

Message from Paul Pulla Director of Education



Dear Families and Colleagues in Catholic Education,

It is my pleasure to share with you this educational history of the Durham Catholic District School Board (DCDSB). This project has been the collective work of many staff members across our Board who have contributed photos, stories and anecdotes about the growth of our Catholic school system. We are thankful for their efforts in documenting the rich history of Catholic education in Durham Region.

My journey in Catholic education with the Board began when I was a student at John F. Kennedy Catholic School which was later renamed Monsignor Pereyma Catholic Elementary School, and subsequently transformed into the present day Monsignor John Pereyma Catholic Secondary School. My secondary school studies continued at Oshawa Catholic High School later to become the present day Monsignor Paul Dwyer Catholic High School.

As a teacher and administrator in both the elementary and secondary school panels of the Board, I have seen many positive changes in curriculum, best practices, assessment and evaluation, research and pedagogy.

To be part of these transformations has been a wonderful experience and as I read through the pages of our history, I am reminded of the dedicated commitment of many, and the tremendous developments that have enriched our learning programs.

- We currently have 40 elementary schools, eight secondary schools and two Continuing Education sites.
- Our French programs have grown in popularity and in addition to the core French curriculum being taught in all schools, French Immersion and Extended French programs are now available in schools within Oshawa, Whitby, Brooklin, Ajax and Pickering.
- We have successfully implemented and continue to expand the Full Day Kindergarten program throughout our schools, meeting provincial requirements.
- We have introduced instrumental music programs to students at the intermediate level.
- We recognize the benefits of using technology in engaging students and have introduced new interactive learning tools such as SmartBoards, iPads and other technical advancements in the classroom.

Through the passage of time, one thing has remained constant – our commitment to our Catholic Faith which is integrated into everything that we do.

- Our Safe and Caring Schools policies and programs are built upon our Catholic values.
- Our Catholic curriculum, recognized by the Ontario Ministry of Education, integrates Gospel teachings across all subject areas.
- We embrace the Ontario EcoSchools program as we live out our Christian stewardship for the environment, cultivating and caring for the goodness of all God's creation.
- We believe in the dignity of all people and their equality as children of God, fostering an inclusive learning environment for all students from Kindergarten to Grade 12 and into Continuing Education for adults.
- We share a sense of community among families, educators and parishes, connected by faith, inclusion and quality education.

Catholic education affords our students the gift of being formed in body, mind and spirit. I am grateful for the opportunity to have been part of the Catholic school system in Durham Region. Whether you are reading this historical review as a present or former student, staff member, or parent, it is my hope that you will be proud of the accomplishments it reflects. Thank you to our families, parishes and community partners for their ongoing support, dedication and commitment. Thank you also to our valued staff for making every day the best it can be for all students.

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Front row left to right: Anne O’Brien, Superintendent of Education; Tracy Barill, Superintendent of Education; Paul Pulla, Director of Education; Janine Bowyer, Superintendent of Education; Tim Robins, Superintendent of Facilities Services

Acknowledgements

This project which outlines the history of the Durham Catholic District School Board (DCDSB) occurred due to the work of many people.

We would like to thank the DCDSB committee responsible for supporting and approving this project: **Honouring, Celebrating and Envisioning Durham Catholic Schools.**

This committee was also responsible for supporting the production of the **DCDSB Distinguished Alumni** posters, highlighting 30 prominent alumni. These posters were circulated in Durham Catholic schools and parishes in May 2012.

Members of this committee were:

Jim McCafferty, Trustee and Chair of the Board (2012)
Brian O'Sullivan, Superintendent of Education
Lisa True, Religion Consultant
Mark Lacy, Vice-Principal
Dan Gryzwacz, President, OECTA Elementary Unit

Stephanie Mandziuk, Teacher, OECTA Secondary Unit
Paul Pulla, Director of Education
Dominic Pullano, Adult Faith Animator
Mary Kay Boase, Principal
Denise Colterman-Fox, Chaplain
Fr. Charles Forget, Pastor, St. Leo's, Brooklin

We would also like to thank the many principals, vice-principals and school staff in each school who composed their local school history and provided interesting anecdotes and photos to this board-wide history. We would like to thank the volunteer editors who spent many hours working on this project, reviewing these school submissions, namely:

Liz Beckstead, Senior Administrative Assistant, DCDSB Board Office
Mary Kay Boase, Principal
Mark Lacy, Vice Principal
Denise Colterman-Fox, Chaplain

Finally we would like to thank Anne Louise Mahoney, our professional editor for her work reviewing all of the histories in the manuscript and directing editorial changes.

