

EDUCATION

College centre drive gets big boost

By Penticton Herald Staff
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The Okanagan College Foundation has received the largest donation since fundraising began for its share of the \$28-million centre of excellence building at Okanagan College in Penticton.

RBC contributed \$135,000 toward the Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Building Technologies and Renewable Energy Conservation.

The college foundation is responsible for collecting \$5 million to pay for its share of the facility, with the remaining \$23 million coming from the provincial and federal governments. To date, the fundraising campaign has collected about \$800,000.

"It is exciting to be a part of such a unique and inspiring project," said Karen Borring-Olsen, regional vice-president for Royal Bank. "RBC is pleased to join the growing network of community-minded donors, both citizens and corporations, who share a vision for education, innovation and sustainable growth in the Okanagan."

Kathy Butler, executive director of the foundation, said that previous to the RBC donation, it had received substantial amounts from two corporations and an individual, with each of those totals hovering around the \$100,000 mark.

"It's showing some momentum now as we start to see some of these larger gifts coming in," said Butler.

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"There's some more commitments anticipated in the next couple of months that we hope to be able to announce," she said.

The new facility is set for completion by March 2011. So, with a little more than one year to go, the foundation is about one-fifth the way to the target. Butler said officials are optimistic they will reach \$5 million by that time.

Since the new facility was announced last April, the fundraising campaign has focused on securing larger donations by allowing those making them to have a five-year window to complete their obligation to the project.

"That's a very important aspect to our campaign," Butler said. "It gives individuals and large companies making those large gifts the opportunity to spread that over time."

John Walker, president and CEO for Fortis and chair for the foundation's capital campaign, said it is fortunate to partner with organizations that understand the importance of the new building for the Okanagan.

Brian Hughes, a member of the college's board of governors, said many people at the college are working hard to ensure the positive results that are happening in the South Okanagan.

The donation announcement was made during Olympic torch relay festivities Monday in Kelowna.

The 6,600-square-metre structure is being recognized as one of the most innovative and environmentally sustainable buildings in the nation. It will more than double the size of the existing campus, and will expand program and research opportunities for people across the region.

To learn more about the centre of excellence, including making donations, visit www.okanagan.bc.ca/centreofexcellence.