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Catholic school board ushers in new programs

While Tuesday marked the first day of classes at the Halton Catholic District School Board, it also ushered in the continued development of various initiatives and programs.

These included the expansion of the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP), English-as-a-Second Language, Students At Risk, Autism (Pervasive Development Disorder/Autism Spectrum Disorders), Gifted Education and Literacy/Numeracy.

"As we begin a new school year, we continue to pursue our goal of providing the best in Catholic education to those we serve in Halton," said Education Director Lou Piovesan.

"Our system is committed to maintaining and promoting its distinctive mission in publicly-funded education with a budget that continues to emphasize the effective use of available funding to support school improvement planning in terms of student achievement in literacy and numeracy initiatives, special education, including programs for identified intellectually gifted students, as well as in the arts."

This year's budget provides for an increase in classroom spending of 6.9 per cent, allowing the board to introduce new curriculum texts and resources for a variety of programs from kindergarten to grade

12.

Each system goal is aligned and focused on improving student achievement with an approach that is inclusive and sensitive to the needs of all of the board's partners in Catholic education, Mr. Piovesan explained.

"Another highlight for this school year is the provision of a new program for Primary Class Size Reduction as was announced by the Ministry of Education this past spring," Mr. Piovesan continued. "The Halton Catholic District School Board continues to recognize the importance of student learning in the early years."

This program will be the first step in implementing the government's cap of 20:1 on primary (junior kindergarten to grade 3) classes.

Autism centre opens

This month, the board has also opened the ASD/DD (Autism Spectrum Disorder/Developmentally Delayed) Transition Centre at St. Patrick Catholic Elementary School in Burlington. This is the first centre of its kind in Ontario that has been created to support school staff as they work with students who have been identified with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Enriched training, assessment and resources will be available to

support ASD/DD students, who are part of the inclusive model in all of the board's Catholic schools.

The new \$8.8 million Guardian Angels Catholic Elementary School in Milton, with a 596 student capacity, opened its doors to students Tuesday.

The school's blessing and dedication ceremony is scheduled for October 7.

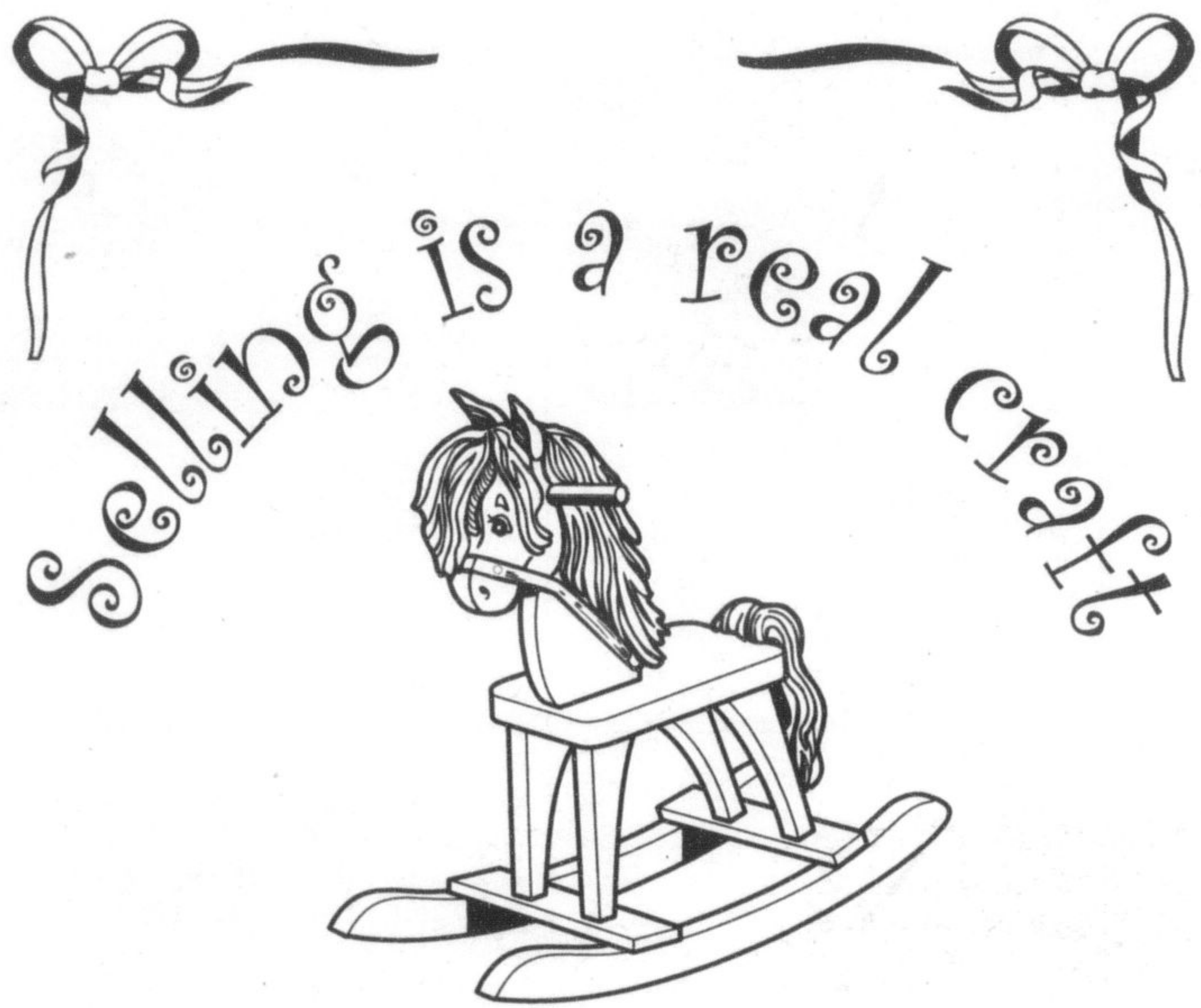
Holy Rosary School in Milton will celebrate its 50th anniversary this school year.

As Halton Catholic students returned to school for the new 2004-05 year, the board reported an overall growth in enrolment of approximately 450 students.

The projected enrolment figures indicate that 26,900 students (18,534 elementary and 8,366 secondary) returned to the board's 36 elementary and seven secondary schools on opening day, compared to 26,457 last year.

The board employs 2,066 teaching staff (1,097 elementary, 626 secondary and 343 occasional) and 817 non-teaching staff. The total number of new teachers hired to date for this year is 131 (88 elementary and 43 secondary).

Visit the board's Web site at www.hcdsb.org to find relevant information on board issues and links to individual school pages.



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