A TIME FOR RENEWAL

A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY FOR BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION

AUGUST 2019

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FINAL REPORT OF THE ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE SCHOOL
INDEPENDENT RESPECT AND CULTURE REVIEW COMMITTEE

CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

Background

In November, 2018, eight incidents involving allegations of student-on-student sexual and physical abuse at St. Michael's College School (SMCS) were reported to police. Three incidents resulted in criminal charges against seven students. Most of the criminal charges remain outstanding. The school expelled four of the seven students, as well as four others, shortly after the allegations came to light.

The allegations were of deep concern to the SMCS community. Many questioned how such behaviour could take place at the school. These questions extended not only to the alleged abusive behaviour, but to the apparent observation, without intervention, of this abuse by other students and to the circulation and viewing of videos of this abusive behaviour on social media. Many, including the school's leadership, questioned whether the school's traditions, practices and values, past and present, may have contributed to the alleged abuse and related behaviour – in short, did the school's culture contribute to what happened? Everyone agreed that such behaviour was fundamentally inconsistent with – indeed, repugnant to – Catholic values, expressed in the school's motto, "Teach me Goodness, Discipline and Knowledge."

The larger SMCS community (composed of past and present students, parents, teachers and other staff, coaches and administrators) held a wide spectrum of views on these questions. Despite these divergent views, there was broad consensus on the need to address these questions and the concerns raised by them – and to do so in an objective, evidence-based way.

Accordingly, the Board of Directors of SMCS, in collaboration with the General Council of the Basilian Fathers, announced the formation of the Independent Respect and Culture Review Committee (the Committee) to conduct a comprehensive review of the school's social and cultural practices and related policies. The Committee's composition and terms of reference were announced in December, 2018.

The Committee's terms of reference

The Committee was to examine and report upon the following:

1. The traditions, social and cultural practices and values at SMCS, past and present, that did or may have contributed to any alleged student sexual or physical abuse at or associated with the school, and what steps should be taken to change any such traditions, social and cultural practices and values;

2. What policies, protocols or practices exist at the school to address sexual, physical or verbal abuse, hazing or the recording of such misconduct, and what policies, protocols or practices should be created or changed;

3. What policies, protocols or practices exist at the school to address the reporting of alleged misconduct to the police, and what policies, protocols or practices should be created or changed;

4. What support processes are in place to promote the reporting by students who have been the victims of sexual, physical or verbal abuse, hazing or the recording of such misconduct, in a safe and confidential environment, and what support processes should be created or changed;

5. Whether any additional measures are needed to restore confidence in SMCS's culture and values, and promote healing going forward.

The independence of the Committee

To ensure that the concerns identified above were fully addressed, and equally important, that the SMCS community and the public could have confidence in how they were addressed, the Board decided that the Committee would be **independent**. The Committee's members had no prior connection to SMCS. Second, we decided on our own processes, chose our own staff, and were given the resources we needed to conduct our work in a timely, effective and complete way. Third, we crafted our own terms of reference that were approved by the Board. Finally, and most importantly, no one at the school dictated or directed what findings or recommendations we should make. The school's leadership supported and respected our independence throughout the process.

How the Committee did its work

It was important for the Committee's work to be evidence-based. This heightened the importance of a robust outreach and engagement plan to collect relevant information. We collected relevant information in five ways: (1) the assembly of relevant documents from the school; (2) voluntary, anonymous surveys completed by current students, alumni, current staff, past staff and parents on a range of topics; (3) over 70 in-person interviews, whether at our request or at the request of those interviewed. These individuals included past and present coaches, past and present administrators, including presidents and principals, guidance counsellors, directors, students, parents, teachers and other staff, the president of the SMCS Teachers' Association, alumni as well as the SMCS Alumni Association; (4) written submissions or comments from many more individuals; and (5) a town hall.

Necessary limitations on the Committee's work

This was a "systemic review." This meant that the Committee was examining the school's traditions, culture and values, and the policies and practices that guide it, at a systemic level.

A systemic review is not designed to find individual fault or wrongdoing. It is not designed to find misconduct or criminal or civil responsibility. Indeed, such findings would be inconsistent with a purely systemic review, unlike a public inquiry. Equally important, it was wholly unnecessary to make findings of individual responsibility to successfully fulfil our mandate. The goal of the Review was to make recommendations to promote a safe and positive environment at the school, and to empower the school to become a leader in addressing the issues raised here.

The impact of a public report

The Board committed to making our report public. This transparency is of importance to the short-term and long-term credibility of the school. It also enables other schools to benefit from the lessons learned at SMCS. But a public report also comes at a price. This report reproduces

or summarizes some very critical comments made about the school, not merely positive comments. Our report also identifies significant deficiencies in how the school has dealt with relevant issues. For some members of the SMCS community, this part of our report may be painful to read.

Critical comments were of importance in understanding the extent of the problem, and how the school can move forward in the most productive way. Even some comments that were not evidence-based or were speculative contributed in a limited way to our recommendations. Some of these comments, including misinformation, reflected failings in the school's communication or engagement with the SMCS community that can be addressed.

However, there may also be a tendency to focus exclusively on the negative comments reproduced in this report. That would be unfortunate since we found that the school has much to be proud of and to build upon. Many current and former students have benefitted in a myriad of ways from their experiences at SMCS. The school has a great deal to offer. The challenge is to utilize the unfortunate events that prompted our work, and the legitimate issues identified during our Review, as an opportunity for the school to become a leader in addressing bullying and to enhance the ability of <u>every</u> student to thrive in a safe and welcoming environment.

CHAPTER TWO -- THE HISTORY AND STRUCTURE OF ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE SCHOOL

Chapter 2 of this report provides some brief history of SMCS, as well as its current activities, academic and non-academic, basic structure and some demographics surrounding its student body and faculty. This chapter also explains how the school is situated within the educational system, including its status as an independent Catholic school.

The school is currently the only independent Catholic school in Ontario for young men. Its existence for 167 years also means that it is steeped in tradition. As reflected in this report, the challenge for SMCS is to preserve traditions that enhance the school and its student body, while relinquishing traditions or practices that prevent renewal and growth as an institution.

Organization

In the 2018-2019 academic year, 1,069 students were enrolled at SMCS. The breakdown of enrollment by grade was as follows: 105 students in grade 7; 115 students in grade 8; 225 students in grade 9; 217 students in grade 10; 193 students in grade 11; and, 214 students in grade 12. The school provided bursaries to about 13% of the students. Bursaries represent financial assistance to cover, in whole or in part, the costs associated with tuition and ancillary fees.

Subject to the qualifications noted below, the faculty for the past academic year consisted of 74 teachers, four academic directors who reported to the principal, a president and three administrators (a principal and two vice-principals). The school also had a chief operational officer (COO), who oversaw the business aspects of the school, as well as a director of facilities.

The school's Board of Directors consists of four Basilian Fathers and three lay persons. The Board appoints the school's president. Candidates for president placed before the Board have been pre-approved by Local Superior of the House of St. Michael's College School, the Superior General and the General Council of the Basilian Fathers (the Council). The president hires the school's principal, subject to the final approval of the Board. The principal has the authority to hire all staff and faculty, in consultation with the president.

Following the alleged incidents in the fall of 2018, the school's president, Father Jefferson Thompson, and its principal, Gregory (Greg) Reeves, resigned. A new interim president, Father Andrew Leung, was appointed and the two existing vice-principals, David Lee and Emile John were appointed as co-principals. Early in August, 2019, James McKinnon assumed the role of principal at the school. It is anticipated that the two co-principals will resume their duties as vice-principals. There was no change with respect to the COO.

In January, 2019, in the aftermath of the November, 2018 events, the school introduced the position of dean of students. The dean of students is primarily responsible for attendance, the school's code of conduct and related disciplinary measures.

Approximately 20% of the teachers at the school are women and currently there is one woman teaching at the grade 7 and 8 levels. There is a higher percentage of women in the business staff, including at the director level. The school's human resources director, two academic department heads and an athletic therapist are female. There has never been a female principal or vice-principal at the school. Needless to say, the historically high percentage of alumni employed at the school also affects the number of female staff employed at the school and the positions they fill. Many people who spoke with the Committee or provided written submissions identified the need for greater gender balance and diversity among faculty and staff at the school.

SMCS's place within the educational system

Private schools operate as businesses or non-profit organizations independently of the Ministry of Education. The Ministry regulates private schools only to the extent of ensuring that the curriculum under the *Education Act* is being delivered. Otherwise, the Ministry does not regulate, license or oversee the operation of private schools in Ontario.

SMCS is a private school in Ontario. Prior to becoming completely private, it, like other Catholic schools, was affiliated with the Metropolitan Separate School Board. After the extension of full funding to all Catholic schools in Ontario in 1985, SMCS decided that it would become a fully private secondary school and not accept the extension of government funding for grades 11, 12 and 13. Subsequently, the school decided that it would accept students from grades 7-12 and that, subject to its bursary program, all students would be required to pay tuition to attend SMCS.

