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Schools submit proposals to attract Toronto students

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Trent University, well known for its leafy, riverside setting, has plans to set up shop in the shadow of Toronto skyscrapers as a partner with George Brown College in its new waterfront campus.

The Toronto beachhead, which would build upon the \$190-million project announced by George Brown earlier this month near the foot of Jarvis Street, could see as many as 2,500 students taking Trent courses in Toronto and another 2,500 enrolled in programs offered jointly by the university and college.

Trent president Bonnie Patterson is pitching the plan - which she estimates would require \$200-million in capital investment - as part of the solution to the growing need for additional university space in the Toronto area. The joint proposal by the two schools would offer Toronto students another option, she said, and at the same time would get Trent's name front and centre on the city's landscape - a tactic she hopes will encourage more city dwellers to enroll in the university's main campus in Peterborough, Ont.

"This will help us build that identity. I think really the [Greater Toronto Area] is important to every university," she said.

Indeed, tapping into the expected rise in demand for a university education from Toronto-area students is a key ambition for many schools around the province. Increased immigration to Canada's largest city, plus the growing popularity of a university degree, will require the creation of between 40,000 and 75,000 new undergraduate spaces, government forecasts say, with the first signs of the bulge hitting by the time this fall's Grade 9 students graduate.

All this will happen at a time when other areas of the province and most parts of the country are expected to see their university-aged population decline, a fact that has led to several proposals for Toronto-area campuses from schools outside the city.

Waterloo's Wilfrid Laurier University is considering adding a location in Milton, Ont., west of Toronto, that could rival its main campus in size. And Thunder Bay's Lakehead University has opened a campus north of Toronto, in Orillia. Toronto's existing universities also are considering partnerships to meet enrolment pressure, and some colleges have aspirations to expand their mandates and offer more four-year degrees.

The provincial government is about to examine postsecondary capital plans as part of its infrastructure planning this fall.

George Brown president Anne Sado said talks

between the two schools grew out of a desire to expand the college's nursing program and also to respond to the need for more undergraduate spots in Toronto.

Preliminary talks with the province have been positive, she said, although no commitment to this second phase of development has been made by any level of government. The Ontario government is giving \$61-million to the first phase of the lakefront development. Two more buildings are planned for the second phase.

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