



Ontario Catholic School  
Trustees' Association

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Karen Pitre  
Premier's Special Advisor on Community Hubs

**Re: OCSTA Submission on Community Hubs**

The Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association (OCSTA) appreciates the specific focus and effort being taken by this government to advance the concept of community hubs through consultation and collaboration with school boards and all sectors representing key community partners in Ontario's communities.

Catholic education is rooted in the premise that we are all connected to each other. Our families and the communities in which we live are where we are able to enhance our relationships to each other and deepen our commitment to being caring and responsible human beings. In the heart of thriving communities are our local schools and we believe schools in Ontario can be adapted to enhance the community and the services they need, as long as the experience and concerns of Catholic, public and French school boards are taken into account as community hubs are identified and developed.

As school boards are recognized for their potential as participants in and/or hosts for community hubs, it is important to also recognize their very specific mandate. This mandate significantly and rightfully limits the use of Ministry of Education funding to costs associated with the delivery of education. That said, we believe there is an opportunity to promote community hubs while focusing on our mandate to provide viable, sustainable, and excellent educational programming for students. We look forward to a provincial inter-ministerial examination of a framework for community hubs that can embrace the mandates of potential community hub partners (e.g., education, health services, etc.) and the goals for operating sustainable and safe community hubs throughout Ontario.

**FALL CONSULTATION**

Over the last few months, OCSTA has travelled the province consulting with our member board trustees and staff at 5 regional meetings to discuss a number of topics including "Community Hubs."

This consultation process surfaced the following key themes:

- Meeting Community Needs and Student Programming and Safety
- Partnerships
- Funding Adequacy

Following is a compilation of our members' feedback, according to these key themes.

### **Meeting Community Needs and Student Safety**

- School board facilities should be used in the best interests of the community, when they are not required for school use.
- Community hubs can also offer school boards opportunities to secure space that meets the educational programming needs of students.
- Addressing the needs of the community can attract varied partners and agencies. Student safety and security must be a paramount consideration in both selecting partners and determining access to each service in the hub.
- Daycare and before and after school care are significant needs in many communities. Among the most popular “partnerships” at CDSBs are those involving daycare centres and before and after school services.
- Families appreciate when schools are able to offer a “one stop shop” for key community and social services and well thought out community hubs are fulfilling that need.
- There are examples of community hubs working with faith communities and non-profit groups to address not only more prevalent needs like daycare, but also the nutritional needs of community residents. Some hubs host community gardens and offer access to nutritious food, community dinners, etc.
- School based community hubs can offer convenient locations for valued youth services like Big Brothers, Big Sisters.
- Some remote communities have the need but not the infrastructure (roads, transportation) to help facilitate community access to the services that could be offered in a community hub.

### **Partnerships**

- Community hubs can serve to maintain school assets in the public realm by seeking out viable partnership opportunities with public or private sector partners to make better use of under-utilized space within schools.
- The primary function of a school building is for education purposes and as such, it is important to find partners who complement the board's curriculum offerings and offer programs which are consistent with the board's mandate and values.
- Boards seek community partners that are able to pay the full operating costs associated with occupying space in schools. While some boards are covering community hub operating cost shortfalls, this is not sustainable.
- An important consideration for CDSBs is the selection of reputable licensed child care providers as partners. Establishing a good relationship with providers supports smoother operation of

programs and expansion where space (and funding) is available.

- Successful partnerships can surface opportunities for expanded service delivery that includes among the more popular services: daycare centres, community drop-in centres for youth and young parents, athletic clubs for youth and seniors' centres.
- Good communications with local partners and access to local data helps to identify gaps in services and where community assets are available.
- Some boards have found that active networking with community partners has created opportunities not otherwise apparent.
- It is difficult to create partnerships during ARC proceedings – the work of nurturing potential partnerships needs to begin well in advance of any ARC process.
- For partnerships to be successful, well defined agreements are required. Agreements should clearly outline the responsibilities of all parties.

