

Washroom death threats spook Oakville school

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Students are scared to attend classes at Oakville Trafalgar School after two graphic death threats were found in the men's washroom this week.

Some parents say the police and school board have responded poorly to the incident, which the police called an act of vandalism.

"Many parents are talking tonight about whether to send our kids to school next week," Sharon Arseneault said, whose son is a Grade 11 student at the school. "And we're of the opinion no. We feel the school has handled the safety of our children poorly."

A note was found scribbled in the men's washroom on Dec. 11. The writer claimed that before the holiday break he or she would first gun down the teachers before killing the students.

The threat added that the shooting would make Columbine "look like a joke."

Police were called to the scene and investigated. A second threat, containing similar material, was found on Thursday.

Arseneault said the school has done nothing to ease their minds, have been uncooperative over the phone and have treated the incident too casually.

"My son says the students are scared and concerned," she said. "I feel like I'm left out of the loop, and I don't like it as a mother."

Arseneault is especially disturbed by the response of police who downgraded the threat to an act of vandalism.

Wayne Joudrie, the director of education for the Halton School Board, wasn't even aware of the second threat. He defended the choices made by police, saying that the threats were not considered serious or credible.

"I wasn't aware of the second threat," he admitted. "We take advice and direction from the police. They are the experts."

Joudrie wanted to assure parents that they do take these threats seriously.

"Our top priority is the students' safety. We are on the side of caution," he said.

He added that he would look into the latest threat first thing Friday morning.

But that's not good enough for Arseneault. She and several other parents are demanding an open forum where the parents can ask questions and have their concerns heard. One parent, who asked not to be identified, said if something isn't done soon her son is getting an early vacation.

"Whether it's a prank or someone that's not well, this needs to be dealt with," she said. "Oakville is perceived as this safe haven. But these massacres have been in quiet little places. This isn't a gang issue. This person is disturbed."

On March 2, a 16-year-old boy was charged with writing a threatening message at Iroquois Ridge High School in Oakville. He claimed the violence would occur on Feb 23.

Most parents kept their children at home that day. Only 300-400 of the 1,250 students at the school attended classes.