

NEWS RELEASE

Wilfrid Laurier University



Laurier board of governors approves faculty of social work move *University will purchase and renovate St. Jerome's high school for occupancy in fall 2006*

For Immediate Release

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**Contact: Dr. Robert G. Rosehart
President and Vice-Chancellor
(519) 884-0710 ext. 2250**

**or Luke Fusco
Dean, Faculty of Social Work
(519) 884-0710 ext. 2315**

WATERLOO – Wilfrid Laurier University will relocate its faculty of social work to downtown Kitchener. At a meeting this afternoon, the university's board of governors granted the final approval needed to move the faculty by September 2006.

“We are very pleased that the board members have granted the approvals required for this project to go forward,” said Laurier president and vice-chancellor, Bob Rosehart. “A great deal of consultation, both within the faculty of social work and in the community, indicates that this is a great opportunity for Laurier and for Kitchener.”

The faculty of social work will relocate approximately 250 graduate students, many of them moving to Waterloo region with families, into the downtown. Approximately 53 full- and part-time staff and faculty will also move from the Waterloo campus to St. Jerome's.

The new facilities move social work out into the community it serves and will provide additional space needed for current programs to evolve. It will help social work expand its research capabilities and professional development courses.

“The main thing we get out of this arrangement is an increase in space and all the programming benefits that space will allow,” said Luke Fusco, dean of the faculty of social work. “One possibility we've been discussing is the addition of one or two programs with an aboriginal focus for, say, 30 mature students. We could never consider something like that with our current space restrictions.”

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Laurier is purchasing the historic St. Jerome’s high school building on Duke Street at a cost of \$900,000; \$1.25 million when real estate fees and adjustments are included. The building will require just over \$5 million in renovations.

The City of Kitchener has already agreed to contribute up to \$6.5-million to the project. That amount will cover the purchase costs and provide a \$5 million loan, forgivable over 10 years, for the renovations.

“This is a very exciting time in the evolution of downtown Kitchener,” said Kitchener Mayor Carl Zehr. “Our partnership with Laurier will bring numerous economic and social benefits – including the preservation and restoration of one of the core’s prominent historic buildings. Through the success of projects like this, we will shape the future of downtown Kitchener and achieve our vision of making it a place for people. On behalf of council, and the entire community, I would like to officially welcome Laurier’s faculty of social work to the neighbourhood.”

The city will also support a \$3-million fund-raising campaign. A third of the money raised will help furnish and equip the Kitchener campus, one third will help defray additional operating costs and the final third will go towards an academic development fund for the faculty of social work.

The opening of a new campus builds upon Laurier’s successful experience with its campus in Brantford, known as Laurier Brantford. The university community is excited about the potential that a major Kitchener campus affords for future development of Laurier.