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George Brown to get new waterfront campus; Site to open in 2011 for health-science students, with \$90-million main building and \$100-million residence and athletic centre

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A new college campus at the water's edge, announced yesterday by Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty, is seen as the key to unlock the potential of Toronto's long-dormant east-end waterfront.

The \$190-million complex for George Brown College - with \$61-million pledged by the Premier - is the biggest expansion in the 40-year history of the downtown school.

But the new campus, expected to open in the fall of 2011 to health-science students, is significant for the boost it gives to revitalizing publicly owned land in East Bayfront, a 22-hectare site south of Queen's Quay between Jarvis and Parliament Streets.

"The vision of the waterfront is not just a collection of condominiums," said Toronto Mayor David Miller, a member of the board of Waterfront Toronto, the public agency of the city, province and federal government spearheading waterfront renewal. "It is a real, vibrant, thriving economic zone in the city. None of that could happen, at its best, without an education institution."

For the McGuinty government, the waterfront project is a tool to help repair the province's sagging economy.

This year's provincial budget earmarked \$2.5-billion in one-time funding for infrastructure projects and skills training, including for workers who have lost their jobs in the manufacturing sector.

Mr. McGuinty said the George Brown project will help the province build on its greatest strength - the skills and education of Ontarians - and generate 880 construction jobs.

Speaking to an audience seated under a canopy at the future site of the college, the Premier said there was comfort to be found in the proximity to Lake Ontario.

"That suits this announcement just fine," he said. "We could use a little comfort in the face of strong economic winds that are blowing across North America."

The project is one of what is expected to be a series of postsecondary capital projects in line for funding under a new provincial infrastructure plan.

Ontario colleges and universities have been asked to submit proposals to the province for consideration as

part of a 10-year, \$60-billion initiative, said a source familiar with the process. Those proposals are being reviewed in light of the government's emphasis on growth through innovation, the source added.

For fast-growing George Brown, the new \$90-million campus for up to 4,000 students and an adjacent \$100-million building for student housing and an athletic centre would be only 10 minutes away from its main site on King Street East.

"It is opportunistic," college president Anne Sado said of the deal, a proposed 99-year lease of city land that is expected to win council approval in September. "We are landlocked and we don't have any space to grow."

In addition to the provincial funds, the college has earmarked \$15-million and expects to do fundraising for the remaining \$14-million for the campus. The \$100-million residence and athletic centre is expected to involve private investors.

Waterfront Toronto has other projects under way in East Bay Front.

Immediately east of the new campus, a \$130-million office complex is under construction for the headquarters of Corus Entertainment, with 1,000 jobs.

"We're saying to the development community, 'Come on in, you are not pioneers,'" said John Campbell, CEO of Waterfront Toronto, which has been in talks with George Brown for two years. "There will be an established community here."

Students living and studying at the water's edge will bring vitality year-round to the waterfront, said Ontario Energy and Infrastructure Minister George Smitherman, whose downtown riding includes the new campus.

"Lots of people talk about waterfront in the context of parks, but we know that in our environment you are not always drawn to the water's edge by the weather."

In the works

A George Brown College waterfront campus, announced yesterday, is part of a \$3-billion redevelopment of the 22-hectare East Bayfront

district. Other Waterfront Toronto projects:

First Waterfront Place, 2010: A \$130-million office complex for the headquarters of Corus Entertainment, Jarvis Street and Queen's Quay.

Partners sought: The agency is seeking private-sector partners for two parcels of publicly owned land between Sherbourne and Parliament Streets, south of Queen's Quay. It would be developed for residential and commercial uses, between 2012-18.

Sherbourne Park: A 1.5-hectare park north and south of Queen's Quay, 2010.

Sugar Beach: A \$4-million park at the Jarvis Street slip.

Development : 6,000 housing units and 230,000 square metres of commercial and employment space, over the next decade.

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