

# Algonquin receives boost from students

**By Debbi Christinck**  
*Staff Writer*

**Pembroke --** The proposed Renaissance Square project for Algonquin College received a huge moral and financial boost with the pledge of \$4 million from the student association.

"The possibilities with the proposed new campus are really limitless," said Rob Nettleton, the student body association president. "It is opening up dreams and inspiring students."

So much so the students are willing to provide funding to make the \$32 million project a reality. The funding would come from student association fees and be provided through a loan, he explained.

"The students pay activity fees into the system and there is money reserved for that," he said. "This loan will be paid off though the activities fees."

Having a gym and a large activity centre for students will make a difference in enabling students to have the same type of college experience in Pembroke as their peers do in other parts of the province, he said.

"We receive a great edu-

cation here, but there isn't the space we need for activities," he said.

Originally from Marmora, Mr. Nettleton is studying professional writing at the campus and said students are very excited about the new proposed campus. Renaissance Square, on the waterfront in Pembroke, would accommodate an additional 300 students.

"We have been asking for sports and fitness facilities, so this is really students helping students," he said.

Manager of Community and Student Affairs Jamie Bramburger was equally enthusiastic about the funding announcement. Although the college expansion project has received a lot of support, final approvals have still not been obtained. This type of commitment from the students is a major boost, he said.

"This proposed project is not a done deal but this is a major step forward for us," he said. "People have partnered with us to make this possible."

Along with representatives from the college, other supporters were present including Pembroke Mayor

Ed Jacyno, Renfrew County Warden Janice Visneskie and Renfrew Mayor Sandi Heins.

The Dean of Algonquin College in the Ottawa Valley, Karen Davies, said this type of support from the student association is significant.

"There is no clearer example of the importance of this project to our student body than the multi-million dollar commitment being made by the students association," she said.

Algonquin College has accomplished a lot in four decades in the Valley, she said.

"Imagine the possibilities a new campus would bring to the Ottawa Valley," she added.

Raymonde Hanson, vice-president Academic, Algonquin College was present at the announcement and said the students deserve praise for supporting this expansion.

"Our expansion plans are focused on providing more access to post-secondary education to help meet the skilled labour challenges that are now facing Eastern Ontario," she said. "For

the City of Pembroke, the new campus would help revitalize the downtown and generate more tourism potential for all of Renfrew County."

It is important for the community to continue to advocate for this project, she added.

Although the college has been looking at expansion plans for many years, this dream seems a lot closer following an endorsement by the board of governors in December. The board of governors gives planning direction and oversees all aspects of the college, so having this endorsement is tremendous. The board unanimously endorsed a plan to build a new Ottawa Valley campus in downtown Pembroke, and since then there has been a flurry of activity including preparing proposals for various provincial ministries for funding. The project, known as Renaissance Square, would be an 80,000 square foot campus near Pembroke's waterfront, adjacent to the city's downtown.

The location would be just west of the amphitheatre in downtown Pembroke. This

14.2 acre parcel is used by the city as a snow dump right now but negotiations are underway to use this land.

The projected cost of the facility is \$32 million, and would allow the Pembroke Campus to expand to accommodate just over 1,000 full-time and apprenticeship students. This funding would primarily come from the province through various ministries.

College officials feel that in addition to creating dozens of construction jobs, once it is built the new campus would place over one 1,000 people in the downtown area daily, generating new business opportunities and creating a critical mass of people to support the existing downtown retail and service sector.

Enrollment at Algonquin College in the Ottawa Valley hit an all-time high last fall with more than 735 full-time, apprenticeship and college preparation students studying at the campus. The new facility, when operational, would increase enrollments by over 300 full-time students annually.



Rob Nettleton of the Algonquin College Students' Association