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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Halton Catholic Board Announces Selection of Proposed Schools for Full-day Early Learning Program**

At its December 1, 2009 Regular Board Meeting, the Halton Catholic District School Board announced the selection of seven proposed schools for implementation of the first phase of Ontario's recently announced plan for a province-wide full-day early learning program (ELP) for four- and five-year olds, contingent on final approval by the Ministry of Education.

The list of proposed schools for implementation of this new initiative **in the first phase** are: **Our Lady of Fatima and St. Peter Catholic Elementary Schools in Milton; Holy Rosary, St. Patrick and St. John Catholic Elementary Schools in Burlington; and St. Luke and St. James Catholic Elementary Schools in Oakville.**

The list of proposed schools for the second year of implementation (2011-2012) are St. Catherine of Alexandria Catholic Elementary School in Halton Hills and St. Joseph Catholic Elementary School in Acton.

Boards were required to submit a list of proposed schools to the Ministry of Education by November 30, 2009. The Ministry will review the implementation plans in consultation with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and notify boards of the final number of approved spaces as early as possible, concluding by January 15, 2010.

The provincial government will be phasing in the full-day early learning program for junior and senior kindergarten students over a five year period. Although the government has committed \$200 million for the first year of implementation at a limited number of schools across the province, it is not providing any funds in the first year to build or renovate additional kindergarten classrooms. School boards must find schools where classroom space already exists. The Ministry provided school boards with criteria to help select schools for the initial implementation. When deciding where to place full-day kindergarten classes, school boards were asked to consider community needs, the impact on existing child care facilities, where neighbouring school boards implement the program and whether a school may be slated for closure. The individual funding targets established by the Ministry of Education for each school board will determine the rate of implementation of this initiative by the boards over the five-year phase in period.

"What this means for the Halton Catholic District School Board is that given we are still a high growth board, our rate of implementation will be slower and more measured over the five year period," explains Michael W. Pautler, Director of Education. "By fully utilizing the available funding that has been provided by the Ministry for the first year of the phased in implementation of this program, our Board will be able to offer 19 classes across the system, which amounts to 494 students. Our Board has been working very closely with both the Halton Region and the Halton District School Board to co-ordinate our efforts to identify schools that will offer this program in the first year of implementation that will best meet community needs and the criteria established by the Ministry for funding of this initiative."

Registration will take place at the same time as the regular kindergarten early registration that will be held on January 26 and 27, 2010.

"Although this initiative is intended to enrich the learning experience of young children and help them with school readiness," notes Board Chair, Bob Van de Vrande, "the initial phase of its implementation does present challenges for us since only a limited number of our schools will be able to offer it in September, 2010 based on the funding allocation that our Board has received. More schools will be added as we phase this initiative in over time based on the available funding received from the Ministry."

For additional information about the Ministry of Education's Early Learning Program, please visit: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/earlylearning/index.html>.

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