

# A Burning Issue

*After a fire destroyed a block of classrooms during winter break, Saint Mary's High School needed replacements for its overcrowded campus fast. PPI Modular tore down the charred buildings and worked around the clock to build and install six new moduls and a connecting hallway—all in just 21 days. Students and teachers returned to school without missing a beat.*

The good news was teachers and students were on Christmas vacation when vandals set fire to six portable classrooms at Saint Mary's High School in Hamilton, Ontario. The bad news: classes were scheduled to resume in just 21 days. And, with the school already well beyond capacity, nearly 200 students were out a safe and comfortable place to learn.

In all, nearly 5,500 square feet of classrooms and one portable hallway were destroyed that cold December day in Canada. Smoke-damaged desks and charred blackboards were the only evidence that teaching once occurred there.

"I really didn't know what we were going to do," said Henry Laharnar, Technical Supervisor for the Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District School Board. "We needed to find a way to get these students and their teachers back into the classrooms as fast possible and with as little impact to them as possible. I have to admit, I was worried."

## PPI To The Rescue

When the call came through, PPI Modular Structures General Manager Adam Frankland knew the 21-day timeline would be a challenge. But the situation was even worse than he expected.

After surveying the portables, PPI's team of experts quickly realized the smoke and fire damage was irreparable. All six 24- by 32-foot units, as well as the 96-foot stretch of hallway connecting them, would have to be entirely replaced. Nothing could be saved.

"It was a job that should have taken months," Frankland thought. "How can we finish in less than three weeks?"

For starters, he wasted no time worrying. Instead, PPI set aside other projects in order to meet the school's tight deadline. Two teams of carpenters, drywallers, electricians, welders and glazers worked back-to-back, 12-hour shifts constructing the classrooms around-the-clock. The units were pre-built at PPI's 80,000-square-foot covered manufacturing space in an effort to work throughout the dark evening hours and amid icy winter temperatures of 20 degrees below zero.

“We recognized the importance of this assignment and made adjustments for this unfortunate disaster,” said Frankland. “It was hard work, but the reward came when the units were up and running before the kids were back to school.”

The “six-pack” modular set arrived at Saint Mary’s the first week of January. After a seamless three-day “button-up” installation by PPI technicians, the new classrooms were stocked with new books, clean desks and other classroom materials. PPI’s classrooms come pre-finished and include full electrical packages, ceiling systems, insulation, doors and windows, flooring, interior wall finish and roof covering. They also feature sound and temperature control and noise reduction technology.

The units blended in perfectly with the campus and its surroundings and matched the existing portables at the school, Laharnar said. And most importantly, students and teachers never missed a beat.

“What can I say? PPI saved the day!” he said. “This was a really negative situation, but I have nothing but positive things to say about the outcome.”

## A Perfect Fit

The disaster at Saint Mary’s was unfortunate, but teaming with PPI was lucky. Meeting tight deadlines with minimum disruption to school or business is the company’s specialty.

Founded in 1981, Ontario-based PPI builds a broad range of turn-key exterior structures for a variety of schools, medical facilities and commercial businesses across the United States and Canada. Units are available in standard or custom sizes and can be tailored to meet any school’s needs.

In today’s growing environment, schools must be ready for change. But few can afford the tear down, business interruption and expense that comes along with conventional construction. Modular units are a cost-effective and time-saving option. In addition, they are adaptable and can be moved from campus to campus as needs change at various schools within a district.

*For more information about PPI Modular Structures and its many classroom solutions, please call Adam Frankland at 1-800-387-7614.*



**Nearly 5,500 square feet of classroom and hallway were destroyed when vandals set fire to Saint Mary’s High School during winter break. PPI was able to remove and replace the charred buildings in 21 days, allowing students and teachers to return without disruption.**

