

RIPPED INTO THE 21st CENTURY

Georgian College's Georgian Centre for Health and Wellness



Anyone driving along Highway 400 through Barrie lately has likely noticed a huge project rising up from the ground in front of Georgian College.

The 165,000-square-foot building, to be named the Georgian Centre for Health and Wellness, is the college's largest construction project to date. Outside labour began last summer and fall with infrastructure work on

the sanitary sewers, water, gas, tree removal and feeding a new transformer. The building has a small basement area for services and mechanical units.

Many employees at the college have had both a ground-level and a bird's eye view of the structure from their office windows and marveled at how fast the steel structure went up over the winter months. The main

contractor for the initial stage was Bondfield Construction of Toronto and the steelworker firm was Linesteel, from Barrie. This April, a 92-foot pedestrian bridge was erected which will connect the new building to the Administration Centre.

In May, work commenced on the envelope of the building, parking lots, roads and landscaping. The building is to be substantially complete by March 31, 2011 and ready for the fall semester.

The building will facilitate a collaborative, interprofessional, team-based approach to health sciences education and will include leading-edge laboratories and technology-enhanced classrooms. Teaching health clinics will provide valuable work experience to students while offering much-needed health care for students and the public. And, it will put Georgian College at the forefront in addressing serious challenges in the growing shortage of skilled health care workers in our region.

Enrolment in Georgian's Health Sciences programs has skyrocketed over the past 10 years. The centre will create a total of 3,000 new student spaces.

The Georgian Centre for Health and Wellness received federal and provincial funding totalling \$40 million through the Knowledge Infrastructure Program and Ontario's 2009 Budget. Other funding (\$10.5 million) comes through municipal, corporate and personal contributions



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to Georgian's Power of Education fundraising campaign.

The view out the window for Georgian College employees will change quickly over the summer months, says John Labrie, director, Physical Resources.

"Once the walls go up, they're going to get a real feel for that building and realize how big it really is," says Labrie. "This new building will be about one-third as large as the total amount of facilities we have currently, including the residence."

The entrance area on the first floor will feature a large open space for the public to sit while waiting for appointments in the various clinics, while students study in classrooms along the back of the first floor. The first floor will also be home to the Aboriginal Centre, complete with an outdoor teepee.

The second floor recognizes that students have a need not only to study, but also sit in quiet contemplation, or to socialize. This floor has an open space running from one end of the building to the other, interspersed with small hubs, break-out rooms and desks along the window area. From here, the students can look out over "Governors' Grove," a stand of mature maple trees.

The third floor will contain a variety of labs. It will also feature a fully-equipped mock apartment, where paramedic and other health

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The Centre for Health and Wellness is a marked departure from some of the older buildings on campus, says Labrie. The building where Labrie has his office, for instance, was built in a traditional institutional style, with long, narrow hallways and a series of rectangular classrooms – not much space or financial resources earmarked for creature comforts, natural lighting or architectural flair, he notes.

“When Georgian planned K Building (University Partnership Centre), it made a conscious decision to move away from that old style and adopt something new and inviting. Our new focus is on having lots of room, glass, an open concept and real architectural flair,” says Labrie. “Georgian has been ripped into the 21st century with this project.” ✦

The real magic of the new building originates on the fourth floor. This will feature four large clerestories – columns that will collect sunlight and distribute it throughout the Centre.



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