

Muslim Society of Guelph buys Community Christian School

GUELPH — The Muslim Society of Guelph's long search for larger worship space has ended with the purchase of the Guelph Community Christian School on Water Street.

Muslim Society president Muhammed Sayyed said they plan to move in when the Christian school moves out. That's expected to happen by September as the Christian school purchased the former College Avenue Public School last year and is well into renovations.

"We're quite relieved," Sayyed said Monday afternoon. "We looked at the school last April and I talked again to Bob (Community Christian School principal Bob Moore) when they showed interest in the old College Avenue school.

"For us, it is ideal. It's not too big, not too small, it's not a huge investment, and we don't have to move a brick. There's a lot of parking and it's 11 times the space from what we have today."

Sayyed said their current location at 44 Marlborough St. will soon go up for sale but they'll keep the historic church on Norwich Street they purchased three years ago, and continue to operate from two locations.

Friday prayers get the biggest turnout, Sayyed said, sometimes upward of 150 people come to the service. That posed parking issues on Marlborough Street until Parkview Church offered the use of their parking lot.

"Now we're looking forward to how the future unfolds for us here," he said.

Moore said renovations at the College Avenue school site are moving along on schedule. They are reconfiguring the interior so the office and staff room are closer together to create a large lobby area where parents can congregate, and are building a performance stage where change rooms used to be.

"Music is a big deal in our school so the stage is important," he said.

With the school site came a parcel of land that fronts onto Lynwood Place. Moore said they will sever that lot and sell it, which will help cover the purchase price and renovation costs at the school.

"Between selling this building (the Water Street school) and the property on Lynwood, it's in the million dollar range," Moore said, adding renovations at College Avenue school are anticipated to ring in at \$2 million.

Moore said the school's capital campaign has collected \$3 million in pledges toward the \$3.5 million goal.

"It's a big relief to be taking this step," he said. "This helps us plan our cash flow.

"And we're happy this building is going to a community group that supports cultural activity."

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