

## Early gift for college

By ANTHONY DIXON

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Algonquin College found a big cheque in its Christmas stocking on Thursday.

At the Algonquin staff Christmas get-together held in The Landing at the Algonquin campus, BMO-Bank of Montreal announced a \$35,000 gift to the college's capital fundraising campaign to build a new Ottawa Valley campus on the Pembroke waterfront.

"BMO is a proud supporter of the new building campaign for Algonquin College," said Doug Law, BMO area manager. "This is something that is going to be of tremendous benefit both for Pembroke and for the local area, but more importantly this is something that is going to have an ongoing benefit socially and economically as we go forward for decades to come."

He praised the work that has gone on so far in the capital campaign and the other individuals, businesses and organizations that have shown their support. He added that BMO is proud to show its support as well.

Karen Davies, dean of the Pembroke campus, said that about four years ago, a group from the college met with BMO to discuss ways of raising money for the new campus. Continuing, she said it is a very complex process for the bank to donate such an amount to a community endeavour.

"I want to give them a really huge round of applause, because they hung in there. They broke down the bureaucratic system and they said this has to be done in Pembroke and they made it happen.

"The Bank of Montreal is our corporate bank for the college so they have been great partners all along. Thank you so much for having the foresight to fight alongside us to make this happen. Thank you. This is a wonderful Christmas present for the college," Ms. Davies said.

She added that since the day the college announced it was forging onwards to build a new campus, "...we have spoken to the college's willingness to be a partner in generating new opportunities for Pembroke's historic downtown. Many of our banks are located along the city's main street, and BMO's support of our new campus development is an indication that they have identified the importance of this project to the entire region and in particular, to Pembroke's downtown," she said.

Ellen Bennett, BMO Pembroke branch manager, said she is looking forward to the college's expansion as it will be able to graduate even more skilled workers into the community. "We are really looking forward to all of the great additions to this community that the college will bring," Ms. Bennett said.



In a written statement, Mark Huckabone, capital campaign chairman, congratulated the bank for its leadership gift and encouraged other financial institutions to come on board. "The holiday season is a wonderful time to give and the building of a new college campus will benefit everyone in our community, including the banking sector. We hope all of our local financial institutions will step forward to support this wonderful initiative that will pay dividends for many years to come," he stated."

Renaissance Square, as the new campus on Pembroke's waterfront has been dubbed, is estimated at \$36 million to construct. It is scheduled to break ground in April 2011 and to be completed by fall 2012. Over the past year, there have been several pledges to support the community capital campaign to raise \$2.5 million towards the new campus.

According to Jamie Bramburger, Algonquin's manager of community and student affairs, the community has raised, so far, \$1.6 million in support of the project. "We are doing very well," Mr. Bramburger said.

The new campus will be located along the waterfront, west of the amphitheatre. Algonquin College's campus in the Ottawa Valley has existed for more than 40 years, making postsecondary education accessible to people of all ages in the area. In the beginning, the college primarily served the Ottawa Valley and the Pontiac, but in recent years, with expanded program opportunities, the number of out-of-town students studying at the campus has greatly increased.

The college has simply outgrown its current confines. Current enrollment at the college is 856 full-time students. The new facility, once constructed, will be able to accommodate at least 1,100 full-time students.

The new campus is expected to provide additional post-secondary learning opportunities and apprenticeship programs, enhanced learning experiences for students with leading-edge classrooms, labs, recreational facilities, and green space, help with the revitalization of downtown Pembroke, attract more students, and create additional jobs.

*Anthony Dixon is a Daily Observer reporter*