### **Funding, Infrastructure and Staffing**

- Challenge: requirements for building or modifying space for daycare under the Day Nursery Act often exceeds the resource limitations of many boards.
- Providing school board custodial services in the summer can be a problem as custodians in some regions are required to take most of their vacation in the summer. Many daycare centres/organizations do not have enough funding to pay for custodial services in the summer.
- Coordination between agencies and ministries to create the hub involves significant complexities that may create barriers to implementation and long-term viability.
- The complexity of cost sharing agreements amongst multiple tenants may be a challenge.
- Boards are currently experiencing staffing and financial strains in the managing of properties and tenants in community hubs/facility partnerships.
- Terms of existing collective agreements must be considered with respect to the delivery of services and staffing complements in school based community hubs.
- The challenge for many non-profits is that some are not able to manage the maintenance/carrying costs associated with being in a community hub. In these situations boards often bear the cost and this is not sustainable given the specific education/student achievement mandate of school boards.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Assess the need for local capital resources from an inter-ministerial level to more effectively identify varied uses for empty school buildings that serve the unique needs of each community. For example, based on the changing demographics of a region or municipality, the best use of an empty elementary school, might be to convert it into a nursing or convalescent home, with shared services for the needs of youth.
- Encourage municipal-wide studies of excess building and city green space. Facilitate a protocol that calls for cities, school boards and the province to work together to create long-range plans (5-10 years?) for community hub development.
- In densely populated areas where space is at a premium, city planners, developers and school boards need to work together to design a long-term plan for community use of schools, community hubs and best utilization of school board properties, new development and long-term needs of these communities.
- Establish a provincial working group to examine Reg. 444/98 and its impact on boards. This working group could help to determine how to address board budget pressures arising from this regulation, e.g. how to financially restore boards who are required to sell properties at less than Fair Market Value (FMV).
- Provide resources to build the specific capabilities and strengths needed for Community Hub Managers: Successful hubs report that emerging challenges include management scenarios that exceed the capacity and role of community hub managers.
- Develop a provincial strategy to assist community hubs in identifying and collaborating with “anchor” institutions in communities across Ontario. Anchor institutions (colleges, universities, municipal governments) have significant assets and local mandates that often align with the needs of the community. Anchor institution resources can help to offset costs associated with managing community hubs.
- Create a Community Hubs Partnership In-Service Program for prospective and existing partners to address the need for understanding expectations, partner mandates, student safety priorities, contracts, operation and financial requirements that are all part of partnering in a community hub with school boards.
- Any change to existing disposition of property regulations or any other regulations to facilitate community hubs, must be implemented across all ministries involved.

## CONCLUSION

Making the best use of public resources to more effectively serve the needs of the people in our communities is good for the future of this province. The success of this initiative depends on the spirit of collaboration, appropriate infrastructure and incentives to support that collaboration, and respect for the unique local needs of a region and the insight, values and priorities of the partners involved.

Facilitating school board access to other provincially funded facilities in order to expand/enhance the education experience is something we look forward to exploring as part of this collaborative effort.

As stewards for Catholic education, Catholic school trustees take seriously our role representing the interests and priorities of the parents, students and community residents who rely on and have contributed to the success of Ontario's publicly funded Catholic schools for more than 150 years. Making use of excess space in schools throughout the K-12 education sector for the benefit of the community makes sense and doing so with the experience and guidance of school board leaders of this province, in collaboration with engaged community partners, supports the well-being of all Ontarians.

The Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association sincerely appreciates the opportunity to make this submission to the Community Hubs Framework Advisory Group on behalf of our member boards. Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions.

Yours truly,



Kathy Burtnik  
President  
Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association

*See Appendix for Examples of Community Hubs in Catholic District School Boards across Ontario*

# Appendix

## Examples of Community Hubs/Partnerships in Catholic School Boards Across Ontario

### Toronto CDSB

- The TCDSB is a partner in an **extremely successful community hub-style project** with the City of Toronto and Toronto District School Board, the **Humberwood Centre**, located in North Etobicoke. This facility was completed in 1996 and includes two elementary schools (Holy Child and Humberwood Downs), a public library and a community centre.
- The Board also has two similar projects in the pipeline:
  - **Block 31 (Railway Lands):** The redevelopment of Block 31 in partnership with the TDSB and City of Toronto will consist of the construction of two elementary schools, a City-owned community centre and daycare facility on a multi-use site adjacent to a community park.
  - **Dante Alighieri/Columbus Centre Joint Facility:** The TCDSB and Villa Charities Inc. are partnering to construct a multipurpose educational and cultural arts facility on Lawrence Avenue West. This facility, which will function as an intergenerational community hub, will house a 1,300 pupil place replacement school for Dante Alighieri Academy and a new Columbus Centre.

### Nipissing-Parry Sound CDSB

- The Board has capitalized on Ministry funding for child care during the construction of the newly constructed St. Victor School in Mattawa and the renovation of 2 classrooms to create 38 new child care spaces at Our Lady of Fatima in North Bay.

### Sudbury CDSB

- Sudbury CDSB currently has three English Community Hubs located within the board: St. Charles Elementary – Our Children Our Future, St. Francis – Jubilee Heritage, Pius XII – Maple Tree Preschool.
- The board also had a very successful Aboriginal Hub located in St. David School. This was an integral part of the school community and provided excellent support for children and families. The partnership with the school community was deemed a best practice, as staff from the Hub and the school worked together to provide the required supports.

### Dufferin-Peel CDSB

- 27 childcare centres
- 5 Early Years/Parent-Family Programs
- St. Cecilia E.S./Westervelts Corners P.S. (PDSB): shared library, staff rooms, custodial office, gymnasium, outdoor facilities
- St. Aloysius Gonzaga S.S./City of Mississauga: shared library, gymnasium, change rooms, pool, classrooms, outdoor facilities
- St. Joan of Arc C.S.S./City of Mississauga: shared library, gymnasium
- St. Marcellinus S.S./City of Mississauga: shared library, gymnasium, dance studio, track & field
- Robert F. Hall C.S.S./Town of Caledon: shared library.

