

Catholic school board sends letter to Peterborough council expressing consultation concerns with Bonnerworth Park project

Trustees disappointed with the city's user group input regarding Bonnerworth Park redevelopment project

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The Peterborough, Victoria, Northumberland and Clarington Catholic School Board is sending a letter to Peterborough Mayor Jeff Leal and council, expressing disappointment with the city's disregard for public and user group input regarding the Bonnerworth Park redevelopment project.

Metroland file photo

By Catherine Whitnall Reporter

Citing no opportunity to voice them sooner, the local Catholic school board is sending Peterborough city council a letter expressing concerns over the redevelopment of Bonnerworth Park.

The letter, advising mayor and council of the impact the project will have on St. Peter Catholic Secondary School and the school board's elementary athletics program, will include the board's disappointment at the city's treatment of public and user group input and the process by which the consultation was conducted.

The motion to send the letter was unanimously supported during Tuesday night's meeting of the Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board.

Discussion on the matter included comments by director of education Stephen O’Sullivan. He said board staff did meet with city staff in August 2023 to learn more about an active outreach study and 15 park improvement projects, Bonnerworth being one.

He told trustees while plans were shared, there was no follow up or consultations. O’Sullivan noted given the hundreds of students who use the park for such activities as soccer and baseball, the school board has a vested interest.

However, Kawartha Lakes trustee Mary Ann Martin questions whether it would have made a difference.

“Council is supposed to work with the community and schools are a big part of that. I would expect a greater level of collaboration ... I think the city has to work a lot harder for its constituents,” said Martin, pointing out council appears to be turning a deaf ear to growing opposition to the Bonnerworth redevelopment.

Peterborough County trustee and board vice-chair Jenny Lahey concurred.

“The city is well aware of the use of that park and should have come to us for input,” said Lahey, calling consultation efforts a “failure” for everyone involved.

“I just think this was done very poorly. This park is being taken over by pickleball ... all else is being tossed aside.”

Peterborough trustee John Connolly questioned what level of engagement would have been made had the project involved a subdivision rather than a municipal park.

“We are more than just a neighbour, we’re more than a stakeholder — the school board is a partner,” said Connolly. “I think you’re hearing more voices rising up ... The city needs to stop and listen.”

In addition to expressing concerns regarding dissatisfaction with the consultation process and impact on students, the letter will also advise council that, as a Catholic institution, it supports Pope Francis in his quest — as outlined in *Laudato Si* — for the protection of the environment from irresponsible use and abuse.



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