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Mohawk College and the Road Ahead

My involvement with Mohawk College goes back over 30 years and a member of The Mohawk Insurance Advisory Committee for some 17 years. This Committee introduced an initiative some 15 years ago to establish a School of Insurance at Mohawk College. Over the years there were various suggestions to accommodate this initiative from erecting a stand-alone building on the Fennell Campus to renovating a portion of the main building for this purpose.

Several years ago a fund raising effort was established and several insurers and including the Insurance Brokers Association of Hamilton donated money to this cause.

Then the plan expanded to also include financial services and relative careers as an adjunct to the proposed centre. A sub-committee was established and in addition to the representatives of the Advisory Committee we introduced representatives of the Financial Sectors which included David Baird, Ten Star Financial Inc., Gerry Flanigan, GIC Financial Services Inc. and Carolyn Fallis, Director, Professional & Student Affairs – Financial Planners Standards Council. Contact was also made to the regulators of the life insurance side of the business.

This committee also reviewed the curriculum and courses being offered at Seneca College, Humber College and George Brown College. We received the full cooperation and enthusiasm of the Financial Planners Standards Council and reviewed their Criteria and Guidelines for Registering a Financial Planning Curriculum at Mohawk.

Numerous times over the 15 plus years it seemed that we were getting nowhere. But now it appears that the dreams of this committee and the College are going to be fulfilled. WE have the total support of the President of the College, MaryLyn West-Moynes, Art Domenicucci, Dean of Marketing, Finance and Insurance and lately from Bill Pitcher, Chief Development Officer.

As stated at a meeting with MaryLyn West-Moynes it took the first very generous donation to start the ball rolling. Through the efforts of Jim Pearson, a retirement function was arranged for Bert Hares on his retirement from the North Waterloo and from which Bert donated the proceeds to this project and in so doing become the sponsor of the Bert Hares Boardroom.

Similarly and generously a donation in the amount of \$125,000 was made by Dan Lawrie and will be used for the Dan Lawrie Insurance Learning Centre.. Another similar donation has come from Cowan Insurance. In addition to the rooms required for the Financial Services there is a common area for both Insurance and Financial Services. The Insurance section, in addition to the three sponsored rooms will include a Computer Lab, Classrooms, Meeting Rooms, Mentorship Lab, Insurance Library, an Interactive Learning Hub and a Founders Room and for which Acumen Insurance is the first donor. In all the Insurance area alone will encompass some 9,310 sq.ft.

The proposed Centre for Insurance and Financial Services will be located on the main floor of the "A" wing. Extensive renovations including removal of all lockers and a complete rejuvenation of this area which will encompass a total area of 29,150 sq. ft. It will have its own HVAC system and the current windows which are located close to the ceiling will be replaced with lower more modern windows. The solid masonry wall on the north east corner, and which will be the boardroom, will be extended outwards and include appropriate windows. Proper signage will be attached to the outside of this wing making the Centre for Insurance and Financial Services visible to Fennell Ave. Architect drawings have been prepared and an estimated "all-in" cost is in the vicinity of \$4,000,000. The College has agreed to offer \$1,000,000 to the project.

It is up to the Insurance Industry to raise the balance of \$3,000,000. We are already well on the way! Many of our members, Insurance Companies and Adjusting Firms regularly employ the graduate students from the 2 year Insurance Administration Program. It is now our time to give back and assist in the project which can only improve and complement the current program. The Mohawk Insurance Program has the highest placement rate for graduates of all of the business courses. By developing a stronger program it can help to increase the standards for future courses.

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