



September 7, 2004

Dear Parents and Guardians of St. Ignatius School Students:

I hope that everyone has returned from the summer break refreshed and ready for another school year! September is always a month of excitement, as students return to school to meet old friends, make new ones, and begin a new year filled with the promise of learning and growing in our faith. For parents, it is also a time of reunion – when the school community comes together again. Your support for our students and our schools is what makes Catholic education a true community endeavour.

There will also be challenges in 2004-2005. As you know, our Board continues to confront the very serious issue of declining enrolment across the district. That is why last April, the Board of Trustees voted to begin an accommodation review at St. Ignatius School. A similar review will be conducted at St. Paul School in Thamesville.

The accommodation review process from September 1st to the end of November, is a time of learning and sharing, during which we will look for answers to a number of questions. *What is the future enrolment of the school likely to be? How might programs be affected by a continued decline in enrolment? Could programs be improved and strengthened through a consolidation of the two schools? What might the impact of school consolidation be on the community?* Our staff has already begun preparing reports which will respond to all of these important questions. **But we also need to hear from you.**

It is our hope that your Catholic School Community Council will take a leadership role in this process. You may voice your opinion through your council representatives, or personally at any public meeting of the Board held through September, October and early November. This is your opportunity to make a presentation, ask questions or raise issues and concerns. Whether you support consolidation, or oppose it, the Trustees welcome your views on this important issue.

Of course, there are procedural by-laws which govern delegations and submissions to the Board. Notice of delegations and written presentations must be received by my office one week prior to the meeting, to allow time to be included in the agenda package. The procedural by-laws can be reviewed in full on the Board's website at www.st-clair.net. Click on *Policies and Procedures*, and go to Policy 10.2, subsection 7.5 *Delegations and Submissions* or ask at your school for a printed copy.

A public meeting will also be held in your community, possibly in October, to allow you a further opportunity to ask questions or raise concerns. In addition, specific questions can be forwarded to Todd Lozon, Community Relations Officer at the Catholic Education Centre. Todd will pass them on to the appropriate department for a response. He can be reached at 1-866-336-6139, ext. 243.

An accommodation review for the potential closure or consolidation of a school is a difficult and emotional time. But I believe it can be made easier if we keep in mind our common goals. As parents and as a Catholic school board, we all want what is best for our children and for the future of Catholic education. I know that after honest dialogue and prayer, the decision of the Trustees in November, whatever it may be, will be one which we will all accept and support.

Sincerely,

Margaret Nelson
Director of Education