

Rogerson Law Group Media Statement Bullying at Havergal College

Background:

On April 20, 2020, Rogerson Law Group filed a statement of claim with Ontario's Superior Court of Justice against Havergal College, Vice Principal Seonaid Davis, and two teenage girls, on behalf of a teenage girl whose identity, as is normal in these proceedings, is protected by the court and is therefore referred to as Jane Doe.

Statement from Andrew Rogerson of Rogerson Law Group.

Ms. Doe suffered extreme, unrelenting bullying from classmates while attending Havergal. The severity of this bullying from her Havergal classmates was so intense that Ms. Doe attempted to take her own life on two separate occasions. In no way did Havergal provide a safe environment for Ms. Doe who suffered persistent bullying.

We believe Ms. Doe and we are committed to exposing the toxic culture of bullying at Havergal College. Though Ms. Doe's individual experience was horrific, we believe it is far from an isolated incident.

Since Ms. Doe's story was made public, we have had other courageous ladies come forward to share their stories; some of which were first-hand experiences, others were stories of them witnessing bullying at the school. We are calling on others to come forward and share their stories.

What we have observed from Ms. Doe's complaint, and the stories of other ladies who attended Havergal College, is that there is ample reason to believe there is widespread, systemic bullying at Havergal College, and a shameful lack of action on the part of staff and administration to safeguard its students.

While Havergal claims to have 'policies', 'commitments', and 'resources' in place to prevent and address bullying, no action has been taken, at least in these cases, to stop it. The Havergal strategy has been to say that the behaviour is not bullying and therefore the bullying strategy does not have to be applied. This is a common thread.

Unlike St. Michael's College School, where they took steps to change the culture by commissioning the Sandler Inquiry, Havergal does not wish to deal with this problem and defends itself by vigorously attacking those who seek to expose and remedy the problem.

It is reprehensible when staff and administrators actively further the suffering of the students that they are responsible for protecting, and punish those who stand up for themselves by casting them aside when their suffering becomes inconvenient, as they did with Ms. Doe.

We hope that this action will provide some measure of justice and compensation for Ms. Doe, who has directly had her future derailed by the very institution charged with enriching it.

We also hope to bring about positive change by dismantling the toxic culture at Havergal College responsible for perpetuating and covering-up the bullying of children and young women.