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MAY 20, 2015 | 098-15

Laurier will continue to pursue Milton campus

WATERLOO – Wilfrid Laurier University is disappointed that its proposal to create a campus in the Town of Milton did not receive approval through the major capital expansion process established by the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU). Laurier has an outstanding record of achievement in developing vibrant campus communities that provide exceptional opportunities for learning and community engagement. Consequently, the university remains committed to the important goal of bringing post-secondary education to the Milton community, and it will continue to work with its public and private-sector partners to prepare for future opportunities to secure provincial approval for a campus in Milton.

“It is a profound disappointment for the university and for the community partners with whom we have worked very hard over the past seven years,” said Max Blouw, president and vice-chancellor of Wilfrid Laurier University. “Our proposal aligned with all the key requirements and objectives set out by the province, and it provided an innovative and responsible approach to satisfying the growing need for higher education in Milton, Halton Region and the Greater Toronto Area.”

The Laurier Milton bid proposed a 150-acre deep-green university campus situated within a 400-acre Milton Education Village (MEV) on the southwest side of town, adjacent to the protected Niagara Escarpment greenbelt. The overall MEV, to be developed by municipal and private-sector partners, would be a purpose-built, fully integrated neighborhood of multi-level education, research and commercialization, as well as complementary residential and commercial development.

Through the MTCU’s major capital expansion process, Laurier had sought approval for the initial phase of campus planning and development. The decision to not fund the proposal at this time means:

Lost opportunity: The Town of Milton’s willingness to donate 150 acres of land valued at \$50 million for campus development cannot be mobilized at this time, which is a lost opportunity for the community, the region, the university and the province.

Velodrome: Plans for the university to support a national centre of excellence in cycling and to share use of the new \$56-million Milton velodrome, built for this summer’s Pan Am/Parapan Am games, means that an excellent opportunity for cost-sharing and long-term facility-use efficiencies will be postponed indefinitely.

Educational need: As the fastest-growing community in Canada, Milton is both hungry for, and deserving of, the kind of high-quality, locally located post-secondary education that helps residents achieve their personal development goals and career aspirations. A full-service campus in the community would fuel economic growth and diversification by creating opportunities for the business community and the university to form research and educational partnerships.

Partnerships: The broad-based co-operation that has gone into developing the Laurier Milton proposal is a model for public-private partnerships. All parties — including the town, the region, the university, and private enterprises — have worked together with the highest integrity to develop a detailed and forward-looking plan that meets community and provincial objectives.

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The province's decision to not approve the Laurier Milton proposal at this time comes as a profound surprise and disappointment to all who have worked on this project. Wilfrid Laurier University will immediately confer with its partners to develop a strategy that will ensure it is ready for the next opportunity to seek provincial approval for a Laurier campus in Milton.

About Laurier

Wilfrid Laurier University is a leading Canadian university known for academic excellence and a culture that inspires lives of leadership and purpose. Laurier has a distinct commitment to teaching, research and scholarship, combined with a strong student focus, high levels of student satisfaction and a deep sense of community. Laurier's innovative educational model purposefully integrates the academic learning experience with an experiential learning component. The university has more than 19,000 students throughout its campuses in Waterloo and Brantford and locations in Kitchener and Toronto. For more information, visit www.wlu.ca