

College Announces Date to Break Ground

Algonquin College is targeting April 1, 2011 as the day construction will begin on its new \$36 million campus, Renaissance Square, at the Pembroke waterfront.

While the college did not receive grants in the latest round of federal or provincial economic stimulus funding, the college's board of governors has committed the funding required to begin construction, Algonquin College president Robert Gillett announced Friday.

"We are building this campus," Mr. Gillett told a breakfast gathering of community supporters and business leaders. "Let there be no confusion on the future of the Pembroke campus. In April of 2011, Algonquin College will break ground on a brand new waterfront campus."

With the current location unable to accommodate expanded student enrolment or programs, the proposed 91,000 square-foot campus will be designed to house state-of-the-art learning environments for skilled trades, health care and hospitality education, and will create a minimum of 300 new full-time spaces which will bring the enrolment to 1,000 students.

Construction could begin as early as next year depending on funding, however, Mr. Gillett said their ultimate aim is to have the campus occupied by September, 2012.

"We want to get this done as soon as we can, but we want to make sure we are building for the future," Mr. Gillett said, adding the facility would be flexible in its design to handle the attachment of residences and a proposed marine technology program.



Photo: President Gillett, left, presents a bulldozer to Mayor Ed Jacyno with the words "April 2011", the date the College will break ground for its new campus.

"This is really the beginning for the Pembroke campus. You're going to have your new campus. It is going to be beautiful. It will be something you will be proud of."

The location of the new campus, along Pembroke's waterfront, will be the catalyst for economic growth and development in the area, especially in the downtown core, Mr. Gillett predicted. "The downtown area needs rejuvenation," he said. "Bringing a thousand people will make a huge difference."

The college has been conducting its own capital campaign with the goal of raising \$2.5 million in community contributions. However, the college has been unable to secure funding for Pembroke although Mr. Gillett did acknowledge the federal contributions of \$35 million for the Ottawa campus and \$5 million for the Perth campus, which had 32 months of life left after a roof collapse.

"We've been given no assurances of funding," he said. "All we can do is keep advocating for the project because it is too important."

In a statement, Karen Davies, Dean of Algonquin's Pembroke campus, said she welcomed the good news. "Today's announcement is a tribute to the efforts of the community support received to date," said Ms. Davies, who was out of town. "With more than \$1.3 million in pledges, we are halfway to our goal of raising \$2.5 million in community contributions and ensuring our Renfrew and Pontiac Counties have the skilled workforce required for future success."

...more story and photos follow

The limited space in the nearly 100-year-old facility has required the college to put enrolment caps on high-demand programs. The college contends that with the new campus there will be increased access to post-secondary education for rural residents, short-and long-term job creation, and an increase in tourism potential. Mr. Gillett pointed out that Algonquin College's three campuses receive 40,000 applications a year, but can accept only 9,000. Among those applicants are students from other countries who seek Canadian accreditation.

The president acknowledged the efforts of board member Fred Blackstein and the board of governors for their support of the project. He also thanked Pembroke city council for dedicating land for the campus, as well as the support from municipal leaders, area businesses and organizations.

From an article by Sean Chase of the Daily Observer; article ID# 1601387, June 6, 2009.



President Bob Gillett also acknowledged Fred Blackstein (at podium), and other members of Algonquin College's Board of Governors for their support of the new Pembroke Campus. The president also presented Lt. Col. Bill Moore of CFB Petawawa with a Certificate of Appreciation from the College for all his efforts on the Capital Campaign Committee these past two years.

A number of local politicians were also present at the meeting and offered their support of the new campus as well. (Photos by Jane Hebert of Algonquin College)

