



## Northern College partnering to expand post-secondary options

By [Emma Meldrum](#)

Wednesday, November 15, 2017 3:56:00 EST PM



Fred Gibbons, president of Northern College and chair of the Timmins Economic Development Corporation, speaks on Wednesday at Cedar Meadows Resort & Spa about this city's hopes of expanding post-secondary options.

TIMMINS - Fred Gibbons says his support for post-secondary expansion in Timmins – including a potential university - isn't at odds with his role as president of Northern College.

In fact, the college was lauded by Dr. Ken Coates, who wrote a report on the feasibility of an English-language university in Timmins, for its work partnering with Algoma University.

“You have a chance to build off the achievements of Northern College,” said Coates on Wednesday during a discussion at Cedar Meadows Resort & Spa. “You have a wonderful foundation, very good relationships with the community, very good partnerships already. You have the opportunity for collaborations with other Northern institutions.”

While Coates didn't recommend a stand-alone university for this city, he said Timmins has the potential to innovate with a new post-secondary system.

Gibbons, who is also chair of the Timmins Economic Development Corporation, said he expects the college can be a partner as the TEDC moves forward in researching and planning for expanded post-secondary options in Timmins.

“I've been questioned by some people, why would a college president be advocating for increased access to university studies in the community. Well, it's about community, it's not about Northern College,” said Gibbons.

The college president said it's important to recognize that students are leaving the community for programs that aren't offered here.

He said Northern College is already working with Algoma University to offer two degree programs: Bachelor of Social Work and Bachelor in Community Economics and Social Development.

“Algoma is very happy with the partnership and they're very happy with the level of enrolment they've seen.”

Gibbons said graduates from the college are finding work - “then they get to a certain level where they're competing for a position within that agency, and the minimum educational requirement is no longer a college diploma, it's a university degree.

“We've had pressure from our alumni associations, from past graduates, to have ready access in Timmins for university studies.”

He said the college reached out to Algoma University, which is based in Sault Ste. Marie. The college offers its facilities free of charge, and college faculty are encouraged to apply for teaching positions within the university programs.

Discussions are now underway for expansions to the college-university partnership.

“What we've heard anecdotally from the community, from students who are looking at university studies and that type of thing, there's strong interest in the area of business, particularly accounting programs. Secondly, engineering programs. We have some discussions underway with Algoma at the present time for both of those potential options.”

Gibbons said that as the college identifies programs people are interested in, it can reach out to other universities as well.

“That's easy to say, difficult to execute. There's a lot of logistics that need to be worked out, but Northern College is willing, the city is willing, and the Economic Development Corporation is willing, because it's right to the community.”

Coates' report, released Wednesday through the Northern Policy Institute, states that Northern College serves the area well.

“Even supports of the stand-alone campus model have made it clear that no new university should be allowed to harm Northern College,” stated the report.