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Halton backs Sheridan's bid to be university

Halton Regional council has joined the Town of Oakville in throwing its support behind Sheridan College's goal of becoming a university.

Halton formally endorsed the plan at its May 28 council meeting — a plan Sheridan officials say will expand postsecondary education options in the western Greater Toronto Area.

"Sheridan's university status will help ensure Halton continues to have a strong and skilled labour force to meet the needs of local employers. It will help attract talent and new companies to Halton, accelerating the growth of new start-ups, and will allow Halton to develop as a complete community," said Halton Regional Chair Gary Carr in a release on the endorsement.

The college currently has nearly 20,000 full-time students across four campuses in Oakville, Brampton and Mississauga.

The City of Brampton endorsed Sheridan's proposal last November, as did the Region of Peel in February. The Town's approval came in March.

"Sheridan's presence in Oakville as a world-class educator, employer and postsecondary institution, will be enhanced once Sheridan becomes a university," said Oakville Mayor Rob Burton.

Now Sheridan is seeking membership in the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC).

Sheridan President and CEO Jeff Zabudsky said several issues are driving the change including more fields requiring a university degree for entry, such as nursing and accounting, where previously a college diploma was enough.

He said because Sheridan is not an AUCC member, its degree graduates face roadblocks for higher education and universities often don't accept a Sheridan degree for entry into a master's

"Sheridan is going through a transformation; we're building on our successful past to become a new and exciting undergraduate teaching university. Our focus will be on small class sizes, strong ties to industry and programs that give students the hard skills they'll need to get their first job and the soft skills in areas like creative problem solving that will set them up for a future in which success will be tied to the power of ideas," said Zabudsky.

"The support of our leaders in Halton Region, along with those in Brampton, the Region of Peel and the Town of Oakville show that there is a need for growing post-secondary choices in our community, and that we are headed in the right direction."