SMCS is a member of the Conference of Independent Schools of Ontario (CIS Ontario), an association of independent schools throughout Ontario. SMCS is one of 48 CIS Ontario member schools. Within CIS Ontario's membership, there are private all-girls, all-boys and co-ed schools. The CIS Ontario Board, and therefore its member schools, are to adhere to the spirit of the "Independent Sector Code of Ethics", a code adopted and followed by many non-profit and philanthropic organizations.

CHAPTER THREE: THE ALLEGATIONS, HOW THEY CAME TO LIGHT AND THE INITIAL INTERACTION WITH POLICE

The chronology of events

We have engaged in a necessarily limited discussion of how the allegations came to light and the timing of the initial interactions between the school and the police. This reflects our respect for the integrity of the ongoing criminal proceedings. Indeed, we were careful not to discuss the merits of the existing criminal cases with those we interviewed or in this report. That being said, we were provided with a chronology of relevant events by the school. The report outlines the chronology provided to us since SMCS was publicly accused as engaging in a cover-up, an issue that we needed to address.

Based on the evidence available to us, it appears that the most publicized allegation (described in the report as the "change room incident") and related video were not reported to the police sooner because, initially, the school did not know the identity of the boys or whether the video had been taken at the school. The school was then asked by the father of the alleged victim of that incident not to contact the police until the victim's mother returned to the city. The school acceded to that request. Most significant, there is compelling evidence that the school always intended to report the incident to the police, and had so indicated in advance of doing so. This intention is also consistent with the school's treatment and earlier disclosure of the less extreme video of the washroom sink incident, also referred to in this report.

On Thursday, November 15, 2018, the school became aware of a third incident, an alleged sexual assault that had occurred before the first two incidents. The school immediately reported this incident to police.

A further video was received by the school on Sunday, November 18, 2018. This video was immediately forwarded to police as well.

The various alleged incidents, investigations and criminal charges can be summarized as follows:

- Police investigated a total of eight different incidents, three of which resulted in criminal charges being laid;

- In total, seven SMCS students were charged criminally in connection with these three separate incidents. Several of these charges were subsequently dropped;

- The police investigations into the other five incidents concluded without any charges being laid;

- All the incidents resulting in charges involved members of the junior football team;

- No charges were laid against any SMCS administrator, faculty, staff member or coach;

- No reports were made to SMCS or the police during this time period relating to historical physical or sexual abuse. The police had no basis to conclude that any incidents of criminal misconduct had taken place other than those identified already.

SMCS administration initially began to conduct an internal investigation. This resulted in the suspension and expulsion of a number of students, including four of the seven students who were charged criminally. (Three of the seven students who were charged, but not expelled or suspended, subsequently withdrew from the school). After discussions with the police, the school administration suspended its internal investigation pending the conclusion of the criminal proceedings. At the time of writing this report, most of the criminal allegations remain before the courts.

Findings on alleged cover-up

Early narratives that followed the disclosure of the alleged abuse focused, in part, upon the failure of the school to report the abuse to police in a timely way. Questions were raised about whether there was a violation of the statutory duty to report and whether the school had attempted to cover-up the abuse to avoid public scrutiny and protect its reputation. The police ultimately concluded that no criminal charge was warranted arising out of any alleged failure to report.

Based on the evidence available to us, we are satisfied that the relatively brief delay in reporting one of the alleged incidents of abuse to police was well-intentioned, rather than motivated by any effort to cover-up what had transpired.

Nonetheless, the delay, while largely intended to enable one of the alleged victims to advise his mother before the police became involved, was unfortunate and problematic.

It was reasonably foreseeable that any delay in reporting to police could result in the kind of accusations against the school that followed. Those accusations heightened the adverse impact these events had on the school and on the SMCS community more generally. They became an unfortunate distraction to the important issues raised by the allegations. Indeed, this was recognized by the decision of Mr. Reeves and the school's president, Father Thompson, to resign their positions.

There was a more fundamental problem with the delay in reporting to police, however well-intentioned. In criminal cases — particularly those involving sexual or physical abuse respecting children, it is important that police are engaged as early in the process as possible. Police have an important role in preventing the loss or degradation of evidence. They may wish to control the circumstances under which victims make further disclosures, including how they are made, to whom and how they are recorded.

None of this is inconsistent with the police working with the school in providing needed support for the alleged victims, in holding off certain interviews until parents are engaged or in the school participating in how parents are engaged. This Committee is well aware of this type of cooperation taking place between schools, children's aid societies and police in ways that address all relevant concerns while not delaying the reporting to police.

Fortunately, here, the delay in reporting was not extensive. However, the potential impact on a criminal case and those affected by it, and upon the reputation of a school that is seen to delay reporting compels a different approach.

SMCS – police protocols

Recommendation 1: **SMCS should develop protocols on how to deal with serious incidents that may involve criminality, in cooperation with the police, when such incidents allegedly occur at or associated with the school. The protocols should be consistent with the duty to report "all violent incidents" articulated in the Ministry of Education's Provincial Model for a Local Police/School Board Protocol.**

Crisis management

It is fair to say that the school was ill-prepared to address the crisis it faced in a coherent, timely way. On one level, this is hardly surprising — the school had not been exposed to these kinds of allegations involving its students before. In this context, we refer to the combination of the following: deeply disturbing allegations of abuse, a criminal investigation, the dissemination of videos on social media, and the level of media attention given to these events.

However, on another level, it should not have been surprising — or at least should have been foreseeable — that this school might face such a crisis. It must be recognized that institutions, however prestigious, are not immune from such allegations. The challenge is to address a crisis in a proactive, transparent and skilled way.

On several fronts, that did not happen here. Although the school, to its credit, attempted to assemble a crisis management team, the team itself lacked the requisite skill sets to fully succeed. Indeed, some of its members themselves felt somewhat traumatized or in shock over what was happening, given their longstanding connection and devotion to the school.

Perhaps most problematic was the school's communications strategy. The school's messaging to the media was late and ineffective. Messaging within the SMCS community was at times inconsistent and poorly conceived. There appeared to be limited understanding on what could and could not be said to the public or the SMCS community about the relevant events. Equally concerning, the strategies around communicating with students on an ongoing basis to address their anxieties and uncertainties were somewhat flawed.

Recommendation 2: **SMCS should proactively develop and implement a crisis management strategy for dealing with potential crises that are foreseeable for any school. This strategy should include a standing crisis management committee with a range of skill sets (including, but not limited to communications and media, safety, psychological needs of the SMCS community, most particularly the needs of students). The committee should be led by a designated member or members of the administration. The committee, in consultation with experts, should develop the strategy, with clearly defined roles for the committee's membership.**

CHAPTER FOUR – SURVEYS AND WHAT THEY TOLD US

Overview

The Committee conducted a set of surveys with the St. Michael College School (SMCS) community to ensure that all its members had an opportunity to report on their experiences at the school. The surveys were adapted from the PREVNet Assessment Tool and specifically tailored to the

current context at SMCS. We conducted surveys with students (1,010), alumni (753), current staff (57), former staff (38), and parents of current students (294). The surveys were completed in April, 2019. Students were asked to report on their involvement in bullying and hazing over the course of their time at SMCS, in the fall term, and in the past four weeks. Administrators did not complete a survey due to their low numbers and concerns for confidentiality; therefore, their perceptions were gathered through in-person interviews with the Committee. Of importance, 96% of students completed the surveys. Chapter 4 sets out, in detail, the results of the surveys administered, often through tables and figures.

In the surveys, the Committee adopted detailed definitions of bullying and hazing. The definitions reflected that bullying and hazing can involve any of the following forms: physical, verbal, social, electronic, racial or religious, sexual, and disability-related. Examples are provided of each.

Summary

The surveys completed by students, alumni, current staff, former staff, and parents provided a comprehensive perspective on issues related to bullying and hazing at SMCS. As with all surveys, there are caveats in interpreting the data. These are described in the report. Accordingly, the Committee has used the numbers as indicators, rather than exact data on the prevalence of bullying and hazing and related issues. However, we also had the benefit of many interviews and written submissions, and considered the data together with the information provided in these other ways. We also observe that, despite the limitations on the data, there are many consistencies in the reporting across all the respondent groups. The cumulative information enabled us to evaluate the culture and relationships at SMCS, and provide direction for addressing problems.

Bullying is a problem at SMCS

One in five students currently at SMCS reported having been bullied during their time at SMCS. On the alumni survey, two in every five former students indicated that they had been bullied. A number of parents who completed the survey also indicated that bullying was a problem: one in four parents indicated that their son had been bullied while at SMCS.

The rates of victimization at SMCS were somewhat lower than or similar to those for boys across Canada. Given differences in the time and frequency scales, these comparisons need to be made cautiously; however, the current rates of bullying at SMCS need to be addressed as they do across the country. As reflected in Figure 25, reproduced in the report, Canada also performs dismally on the international stage, ranking 27th out of 31 countries on rates of being bullied. Therefore, all families, schools, and communities have a responsibility to create safer environments for Canadian children and youth.

