

# 'ONE STEP CLOSER'

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York University said Thursday, May 30 that its planning to establish a new school of medicine in Vaughan after Greater Toronto Area health and government leaders signaled "positive momentum and growing support" for the new institute.

Mayor Maurizio Bevilacqua welcomed this major move especially since his initial thoughts and seeds began in 2010 when he formulated his vision for a hospital precinct in his ever-growing city of Vaughan.

"Today's news brings us one step closer to realizing a significant project that will improve access to education and professional net-

works for aspiring entrepreneurs and accomplished business experts across the Greater Toronto Area," Bevilacqua said in a statement.

He added, "It will further expand our human capital and growing talent pool of hard-working, driven and innovative professionals."

With more than one million Ontarians not having any access to primary care, the idea of the new school is that it will focus on training family and community doctors in an integrated setting.

"Medical and health curriculum and research will support this integrated and preventive model for health care, which aims to promote care beyond the walls of hospital facilities," the university said in its re-

lease.

It added, "The model is expected to create greater health equity for diverse communities in the GTA and underserved communities across Canada."

In October 2019, Vaughan signed a memorandum of understanding with York University, MacKenzie Health and VentureLAB to create the Vaughan Health-Care Centre Precinct to innovate health-care products and export them far beyond Canada globally by making use of local resources and talent.

At the time of the signing, the mayor, who long touted his motto of the "art of the possible," wasn't shy from proposing a medical school in the heart of Vaughan, too.

In February 2020, Bevi-

acqua, once again at the annual Vaughan Chamber of Commerce Mayor's Luncheon in the presence of York University's President Rhonda Lenton, York University officials and more than 900 business and government leaders, reiterated his ambitions for the university to establish a medical school in Vaughan.

"I made a public commitment to encourage and strongly support York University's efforts to establish a medical school in Vaughan," Bevilacqua said in his Thursday statement.

Indeed, his calls yielded a breakthrough. "The announcement was well received," the mayor added. "My message to all levels of government and the community was crystal clear: a York University School of Medicine in Vaughan would serve the GTA and the province exceptionally well."

The news of building a medical school in Vaughan



Steve Somerville/Torstar

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is entrenching York University's expansion in York Region, too.

After years of lobbying, Premier Doug Ford announced in July last year, the approval of a new York University Markham Campus.

York University was able to bring about working capital of up to \$275.5 million to make the campus a

reality. Presidents of various hospitals from South-lake Regional Health Centre, Markham Stouffville Hospital, North York General Hospital to MacKenzie Health have all welcomed the move.

Even Toronto mayor John Tory has joined the chorus to back the move to "bring forward new ideas and breakthroughs."

## GRADUATION 2021

### How to celebrate grads despite unique circumstances

The end of a school year has traditionally been a time of celebration. Students may celebrate because summer vacation has arrived, and families typically gather to celebrate students who have earned their diplomas and degrees. But just as it's compromised many other traditional celebrations, the COVID-19 pandemic is changing how families can safely celebrate graduation.

Thanks to the tireless efforts of medical researchers, a handful of COVID-19 vaccinations have been developed and approved since the end of 2020. As more and more people become vaccinated, the world is gradually emerging from the pandemic. However, members of the class of 2021 will likely have to celebrate in unique circumstances. Such celebrations may not be traditional, but they can still be fun. Families may even enjoy finding new and unique ways to celebrate graduation this spring.

- Create a school-themed "movie" where grads are the stars. Students' academic careers are filled with milestones, and the emergency of various technologies over the past two decades has made it easier than ever for families to document those milestones. Parents can pore through the many photos and videos they've created through the years and create a "This Is Your Life" video montage documenting all the special school-related moments students have had on their way to earning their diplomas and degrees. Parents can share the video with relatives if they still can't gather en masse come graduation season.

- Plan a special dinner. Graduation dinners are one tradition that need not fall by the wayside, even if meals might not resemble traditional meals. Families comfort-

able dining out can book a reservation at the grad's favourite restaurant, while those who prefer to avoid dining out can order takeout from that establishment. But families also can gather and prepare a special meal together. Even if dining at home, everyone can get dressed up and go the extra mile by creating a restaurant-like atmosphere at home: Fête the guest of honour with a toast before the meal, and reserve a special surprise for the graduate that's only revealed during the meal. For example, parents can uncork a special bottle of wine to commemorate college grads who can legally drink. Parents of newly minted high school graduates can present a special video with well-wishes from all the relatives who would normally attend the dinner but cannot due to the pandemic.

- Organize a ceremony at home. A light-hearted graduation ceremony in the living room or the backyard can ensure graduates don't miss out on their chance to stride across the stage and receive their diploma. Invite a favorite teacher over to give out the diploma or present it yourself while doing your best school principal/president impersonation. This can be a fun way to add some levity to celebrations and will be a fun memory for grads to look back on in the years to come.

Graduation celebrations will be different in 2021, but families can still make the most of their chances to honor grads in these unique circumstances. (MCC)



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