

## Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board Breaks Ground at new St. Mary's Site



Courtesy of Sault Star | May 23, 2013

Shannon O'Brien was excited and a bit sad Wednesday as officials held a ground-breaking ceremony at the new St. Mary's College site.

O'Brien, a Grade 11 student who donned a Knights mascot costume for official photos, will have graduated by the time the building is scheduled to open in the fall of 2015, replacing the current St. Mary's College and St. Basil Secondary School.

"I'm sad I won't be able to go back and visit (the old school) in a couple of years," O'Brien said.

But she said she feels some anticipation too, even if it's on behalf of her sister Helene, who is in Grade 6.

"She knows how much spirit both of our schools have," said O'Brien.

The ground has been cleared at the site of the new \$47-million school, which will also replace Holy Angels Learning Centre, and construction is expected to get underway in earnest this summer once a tendering process is complete.

John Stadnyk, Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board director of education, said he was satisfied when he came out to the 20-acre hilltop site on the weekend to look around.

"Panoramic views, aesthetics – it's all good," said Stadnyk.

With final design work done, plans for the school are now with the Ministry of Education which must approve them before construction goes out to tender. With a roughly six-week tender process, Stadnyk said the board hopes to see work begin in July.

"The plan has evolved and has come to the point that it has been submitted," said Stadnyk.

The total cost of the project, with land acquisition costs, is \$51 million.

MPP David Oraziotti praised the board for a "thoughtful and thorough" capital plan proposal that led the provincial government to approve funding for the site, which he noted was the most substantial of the school projects announced in the 2011 budget.

He said the new school will be state of the art.

"We know what the research says about that – that it translates into better learning environments for students and better outcomes, which is important," said Oraziotti.

Design details revealed by the board so far indicate the new school's focal point will be a commons area stretching 40-feet high, and providing "breathtaking views" visible from all three levels of the school. Students will also have access to key areas such as the library, cafeteria, gymnasium and auditorium.

The school will feature a new 500-seat Theatre SMC and a centrally-located cafeteria that can be expanded for events open to the general public.

Outside, a sports complex will include a playing field for football and soccer, a six-lane track, second practice field and various training centres for field events.

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