Victimization has been long-lasting for many of the students who reported bullying

Bullying involves a power dynamic in which the individual who engages in bullying gains in power and the individual being victimized loses power as the bullying continues over time. This loss of power means that the victimized individual becomes increasingly helpless to stop the bullying alone. Of the current students who reported being bullied, one in three indicated that the bullying had been going for more than a year. On the alumni survey, one in four former students who reported victimization indicated that they had been bullied for longer than a year. Three of

four parents who indicated that their son had been bullied noted that the bullying had been going on for more than a year. This chronic bullying may be explained by the school's inability to fully identify and effectively address bullying, a perception that bullying involves normal "boys will be boys" interactions, and the absence of a prior understanding of the extent to which bullying exists at SMCS. The absence of understanding was contributed to by the hesitation of students to report victimization. This also supports concerns about a "code of silence" regarding bullying. Only one in five boys had told an adult at home, one in eight had told a teacher, one in ten had told another student, and only one in twelve had sought out someone to help them. Without feelings of safety, trust, and confidence to reach out for help, these students may have been left to suffer abuse at the hands of peers in silence.

Students experience many forms of victimization

The diverse forms of bullying experienced by students at SMCS all interfere with healthy developmental processes in early adolescence and adolescence. Adolescence is a stage of life with profound physical, cognitive, social and emotional changes. It is a critical time for identity development and a time when a sense of belonging with peers is paramount.

Physical, sexual, and racial/religious bullying can undermine boys' sense of who they are becoming as they form their unique identities. There was consistency in the reports of current students, alumni, and parents: one in three boys who had been victimized experienced physical bullying. Using physical aggression to control or distress another is consistent with hyper-masculinity and a perception that it is normal for boys to be physically aggressive. Sexual bullying targets many aspects of emerging sexual and gender identity. Of the current students who were bullied, one in four reported that they had been sexually bullied; one in five alumni reported they had been sexually bullied; and one in six parents reported that their son had been sexually bullied at SMCS. In response to the question on racial or religious bullying, we assume that the bullying was more likely to have been racial as there is relatively little diversity in the religious affiliation of SMCS students. Nonetheless, some bullying based on religious affiliation cannot be discounted entirely. Of the victimized current students, two in five reported that they had been bullied because of their race/religion; one in five former students and parents reported this form of bullying. A high proportion of non-white youth who reported having been bullied indicated that they had experienced racial or religious bullying. Not only does this form of bullying interfere with positive identity development, but it is consistent with interviews in which SMCS community members indicated concerns for a racial divide.

As adolescents mature and become more independent, they shift their focus from the family to peer relationships. Being accepted and included in healthy peer relationships is critical for development during this stage. Consequently, social bullying that comprises damaging another's reputation and relationships or excluding another, is both painful and developmentally detrimental in adolescence. Of the current students who had been bullied, three of five reported being socially bullied; three of five parents reported that their sons had been socially bullied. One of two former students who reported being victimized had been socially bullied. School is a place where every student has the right to belong, be included, and participate fully. Those who are socially bullied are pushed to the margins of social groups, where they are not safe and included.

Today's youth are growing up in a digital world, where information and connections are at their fingertips. Although there are many advantages to instant access to information and communication, there are also risks linked to 24/7 access, wide public distribution of images and comments, and the indelible nature of anything posted on the internet. There have been grave episodes of Canadian youth who have suffered from electronic or cyber-bullying. At SMCS, one in four bullied boys and one in four parents reported experiences of electronic bullying. A lower rate of cyber-bullying (one in thirteen) was reported by former students, most likely because social media was not an integral part of their lives.

Being bullied has harmful consequences
Research in the field shows that the experience of being bullied is physically, socially, psychologically, and socio-economically harmful, with the impacts potentially lasting long into adulthood. The SMCS students who reported they had been bullied indicated a range of harmful consequences. Three of four boys reported mental health symptoms (anger, sadness), one in two boys reported somatic or physical symptoms associated with stress (e.g., stomach aches and headaches) and problems with school work, and one in three to four boys reported difficulties in relationships with adults and peers at school and with their families.

Boys who had been sexually bullied reported the highest levels of problems: four of five of these boys reported mental health symptoms, two of three reported somatic complaints, problems with school work and feeling helpless, and one in two boys reported difficulties in relationships with adults and peers at school and with their families. Boys who had been bullied because of their race or religion also indicated high levels of problems similar to or slightly less prevalent than those for boys who had been sexually bullied.

Bullying has harmful consequences for those who bully
On the surveys, one in ten of the current students and one in 14 of the former students acknowledged that they had bullied others during their time at SMCS. Only a handful of parents indicated that their sons engaged in bullying other students. The current students were asked about the duration of their involvement in bullying. Over seven in ten of the current students reported that they have been bullying others for over a year and four in ten reported having bullied over the past two years. Bullying is a dynamic of abusing power to control, distress, or harm another. Those who bully have learned the relationship strategy of using power to negatively impact others, rather than using power positively to support others. Students who bully at school are more likely to use power in other relationship contexts through sexual harassment and dating aggression. There is already an awareness at the school of the importance of education to promote the attributes of the modern man, as reflected in the development of its St. Michael's Man initiative (now called the Modern Man Movement). Identifying the students who are bullying others and supporting them to learn to use their power in positive rather than negative ways has the potential not only to reduce bullying and hazing at SMCS, but also to create an inclusive, respectful and safe context for boys' healthy social-emotional development. This provides a foundation for life-long relationships as husbands, fathers, and community leaders.

Hazing at SMCS
Among the current and former students, one in twenty reported having been hazed while at SMCS. Current students were asked about their feelings about being hazed. Three of five of

these boys indicated that being hazed was a bit to very upsetting; two of five boys indicated that they were not upset by the hazing they experienced. The wide range of feelings following hazing suggests that it unfolds and is experienced with varying intensity, depending on many factors such as the nature of the aggression involved, the number of students perpetrating and witnessing the hazing, and the powerlessness and helplessness of the victimized student. About one in four current and one in three former staff members indicated that they had been aware of hazing among the students at SMCS. Although hazing is often cited as a means to build team cohesion, research indicates that the opposite is true. Appropriate team building behaviours are linked to athletes judging their team as more cohesive; more hazing activities are linked to perceptions of a less cohesive team. Based on the numbers of students who reported hazing, the significant number who reported that hazing had little or no impact on them, and based on our many interviews, we were satisfied that the most extreme forms of hazing, unlike some of the lower level initiation rites described in chapter 5, do not figure prominently in the school's culture. However, for the reasons fully developed in chapter 7, hazing and initiation rites must be addressed as part of the school's comprehensive strategy going forward.

Witnessing bullying

Bullying is a social power dynamic that engages peers as onlookers. Peers can play diverse roles: joining in the bullying, intervening to stop the bullying, or passively observing it. At SMCS, over half of the current students reported witnessing bullying. Consistent with research in the field, the students who witnessed bullying were negatively impacted by these observations. Almost one in two boys who witnessed bullying reported feeling helpless in the situation, which is consistent with research on bystanders and reflects the complex peer dynamics that unfold through bullying. At SMCS, there is an opportunity to mitigate the "code of silence" regarding bullying and build widespread support for bystanders to intervene in supporting a victimized peer. Although peers are generally reticent to intervene in bullying, they are more likely to do so when they believe that their peers support defending a victimized student.

Location of bullying or hazing

Students who had witnessed bullying or hazing among fellow students were asked where this activity had occurred. We identified 15 potential locations in and around the school, including social media. The students indicated that bullying or hazing occurred throughout the school and not just in sports-related areas. The most common locations for bullying or hazing were the hallways, lockers, outside, café, and on social media. All of these locations tend to have lower adult supervision. This affords opportunities for covert bullying or hazing. The diverse locations of these activities indicate that bullying and hazing are not limited to sports-related events or teams, but extend to a wide range of school-related events and locations.

Role of teachers, coaches, and administrators in addressing bullying

Teachers and other staff at the school operate *in loco parentis* (in the place of parents) and, as such, are responsible for upholding the safety and well-being of all students in the school context.

Teachers may be overconfident in their evaluation of how well they and the school respond to bullying. The majority of current and former staff believed that bullying was not a serious problem at SMCS. Staff generally indicated that they are prepared for and effective in dealing

with bullying when it arises. About half of the current and former staff indicated that they had received adequate training in bullying prevention. Almost all current staff indicated that they use effective, evidence-based strategies when they address bullying problems. Not surprisingly, very few staff indicated that they use ineffective strategies, such as blaming the student who was bullied, ignoring the bullying problem, or making excuses for the student who had bullied.

About three-quarters of current students and almost half of the former students who had been bullied indicated that SMCS staff members respond in effective ways (e.g., listened to my concerns, suggest ways to stop it, and offer to report it). In contrast, victimized students also reported that some staff responses were not effective or evidence-based. Half of the current students and a third of the former students had been told to ignore the bullying. The difficulty with this response is that by the time students have the courage to approach a trusted staff member, they have likely tried many strategies, including ignoring the bullying, that have not been effective at stopping the abuse because of the power differential. About two in five current and former students reported that teachers had told them that bullying is normal. About a quarter of the students indicated that a staff member advised them to fight back. Research shows that when a student fights back, the bullying lasts longer. Finally, a third of current students and over half of the alumni indicated that after reporting problems with bullying, the staff member did nothing to ensure their safety and protection from bullying.

