

Opening their wallets for new campus

Generosity of businesses and individuals surpass million-dollar mark

Posted By **TINA PEPLINSKIE, STAFF WRITER**

The capital campaign for Algonquin College's new vision Renaissance Square has exceeded \$1 million in pledges.

Capital campaign chairman Mark Huckabone provided the update during a town hall meeting in the Algonquin College in the Ottawa Valley cafeteria yesterday.

The pledge includes contributions from local individuals and businesses. The committee also has additional commitments in the works but they are yet to be finalized, according to Mr. Huckabone.

Since the campaign kicked off in March, members of the fundraising committee have been busy calling people they know trying to secure donations.

"The difficult part is getting people to meet with you, but when you tell them about Algonquin College and what this will mean to the community it's not a tough sell," he said.

The \$2.5-million capital campaign is one step in the process towards the \$32-million dream of a state-of-the-art facility along Pembroke's waterfront adjacent to the city's downtown core.

Algonquin College has requested \$26 million in provincial government funding. Before the province commits the funding, however, the community must first show its support for the project.

"There is nothing more real for the government than people opening their wallets," said college president Bob Gillett. "This is not idle talk from the community and the parties are committed to making this happen. This will go a long way to making a case with the government."

With current college enrolment an all-time high hitting 715 full-time students studying at the campus, the 100-year-old building, which now houses the college, has been outgrown.

The new campus would provide a number of benefits including expanded access to full-time post-secondary and apprenticeship programs; enhanced learning experiences for students with leading-edge classrooms, labs, recreational facilities, and green space; and a revitalized downtown Pembroke with new business opportunities, which will strengthen the local economy.

Because of limited space at its present location, the college has had to turn students away at a time when the community needs skilled workers, said Mr. Gillett.

The new facility will allow the Ottawa Valley campus to grow to at least 1,000 students.

"A new campus is necessary to meet the government's access and capacity agenda and address the region's work force and training demands," he added. "This new campus proposal will help ensure we have the appropriate facilities, equipment and personnel to accommodate the growing demand for our programs."

Aside from the capital campaign, the Algonquin Students' Association has also pledged \$4 million towards the college expansion project. Fees collected from the students will go towards financing the donation, which will likely fund a fitness area and students lounges explained Students' Association president Rob Nettleton.

"We are hoping to help out any way we can to benefit the students," he added.

Anyone interested in making a contribution to the capital campaign is encouraged to call Algonquin College.