

HALTON CATHOLIC BOARD WAITS ON FUTURE OF \$900,000 IN PROVINCIAL GRANTS

ANNOUNCED CUTS TOUCH ON INDIGENOUS EDUCATION, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PROGRAMS AND A PROJECT TO HELP DROPOUTS FINISH HIGH SCHOOL

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The province's abrupt cancellation of a swath of school grants will lead to cuts in indigenous education, student leadership opportunities and physical activity programs at Halton's Catholic school board. The provincial cuts were announced Dec. 14 and total \$25 million across Ontario.

Ten board programs will no longer be funded by provincial "Education Projects -- Other" (EPO) grants. They include literacy programs; supports to help students access post-secondary education; a project to help dropouts finish high school; indigenous learning initiatives; physical activity programs; a grant to help students run special events and conferences; and an

equity and inclusion student leadership program.

Halton Catholic District School Board Treasurer Roxana Negoi says board staff is still working to sort out what the cuts will mean at the school level. She says the board receives more than \$1.5 million annually in "additional" grants in recent years, but not all have been cancelled.

Communications officer Amanda Bartucci said, based on what has been communicated from the ministry so far, there will be no job losses as a result. Most of the cancelled programs have already been funded and executed for the last time, meaning the board isn't on the hook for money that has been spent and now won't be paid back.

"There's no financial impact there, per se, but



Ten Halton Catholic District School Board programs will no longer be funded as a result of a provincial government decision to cancel EPO grants.

Riziero Vertolli/Metroland Media

service-wise, there will be an impact," said Negoi in a Dec. 19 phone call.

However, it won't receive \$108,111 for technology and innovation projects that has already been spent.

The province has also indicated that grants around experiential learning, a renewed math strategy and safe schools/mental health are being examined and may be renegotiated. Last year, the

board received nearly \$900,000 for those programs.

The board plans to find other ways to continue some of the cancelled programming, but saving all of it won't be possible.

"There's certain things we've been doing in the schools we will want to continue," said Negoi. "We need to wrap our heads around (all of the details)."

The board expects that

the program to help returning students finish Grade 12 will continue, said Colin McGillicuddy, Superintendent of Education, School Services.

"The funding amount is small and we defray costs through the Thomas Merton Centre for Continuing Education that we would otherwise cover ourselves," he said in a Dec. 20 email, noting the program serves about 120 students.

Student trustee Stephanie Mazza says she and her peers feel upset that they weren't consulted, and uneasy about what the cuts could mean for school programming.

"Stakeholders should be involved in any major decisions," she said Dec. 20. "There's so many different groups of students who will be affected... The wellbeing of our generation as a whole has been compromised."

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