Bullying is a relationship problem that requires relationship solutions. These solutions are designed to ensure that those involved are safe and are developing the capacity for healthy relationships throughout their lives. From this perspective, it is evident which responses to bullying will be effective or ineffective. The following ineffective strategies are drawn from the Bullying Prevention Toolkit, developed for the Ontario Ministry of Education:

- Zero tolerance and disciplinary measures that are solely punitive
- Advising children who are victimized to fight back
- Expecting children to solve bullying problems by themselves
- Advising children to avoid social media as a way of avoiding electronic bullying
- Addressing bullying with celebrity, not expertise
- Offering one-time interventions (e.g., a 45-minute motivational speech)
- Limiting interventions to the individual children who are bullying or who are being victimized — everyone needs to be involved in bullying prevention
- Ignoring adults' bullying and relationships—these are models for children.

Evidence of systemic nature of bullying
We commenced this summary by concluding that bullying is a problem at SMCS. Some elaboration of the systemic nature of the problem is warranted here.

As indicated above, some believed that the bullying problems at SMCS were limited to a few students who were troubled. The surveys from current and former students, current and former staff, and parents shed light on the systemic nature of bullying and confirm that this problem is not limited to "a few bad apples". According to current and former students, as well as parents, a substantial proportion of students at SMCS has been targeted by bullying.

Current teachers and coaches were asked about witnessing bullying that occurred between staff and students or parents. In their responses, almost three-quarters of SMCS staff indicated that they had witnessed a staff member bully other staff, almost two-thirds of the staff members indicated that they had witnessed another staff member bully a student, and over half of the staff indicated that they had seen a student bully a staff member. In terms of being bullied themselves, over half of the staff members who completed the survey indicated that they had been bullied by parents of students and almost a third indicated that they had been bullied by students. This data supports the Committee's recommendation for the comprehensive bullying prevention and intervention strategy set out in chapter 7.

Changes after the alleged incidents

The school has undertaken a number of initiatives to address problems of bullying and hazing since the alleged incidents. According to the survey responses from the current students, there were no significant changes in the rates of experiencing victimization or engaging in bullying. The only improvement was in the number of students reporting that they had witnessed bullying, which decreased from the fall to the spring. The decrease in witnessing despite no significant reported decreases in victimization and bullying behaviour suggests that bullying may have become more covert, as all SMCS students are aware of the school community's concerns around bullying.

Conclusion

There are two realities at SMCS. The prevailing perception for the majority of the members of the SMCS community – at least prior to release of our preliminary survey results -- was that bullying and hazing were not pervasive problems at the school. For others, however, experiences of victimization can be frequent, persistent, and have a significant impact on relationships, mental health, and quality of life at school and beyond. All the students who are involved, in some way, in bullying (whether they bully, are victimized by bullying or witness bullying) may be impacted in a variety of harmful ways. The power differential that is inherent in bullying was evident in the students' reports: boys who bullied indicated that they felt more powerful through bullying; boys who both experienced and witnessed bullying indicated that they felt helpless when bullying occurs at SMCS.

The survey data has greatly assisted us in formulating recommendations for change that can enhance the school's culture.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE INTERVIEWS, WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS AND THE TOWN HALL

Introduction

As indicated earlier, the Committee conducted over 70 interviews with the larger St. Michael's College School (SMCS) community of "stakeholders", consisting of students, their parents, alumni, current and former SMCS staff and administration, as well as parents of recent SMCS graduates. We also received many written submissions from the SMCS community around the globe.

We met with everyone who requested to meet with us. We also reached out to a broad cross-section of current staff, both teaching and non-teaching, some past staff members, as well as current and past senior administrators. We spoke with teachers from many different academic departments as well as the Student Affairs Department, which consists of guidance, the Learning Enrichment Centre and the library. We met with male and female teachers at every stage of their careers, ranging from those who are new to teaching or new to SMCS to those who have taught at the school for a lengthy period of time. A number of staff we met with are alumni of the school. Most of the staff are actively involved in coaching sports and/or other co-curricular activities for students. We spoke to both male and female coaches. Many of the non-teaching staff we heard from have direct interaction with students. Several of the staff members have sons who are current or past students of SMCS.

The alumni we heard from ranged from those who graduated from SMCS in the 1960s up until recent years. Many of these alumni have sons, nephews or grandsons who have attended the school..

A detailed description of what we learned and the extent to which what we learned resonated with the survey results

Overview

There were a wide spectrum of views and experiences and many thoughtful and insightful comments and suggestions. Though there was little consensus among many stakeholders on a number of issues, there was broad consensus on others. Things we heard were often consistent with the survey results.

It is evident that for many people SMCS is a beloved educational institution that provides a superb education. Many told us about the excellence and dedication of teachers and other staff who devote countless hours to students. People also made a point of telling us that non-academic activities at SMCS are referred to as "co-curricular", rather than "extra-curricular", as they are as valued in the development of a well-rounded person as academic learning. The Basilian charisms of education and faith were frequently mentioned, as was the school's motto "Teach me goodness, discipline and knowledge." We heard from many alumni that SMCS contributed to their formative years and made them who they are today: successful men devoted to family, faith and community. We also heard from across the community that, unfortunately, there are negative aspects to the culture of SMCS. The experiences of some have been difficult and, in some cases, traumatic. Although we heard that hazing had occurred in the past, we did not hear that there exists an ongoing pattern of hazing similar to the alleged incidents that are the subject of the criminal charges. In contrast, we did hear from a number of individuals that bullying represents a systemic issue at the school. This was consistent with the survey results described earlier.

The balance of chapter 5 sets out in great detail, and without attribution, the views expressed by many members of the SMCS on many topics. Many quotes are provided as well. These views informed the recommendations made in chapter 7.

CHAPTER SIX: NEW INITIATIVES AT THE SCHOOL

Overview

In this chapter, we outline the initiatives that the school has undertaken since the events of November, 2018. These were intended to address the issues raised by those events. Some of these initiatives are reflected below.

Classroom support and counsellor services for grades 7-10 were provided in late November after the incidents came to light. Police officers also visited classrooms to speak about security and appropriate behaviour. Moreover, additional security officers were hired in order to have a greater security presence at the school.

A new dean of students was put in place in the new year.

A student support application (My SSP), an online/digital reporting solution (app) and voicemail reporting were all launched in November, 2018. Additional support resources were also introduced through the Student Affairs Department. We were advised that this initiative will be reviewed to ascertain how it can be improved going forward.

A parent and guardian support hotline was established in late November, 2018. This hotline remains active and will continue going forward.

A number of town halls were held throughout November and December, 2018. These were geared towards students, current parents, alumni, prospective students and those involved with the junior football team.

A student workshop directed towards building awareness and respect was conducted in late November and another on coping and resiliency took place in December, 2018. The workshops covered aspects of power and power dynamics within teams, including bullying and hazing. The second component of the workshops was directed toward resiliency. All teams in 2018-2019 participated in these workshops. We were advised that the school intends to conduct these workshops, subject to our recommendations, in the upcoming school year, but that they will be enhanced and revised to ensure that the content is novel and that student athletes remain engaged.

A staff workshop and follow up session were conducted in mid and late December, 2018. A public relations firm conducted the first workshop and reviewed feedback from staff about the state of affairs at the school. The second workshop was facilitated by the White Ribbon campaign. This workshop was geared towards gender issues, and included issues related to teacher and staff gender bias (both overt and implicit). The focus was mostly upon how the school could increase awareness of gender issues among staff and students.

An ongoing mentorship program exists at the school. Beginning in late September or early October, SMCS will introduce a teacher advisory group (TAG) program. For the program, students will be placed into groups of 10-15 students. The groups will be comprised of students from each grade to ensure that more senior students are interacting with and serve as mentors for their younger peers. The groups will meet at the beginning of the day for approximately 40 minutes

once every two weeks. During these meetings, there will be teacher facilitated discussions surrounding issues of significance, such as leadership, bullying and inclusivity.

A student wellness initiative was established several years ago, but has been enhanced since December, 2018. Students were able to attend student town halls during their lunch hour on a voluntary basis. The town halls were facilitated by staff and provided an opportunity for students to speak freely about how they felt about what was going on at the school.

In February, 2019, additional classroom workshops were conducted. These were directed towards positive masculinity, consent and emotional intelligence. Further student workshops directed at building awareness and respect in sports were conducted in late March, 2019.

In December, 2018 and again in April and May, 2019, SMCS brought in facilitators from the White Ribbon campaign to facilitate workshops for students – the focus was on bullying and bystander intervention training. The White Ribbon campaign has been contracted to do workshops over a three to five-year period going forward.

In June, 2019, SMCS announced the hiring of a student wellness officer. Her work at the school will officially begin in September, 2019. She has a Masters in Social Work and will provide a host of services to students at the school, including counselling for individuals and groups of students such as athletic teams or groups of students facing common issues.   There will also be opportunities for the wellness officer to work with parents and guardians of students facing challenges.

In June, 2019, a lawyer from Borden Ladner Gervais conducted diversity, equity and sensitivity training for faculty. All other staff at SMCS (new teachers, business staff and administrators) will be participating in the same training at the end of August, 2019. The school plans to continue educating all staff and faculty to build awareness around inherent biases and particularly how these may come into play when working with students.

