

The Hill Academy moving to a new location near Alton

Written By BRIAN LOCKHART

The Hill Academy is moving to a new location in Caledon.

The private school is an independent school geared for dedicated student athletes with a focus on hockey and lacrosse.

Currently the campus is located in Kleinburg.

The new location will be at the former SGI Canada Caledon Centre for Culture and Education near Alton, a property that once included the home of famed Canadian tenor Jon Vickers.

The Hill Academy was founded in 2006 by Peter Merrill, sons Patrick and Brodie, who both have had high-level careers in lacrosse, and sister Tory Merrill is the women's lacrosse coach at the School.

They are a local Orangeville-area family.

Many graduates of the school go on to play sports at the university level both in Canada and in the U.S. and some go on to professional sports careers.

The new location is a former place for religious studies and is located on 134 acres of forested land that includes Orpen Lake.

It will offer students new gym facilities, running and hiking trails, a turf field, and a large student boarding complex. They will have access to off-site rink facilities.

The school started as a small enterprise in Hockley Valley but after one year moved to Kleinburg to gain more visibility and attract students from more populated areas.

"As we grew, we transitioned over to the Vaughan Sports Village where we've been for just over 10 years now," explained The Hill Academy president, Patrick Merrill. "Over the past five years we've been at capacity there and didn't have the opportunity to grow. We've always had the dream of having a beautiful rural campus and a true private school-type campus setup. We were searching for the last five years to find that. We found a property that is a perfect fit for us, close to our roots and close to where we grew up and where the school started. It seemed almost serendipitous, like it was almost meant to be. It's a big move and big step for us. We eventually want to add up to 400 students and add other sports and add a junior school program. This property will allow us to do all those things."

The existing buildings at the new property were very well maintained and the layout is already of school-type design.

"We will renovate some parts of the property and add athletic facilities as soon as possible," Mr. Merrill explained. "The existing buildings, with some minor renovations are definitely buildings we will incorporate into the campus both short-term and long-term. The main building is a beautiful 45,000 square foot building that includes a wing of hotel-style dorm rooms which is good for us because we can now attract student athletes from all around the world. That main building will also include between 15 and 20 classrooms, as well as a cafeteria and training centre."

There are several other smaller buildings on the location that will be used as a residence and administrative offices.

The Hill Academy is wasting no time in moving to the new location.

They plan to begin the 2020 school year on the new property.