

# NEWS RELEASE

## Wilfrid Laurier University



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### **Wilfrid Laurier University celebrates 20 years as public institution**

*Waterloo (June 21)* — Wilfrid Laurier University will celebrate 20 years as a public university on Friday, June 25. It was on June 23, 1973, that the Ontario legislature passed the Wilfrid Laurier University Act establishing the institution as Ontario's 15th public university.

- Twenty individuals who played a key role in the transition from Waterloo Lutheran University or who have made a significant contribution to the university since will be honored as Twentieth Anniversary Fellows at a luncheon. (noon)

- They will participate in a sod turning ceremony for the science building. (3:15 p.m.)

- Faculty, staff, and students will share in a 32-square-foot anniversary cake at a reception. (4 p.m.)

- The family of the late Paul Martin Sr., who was chancellor of the university from 1972 to 1978 and who was conferred with an honorary degree in 1967, will present a portrait of him to the university. (11:30 a.m.)

- The Robert Langen Gallery will feature a historical display of university posters and photographs. (until July 5)

"Laurier has achieved a rare success in maintaining its sense of community while taking its place as a respected Canadian university," says president Lorna Marsden.

Over the 20 years, the institution has evolved from one with 2,800 full- and 7,000 part-time students, 142 full-time faculty, 125,000 volumes in its library, and an operating budget of \$8 million, to one with about 5,880 full- and 4,800 part-time students, 280 full-time faculty, 1.4 million items in its library collection, and a budget of \$59.2 million. Waterloo Lutheran Seminary is a federated college of the university.

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Praised in 1973 as a "highly creative contribution to the educational life of the province," Laurier has earned a reputation for the excellence of its teaching and research. It ranks third in the province for the percentage of Ontario Scholars it attracts. The university offers two doctoral and eight master's programs, and has seven research centres.

Its program innovations include Ontario's largest co-operative education program for business and economics students, internships for arts and science students, one of only four music therapy programs in Canada, and a pioneering distance education program with students in 12 countries and on-site instruction in Trinidad and Tobago.

Many of those employed by the university during the transition are still at Laurier including 69 professors, 50 staff members, and four librarians. Twenty-two professors emeriti were on the faculty at the time.

In 1969 Waterloo Lutheran University, governed by the Eastern Canada Synod of the Lutheran Church in America, sought provincial status to secure full operating grants and protect the quality of education it offered. Recent changes to federal funding had left WLU with only 50 per cent of the operating grants available to public universities and ineligible for capital grants. By 1972, the institution — with a history of good stewardship — was projecting a \$100,000 deficit for the following year.

In 1973, both the government and the church gave their approval to an agreement on financial and other terms, including a name change to eliminate religious references and community representation on the university's board. The Wilfrid Laurier University Act came into effect Nov. 1, 1973.

The name — the top choice in polls conducted among the public, students, and alumni — honors Canada's seventh prime minister who believed in the multicultural nature of the country and proudly asserted that the 20th century belongs to Canada.