Several guest speakers spoke to various members of the SMCS community about topics such as: what manhood really means, how to prevent sexual harassment, building self-confidence in positive, healthy ways, social media safety and best practices, and mental wellness. Some of these speakers will be invited again this coming year.

Conclusion

In response to the November, 2018 events, SMCS has undertaken a number of initiatives to address the issues raised by these events. That is commendable. In our view, some of these initiatives can be incorporated into the comprehensive bullying prevention and intervention strategy developed in chapter 7. As further discussed, the challenge is to ensure that these initiatives form part of a holistic approach that is integrated into the full life of the school, rather than a number of somewhat disjointed activities; are evaluated for effectiveness on an ongoing basis, and are sustainable. "Sustainable" in this context means not only that their content and form are regularly evaluated and renewed to avoid diminishing returns, but that they form part of the school's long-term strategy. The concern when programming is introduced in response to a specific event or crisis is that it can be seen as less important or critical as the precipitating events fade from collective memory.

CHAPTER SEVEN – FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
Findings on bullying, hazing and initiation rites

The extensive engagement with the SMCS community produced a range of perspectives and shared experiences about life at the school both historically and currently. The majority of former and current students describe their experience at the school in positive – often in glowing terms. There is no doubt that for many students, the school has represented and continues to represent an institution that promotes excellence – whether in academics, fine arts, athletics – within a supportive environment. For many, the school also has instilled spiritual values in its students.

The survey data, as well as interviews and written submissions, support our finding that although hazing, in its most extreme form, prompted this Review, and has occurred in less violent forms in the past, it does not figure prominently in the culture at the school. As reflected earlier, approximately 5% of current students said that they have been subjected to some form of hazing. Hazing and other initiation rites have also been reported historically. Approximately the same percentage of alumni said that they had been subjected to hazing as well.

Although the incidents that form the basis of the criminal allegations are deeply disturbing on multiple levels and do require remedial measures to prevent or reduce their likelihood in the future, they can fairly be described as relatively infrequent events.

Our finding as to the relative infrequency of the more extreme forms of hazing is based on the wealth of information provided to us, rather than on speculation or conjecture. It was of importance in framing our recommendations relating to the continuing team sports activities at the school. Of course, the relative infrequency of such conduct does not mean that it can be ignored in the future or more immediately, in the recommendations we make in this chapter. One goal is to ensure that the types of activities that prompted criminal charges <u>never</u> occur at the school again.

In this context, it is also important to discuss initiation rites, short of hazing or other forms of sexual or physical abuse. Some initiation rites, although significantly less concerning than the hazing that prompted this Review, or other forms of sexual or physical abuse, also should have no place in the ongoing life of the school: for example: the ritualized chores given to "rookies" or the demeaning language directed to them. Some feel that these initiation rites somehow build team unity or a "brotherhood." They may point to similar rites that routinely take place within professional sports or indeed, in society more generally.

In our view, there remains no place for initiation rites that demean, insult or ridicule any team, group or club student member. These initiation rites, even where purportedly acquiesced in by students, subtly – and not so subtly – undermine the values the school otherwise wishes to promote. They are hurtful to a number of students and may make them feel marginalized and less worthy. Whatever their purported value – itself debatable – within the context of professional or semi-professional sports, they have no place within a school environment.

As stated above, although hazing does not figure prominently in the culture of the school, this finding cannot be viewed in isolation. It is deeply concerning that the incidents currently before the courts were apparently observed by a number of students and that the most serious incident,

and others, were apparently captured on video and viewed or distributed by students on social media. These facts confirm the importance of introducing robust measures to address not only potential hazing, but also the larger moral issues associated with the observation of serious victimization of fellow students and the misuse of social media to further victimize a fellow student or students.

Some members of the SMCS community characterized this situation as involving "a few bad apples" who should not taint the reputation of the school or its students. We are sensitive to the concern that all students "not be tainted with the same brush" especially in the context of our finding that hazing does not figure prominently in the culture of the school. However, it is equally true that the characterization of this situation as involving "a few bad apples" has the potential – however inadvertent – of undermining an important opportunity to strengthen the values of all students who attend and will attend the school and promote a safe and welcoming environment for every student.

This opportunity cannot be missed for another critical reason. While hazing does not figure prominently in the school's culture, bullying is a systemic issue that must be addressed. As reflected in chapter 4, the anonymous surveys completed by 1,010 students at the school reflect that approximately 22% of current students describe themselves as victims of sexual, physical, verbal and/or racial/religious bullying. The surveys revealed that bullying has had a profound impact on most of these students. The data also revealed that despite measures put in place by the school after the hazing allegations came to light, they have not been successful to date in reducing the number of students for whom bullying remains a concern. Indeed, the data provide support for the conclusion that bullying has become more covert, and therefore more difficult to detect.

The levels of bullying at SMCS are roughly comparable to those reported by boys of similar ages across Canada.   Nonetheless, they are sufficiently high to warrant a new prevention and intervention strategy. Every student at SMCS has the right to be free from bullying and the right to thrive in a safe and nurturing environment. It is no answer to say that SMCS is not for everybody. Surely, that cannot be the answer for vulnerable students who are members of the student body and who can reasonably expect that everything possible will be done to promote their physical, emotional, sexual, spiritual and academic well-being. Our recommendations are designed to meet those expectations and allow SMCS to take the lead in instituting effective measures to severely reduce bullying.

The components of a comprehensive bullying prevention and intervention strategy
Recommendation 3: **SMCS should develop a comprehensive prevention and intervention strategy to address bullying. Since bullying takes place across the entire spectrum of the student body and school activities, the strategy is not to be confined to sports-related activities. A comprehensive strategy means that it is not accomplished through a series of "one-off" measures, but involves a holistic approach consisting of measures that are coordinated and that complement each other.**

Such a strategy can also build upon some of the initiatives already undertaken by the school. The challenge is to integrate these and other initiatives, with professional assistance, as part of the

holistic approach described here. As reflected in this recommendation, we place considerably less weight on lectures delivered to students on relevant topics. Such lectures often have little impact on thinking and behaviour of students. Workshops and interactive sessions are more effective, particularly when coupled with follow-up sessions which discuss how, if at all, participating students' behaviour has changed or any changes in culture observed by students. The school should also evaluate, through ongoing dialogue with students, staff and parents, how its initiatives are regarded, and make adjustments accordingly. Some of the initiatives undertaken by the school met resistance or were not well received. This should invite consideration of how messages are being and should be communicated.

Recommendation 4: **A comprehensive bullying prevention and intervention strategy must address, in part through policies, guidelines, and supporting documents such as codes, the following:**

(a) The definition of bullying and the ways in which it can take place;

(b) The definition of hazing and undesirable initiation rites, and ways in which they take place;

(c) The obligation of students, teachers, coaches and other staff not to participate in bullying, hazing or analogous conduct;

(d) The appropriate and inappropriate use of technology (including cell phones) and social media;

(e) The obligations of or expectations for students, teachers, coaches and other staff who witness bullying or <u>related</u> conduct. <u>Related</u> conduct includes the misuse of social media to further demean the person bullied;

(f) Ongoing, effective training (also referred to as professional development) for teachers, coaches and other staff who regularly interact with students on how to identify and address bullying, including effective strategies for vulnerable students;

(g) Assistance to parents[1] whose children have been bullied, witnessed bullying, or have engaged in bullying, and to parents who are concerned about bullying, including workshops, an inventory of available resources and information on all aspects of bullying;

(h) Ongoing effective, interactive education for all students on at least an annual basis respecting bullying, hazing and analogous conduct, and on strategies to prevent or address such conduct;

(i) Special, but not exclusive attention, to sports activities, including specific strategies identified in this report to reduce the likelihood of bullying, hazing and other undesirable initiation rites within a sports-related environment;

(j) Resources, including professional assistance to support students who have been bullied or who have witnessed bullying and referrals for students who have engaged in bullying;

(k) Procedures that promote the ability of students to report incidents of bullying or hazing in a safe and welcoming environment and in a way that minimizes the possibility of reprisals;

(l) Procedures that encourage parents, and other persons, including the school's teachers, coaches and other staff, to report incidents of bullying; and facilitate such reporting;

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[1]References to parents include guardians.

(m) Policies and/or protocols for when and how to report to police, and how to work with police on an ongoing basis to promote the safety and security of students while not prejudicing ongoing criminal proceedings;

(n) A plan for the sustainability of the bullying prevention and intervention strategy and related programming and resources over time;

(o) A plan to measure the success of policies and guidelines or associated programming, including anonymous surveys conducted at least every other year, and possibly annually;

(p) In addition to anonymous surveys, the collection and use of data on bullying, but in ways that protect confidentiality of affected persons;

(q) Periodic review of existing policies and guidelines, and other supporting documentation with feedback from the larger SMCS community;

(r) A clear articulation of the role played by each administrator or staff member in creating, implementing and modifying policies, guidelines and other supporting documentation, or in otherwise implementing components of the school's bullying prevention and intervention strategy. The strategy should have a defined leader or leaders within the administration and involve a safe and accepting schools team.

The SMCS must give much greater attention, going forward, to the guidance, all not legally binding, provided by the *Education Act*. Accordingly, it should not be a surprise that this report makes extensive reference to the Act and related regulations, and policy/program memoranda (sometimes referred to as PPMs) created by the Ministry of Education.

