

Gun threat leads to locked doors at Cardinal Carter

By Brock Weir

Parents of Cardinal Carter Catholic High School students sounded the alarm when the school locked its doors, rather than going into a full Hold & Secure or lockdown mode after the school received gun threats online.

According to York Regional Police, threats were made in an online student chat group last week threatening a gun was at the Bloomington Road high school, a fact the school was made aware of after receiving a call from parents.

‘Parents contacted the school and it was the principal who contacted police,’ said York Regional Police Constable Andy Pattenden. ‘The [venue for the threat] was described as a chat group, but it didn’t sound like Twitter or anything like that – more of a private chat group the students were involved in.’

This was later confirmed by Sonia Gallo, spokesperson for the York Catholic District School Board, who said ‘the school had received the information from concerned parents’ after rumours began to circulate on iChat.

‘The school received the information from concerned parents, and York Regional Police (YRP) spent most of the day at the school to investigate and to ensure the safety of students. YRP conducted an investigation to try and find out where the rumour originated, and officers were unable to find that a credible threat existed,’ said Ms. Gallo.

‘The school was not in a Hold & Secure or Lockdown mode. As the safety of all students and staff is our top priority, administration at Cardinal Carter decided to lock the front doors as a precaution for a period of time. YRP indicated that there was no immediate cause for concern and the front doors were unlocked shortly after 1 p.m. It is important to note that all other exterior doors are typically locked in our secondary schools during the day.’

Hold & Secure, she noted, goes into effect when there is a threat outside of the building, such as a police-initiated action or a crime in progress. A Lockdown takes place when there is a threat inside the building.

By the end of the week, Police were left appealing to the public for anyone with information on the threats to come forward.

‘The school decide what they are going to do [with the threats] first and depending on the credibility of the threat, whether they choose to do lockdowns, holds and secures, or nothing,’ said Constable Pattenden. ‘They contacted us, we arrived, and our first effort is to determine what the threat is, the nature of the thread, do we believe it is a valid threat, and do we believe there is an immediate risk to public safety, or safety to students?’

‘In this case, officers deemed there wasn’t an immediate risk to the students and the investigation continued from there. They were basically there the whole day from 9 a.m. until the end of the school day.’

The investigation involved an initial response from frontline officers, school resource officers who took over the investigation, as well as involvement from the 1 District Criminal Investigation Bureau.