

## School board receives its largest donation for Woodend living campus

By Erica Bajer QMI Agency

ST. CATHARINES — Niagara's public school board has received its biggest donation ever to support the development of its Woodend living campus.

The Walker family of Walker Industries donated \$500,000 for the project, which will see the Woodend environmental centre transformed into a living campus where students can interact with nature and learn about conservation.

District School Board of Niagara education director Warren Hoshizaki said the donation doubles the amount already raised for the project, which has a fundraising goal of \$1.75 million.

"This way exceeds every donation that we've ever had that I know of," he said, noting that includes money raised for other programs. He said the gift will benefit students in Niagara for generations.

"It's a commitment that will last a long time. It's a legacy for Niagara," Hoshizaki said.

"It'll serve students in outdoor education, in the environment, for many, many years."

A Walker family spokesperson was not available for comment Thursday.

Kevin Graham, a special initiative facilitator for the board, said the family now has naming rights for the living campus, which will be an interpretive centre with programming for both elementary and high school students.

"The living campus is a tool to show kids how we can build and be environmentally friendly," he said.

The facility, which includes the existing Thompson House, will also have a school house and gathering place, he said. The buildings will be environmentally friendly with water harvesting, white roofs and limited lighting, he added.

Graham said the Walker family's donation offers much-needed funding for the living campus and also boosts its profile in the community.

Hoshizaki said the school board is grateful for the Walkers' support.

"We can't thank them enough," he said.

He said the living campus, located on the escarpment in the Woodend Conservation Area, is a place where students can connect with nature in the Carolinian forest.

"It recognizes the importance of the environment, sustainability and helping kids understand the world we live in," he said, noting aspects of the curriculum will be incorporated into the learning. Hoshizaki said the facility will also be used by the community.

Graham said a fundraising gala Thursday night was aimed at raising another \$100,000 for the project.

Construction on the new building is slated to start in late spring. For more information visit [www.dsbni.org/woodend](http://www.dsbni.org/woodend)