

Expansion plans for Seneca's King Campus move forward

By Mark Pavilons

The Seneca College King Campus expansion project is moving full steam ahead.

It involves the design and construction of new academic and extracurricular facilities that will allow Seneca to increase the range of programs offered and provide space for an additional 1,450 students. Once complete, Seneca's King Campus will provide teaching and learning opportunities for more than 5,000 full-time students.

"I've got a shovel," said an enthusiastic King Mayor Steve Pellegrini.

The project has been three years in the making and it comes as good news for the municipality. Seneca is the largest single employer in King Township and the economic benefit will be huge.

Seneca is also a great community partner, Pellegrini observed, allowing use of their soccer fields. The college is well integrated into the community.

The mayor said it's a great institution that needs facilities that match it.

This is one of the largest revitalization and expansion projects in Seneca's history.

It was featured in last week's provincial budget as one of the key postsecondary expansion projects in Ontario. Despite the fact Ontarians are gearing up for a June 12 election, the college and Infrastructure Ontario have jointly issued a request for qualifications (RFQ) to pre-qualify companies to design, build and finance the first phase of the campus expansion.

"This project will allow Seneca to continue to meet the needs of our students while expanding the programs we offer at this key location in northern York Region," said David Agnew, president of Seneca College.

Responding to the growing demand for post-secondary education, the first phase will revitalize the campus by modernizing current facilities and building more space for students while expanding the college's programming in health and community services, pathways and natural environment and sustainability.

The number of full-time students at King Campus will grow by 1,450 to a total of more than 5,000. The project includes:

• A new academic building with approximately 25 new classrooms, computer labs, specialty labs for training health care practitioners, library, learning commons and student study space.

• A new student centre including a multi-purpose athletic and recreation space with a gymnasium, fitness centre, informal study areas and event spaces, partially funded by the Seneca Student Federation and the Student Athletic Association.

• Upgrades to Garriock Hall – the main existing academic building – and to existing site services.

Animal health, social services, policing and public safety, nursing and recreational studies are among the programs offered at King Campus, the former Eaton family estate, located on 282 hectares (700 acres) that include a lake, forested areas and fields within the Oak Ridges Moraine. Stewardship of these natural areas will continue to be a priority for the college.

In June 2011 the province announced an investment of \$43 million to support the project. The college, the Seneca Student Federation, and the Student Athletic Association are also contributing to the project.

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