

January 30, 2017

Message from Director John Malloy & Chair Robin Pilkey Re: Events in Quebec City

Our thoughts and prayers are with Muslim communities in Quebec, here in Toronto, and around the world in the wake of yesterday's attack on a Quebec City mosque

It is difficult to comprehend what motivates these acts of violence, but more than likely at the root lies hatred, bigotry and racism. Undoubtedly, all Canadians will begin their day, not only in shock of this horrendous act, but also concerned for the future. Today in our schools, yesterday's events will be top of mind for many of our students and staff. For our Muslim communities and for all of those who face Islamophobia, there will be feelings of insecurity. For our students of Muslim faith, there will also be an added feeling of vulnerability.

At the TDSB, we work every day to ensure that our schools, classrooms, hallways and playgrounds are safe and caring spaces for everyone. Today, we will need to work extra hard. As a school system, we have the responsibility and I would say the opportunity to engage young people in a broader conversation about the importance of building a more inclusive society.

Today we have reminded TDSB staff that promoting a positive school climate is an important part of our work. We have asked them to keep in mind that as educators, they have the greatest opportunity to plant and nurture the seeds of inclusion, respect, and compassion. Our schools, more than any public institution, have the responsibility and obligation to offer safe, caring and bias-free places to learn and work.

As a school community, together we can embrace these opportunities and obligations, while facing the challenges which are sometimes presented in our communities and around the world. In the wake of tragedies such as these and wider events around the world, we remain committed to supporting all of our students and families. We are not immune, but we are also not deterred.

The TDSB has a longstanding commitment to equity. Racism, bigotry and hate are issues that concern us all – staff, parents, students and members of the community. We share a responsibility to promote belonging, inclusion and respect, and to identify and report acts of hate. We have asked our staff now as we have before to make this among their highest priorities.

Like our schools, we welcome people from all over the world in our country. Like our schools, our country is filled with rich and thriving linguistic, religious and ethnic

diversity and like our schools, we have grown strength from this diversity. We have asked all TDSB staff to lead by example with love, compassion and respect and to continue drawing on and promoting this incredible strength in our schools and within our communities.

We believe there is need to bring the events in Quebec City into the conversation as we all – schools and the community – reflect and act on shaping a better tomorrow. With that in mind, all flags across the TDSB have been lowered to half-staff in memory of those lost in last night's senseless attack.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Malloy', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

John Malloy
Director of Education

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robin Pilkey', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

Robin Pilkey
Chair