

Countdown begins to a new era for Pickering College as ground is broken on West Lake House



Pickering College students celebrated the beginning of countdown to a new chapter in its storied history on Friday afternoon as the firing of confetti cannons signalled the start of construction on its long-awaited West Lake House.

West Lake House, set to be the newest academic building for the school, which was founded more than 160 years ago before moving to Newmarket in 1909, will be built on the north end of the school's expansive Bayview Avenue campus.

The name of the new building harkens back to its earliest roots as West Lake Boarding School in Prince Edward County. Once West Lake House is complete, it will add 50,000 square feet of learning space, approximately double the amount of classroom space currently boasted by Pickering College.

The main floor will include a brand-new auditorium and space for their CRTC-licensed radio station, 102.7 CHOP FM, while the rest of the facility will include libraries, science and tech labs, and so much more.

"We're excited about what this visionary build will mean for our students, our programs and for the entire Pickering College community," says the school. "This is a significant addition to our classroom and community space."

To make the space a reality, Pickering College has raised \$27.9 million through generous donors to its capital campaign.

Friday's event was meant to be a sod-turning ceremony and an opportunity to thank the scores of people, from engineers to donors, who have helped them along the way. Inclement weather, however, forced the celebration into the school's gymnasium where the shovels were exchanged for confetti cannons and, bearing the school's colours, hardhats for all.

Addressing students, Head of School Dr. Cinde Lock said, "Today is a big day, our most exciting ever."

"I think this is better because we're all together, we can all hear each other and have some fun," Dr. Lock said, referencing the venue change. "As the days pass, we can watch them dig and create and make this a beautiful new building. Today's our countdown and today's Day 1."

"[The construction team] is not just making a building. They're making a future and we're discovering what that future will be, how we will be able to learn together, grow together, and what we will be able to do is shape our futures to make the world greater, better and more beautiful."

In her remarks, the Head of School highlighted the classrooms, the science and tech labs, and the auditorium, as well as an expansive

learning commons that will be a destination for all students.

'This is a space where we will collaborate, where we will plan, where we will work together, make partners in the community and partners across the world to say, 'How can we, as an educational group, come together and shape our future together?' In fact, this means a lot more than creating a building. Even though we're at the beginning and it will feel like bricks and mortar, it has been a long time coming. We've been waiting for years and now we're finally here.'

Amid the excitement, Dr. Lock paid tribute to her predecessor, Peter Sturup, who took part in the celebration alongside wife Lisa. 'He has worked tirelessly over a long period of time to really see this new building come to fruition and we're so grateful for his leadership and his guidance in making that happen,' as well as to Pickering College's Board of Directors.

'These are the people who meet so often for hours and hours and they are the ones who secure the future of the school and think about what strategically we should do to continue to make Pickering College the very best school it can be, making sure we also adhere to our values and what we believe in for not just what you learn but who you are as adults and global citizens,' she told students.

By Brock Weir
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