

\$32m campus plan for Stoney Creek

By Rob Faulkner
The Hamilton Spectator
(Jun 22, 2006)

Mohawk College calls its \$32-million plan to transform its Stoney Creek campus into a skilled trades mecca a "legacy project" for all of Hamilton.

With the looming shortage of skilled trades workers in mind, the college plans to double its skilled trades enrolment at the campus to 1,020 students, and boost apprenticeships 35 per cent to 3,571 students.

The college applied to the Hamilton Future Fund for \$2.1 million to offset costs of a mega-plan to add buildings, parking, a new student centre, a library and more near Barton and Dewitt.

That application offers the first glimpse at the detailed plans to turn the Stoney Creek campus into the Skilled Trades and Apprenticeship Research, Resources and Training (STARRT) Institute.

"When you look at our community and employment, you understand the need to have college diploma graduates and skilled trades workers," president MaryLynn West-Moynes said. Already home to trades training, the expansion would turn that campus into a 7.5-hectare hub with new facilities totalling 8,178 square metres to teach 1,500 additional students.

The plan for the site, which now fills about 234,000 square metres, including removing three portables while a two-storey STARRT centre with main entrance and a two-storey automotive complex are built.

Phase 1, to open fall 2007, will add new classrooms and labs, a corporate training centre, a renovated student services centre, and an awareness centre promoting trades and apprentices.

The larger Phase 2, to open fall 2009, will consolidate all automotive programs at the Stoney Creek campus.

"If we want young people to believe us that apprenticeship is a valued occupation and career in Ontario, our facilities have to match that," said Cheryl Jensen, executive dean of engineering technology. "And we treat them as second-class citizens here."

Jensen said in recent years Mohawk has grown apprenticeships 18 per cent but has crammed them into existing buildings. She said that Mohawk is Ontario's largest producer of apprentices, at 3,000 a year.

She said the Stoney Creek campus also needs to increase its visibility. Plans call for a feature entrance at the STARRT centre facing Barton east of Leaside Avenue instead of the current low-rise, nondescript frontage.

Mohawk has hired an architect and construction of the \$12.5-million phase one may start in October. New space to open in fall 2007 will serve an additional 1,000 students and apprenticeships.

Mohawk now has about 10,000 students and 3,000 apprentices, but the college hopes STARRT can boost this to 12,000 students and 4,000 apprentices.

For Phase 1, Mohawk already has \$2.15 million from the province and \$1 million from Dofasco. It plans to use about \$7.1 million from reserves and fundraising. It leaves \$2.15 million in its request to the Hamilton Future Fund.

That fund, created with money from the incorporation of Hamilton Hydro, has a mandate to grant requests for "legacy" projects that benefit the city's economic, social and community life.

After passing the committee's first review, West-Moynes said she expects the fund to issue a decision in July. She's upbeat about Mohawk's chances.

But if it's turned down, college spokesperson Ron Holgerson said more fundraising could fill the gap for phase one. Mohawk already bought .7 hectare of adjacent land.

"We feel confident we'll be able to do Phase 1," he said. "But the second phase (worth \$19.6 million) would very much depend on provincial, federal and municipal money," he said, noting Mohawk won't ask the city for more than the current \$2.15 million request.

Holgerson says the Stoney Creek expansion has benefits beyond post-secondary ones.

"Given the fact that poverty is high ... apprenticeship may offer opportunities, although it hasn't been marketed and celebrated as much as it might be," Holgerson said.

Mohawk says the centre will stoke economic development in the greater Golden Horseshoe region, increase education for hands-on learners, integrate immigrants and more.

Mohawk's plans estimate the \$32 million plan would consist of 38 per cent from Ontario, 25 per cent from Canada or a mortgage, 6.7 per cent from the future fund, and 30 per cent from Dofasco, reserves and fundraising.