

Public shares views on Community Learning Campus

January 7, 2005 – Nearly 150 people braved a severe winter storm to attend last night's public meeting and hear the vision for a Community Learning Campus (CLC) in Olds.

Among the audience in the Olds high school gym were school teachers, college instructors, Olds residents and political representatives from Mountain View County, Town of Olds, and Chinook's Edge School Division. The vast majority in attendance, however, were parents who were keen to see how a Community Learning Campus will impact their children.

"I think tonight's process of getting public input is a good one and I'm pleased with the opportunity to be heard," said local resident Colleen Sturrock, whose two children currently attend Olds Elementary School. Mrs. Sturrock took her schooling in Chinook's Edge School Division, as well, and is also an Olds College graduate.

"I had some misgivings, but when I saw the direction the steering committee is heading and the powerful vision they have I completely changed my view. I think this is a wonderful opportunity for people in this community and the CLC will provide huge benefits to our children. This concept will hook a lot of reluctant students and it will inspire the dedicated students. I feel that this project is in good hands."

The meeting opened with presentations from Tom Christensen (Olds High School Principal), Dot Negropontes (Assistant Superintendent of Chinook's Edge School Division), Rob Mackenzie (Olds College Vice-President of Student and Support Services), and Craig Webber (Project Architect, Group 2 Architecture Engineering Interior Design). After outlining the project's history and vision, audience members were invited to participate in small group discussions to rank what they felt were the most important opportunities presented by the proposed CLC, as well as what they felt were the most critical challenges.

Central Alberta residents showed excitement about a number of opportunities including the core vision of the proposal, specifically the concept of a seamless transition for high school students into the workplace, apprenticeship or into post-secondary education. Participants were pleased with greater access for learners to a variety of courses and curriculum, and felt learners will benefit from programs which are designed to be

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engaging and focused on individual interests. A number of comments were made regarding the benefit of having a more diverse educational experience. Also highlighted were opportunities such as an increase in community services, including a community theatre, access to new technology, and apprenticeship programs.

“We heard people tell us how excited they are about the opportunities for learners and for the entire community,” said Negroptes. “We were also listening to the challenges that were outlined and we will include these comments in our planning process.”

Craig Webber, Project Architect, Group 2 Architecture Engineering and Design said, “The strength of having a public meeting is gaining a thorough understanding of the needs, expectations, and desires of the community. Comments from the public meeting allow us to move forward with planning in a responsive way.”

Participants felt one challenge is the size of the project. Both the uniqueness of the facility and its programs are so significant, participants felt it would be important to ensure that the project goals, objectives and values were clearly communicated to everyone. Also, those in attendance expressed concern about peer pressure and social challenges, as well as safety and security for high school students on the Olds College campus.

Each of the concerns raised has already been acknowledged and studied in detail by members of the steering committee. The Community Learning Campus is comprised of representatives from Olds College, Chinook’s Edge School Division and Olds High School. Further information and public input sessions are planned to continue addressing opportunities and challenges, along with providing updates on the project’s overall progress. Dates include:

- Invited Workshop #1 – January 13
- Invited Workshop #2 – January 27/28
- Parent Council – January 31
- Invited Workshop #3 – first week of February
- Public Open House – February 24
- Parent Council – February 28

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