This history is drawn from many sources, namely parish and school anniversary histories commissioned over the years, materials provided by historical staff from several religious orders and a number of previous histories that were useful in this publication:

- *Jubilee Volume: The Archdiocese of Toronto 1842-1892*. Toronto: George T. Dixon, 1892.
- *Reflections in Time: Catholic Education in Durham Region: 1969-1994*. Oshawa, DCDSB, 1994\
- Betty McDonald & Liz Spratt, *The Durham Catholic District School Board: Celebrating Our Faith Journey 1969-2010 (research paper)*

We thank the collective efforts of so many people responsible for the latest history of the Durham Catholic District School Board.

Brian O'Sullivan, Superintendent of Education
Chair, **Honouring, Celebrating and Envisioning Durham Catholic Schools Committee** (April 2013)

Introduction: Catholic Education In Durham Region and Ontario

The first school in Ontario was a Catholic school set up in the winter of 1669-1670 on Frenchman's Bay in Pickering by Sulpician missionaries, Fenelon and Trouve who taught the children of the Seneca peoples. However, there was little European settlement in Durham region for almost another century and a half. Instead, Catholic churches and schools were built to the west in York (Toronto) and to the east in Kingston.

In 1841, legislation was introduced to permit the establishment of religious "separate" schools financed by the government. This included Catholic or Protestant schools "separate" from the common public school system. In 1843, it also allowed these schools to employ teachers of the same faith to teach in these schools. Edgerton Ryerson who was considered the founder of Ontario's public school system, opposed such separate schools and wanted only one common school system for Ontario. However, Bishop Armand de Charbonnel of Toronto encouraged the Catholic settlers to establish and support distinctively Catholic schools.

Catholic immigration to the region included Irish settlers in the area who built the first Catholic church in Oshawa in 1842 (St. Gregory the Great). The focus of other Catholic settlement at the time was in the "Brock mission" in the Beaverton/ Vroomanton area further north. Until this time, the area was served by travelling priests from Cobourg and St. Paul's (Toronto). Catholics living in Oshawa and Whitby did have resident priests (Fathers Fitzpatrick, Nightingale and Smith) from 1843-1848 but in August 1848, Father Jean Baptiste Proulx was given responsibility to oversee the entire Ontario County.

Fr. Proulx was an impressive leader who had worked with the First Nations people in the northern parts of the diocese. He had ministered to Irish refugees in the typhus sheds of Toronto and he was the uncle of Chief Justice Lacoste of Quebec. Under his leadership for the next 12 years, he built churches across Durham, namely, St. Joseph at Highland Creek, St. Wilfrid's in Pickering (1849), St. Francis de Sales Pickering (1860), enlarged St. Gregory's Church in Oshawa (1852), purchased land in Whitby for a future church and provided a convent for the St. Joseph Sisters in Oshawa (1860). Fr. Proulx was also responsible for building Oshawa's first Catholic school in 1855. His successor, Fr. Eugene O'Keefe, is credited with establishing the first Catholic school in Whitby.

The separate school system continued and was further enhanced in 1863 by the "Scott Act" which supported separate schools up to the Fifth class which we call today Grade

10. This allowed the Catholic school trustees all the rights and privileges of those in the public schools and allowed Catholic schools a share of the Common School Fund provided by the Canadian government. When Confederation occurred several years later, our constitution, the British North American Act of 1867, protected such denominational (religious-based) separate schools in Section 93. Under Section 93 of the Act all the educational rights held by religious minorities at the time of Confederation would be secured “constitutionally thereafter”.

In the late nineteenth century, Catholic schools were constantly underfunded due to their small tax base, their lack of ability to share in the business tax assessment, and having limited access to a very small share of government school funds. Catholic immigrants arrived in Ontario in large numbers from the 1890s up until World War I, coming from areas as culturally diverse as Italy, Ruthenia (Ukraine), Hungary, Poland, Lithuania, Malta, Lebanon, Ireland, Scotland and England. Ontario grew quickly to become a major industrial urban province, and with immigration, new demands were placed on the education system to establish government financed Catholic high schools.

