

Greetings to the Chair and all Trustees, Senior Staff, and all Members of the Assembly. My name is Grace Ricci, I am a member of the Catholic School Parent Council at Loretto College School. And I am here with the co-chair Denise Grande.

We are making this presentation to you on behalf of our school, Loretto College School located at 151 Rosemount Avenue. We are bringing to your attention the immediate need to recognize the inequity that currently exists between the all-female schools and other schools within TCDSB. Namely, we are here to address the lack of outdoor sports fields for all female schools in the TCDSB district.

Whereas we have received funding for levelling the field and installation of a surrounding fence, this does little to improve the usage for students, staff, and the community and quite frankly points to the lack of support structure for girls in sports.

If we had the planned space drawn for us, it would provide the community with green space, a multi-sport outdoor space, an outdoor teaching space, an outdoor lounging space, and a beautiful sensory raised garden green zone for all to enjoy. Whether kicking a soccer ball, playing catch, or walking around the field, a properly designed and constructed outdoor activity space can serve many good purposes. Also, for our students with learning disabilities, this would be very beneficial to their outdoor experiences. They would be able to let go of some of their energy and be able to get refreshed and reenergized. They may even be able to utilize raised gardens to plant seeds, nurture them and watch plants grow.

Several studies show that regular exposure to the outdoor environment provides immediate mental, physical, and social health benefits. It has also been shown that outcomes such as self-concept and intrapersonal skills (self-confidence, resilience) in addition to social and interpersonal skills improve with increased exposure. This is especially important as these teenagers have great deficits in these areas following COVID-19 restrictions.

Each year during the outdoor sporting seasons, our girls have not been able to properly prepare/train for these sporting events due to the space, or rather lack-there-of, outside of our school. During the past years, our girls often needed to travel to other schools or community parks in order to prepare for outdoor sports/competitions. This has resulted in our students having to spend additional money on transportation to participate in practices. Since this can be quite challenging for some, depending on their financial situation, or can possibly determine whether they will compete, it is of utmost importance to resolve this issue by having a proper outdoor sporting area for our school.



Our students have not had the honour of having home-field advantage for our sports games, nor the joy of being cheered on by their families, friends, peers, and teachers. Having said opportunity, this will provide the Loretto College School students with a greater sense of team spirit, resulting in a strong will to thrive and succeed.

Another important factor is that our students who participate in outdoor sports competitions will have to miss necessary instructional time due to having to leave school early so that they may practice at other locations that will accommodate them. Being a parent at the school and witnessing our athletic representatives leave early in a rather frazzled state is quite disheartening. Knowing that they are missing valuable information from their instructors, they leave with guilt overpowering the excitement they should feel.

In addition, there are costs incurred by our school to obtain permits for the use of community fields or the use of another school's field to allow our students an equal opportunity to train for upcoming events. Safety concerns exist for our student's training in public community fields or other schools.

Besides the factors mentioned above, gender inequity is also an important issue that becomes glaring and obvious, Loretto College School, an all-female school, like the 5 other all-female high schools, out of a total of 6, does not have an outdoor sports playing field. This is not the case in any of the all-male high schools. Just as an all-male or co-ed school needs its sports or school field as part of its curriculum and educational programs, and its extracurricular activities and sports teams, so do our all-female schools. The statistics speak for themselves. It is dismal that less than 0.2% of all female schools have a fully functioning outdoor field, compared to 100% for all-male high schools. Not to mention that many schools are requesting upgrades where we are still requesting to have one where there is none. Females need exercise and physical activities; we know this is not happening at our school. Not for lack of trying but for lack of fairness to all-female schools. As mentioned, with a proper field these female students can engage in different sports that they can also play during school or even after school while being safe within their own community. There are simply so many benefits to redesigning our school's outdoor space into a functioning field for our sports, green space, and educational outdoor classes, that our request for funding should be granted.

On behalf of the Loretto College School Community, we thank you for your attention and consideration for this wonderful opportunity that will hopefully be given to our students.





This is the current state of our field:

