

City gives college a break on expansion

By SCOTT TRUDEAU

Penticton Herald
Copyright

Okanagan College will be able to offset building permit costs for its expansion project with help from the City of Penticton.

City council approved a \$267,000 grant towards building permit fees and adopted a bylaw enabling the college to apply for a reduction in development cost charges that could amount to savings of \$160,000.

The decisions were made to assist the college in its fundraising efforts for the Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Building Technologies and Renewable Energy Conservation facility at the Duncan Avenue campus.

Provincial and federal governments are contributing \$23 million towards the \$28-million total cost, and the OK College Foundation is fundraising for the remaining amount.

Donna Lomas, the college's regional dean for the South Okanagan-Similkameen, applauded the move.

"We're thrilled that the city has done what it's done in a really tough budget year," said Lomas. "We certainly appreciate it, and it shows, I think, vision and it shows commitment."

"I know that the mayor and council have been behind the project since it was announced, but the follow-through on the gift and also the ability to apply for the refund on the DCC is just fantastic. It really helps us along with our goal."

Mayor Dan Ashton said the college is an important economic engine for the community and the entire region.

"Having a state-of-the-art educational institution like Okanagan College and their leading-edge green initiatives and technology showcases this campus and community to the world," he said.

The foundation's fundraising campaign, which has collected about \$800,000 to date, is tracking nicely.

"We're in the phase right now where we are very much focusing on large corporations, as well as high-profile companies and individuals who have been supportive of the college and are wanting to be on the program," said Lomas.

She said that although it may appear the fundraising efforts are moving at half speed, "work is happening behind the scenes" and donors will decide when they would like to announce their contributions.

The foundation received its largest donation in January, when RBC gave \$135,000.

More donations are expected towards the end of March, said Lomas.

"There will continue to be this very targeted campaign," she said, noting it is encouraging members of the public to help out.

"It's going to be critical for all of us in the South Okanagan-Similkameen in particular to get behind the project."

**Foundation
must raise
\$5M towards
construction
of \$28-M
Centre of
Excellence**