This case for government funded Catholic secondary schools led to the Tiny Township court case from 1926-1928 , reflecting Catholic Ontarians desire for a fully funded Catholic school system. The Catholic school board in this rural area of Ontario wanted to run their own Catholic high schools, to fully direct their municipal taxes to support their high schools and to receive provincial grants to operate Catholic high schools. This case was carefully watched by both supporters and opponents of Catholic education because of the impact it would have on Catholic education in Ontario. The case was heard in London, England at the highest court of appeal in the British Empire – the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. It’s decision offered a mixed decision on the high school issue: Catholics due to the pre-Confederation precedents and the subsequent development of the “fifth book” continuation classes had just claims to funding for Grades nine and ten; but it was decided that Catholics had no constitutional right to funding high schools-- although the Ontario provincial government was at liberty to grant it, if it so desired.

Realizing that full funding for Catholic high schools had to become a political movement, Catholics established a province-wide body, the Ontario Catholic Taxpayers Association to lobby the Ontario government to support full funding for Ontario Catholic schools. It proposed that it be legally mandated that corporations direct their taxes to support Catholic schools, that education funding be on the basis of numbers of students taught by their system and that Catholic schools also have access to public utilities tax.

Groups hostile to Catholic education were widespread and strongly opposed further funding to Catholic education. Nonetheless, the Ontario Catholic Taxpayers Association was successful in supporting the election Premier Mitch Hepburn and he subsequently passed a 1936 Tax Assessment Act that required corporations to direct their share of the tax revenue to Catholic schools based on the percentage of Catholic assessment in their community (however, separate schools continued to be denied access to public utility taxes). This piece of legislation was politically unpopular to opponents of Catholic schools and the process of overseeing the portion of revenue due to the Catholic school system proved difficult to determine. In 1937 Hepburn's bill was withdrawn. To compensate for the repeal some increase in provincial grants was given to Catholic schools.

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, Catholic schools in Ontario experienced serious economic challenges. Given the fragile nature of provincial funding and given the economic depression of the 1930s it is not surprising that only two Catholic schools were built in the inter-war years, namely St. Bernard (Whitby) 1923 and Holy Cross (Oshawa) in 1938. There were no Catholic high schools built in Durham Region at all.

In the Toronto Archdiocese during World War II, a major fundraiser was required to keep existing Catholic high schools open. If it wasn't for the dedicated religious orders such as the Basilian Fathers, the Christian Brothers, the St. Joseph Sisters and the Loretto Sisters who essentially ran the Catholic high schools at their own expense, the system might have disappeared. Wealthy Toronto Catholic businessmen, such as Senator Frank O'Connor (founder of Laura Secord Chocolates) were known to contribute generously from their own funds to support Catholic education during this time. However, in Durham Region, which lacked a wealthy Catholic business community, Catholic high schools were not established until the 1960s.

Renewed immigration from Europe after World War II, and the natural increase in Ontario's baby boom, placed increased demands on Ontario's Catholic schools. A decline in religious orders and the increase of lay teachers placed additional financial burdens on Catholic school boards that were already desperately trying to finance their school facilities and programs.

This Ontario post-war boom occurred across Durham Region too. In the 1950s, there was an unprecedented building boom as new schools were established in Pickering at St. Mary (1952); in Uxbridge at St. John Training School (1957) and St. Joseph (1958); in Ajax at St. Francis de Sales (1953) and St. Bernadette (1951); in Whitby at the present St. John the Evangelist (1955), St. Theresa (1957), and St. Paul, (1959); and in

Oshawa at St. Christopher (1956), Msgr. Coffey (1959), St. Gertrude (1954) and St. Joseph (1958).

This boom in school construction in Durham was even more pronounced in the 1960s. This growth was also assisted in 1964 when provincial school grants were issued to Catholic school boards to provide similar educational funding as public schools in their community. However, it should be pointed out that this unprecedented growth was not coordinated on a regional basis. There was not a regional Catholic board of education at the time and the responsibility for this growth fell upon individual Catholic school boards located in the municipalities of Pickering, Ajax, Whitby, Uxbridge, Mara and Oshawa.

