

## Ceremony officially opens two new schools designed by +VG Architects



By Michelle Ruby, Brantford Expositor

The City's two newest elementary schools, which share a building on Blackburn Drive, held official opening ceremonies this week. Most Rev. Douglas Crosby, Bishop of Hamilton Diocese, Blessed St. Basil's Catholic Elementary School at its opening celebration on Wednesday.

On the other side of the \$15-million joint facility, Walter Gretzky Elementary School officially opened on Thursday evening. Walter Gretzky, with a group of family members in tow, was part of the celebration.

"I am honoured and humbled that this school is named after me," said Gretzky. "If my parents were alive today they would be over whelmed because this honour would not have been bestowed upon a commoner where they come from. But here in Canada we are all equal and special." The new schools have been open since January when students transferred from overcrowded Ryerson Heights and St. Gabriel schools.

The new 90,000 Ft<sup>2</sup> facility has room for growth. Each school is designed to eventually house about 450 students. There are plans to construct another 1,900 homes in southwest Brantford over the next few years.



All Photography CHRISTOPHER SMITH, The Expositor, QMI, Agency



The schools share a foyer, gym and library. It has been more than 20 years since the Grand Erie District School Board and the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board opened their first shared facility on Brantwood Park Road. The Branlyn

Community Complex houses both Branlyn Community School and Notre Dame Catholic School. Tracey Austin, Manager of Communications for the Catholic School Board, said St. Basil's is equipped with fibre optics and has Smart boards, video monitors and computers in each classroom.

The Gretzky school is also state-of-the-art. Gretzky offered some advice to the students gathered in the audience Thursday.

"Mrs. Gretzky and I always stressed to our five children the importance of an education. You can never lose an education or have it taken away from you once you get it."

**+VG Architects** is a full-service architectural firm offering new design, expansions and heritage restorations for cultural, educational, municipal, justice, healthcare, residential and recreational facilities. Our staff of **+50** operates in five offices in Ontario, in Brantford, Kitchener, Toronto, London and Belleville.

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