies established a link between radon and lung cancer, Health Canada lowered the maximum safe limit of radon for interior air to 200 becquerels per cubic metre.

According to Heffernan, radon levels must exceed 600 becquerels before the school board is required to take immedi-

ate action.

"We will retest that room, because it could be a defective dosimeter," reassured Heffernan, who did not specify which school will be scrutinized again. "It is not unusual at all to find defective ones."

She explained that sometimes students tamper with the hockey-puck shaped measuring instruments that are placed in each classroom.

"They take them down and play with them," she said. "It doesn't make sense to find such a variance in the [radon] readings in [just] one classroom."

Heffernan indicated that the findings are the initial part of a three-year safety program to evaluate radon levels in all LBPSB schools.

According to Health Canada, radon is

the second-leading cause of lung cancer deaths in the country. On average, it accounts for one in six fatalities from the deadly disease.

However, the federal health regulator indicated that there is no scientific evidence that radon exposure causes other kinds of cancer, asthma, coughing or headaches.

Heffernan added that two out of 428 dosimeters placed in West Island schools north of Highway 40 also returned results over 200.

"Again those dosimeters might be defective, and we are planning to redo the testing during the 2013-2014 school year," she concluded, indicating that all schools south of Highway 40 are slated for testing during the coming school year, as well.

## Never leave children alone in car

The Canada Safety Council is urging parents and caregivers not to leave children alone in the car. Twenty minutes is all it takes for a child left alone to overheat and die from heatstroke.

Heat levels in a car exposed to the sun on a 35°C day, can soar to 50°C within 20 minutes. Even one minute isn't safe. Heat stroke occurs at 40.5°C. When the body's core temperature reaches this point, sweat reserves are depleted and a person's body is no longer able to cool

not as developed. Their bodies are not able to cool down as quickly and when exposed to heat their body temperature rises three times faster than an adult's body would.

The Canada Safety Council recommends parents leave a toy on the





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# Time Suburban

## School board moves swiftly to stem radon risk

By Robert Frank  
The Suburban

Sir Wilfred Laurier School Board (SWLSB) has taken measures to safeguard students and staff, after scientific tests detected the presence of radon gas in several of its schools.

"We've been very transparent," SWLSB spokeswoman Maxeen Jolin told *The Suburban* in an interview. "We notified parents to keep them abreast, when we initiated the three-year testing program in 2011."

Radon is a naturally occurring gas that emits alpha particles that can damage lung tissue. In 2007, after scientific studies established a link between radon and lung cancer, Health Canada lowered the maximum safe limit of radon for interior air to 200 becquerels (Bq) per cubic metre.

Health Canada has indicated that there is no scientific evidence that radon exposure causes other kinds of cancer, asthma, coughing or headaches.

Instruments found radon levels above the 200 Bq/m<sup>3</sup> limit in four schools: John F. Kennedy in Chomedey and St. Vincent

### RADON

Cont'd from page 1

in St. Vincent de Paul, as well as in Mountainview and St. Jude in Deux Montagnes. A becquerel is one radon atom decaying per second.

SWLSB moved immediately to take corrective action, even though it had two years to do so (one year in the case of St. Jude, which had levels over 600 Bq/m<sup>3</sup>).

According to Jolin, "the corrective measures include drilling a hole in the basement floor and installing a pipe with a fan that draws the radon gas from under the building and pushes it outside, which can reduce radon levels by more than 90 percent."

Other methods involve increasing ventilation, sealing entry points and extracting air from and installing

membranes in crawl spaces.

"Whenever anything untoward was detected, we sent notices to the parents," Jolin explained. "The schools' governing boards received copies of the test reports. Everyone knew about it. We had nothing to hide."

"Knowing that we were taking measures to reduce radon levels was very reassuring for the community," she continued. "At one school meeting with the local health authority, about 45 parents showed up. A doctor was on hand and everyone was understanding."

"We provided Internet links to information about radon, so we never received subsequent questions about it," Jolin added.

Retesting this year showed that SWLSB's corrective measures worked at St. Vincent school, where

levels dropped below the 200 Bq/m<sup>3</sup> limit. John F. Kennedy and Mountainview schools each had one room that remained over the limit, though and 10 rooms in St. Jude school, which was first tested only this year, will be reassessed this winter, now that remedial measures have been implemented.

In addition to the retesting, SWLSB will complete the third and final year of its assessment from January to March 2014.

The as-yet untested SWLSB facilities include: Franklin Hill, Joliette Elementary, Joliette High, Lachute Centre, McCraig, Our Lady of Peace, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, Pinewood, Rawdon, Rosemere High, Terry Fox, Twin Oaks and all CDC Laurier campuses, save for Pont Viau, as well as Arundel Nature Centre and SWLSB headquarters.

See RADON, page 3

6/6