
Communications and Public Affairs

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NEWS RELEASE

TO ALL ASSIGNMENT EDITORS/EDUCATION EDITORS

For immediate release

TDSB announces School Community Safety Advisory Panel

Toronto, ON, June 5, 2007 – The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) today announced the chair of its School Community Safety Advisory Panel, which will look into the conditions which existed at C.W. Jefferys Collegiate Institute prior to the shooting death of 15-year-old Jordan Manners.

Respected human-rights lawyer Julian Falconer has agreed to chair a three-member panel whose terms of reference are to review:

1. the practices and procedures regulating student supervision, student discipline, and building safety at the school over the past two years;
2. if other factors affected the school's or the Board's ability to maintain student order and discipline, and;
3. how student supervision, discipline, and security can be improved across the TDSB.

The remaining panelists will be announced to the public on Tuesday.

TDSB Chair Sheila Ward thanked Falconer for agreeing to take on the role: "As a Board we are determined to examine thoroughly all of the elements that have been raised by teachers, students, parents and the community in the last 10 days."

"The appointment of Mr. Falconer as Chair of the Panel is a clear signal that the review will be thorough and that the Board is determined to do whatever it takes to ensure the safety and safe operation of our schools. We believe that an honest assessment of our policies and procedures is the first essential step in making whatever improvements are necessary," said Chair Ward.

"Our community, in fact, the entire city, was shaken by Jordan Manners' death," said Trustee Stephnie Payne, Ward 4 (York West). "The school community needs to work together to heal and move forward."

Julian Falconer is a well-respected lawyer whose work in the civil and criminal justice system on behalf of individual and institutional clients has earned him a reputation as a powerful advocate for a broad cross-section of community interests. He has served as legal counsel to such organizations as the Urban Alliance on Race Relations, various Presbyteries of the United Church of Canada, and Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto.

TDSB Director Gerry Connelly said the panel is expected to report its findings by July 16, 2007, and will receive the full support and co-operation of the Board.

"As a Board we are committed to ensuring that our schools are safe, welcoming learning environments for our students, staff, and communities," said Connelly. "We look forward to receiving the report. The recommendations will provide us with a better understanding of what we need to do to ensure we have safe, welcoming schools for our students and our staff."

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The Toronto District School Board serves more than 270,000 students throughout 560 schools.