In the early 1960s two new high schools were established St. Joseph Catholic School (run by the Sisters of St. Joseph) and Archbishop Denis O'Connor (run by the Grey Sisters of the Immaculate Conception). Credit is also due to the Felician Sisters who worked in the region at this time teaching in Durham's elementary schools.¹ The funding of these high schools counted on generosity from the community (such as the annual student D'OC walk-a-thon) or surprising acts of generosity, such as a \$10,000 cheque given by Col.R.S. McLaughlin to the St. Joseph Sisters to purchase musical instruments for St. Joseph High School.

In the 1960s, growth was particularly focused in Oshawa with a new school opening almost every year namely, Fr. Francis Mahoney (1963), John F. Kennedy (1964), Sir Albert Love (1965), St. Thomas Aquinas (1965), St. Michael (1966), St. Philip the Apostle (1968), and John XXIII (1969). Elsewhere, schools were built in Pickering at Holy Redeemer (1962) and Our Lady of the Bay (1969) and in Brooklin at St. Leo's (1964).

In 1969, all Ontario boards of education were permitted to amalgamate into larger boards that would have more access to funding and be more efficient. In 1969, the Ontario County Roman Catholic Separate School Board was created, amalgamating Catholic school boards in Pickering, Ajax, Whitby, Uxbridge, Mara and Oshawa. In addition, some provincial funding was extended to Catholic schools for Grades 9 and 10 in 1970, making Durham's Catholic high schools more financially viable.

This post war boom in Catholic schools did not repeat itself in the 1970s. In that decade only two schools were built – Father Joseph Venini (1970) and Canadian Martyrs (1973)—and both were in Oshawa. That decade, the board was renamed Durham Region Roman Catholic Separate School Board (1974).

However, in the 1980s, political developments in Ottawa and at Queen's Park in Toronto resulted in significant legal and financial changes for Ontario Catholic schools. In 1982, the Canada Act which replaced the BNA Act of 1867, continued to guarantee protection to denominational schools and these rights were included in the new Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In June 1984, Ontario Premier William Davis announced that Ontario high schools would receive full funding each year, beginning with Grade 11 in September 1985. In June 1986, under a new provincial Liberal government of David Peterson, Bill 30 was initiated to provide full funding for Catholic high schools.

Facing opposition from public school boards, public teacher unions and some non-Catholic voters, Premier Peterson's new government was strongly encouraged to test the bill constitutionally before the Ontario and Canadian Supreme Courts. Both courts ruled that the matter was constitutional. The Supreme Court of Canada stated in 1987 that it was within the constitutional jurisdiction of provincial governments to make the laws over matters of education. Thus, funding of Catholic high schools was legal if the Ontario government decided to pursue this policy (a decision rendered many years earlier by the courts as part of the Tiny Township school case).

In Durham Region, these changes, combined with extensive suburban housing growth, supported the establishment of three new Catholic high schools, St. Mary in Pickering (1987), Msgr. John Pereyema in Oshawa (1988) and Fr. Leo Austin in Whitby (1989). There was also impressive growth in the 1980s, especially in elementary schools in Pickering with St. Isaac Jogues (1981), St. Marguerite Bourgeoys, (1983), L'Ecole Catholique Notre Dame de la Jeunesse (1985), St. Monica (1987), St. Anthony Daniel (1987) and in Ajax, St. Jude (1989), St. James (1986). As well, the Immaculate Conception school opened in Port Perry in 1981.

The complete implementation of full funding of Catholic high schools was not accomplished until the 1990s when all educational tax revenue was "pooled" province wide and grants were apportioned based on the *number of students* educated in a board of education. Large suburban housing growth, combined with this new funding formula, made possible the construction of two new Durham Catholic high schools, Notre Dame (Ajax) and All Saints (Whitby), when both opened in 2001.

Likewise, growth in Durham Catholic's elementary schools from the 1990s to the present day (2013) has been especially pronounced in Ajax, Whitby and Brooklin. Since the 1990s, there have been six elementary schools built in Ajax, four schools in Whitby and three schools in Brooklinⁱⁱ.

