**Trent's future is taking shape**

**Written by Ian Buck for the Peterborough Examiner (Page A4) on September 17, 2015.**

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For those of us in education, September — not January — is the beginning of the New Year. This makes September a good time to take stock of where we are and where we are going. To understand what this means for Trent requires a preliminary under- standing of the post-secondary sector in Ontario. These days, it is a good news- bad news story.

The good news is for our students. Ata difficult time for young people seeking jobs, a recent government survey shows that 94% of Trent University graduates have secured well-paying jobs two years after graduation.

University graduates have more success in the job market than any other Ontario educational group, earning on average, 58 per cent more than graduates from other postsecondary programs. Students with only high school lag far behind university and college graduates in employment.

This good news is coupled with some challenges for universities and colleges. One of the most significant is declining numbers of students in Ontario. In Peterborough, like other regions across the province, declining numbers of high school graduates means declining numbers of students for post-secondary institutions.

At most universities, fiscal issues are compounded by pension fund liabilities which are the result of global economic uncertainty. At Trent, we are determined to maintain excellent pension benefits for our employees, but we must do so in a way that allows us to manage costs.

At a time when governments are struggling to manage significant debt, there is no easy answer to the fiscal challenges in the postsecondary sector, a sector in which funding is not keeping pace with rising costs.

At Trent, these pressures mean that we must manage our way through some tight fiscal times. This will be challenging, but there are many reasons to be bullish about Trent's future in the long run. This will be good news for Peterborough, as our future and the City’s are inextricably intertwined.

There are too many Trent positives — in Peterborough and Durham — to list here, but one that stands out is the capital improvements being made to our Symons campus. These are developments which will add enormously to student life and create recreational facilities which will be an asset for the whole community, and especially North Peter- borough.

These enhancements include four new residences; a state-of-the-art base- ball diamond and sports field which will be completed this fall; the construction of a stunning new Student Centre on the banks of the Otonabee, and an agreement with the City which will locate a twin pad arena on the campus. While we have no exact figure at this point, these developments will represent over $100 million dollars of capital improvements to one of Canada’s most attractive campuses.

What is even more significant is that these initiatives will pave the way for future developments by bringing water and sewage services to the east side of the Otonabee. Our vision is a partner- ship with the city which will enable the creation of a Research and Innovation park on Trent land.

This is a project that can, over the long term, support the growth and expansion of Peterborough as a destination for green industry and the jobs and economic development it makes possible.

Further into the future, another possibility is a “sustainable village” that would attract retirees and others to a residential development on the campus. Like the research park, it has the potential to foster a much stronger and sustainable Trent and Peterborough for the future.

For Trent and the City of Peterborough, one can sense new possibilities and potential in the air.