

Pickering College cuts the ribbon on 50,000 square foot West Lake House



It was a historic day for Pickering College last Tuesday as they formally opened West Lake House, a new 50,000 square foot facility that includes classrooms, labs, studios, a library, an assembly hall, and more.

Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy and Newmarket Mayor John Taylor were among the dignitaries in attendance on September 2 as the Newmarket-based independent school began a brand-new chapter in its more than 180-year history.

"This building represents years of dreaming, planning and perseverance," said Head of School Dr. Cinde Lock, who said it was an "extraordinary milestone" for the school.

Construction of the new building has been a "roller coaster" ride, she said, and while there are still a few finishing touches to complete on the inside, it is more than ready to welcome students.

"It's not just classrooms, it's opportunities for learning," she told the assembled crowd ahead of the ribbon-cutting and site tour. "You're looking at ways that students will interact with each other, that the community will come together, and just imagine all this beautiful space can bring for our school and everyone involved."

Mirella Morra, Chair of Pickering College's Board of Directors, said last week's event was not just the opening of a new space in West Lake House, it was "bringing history forward" as the name pays tribute to the school's earliest beginnings as West Lake Boarding School in Prince Edward County in 1842.

"We celebrate how that legacy continues to shape our future here in Newmarket," she said. "This facility, home to music and art studios, a drama classroom, a grand assembly hall, science labs, CHOP-FM Newmarket's community radio station and junior school classrooms, is a place where imagination will take flight, where creativity and collaboration will thrive, and where future generations of students will discover their full potential."

"Now, none of this would have happened or would have been possible without the vision, generosity, and patience of our donors. You truly have stood with us throughout this journey. You understood that building something extraordinary takes time, care and commitment. Today, we celebrate the results of that shared dedication."

This dedication was also celebrated by Mayor Taylor who said the new West Lake House will only further Pickering College's mission to prepare students for the challenges that lay ahead.

“There are huge challenges in our world today and our students need to be prepared for that,” he said. “They need to be given every opportunity to pick up those challenges, use collaboration, use creativity, use technology to help solve some of those great global challenges. If they are going to do that, we as schools, as parents, as communities, have to give them the tools to do it” and this is a big, big step forward for Pickering College in its efforts to not only be integrated and involved in the community, but to think and lead globally.”

Addressing students, he added: “This is essentially four walls” four pretty amazing walls and there's lots of amazing stuff that's in there” but what's really going to happen in there is up to you. Use this incredible opportunity that's being given to you to collaborate with your fellow students, to think about the world globally, to think about the world locally, and to come together to make Newmarket, Ontario, Canada, and the world a better place. You have the tools, you have the ability, you have the support of an incredible school here behind you.”

Driving home the point of student possibilities was a group of Pickering College students past and present, ranging from Roger Warren, a graduate of the class of 1951, whose mother was a Pickering College student at the turn of the twentieth century, to Arianna, who is set to be a member of the class of 2026, and middle school student Daisy.

“What excites me most is the possibility this space brings and the chance it gives students to discover new passions: Shiny new science labs that will allow us to explore, beautiful art studios to bring out our creativity, and gathering spaces where our school community can really connect,” said Arianna. “It's not about the spaces themselves, but the opportunities they open up. I feel so fortunate to have watched this transformation from start to finish, and as I head into my final year, I'm excited to make memories here myself with friends and classmates and to see the ones that generations of students will create for years to come.”

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