General findings on SMCS's policies, guidelines and supporting documentation

The adequacy of the school's policies, guidelines and other documentation cannot be addressed by focusing only on the issues that prompted our Review. We identified systemic deficiencies in how the school creates, maintains and uses policies and other documentation to support its work.

For example, SMCS has a number of policies or guidelines. However, many faculty members or staff were unaware of precisely what policies or guidelines exist or their most current status. Indeed, there was no easy way for the Committee to obtain the full array of existing policies or guidelines. The policies or guidelines are usually not available on the school's website, though sometimes accessible by staff online. They share no common format or template. Nor is there any process in place to ensure regular review of the school's policies or to ensure the engagement of the SMCS community in that process.

Recommendation 5: **Policies and guidelines should be fully accessible by all members of the SMCS community and the public. They should be organized by subject matter, and adopt a common format and style to facilitate comprehension, and consistency of approach.**

Recommendation 6: **SMCS should establish a formalized process for periodic review of its policies or guidelines and should solicit the views of the larger SMCS community as part of that process.**

A formalized process for periodic review of existing policies or guidelines is designed to evaluate, on an ongoing basis, whether policies or guidelines are complete, accurate and up-to-date. At

present, policies and other supporting documentation tend to be examined and revised largely in response to a specific problem or issue, resulting in patchwork solutions.

There are more fundamental problems with the school's policies or guidelines. Generally, policies or guidelines should be Board approved documents that provide policy direction on a range of issues. It was unclear to us whether each document described as a policy or guideline has even been formally approved by the Board. As well, policies or guidelines on some important topics do not exist at the school.

Recommendation 7(a): **The Board should review existing policies and guidelines to ensure that they (i) truly represent the policy direction of the Board, and (ii) appropriately address all required topics.**

A number of policy gaps or shortcomings are identified throughout this report. The Committee has also undertaken to the Board to assist it in identifying other shortcomings and providing templates for such policies based on best practices elsewhere.

Recommendation 7(b): **SMCS's policy on bullying should be amended in accordance with Appendix A to this report.**

The school's bullying policy figured most prominently in our Review of the school's policy documents. It was created in June, 2010 and has not been amended since. It contains some important features of an adequate policy. However, some important features are also missing. These are set out in Appendix A to our report.

Recommendation 7(c): **SMCS's policy on hazing and initiation rites should form part of its policy on bullying or consist of a free-standing policy. It should be accessible to everyone on the school's website, and should clearly apply to the entire school, not merely the athletic program.**

Recommendation 7(d): **SMCS should develop a robust policy on the use of mobile technology and social media by students and staff.**

Codes of Conduct, handbooks and other documents

While policies or guidelines provide policy direction, schools should provide students, teachers, coaches and other staff, as well as parents with additional direction as to their respective responsibilities or what is expected of them, and in some instances, the consequences of non-adherence to those responsibilities or expectations. These are often captured in codes of conduct.

At SMCS, there is an array of documents, such as an employees' handbook, handbooks for coaches, handbooks for student athletes in some but not all sports, a school code of conduct, a student's agenda that collectively can fairly be described as confusing and at times, inconsistent. There is no clear logic as to what is contained in a handbook or a code or in one handbook, but not another. Nine deficiencies in this array of documents are listed in our report.

Recommendation 8(a): **SMCS should revamp, on a priority basis, its codes, handbooks or its student's agenda to address the deficiencies described in this report. As recommended for the school's policies or guidelines, these documents should be well organized, fully accessible, and**

reviewed periodically as part of a regularized process. SMCS should solicit the views of the larger SMCS community as part of that process.

Recommendation 8(b): **There should be a single handbook for student athletes that addresses topics common to all athletic activities with sections on specific athletic activities, if some distinctions must be drawn. The same approach should be taken with respect to the coaches' handbook. The school should have a single code of conduct (for the entire school) with sections, as required, that pertain to students, to staff and to parents. Alternatively, the school may create separate codes of conduct for students, staff and for parents, as long as they are consistent with each other in content, format and style to promote understanding.**

Recommendation 9: **Teachers and other staff are trained regularly on some existing policies, guidelines or on certain statutory duties and responsibilities. However, some training gaps exist in relation to policies, guidelines or staff's statutory duties and responsibilities. The school should have a full checklist of existing policies, guidelines, statutory duties and responsibilities, and ensure, in a systemic way, that staff are trained on them all.**

Definitions

Recommendation 10: **For the purposes of existing and future policies and guidelines and supporting documentation on bullying prevention and intervention, and on hazing, the school should be guided by the definitions used by the Committee in its surveys, as well as the definition for bullying set out in the *Education Act*.**

Ongoing, effective training for staff

Recommendation 11: **As reflected in recommendation 4(f), a comprehensive prevention and intervention strategy requires ongoing, effective training for teachers, coaches and other staff who regularly interact with students on how to identify and address bullying, including effective strategies for vulnerable students. This means, among other things, that:**

(a) Such training should be mandatory for all staff members who regularly interact with students, whether they are administrators, teachers, coaches, security personnel, or other staff;
(b) It should be provided at least once a year;
(c) It should be structured and developed with expert assistance and feedback from a representative committee of staff and others;
(d) In order to be effective, it should be interactive. Training of this kind is most effective when it has an interactive component that includes scenario discussions and exchanges between and among participants and a facilitator;
(e) It should involve mixed groups of administrators, teachers, coaches and other staff. This discourages a "siloed" approach and a lack of common understanding among all staff.

Assistance for parents concerned about bullying

Recommendation 12: **As reflected in recommendation 4(g), a comprehensive bullying prevention and intervention strategy ensures that assistance is available to parents whose children have been bullied, witnessed bullying, have engaged in bullying, and to parents who**

are concerned about bullying, including workshops, an inventory of available resources and information on all aspects of bullying.

There are two components to the assistance referred to in this recommendation. First, the school should have available for parents an inventory of resources to learn more about or address bullying. PREVNet has developed the Bullying Prevention Toolkit, accompanied by other resources. In addition, the school should clearly identify for parents a roster of individuals whether employed at the school (such as the wellness officer) or external whom parents can contact. Indeed, the school should have such a roster available in any event to assist the school directly, if needed, when issues arise at the school. The roster would include, but not be confined to, psychologists with specialized knowledge. Of course, parents can choose to draw upon other resources or professional assistance as they see fit.

The second component involves workshops for parents on bullying. Workshops should be available for concerned parents that are, again, interactive, and that assist parents in identifying and addressing bullying. Parents do not need to have already identified a bullying issue pertaining to their own children in order to participate in these workshops. Again, the Committee is providing the school with a model for such workshops.

Special measures relating to the football programs and other sports activities

*Recommendation 13***: As reflected in recommendation 4(i), a comprehensive prevention and intervention strategy must include special, but not exclusive attention, to sports activities, including specific strategies identified in this report to reduce the likelihood of bullying, hazing and other undesirable initiation rites within a sports-related environment.**

Recommendation 14(a): **The most significant measures that should be introduced if the football programs are to be reinstated relate to how students should be engaged now in clarifying their rights and responsibilities through "a social contract" if they are to participate in the football programs going forward. This engagement must extend not only to those students who were members of the junior football team last year and wish to continue to play football, but to every student who wishes to participate in the reinstated football programs.**

Student input is critical when challenging peer dynamics, such as bullying and hazing. Bullying and hazing occur based on problems that arise in peer dynamics. Peers are part of the problem; therefore, they need to be part of the solution. Drawing from two established methods in the bullying intervention field, *The Method of Shared Concern* (Pikas) and the *Support Group Method* (Maines & Robinson), this recommendation involves student participation in discussions regarding their rights and responsibilities related to SMCS team membership.

It is important to note that these discussions will <u>not</u> be focused on the alleged assaults at SMCS that remain before the courts. The discussion will focus in a forward looking way on how the boys will participate in sports (starting, at the very least with those who wish to participate in the football teams), how they want and expect to be treated both by other students and staff, and how they will treat others. These are to be discussions facilitated by expert facilitators (whether drawing on those experts on the Committee or outside experts as can be recommended by the Committee.) The discussions will address the responsibilities of each student to keep himself and

others safe, as well as strategies to ensure safety, inclusion, and cohesion. The focus is not on blaming and finger pointing, but on finding solutions and a direction forward that boys <u>can agree on and agree to</u>.

These discussions are also an opportunity for the expert facilitators to ensure that students can describe the impact that the events of the past year have had on them and on others, and assist in the healing process going forward.

The discussions are best carried out in small groups (approximately 8-10 boys). Solutions from the small groups can be aggregated and distilled for a brief report and will result in an agreement or undertaking (sometimes described as a social contract) to be signed by each student <u>as a precondition</u> to participation in the football programs. The agreement or undertaking must of course align with the school's code of conduct and relevant policies.