- St. Kateri Tekakwitha Catholic Learning Centre: closed and repurposed secondary school which offers continuing education classes, specialized programs and professional learning as well as housing the Librarian/AV staff and ICT staging centre
  - Main uses: Applewood Centre for Adult Learning (ACAL) – Community Partnership involving lease of space; Korean Teacher Training Program; Retreat Program; Centre of Imagination and Creativity; and Visual Arts Centre.
- Blessed Trinity Catholic Centre for Learning: closed and repurposed elementary school which offers programs for the following: Archbishop Romero students (regional school offering alternative programs for secondary school students who require a non-traditional approach to learning); Continuing Education programs; and professional learning for Board staff as well as meeting rooms.
- Brian J. Fleming Catholic Adult Learning Centre: closed and repurposed elementary school which offers Con Ed classes. There is also an ICT training lab Board staff and the gym houses the Board's archives.
- St. Gabriel Adult Learning Centre: closed and repurposed elementary school which offers continuing education classes. It also houses some ICT related functions.
- St. Mary, closed and is currently leased to Fun School (childcare centre).

#### **Durham CDSB**

- Since the implementation of the Full Day Kindergarten (FDK) program the DCDSB has expanded its use of facilities through the opening of the new Before and After School childcare programs and daycare operations.
- The DCDSB actively looks for partnering opportunities associated with underutilized space in its schools and has entered into successful partnerships through this process.
- The Board is in the process of updating its Community Planning and Partnership Policy following the new Ministry guidelines.
- Examples of successful partnerships at the DCDSB completed to date include:
  - Newly created daycare centres
  - Community drop-in centres for young parents
  - Community basketball association
  - Community seniors care centre
  - Hub in DCDSB school in Beaverton – extra school space leased as a seniors' centre

## Halton Catholic District School Board

- Halton CDSB belongs to a region-wide partnership of organizations and agencies serving children and youth called **Our Kids Network (OKN)**.
- OKN is a national leader in sharing research to strengthen communities and improve life for families and children.
  - OKN Mission: to promote healthy development, security and safety of all children, youth and families through collective action, engagement, knowledge mobilization, system navigation and research
- The leaders who form OKN are:
  - ErinOakKids, Centre for Treatment and Development
  - Halton Catholic District School Board
  - Halton District School Board
  - Halton Multicultural Council
  - Halton Regional Police Services
  - Reach Out Centre for Kids
  - The Halton Children's Aid Society
  - The Regional Municipality of Halton
- Neighbourhood-based Hubs
  - Children, youth and families receive support in Halton through 3 neighbourhood-based "Hubs".
  - The **Milton, Aldershot** and **Acton Hubs** provide space and resources for families, schools and the community to work together to support children and youth.
- Acton Hub (McKenzie-Smith Bennett Public School, Acton)
  - A population of 10,000 and growing.
  - Working together since 2008 to connect families, children and youth (prenatal to 18 years) in the community to the services they need.
  - A network of schools, local and regional support agencies, with dedicated staff and volunteers.
  - Schools in the area work with the Hub to develop and run after-school programs, workshops, seminars and summer camps.
- Aldershot Hub (Holy Rosary Catholic School, Burlington)
  - Has become an integral part of the Aldershot community.
  - More than 25 community partners; agencies, faith groups, regional staff and community members work together to provide and improve opportunities for children and their families.
  - Community partners work with Hub coordinator to plan events, introduce new programs and give Aldershot families more access to community resources.
  - Examples of Community Participation:
    - Toys for Tots, through the Halton Regional Police Service program – Aldershot Hub contributes to sending gifts to Aldershot children and youth each Christmas
    - Alderfest – a community building celebration
- Milton Hub (Our Lady of Victory Catholic School, Milton)
  - Located in the Region of Halton, the Town of Milton is experiencing rapid population growth.

- Integrated program partnerships have been formed with community agencies and schools in the West Milton area.
- Examples of Community Participation:
  - Big Brothers Big Sisters Homework Club;
  - ROCK Camp – supporting all campers, including those with high behavioural needs;
  - Backpack program - in partnership with the Crosstowne Church.

## London DCSB

- Jean Vanier Catholic School, City of London (Westmount Family Centre)
  - Services families by offering a single ‘door’ to:
    - Parenting and early learning
    - Early childhood education
    - Public health and wellness
    - Recreation, sports and leisure
- 3 shared facilities – 1 with public school, 1 with community college, 1 with public health and family centre
- Partners paid for their costs
- Part of the ARC process
  - Community uses part of school for community centre (senior groups)
  - Issues of security, close off some sections of school not available to the community
- Attempting to find a match in existing buildings where we have separate clientele can be difficult.
- Attempting to find a match during an Accommodation Review Process is difficult. Needs to be done well in advance.