Concluding Comments

Catholic education in Durham has grown substantially since its humble origins with Sulpician missionaries in 1669 at Frenchman's Bay. Its growth has been the result of the efforts of the combined talents of many community leaders, clergy and lay persons alike, in building the school system today. Much is to its early leaders, like Fr. Proulx, Msgr. Paul Dwyer, Fr. Leo Austin and the leadership and teaching talents of the Sisters of St. Joseph, the Grey Sisters of the Immaculate Conception and the Felician Sisters provided important foundations for Catholic education in Durham Region. As well, Durham's proximity to Toronto and the economic impact of the General Motors auto industry in Oshawa have greatly influenced Durham's suburban growth and its regional Catholic school expansion.

Finally, political and financial reforms, notably the establishment of regional government and full funding for Catholic elementary and secondary schools have provided a sustainable system of revenue to ensure the future success of Catholic education in Durham Region.

The story of Catholic education in Durham is about celebrating its local and national Catholic community. The naming of schools celebrates Canadian Catholic history—with names such as St. Marguerite D'Youville, St. Isaac Jogues, Br. Andre and St. Marguerite Bourgeoys. School names also celebrated local Durham heroes, such as Fr. John Venini, Msgr. Philip Coffey, Father Donald McLellan and Sir Albert Love to name but a few.

This spirit of community between school and parish has also been a part of Durham's history. When burgeoning suburban communities could not immediately establish local churches, schools became local Catholic community centres-- like Holy Redeemer and St. Isaac Jogues – whose schools offered weekend Masses until local churches could be constructed. In northern areas such as Brooklin, Beaverton and Port Perry, it was the efforts of families who petitioned the board of education that eventually led to the establishment of Catholic schools in their neighbourhood.

The Ontario Catholic school system is firmly entrenched in the province, teaching one third of the Ontario student population and employing nearly 40,000 teachers, administrators, support staff and professional workers in its boards. The Durham Catholic District School Board is a partner in that story of Ontario Catholic education. We invite you to read the stories of each school contained in this history and to reflect on the contributions that others have made before us. May their lessons guide Catholic leaders in their work in the years ahead.

ⁱ **Sisters of St. Joseph**, Reverend Mother Francis McCarthy, Sister Aloysius Truite and Sister Mary Rose were teachers and administrators at the first St. Gregory's school in Oshawa in 1858. Others were teachers and administrators at Oshawa schools such as Holy Cross, St. Joseph, St. Getrude's, St. Francis Mahoney School, and St. Joseph High School, Sir Albert Love, St. Thomas Aquinas School, St. Philip's St. Christopher and in St. Michael School. They also were on staff at St. John the Evangelist Catholic School in Whitby. **The Grey Sisters** were invited to Whitby to be teachers and administrators by Fr. Leo Austin in 1959. He had previously worked with their order in Penetanguishene and Midland. The first Grey Sister to serve as principal of St. John the Evangelist Catholic School was Sister Mary Rose Moran and she remained until 1965. Since its beginning in 1962, Archbishop Denis O'Connor High School has had as principals Sister Anna Claire (1962-67), Sister Margaret Mary (Mildred Moyle) (1967-1980), and Sister Mary Goulet (1980).

ⁱⁱ **Ajax Schools** : St. Catherine of Sienna, 1990; St. Patrick, 1991; St. Wilfrid, 1994; Mother Theresa, 1999; Br. Andre, 2005; St. Josephine Bakhita, 2012

Whitby Schools : St. Margeurite d'Youville 1990; St. Mark the Evangelist, 1992; St. Matthew the Evangelist, 1990; St. Luke the Evangelist, 2000

Brooklin Schools : new St. Leo's 1999; St. Bridget, 2004; Blessed Pope John Paul II, 2013

New schools were also constructed in Pickering (St. Elizabeth Seton, 1995), Uxbridge (St. Joseph, 1990), Port Perry (Good Shepherd, 1999), and Oshawa (St. Joseph, 2006; St. John Bosco, 2000).



The official symbol of the Durham Catholic District School Board combines a cross, heart, anchor, and lamp in the following way:

- The **cross, heart, and anchor** represent the theological virtues of FAITH, HOPE, and CHARITY.
- The double "**S**" represents Separate Schools.
- At the base of the double "**S**" is the **lamp of learning**, a symbol from the Greek work "lampien" meaning "torch" and representing a source of INTELLECTUAL or SPIRITUAL LIGHT.