Recommendation 14(b): **Parents of students participating in the football programs should be invited to a meeting to enable them to familiarize themselves with what the students have agreed to or undertaken as part of their involvement in the football programs. Parents should be expected to sign a document reflecting that they are aware of the commitments undertaken by their children and their own commitment to support what the children have undertaken. As reflected below, this is part of a larger initiative that will involve the creation of a parent code of conduct that parents should also commit to.**

These measures will also assist in identifying the appropriate student leadership (captains or co-captains) of the football teams. Team leaders should not merely be determined based on athletic prowess, but upon their likely leadership in promoting a safe and healthy culture within the team. This means that they should have the ability to understand, communicate and lead on issues relating to codes of conduct and the role of the athlete within the SMCS community.

This proposed approach to team membership is fundamentally different than more conventional approaches that involve merely "signing off" on a code of conduct or merely attending lectures on bullying or related issues. Despite commendable efforts by the school to address these issues after the criminal allegations came to light, the student surveys reflect that these efforts have not been successful to date – nor do we believe them to be sufficiently robust to significantly reduce bullying in the future. The proposed approach fully enlists students and parents in "owning" the issue. (Other recommendations enlist staff members as well.) The proposed approach is also designed to promote healing for students who were impacted, in any variety of ways, by the year's events.

Some questioned the reinstatement of the football programs based on the fact that the school's internal investigation was never completed, due to the outstanding criminal charges, and that such an internal investigation may well have identified other students who should face discipline for their involvement in the misconduct, whether directly or indirectly.

We carefully and respectfully took these views into consideration. In our view, deferral of a decision on the football programs until any internal investigation could be completed was unwise and of doubtful value. All criminal charges are unlikely to be resolved in the next few weeks. The criminal investigation was extensive. Questions of fairness arise in deferring either the decision

on the football programs or on further discipline until some uncertain time in the next school year. More to the point, the robust measures recommended here are more likely to influence student thinking and behaviour on these issues, than a more punitive approach. Cancellation of the football programs provides no guarantee that students inclined to bullying or other misconduct would not participate in other sports activities. Our recommended approach is designed to reduce the likelihood of repetition by <u>any</u> athletes or more generally, <u>any</u> member of the student body. Finally, if evidence later reveals that a student was involved in serious misconduct, but escaped detection through the criminal process or the initial internal investigation, the school is not precluded from acting on that evidence.

Recommendation 14(c): **While these measures should represent a precondition to the continuation of the football programs in 2019-2020 and beyond, they should be adopted with appropriate modification for team sports activities more generally.**

The reference to "appropriate modification" reflects the reality that heightened attention should be given to the football programs for the reasons already indicated. This may mean, for example, that expert facilitators are not utilized for every team sports activity. However, there is no reason why participation in every sport should not be accompanied by a social contract endorsed by student athletes and their parents, or that the social contract should not be developed through an interactive exercise similar to the one to be employed by the facilitators.

Additional measures directly relating to sports activities
Recommendation 15: **Any policies, guidelines, codes of conduct, or handbooks relating to sports activities should be created or revised in accordance with the recommendations contained in this report.**

Form and content of athletic handbooks, codes, policies etc.
Recommendation 16: **As stated in relation to the school's documentation more generally, any documents (whether described as policies, guidelines, handbooks, codes of conduct or the student's agenda) should be fully accessible to the SMCS community on the school's website. Insofar as they specifically relate to athletic activities, they should be consistently described, be similarly formatted and be collected together for easy access by anyone involved or interested in athletics.**

Recommendation 17: **The documents should form part of a uniform approach to common issues. This means, among other things, that similar issues should be identified and dealt with similarly, with only such modification as a particular sports activity might warrant.**

Recommendation 18(a): **Such documents should comprehensively address the issues identified during this Review, including components of the comprehensive bullying prevention and intervention strategy described in this report.**

Recommendation 18(b): **They must explain in plain language what conduct is and is not acceptable and expectations around such behaviour, procedures in place to address relevant issues, accountability and the range of potential consequences for non-adherence to the school's policies, guidelines, codes or similar types of documents.**

Recommendation 18(c): **They should also clearly articulate what it means to be a student athlete (that is, the role of the athlete within the larger SMCS setting and how this role is integrated with the promotion of goodness, discipline and knowledge).**

Recommendation 19: **Such documents should complement and be consistent with the school's policies, guidelines, or codes more generally. It should be obvious to users how the school's athletic and general documents interrelate. It should not be a chore to figure out what applies and to whom and how to navigate through a myriad of documents.**

Recommendation 20: **Such documents should explain the responsibilities and expectations for coaches as well, consistent again with the comprehensive bullying prevention and intervention strategy described in this report.**

Recommendation 21: **SMCS should create a parent code of conduct or modify existing codes of conduct to include expectations for parents, most particularly as they relate to their sons' involvement in sports activities. This parent code of conduct should also be endorsed by parents whose children will be participating in sporting activities. Again, SMCS can draw upon existing templates for such parent codes adopted by other institutions.**

This recommendation takes into account the behaviour of a minority of parents at or related to sporting activities. Students often model the behaviour of parents, teachers and coaches.

Recommendation 22: **The existing policies or supporting documentation around change room use and supervision should be modified both to reinforce the obligation of coaches or their proxies to monitor change room use (externally) and to create a fixed period for change room use (depending on the sport) after which coaches can clear the room.**

Education and training for athletes and coaches

Recommendation 23: **At least once a year, all athletes and coaches should be required to attend a meeting at which the responsibilities and expectations set out in the applicable codes, handbooks, policies or guidelines for athletes and coaches are reviewed. This should generally take place at or near the outset of the relevant sports activities.**

Recommendation 24: **Athletes should also be required to participate in a training program at least annually on hazing and bullying, such as Respect in Sport – Speak Out! or similar programs.**

These programs need not be structured as training or educational sessions. For example, one way to engage students on hazing and initiation rites is through the development of positive team building exercises that provide practical alternatives to hazing and other unacceptable initiation rites.

Recommendation 25: **At least once a year, coaches should also participate in a mandatory half-day training program that specifically addresses how to prevent, detect, deal with and report incidents of hazing, bullying, and undesirable initiation rites.**

Recommendation 26: **As reflected in recommendation 4(h), a comprehensive bullying prevention and intervention strategy must include ongoing, effective, interactive education for**

all students on at least an annual basis on bullying, hazing and analogous conduct, and on strategies to prevent or address such conduct.

As reflected in chapter 6, SMCS has taken the initiative in introducing, in a variety of ways, education for all students on these issues. It is obvious to us, based on all the information collected, that the education has not always been effective. For example, lectures often do not represent the most effective way to convey information, and certainly not the most effective way to change culture, attitudes or behaviour. That is why the social contract sessions we propose place such emphasis on professionally designed interactive sessions with students.

It is unrealistic – and indeed impracticable – for the school to conduct interactive sessions with groups of 8-10 students for the total student body in excess of 1,000 students. Instead, we propose that this important education for students take place through the enhanced use of homerooms as a forum for discussion, and through a sustained commitment to the SMCS Modern Man or St. Michael's Man curriculum, as discussed in this report.

SMCS Modern Man Movement or St. Michael's Man initiative

The events that prompted this Review, as well as the Committee's findings on bullying compel SMCS to revisit what it means to be a St. Michael's man. The school is already alive to the need to educate students on the attributes of the modern man, as reflected in the development of its St. Michael's Man initiative (now called the Modern Man Movement). We were impressed with the teachers who lead that program and their commitment to it. The recent events, however, do provide an opportunity to refine and shape the school's image of the SMCS man, his values, and how to incorporate those values more successfully in the school's curriculum and overall culture.

The challenge in defining the St. Michael's man is to do so within the context of a Catholic school. Many parents expect the school to impart Catholic values – that represents an important and legitimate rationale for their children's attendance at the school. However, that should not translate into a reluctance to discuss with students the difficult issues that exist in a diverse, pluralistic society. At times, it appears as though the program has been hamstrung by a reluctance by the school to directly address those difficult issues.

Two examples are illustrative: sexual orientation and race. Based on our detailed work, it is obvious that some students feel vulnerable respecting issues around their sexual orientation. Some racialized students also feel vulnerable in this regard. Indeed, the anonymous surveys reinforced the view that for racialized students, bullying was often tied to race. The innuendos around the criminal allegations also support the existence of a divide at times between racialized and non-racialized students or their families.

An informed approach to how a St. Michael's man is defined does not impose unwelcome values on anyone or values inconsistent with one's own religious values. However, an informed approach, consistent with Catholic values in a modern society, means that the St. Michael's man is not defined by sexual orientation or race. It means that the St. Michael's man is respectful of diversity, whether that diversity relates to sexual orientation or identity, race, religion, gender, economic circumstances or any enumerated grounds set out in Ontario's Human Rights Code. A

St. Michael's man does not promote a hierarchal view based on athletic v. artistic excellence. A St. Michael's man's pride for the school is manifested not only by respect for diversity, but a commitment not to support, encourage or permit lack of respect by others.

Recommendation 27: **Based on the approach outlined in our commentary, including a dialogue with students, SMCS should develop a clear definition in writing of what it means to be a St. Michael's man, to be incorporated into a code or codes of conduct.**

Resources to support students

Recommendation 28: **As reflected in recommendation 4(j), a comprehensive bullying prevention and intervention strategy must include resources, including professional assistance to support students who have been bullied or who have witnessed bullying and referrals for students who have engaged in less extreme forms of bullying.**

The school has given attention to the need for professional assistance and other support for students who have been victimized by hazing. In our view, the school must better ensure that the SMCS community of staff, parents and students is aware of the supports available for such students, including the inventory of available resources and a roster of professionals discussed in our report. Students who have engaged in less extreme forms of bullying (*ie* that will not result in expulsion) should also be supported in a variety of ways, including referrals, if needed, for professional assistance, remediation and re-integration strategies discussed elsewhere in this report.

