



## **St. James and St. Thomas school programs to amalgamate**

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, March 23, 2005 . . . . .

Beginning this fall, the Kindergarten to Grade 8 programs at St. James and St. Thomas schools will be amalgamated at St. Thomas School, located in Eastview. This decision was made by the Board of Education for Saskatoon Catholic Schools at a regular board meeting on Tuesday, March 22, following an extensive consultation process involving both school communities. Consultations, which began in December, included the parent community and staff members and also involved joint sessions with both school communities.

“These parent communities understood that there were some challenges around enrollment that needed to be addressed and they rolled up their sleeves to help us find the best solution for their children and for Catholic education in this area of the city,” explained Jim Carriere, Board Chair. “We were very pleased with the commitment parents showed through their involvement in the consultation process, as it was quite extensive. It was an opportunity for trustees and administration to listen, to get to know the communities better and to better understand the educational needs of the students and families in these areas. While decisions such as this are always difficult to make, the school board believes it is the right decision. By congregating more students in the same place, we will be able to enhance their educational opportunities.”

Consultations were undertaken as a result of changing demographics in the neighbourhoods from which the two schools draw students. An aging population base in the neighbourhoods of Nutana Park (east of Cumberland), Holliston, Brevoort Park, Nutana Suburban and Eastview has resulted in decreased enrollments in these school programs over the course of the last few years. An increase in the number of school age children is not expected for the foreseeable future.

The consultation process was based on guiding principles regarding school programs and locations, which were previously established by the Board. The four principles are: access to Catholic education; program excellence; collaborative consultation and relationships; and responsible stewardship of resources.

A number of factors influenced the decision of the board. Consultation feedback indicated that parents believed program amalgamation was the best thing for their children and for Catholic education in the long term and the majority thought St. Thomas was the facility best suited to handle the amalgamated programs. St. Thomas School is almost 8,800 square feet larger than the St. James facility with slightly larger classrooms, a larger gym and recent upgrades to its larger computer lab and resource centre.

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It's anticipated that existing staff at the two schools will be assigned to the amalgamated program, based on programming needs and enrollment. A few staff members may be assigned to other schools.

Program amalgamation is expected to enable the division to reallocate more than \$440,000 annually to instructional programming of the school division.

St. James is a Kindergarten to Grade 8 elementary school located in Nutana Park with more than 200 students and 31 full-time and part-time teachers, service and support staff. St. Thomas is a Kindergarten to Grade 8 elementary school, located in Eastview, with a current enrollment of more than 90 students and 17 full-time and part-time teachers, service and support staff.

Saskatoon Catholic Schools has more than 15,000 students in 41 schools. The division employs approximately 1,600 teaching, service and support staff. The purpose of Saskatoon Catholic Schools is to assist parents and the local church community in the formation of students in heart, mind, body and spirit.

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