

CITY

Algonquin: Had to turn down contracts

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Mr. Matte says he regularly uses the same plumber and electrician, but "they have their own businesses, and it's hard to get them to come out to do my jobs." The shortage has forced Mr. Matte to turn down contracts.

"I can't get them (the skilled trades workers) booked fast enough to get the jobs," he says.

But even with the lack of skilled tradespeople, Tracy Ar-

nett, a real estate agent, says she has a great crew of tradespeople on whom she can rely.

The only problem, she says, is with the roofing trade.

"We don't have any roofers, and any we do call just don't come."

Enrolment in the college's 19 construction trades programs has doubled to nearly 3,000 over the past five years. Many programs are offered year-round to accommodate demand and some, including construction technician

engineering and architectural technology, have waiting lists.

A new building would ease the demand and allow the college to admit another 520 students. It would also bring together instructors and students who are scattered across six outdated buildings on the Woodroffe Avenue campus.

"Without this new building, we don't have the space to increase our numbers," says Mr. Tapp.

Details of a public-private part-

nership have yet to be worked out, but the college is preparing a business plan with the expectation that it will be presented to provincial officials by the spring.

The college has enlisted Ottawa MPPs Jim Watson and Richard Patten to lobby for the project. The goal is to get approval and financing in time for the building to be open by January 2009.

WITH FILES FROM JESSICA DEAN

Building trades drive \$66M Algonquin project

Ottawa Citizen Jan. 16, 2007

Skilled labour shortages forecast

BY PAULINE TAM

Algonquin College is seeking the Ontario government's help to finance what is believed to be its largest capital project to date.

The college is looking to the province to cover part of the \$66 million needed to construct a new flagship building devoted to the construction trades.

The rest of the funds would come from the private sector, which has indicated its willingness to support the project, said Morris Uremovich, executive dean of Algonquin's faculty of technology and trades.

The proposed 158,000-square-foot facility would be located on an empty lot at the southeast corner of the campus, next to the college's automotive trades building.

A new building would provide an incentive for Algonquin to overhaul its construction trades curriculum and allow the college to expand its training programs in critical areas of the skilled trades, which are expected to face a labour shortage over the next decade as the workforce ages.

In the Ottawa area alone, up to 8,000 new workers will be required over the next five years to replace retiring baby boomers, says Mr. Uremovich.

According to the Construction Sector Council, Canada will need as many as 48,000 workers to replace the massive wave of retirees over the next seven years. An additional 22,000 workers will be needed to meet market demand.

In addition to an aging workforce, fierce competition for workers, driven by building booms in Alberta and British Columbia, is also behind the increased demand for construction trades training.

"There are hotspots all across Canada where there's a requirement for workers, so the chances of being out of work once students are trained and get some job experience are pretty small," says John-Paul Tapp, Algonquin's dean of the school of transportation and building trades.

Stephen Matte, a general contractor and owner of the Matte Group, says there are many problems in finding skilled trades workers in the region. Not only is there a lack of workers, but many of those in the skilled trades are either inexperienced or older, with businesses of their own.