Recommendation 29: **Students who are vulnerable or potentially vulnerable (whether or not they have been bullied) should also be supported in a variety of ways. For example:**

(a) **Through mentoring by older students.**
(b) **A formalized initiative that involves a designated staff member (such as a guidance counsellor or wellness officer) meeting with new students on a regular basis to assist them in the transition to SMCS.**

Recommendation 30: **As reflected in recommendations 4(k) and 4(l), a comprehensive bullying prevention and intervention strategy must include procedures that promote the ability of students to report incidents of bullying in a safe and welcoming environment and in a way that minimizes the possibility of reprisals. These procedures apply to victims of bullying and those who witness bullying. It must also include procedures that encourage parents, and other persons, including the school's teachers, coaches and other staff, to report incidents of bullying, and facilitating such reporting.**

As reflected in chapter 6, in November, 2018, the school launched a student support application (My SSP), an online/digital reporting solution (app) and voicemail reporting. These were welcome and important steps taken. In our view, the existing supports are more likely to be used when seen by students within the context of the comprehensive strategies outlined in this report.

We also recognize that, despite robust strategies, students may still lack confidence to discuss bullying with anyone associated with the school. That is why the school should also ensure that

students are well aware of external helplines, and that they are provided with easily accessible information on how to contact such helplines.

Recommendation 31: **As reflected in recommendation 4(n), a comprehensive bullying prevention and intervention strategy must provide for the sustainability of the strategy and related programming and resources over time.**

Recommendation 32: **Sometimes, institutions introducing systemic change overlook the need for a plan to measure the new or modified initiatives. As reflected in recommendation 4(o), SMCS should identify, as a component of its comprehensive strategy, how it intends to measure the success of the initiatives it adopts in response to this report. One feature of measuring success should be the use of anonymous surveys conducted at least every other year and possibly annually.**

Recommendation 33: **As reflected in recommendation 4(r), SMCS should clearly articulate the role played by each administrator or staff member in creating, implementing and modifying policies, guidelines and other supporting documentation, or in otherwise implementing components of its bullying prevention and intervention strategy. The strategy should have a defined leader or leaders and involve a safe and accepting schools team.**

Sexual orientation and diversity

As reflected in chapter 5, for a number of years, some teachers have advocated for a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) to provide a safe space for students who are gay or struggling with their sexual orientation and to promote dialogue with students who are straight.

The *Education Act* specifically requires all publicly funded school boards to support such activities, including the formation of organizations that promote the awareness and understanding of, and respect for, people of all sexual orientations and gender identities, including organizations with the name gay-straight alliance or another name.

Catholic schools across Ontario that are publicly funded are bound by the *Education Act* and comply with these provisions. Indeed, they are mandatory. They are consistent with Catholic values of promoting respect, diversity and inclusiveness, while not imposing anyone's lifestyle or sexual orientation on anyone else.

Recommendation 34: **The school should support any student who wishes to set up or participate in a Gay-Straight Alliance or Diversity and Inclusiveness Alliance or club of similar description, facilitated by a volunteer staff member, either at SMCS or in conjunction with existing clubs or alliances.**

The role of alumni and women staff members at the school

In our view, our recommendations must be seen within a larger opportunity for renewal within the school. Renewal includes an appetite for, and commitment to needed change. Many of those we spoke with challenged the prevalence of alumni as teachers at the school. It was suggested that alumni are less disposed to, and stand in the way of, renewal and change. Of course, we also heard about the invaluable contributions made by alumni to the school, both as teachers and ongoing supporters.

It is, of course, a tribute to the school that alumni wish to participate fully in the life of the school, whether as members of the SMCS Alumni Association, as supporters of the school or its programs or as members of the school's staff. In our view, there is an important place for alumni in the ongoing life of the school.

However, it is well within the Committee's mandate to discuss the role to be played by alumni as members of the faculty, staff or administration.

Without reflecting in the slightest on the alumni, renewal and change are enhanced through the greater use of non-alumni faculty members. Non-alumni faculty members often bring a fresh perspective to the school. So do alumni faculty members who bring experiences from other schools or other school systems, whether private, public, or Catholic-based, before assuming teaching responsibilities at SMCS. A faculty member who knows only the SMCS experience has fewer comparators to promote new approaches. He may fall back on how things have always been done at the school. Incidentally, this is a view shared by some alumni members of the faculty or administration who expressed concern about the somewhat cloistered experience of those who only know this school. An opportunity for a fresh perspective also exists through the appointment of the new principal, who is the first lay non-alumnus principal in the school's history.

Of course, by definition, women teachers and administrators are not SMCS alumni. In our view, the school is better placed to be a leader in renewal and change with a higher proportion of female teachers at the school, as well as women in positions of leadership at the school. In the context of an all boy's school – especially where hyper or toxic masculinity has been identified as an issue to be mindful of, female teachers and administrators provide much needed perspective.

Recommendation 35: **Alumni should continue to play an important role in the life of the school, including as members of staff or administration. They provide important continuity, as well as ongoing support for the school and its vision. It is also important for the school to promote renewal and change. This favours an approach that encourages the hiring of alumni teachers with experience at other education institutions than SMCS. It also favours the hiring of more women as teachers, staff and in leadership roles.**

Discipline

Recommendation 36(a): **SMCS should review its policies and guidelines respecting discipline, guided in part by the *Education Act*, its regulations and the Ministry of Education's Policy/Program Memorandum No. 145. In doing so, SMCS should be mindful of the concerns articulated during this Review, and the need to provide clarity and consistency respecting how and when discipline is imposed.**

Recommendation 36(b): **The administration should work with its staff to cooperatively develop a clear understanding of what information will and will not be shared. This understanding should be reflected in the school's policies and guidelines. The administration must ensure that teachers and, where appropriate, other staff who regularly interact with students are not unnecessarily left "in the dark" about the fact that a student has been suspended and the basis**

for that suspension. Such an understanding is not inconsistent with the need to protect a student's privacy, and to prevent unnecessary disclosure.

Recommendation 36(c): **When a student is suspended, there should be an articulated re-integration strategy to promote healing and the student's positive development. That includes, where appropriate, an enhanced role for mediation and restorative processes for suspended students and those affected by their conduct. This may involve, in some circumstances, a facilitated dialogue involving the suspended student and other persons affected, where this approach is consistent with the other persons' safety, security and wellness.**

Recommendation 36(d): **The current approach to Ontario Student Records (OSRs) – most particularly the failure to record a student's suspension on his OSR – does not represent a best practice. A best practice, consistent with the *Education Act* is to record all suspensions, with a mechanism for removal of the suspension based on good behavior.**

Recommendation 36(e): **Although SMCS keeps a record of suspensions and the reasons for suspensions, this type of data is largely unused in setting or revising school policies or practices. As reflected in recommendation 4(p), a comprehensive bullying prevention and intervention strategy requires the collection and use of such data, but in ways that protect confidentiality of affected persons.**

Recommendation 36(f): **The administration must be alive to existing perceptions around unequal application of discipline based on a student's identity, and proactively address these perceptions.**

Recommendation 36(g): **Greater consideration should be given to the use of in-school suspensions where warranted, rather than simply sending the students home. The latter is not regarded by some students as a disincentive to misconduct – on the contrary. More important, an in-school suspension, if consistent with the safety and security of others affected, provides the opportunity for self-improvement and re-integration.**

CHAPTER EIGHT – CONCLUSION

There are two realities at Saint Michael's College School (SMCS). For many students, past and current, the school has represented the very best in schooling. An opportunity to aspire to, and achieve excellence, while building life-long friendships. A school that promotes the highest in Catholic values and public service. A beloved institution that inspires its alumni to continue to participate in, and support its work in a variety of ways.

For many, all of that is true.

For others, the school failed to ensure that they felt safe and secure or fully included.

This reality was also true for a significant number of students, past and current.

The troubling events that prompted this Review alerted many to that second reality. Or to the fact that even our most reputable institutions are not immune to the issues identified in this report. On the positive side of the ledger, the extreme misconduct that prompted criminal

allegations do not figure prominently in the school's culture. On the negative side, bullying and other demeaning behaviour do represent a systemic issue at the school, albeit in numbers comparable to the experiences of children of similar age across the country. We can do so much better. Canada can do so much better.

As we have said throughout this report, these events provide SMCS with the opportunity to become a leader in this area. It has the means to do so. The SMCS community has demonstrated to us that it also has the commitment to do so. We believe that this report provides the school with some important tools to augment what it has already done so as to truly lead the way.

Its current and future students deserve no less.

Its past students for whom the second reality was true also deserve no less.

The Committee is grateful that we have been permitted to assist in this critically important project. If our report is received by the SMCS community in the spirit in which it was written, we believe that it can make a difference in the lives of SMCS's students.