

## Presentation

My name is Michael Saunders, and as a member of school council I am speaking tonight on behalf of parents whose children attend Peterborough Collegiate and Vocational School.

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We'd like to begin by pointing out that Peterborough Collegiate and Vocational is a popular, vibrant and successful school.

Just a few facts about our school to begin ...

We have more than 800 students on two campuses

Almost 70% of our students - that's more than 550 kids - live in the heart of the city and can walk to school every day.

We've got 225 athletes involved in track and field, rowing, tennis, field hockey, basketball and more.

Better than 1 out of 3 of our graduates are Ontario scholars

Loran scholarships, worth \$75,000, recognize academic achievement, leadership and community commitment. Each year they are awarded to only 30 students across the entire country. Last year PCVS students won 2 of those awards.

We have 64 International Students, visa students and refugees in our ESL program

We meet the special needs of 280 Identified Students

We have 127 students in the school who have come from outside our boundary to attend regular classes - they choose Peterborough Collegiate because they are attracted to our school.

And we're a busy place - 56 community groups made 650 bookings at the school last year.

Everyone knows we are Peterborough's oldest school. We've been around since 1827. And we think we get better every year.

In evaluating the schools under review the ARC committee has been instructed to focus on three values - the value of the school to the student, to the community and local economy, and the value of the school to the board.

We'd like to touch upon those values ...

### Value to the students

PCVS provides enormous value to its students in its location, its programs and the environment in the school

Our location is great. PCVS is a neighbourhood school. We all know too many kids don't walk to school anymore, but most of our kids do. Not having to stick to rigid bus times means kids can participate in activities before and after school. And ... it's a relief to have our kids in a place that's not polluted by a fleet of buses twice a day.

Our students have the city at their doorstep. They are actively encouraged to be involved in the cultural life of the downtown—from performing in festivals and downtown venues to painting banners for the downtown streets. There are dozens of co-op placements close to our schools and homes.

We have a history of academic excellence. Our model UN program provides an amazing experience for our students. We sponsor an Academic Olympics held every year where schools from around the province are invited to come. They have a tough time defeating our kids.

45% of our students come back for a victory lap. We know that's a great reflection on the school. Imagine how good a school must be if the kids want to stay for an extra year.

There are 280 students in our Integrated Arts program taking music, dance, theatre and visual arts. Kids grow up in this community aiming to come to a school where the arts are so vital.

We appreciate the board's statement that programs will not be eliminated. Obviously parents who are considering enrolling their children in our Integrated Arts program, for example, need to be reassured.

But the Integrated Arts program wasn't created at Adam Scott or Thomas A Stewart, its unique and widely admired character didn't develop at Kenner or anywhere else - the program is a reflection of Peterborough Collegiate's culture. The Integrated Arts program was built for the unique size, location and spirit of PCVS.

Peterborough Collegiate is a school of variety and tolerance. Under our roof are students who excel and those who struggle, students who are affected by poverty and those who are financially secure, students who have always been dynamic participants in their school and students who couldn't find their place in

other schools because of their sexual orientation. The benefit of being in a smaller school is that no one group stands out. And in a school where creativity is so encouraged our kids learn that differences don't need to be ridiculed or hidden, they need to be celebrated.

These are a few words from a note a student sent to us:

At PCVS I can honestly say that we are a community. I don't know what it is but there's time when being at school feels better than being at home. It might be because the teachers are so friendly and willing to help or it might be because you aren't set apart for your beliefs and who you are. I had a lot going on in my life and if it hadn't been for this school I am afraid I wouldn't be who I am now. I went from being the shy girl who sits at the back of the class and doesn't talk to anyone to, currently being on stage dancing and just speaking my mind.

We're a downtown school where beautiful works of art hang in the hall and do not get vandalized, where graffiti and fights are not a problem. Our size, history and humour make our kids take ownership of the school, to have that invaluable sense of pride of place.

### Value to Community

One of our values to our community is that PCVS provides a neighbourhood school for families who live downtown, and keeping families staying downtown is central to a healthy city.

PCVS provides critical support to youth at the Youth Emergency Shelter, support that is not available at CIS. These are kids who struggle with daily life and need help close at hand.

PCVS students use city buses and city fields, they spend their money in the downtown, they fill positions in local businesses with after-school jobs. Our students invigorate the community by being a central part of it.

One example of the historical tie between our school and the city of Peterborough is the yearly Remembrance Day service. With the memorial to the

veterans right beside the school, students can all attend, and learn about local and national history. Students every year welcome veterans - many of whom attended PCVS - and create a show to mark the importance of the day.

Our walls are decorated with tributes to soldiers. The students live and absorb what so many of us forget. They respect and admire the building because they know that it is unique and means so much to so many.

Urban centres are constantly under the threat of being emptied out, of businesses and people and community facilities leaving. The awful effects of a downtown school closing have been demonstrated in other places. What we have in Peterborough is a beautiful, historic school that is filled with energy and creativity and hard work. We live in a community that has kept it's oldest school open, and we all ought to take pride in that.

### Value to the Board

The value PCVS provides to the school board is in all the things I just touched upon - a place of pride, tolerance and success. We think PCVS should be regarded as a model school for the board.

A unique characteristic of our school is that we ATTRACT students from the Separate School Board. They come to the school for the Arts, because of our relatively small size, and because of the inclusiveness of the school.

Our low busing costs provide value to the Board. Only 39% of our students are bused and 60 of them receive city bus passes, a benefit that is unique to a downtown school.

PCVS retains its teachers, a benefit to the students and the board.

Contrary to popular belief, our school is in excellent condition. During the Facilities Index review of 2003, PCVS was second only to Kenner in a study that rates the condition of the buildings. Since then the board has spent money on renovations - a new boiler, repairs to the roof, an air exchange system, a new chemistry lab, accessible washrooms and all new lockers.

PCVS is not accessible, not yet. Nor were Adam Scott or Kenner until the Board invested funds in retrofitting them. We have discussed this issue with an expert in the field and we know the job can be done. We expect that the Board will invest funds in accessibility just as they have in the other two schools.

The fact that PCVS has no playing field on site is not an issue. In the short period of time during the school year in which students take class outside, our kids run ... or walk ... to use the fields at Nicolls Oval and Bonnerworth Park. It's a great way to start a gym class. And without having to maintain a field the arrangement is financially beneficial to the Board.

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We know Peterborough Collegiate provides enormous value to our children, to the community and to the school board.

We are well aware of the need to discuss creative solutions to the enrolment problem. We know many people, including supporters of Peterborough Collegiate, will be presenting ideas in the next few weeks.

In the meantime we want to encourage a process that is fair, open-minded and thorough. And so we have some questions we'd like the committee to consider:

Why are so many students in our board moving to the Separate Board? Have changes to busing, and the fact that there is only one French Immersion school badly effected our enrolment numbers?

Are the current boundary lines for the city schools appropriate?

How has the City's municipal plan for downtown growth been factored into enrolment projections?

Are we marketing our specialty programs properly? Can we eliminate artificial restrictions and encourage every student in the city to apply?

Is the current system of feeder schools fair and balanced? Does it provide every school with the same opportunity to draw in students?

Are we working with up to date and accurate information on the status and cost of each building?

This is a difficult time for all four of the schools under review. Our commitment is to advocate on behalf of our school in a positive manner while recognizing that change in some form must happen if the Board is to continue to offer quality education for its students. We think PCVS is an exceptional model of how groups

with varying interests can work together. We understand that there are tough issues facing us, but we can all work together to address these.