

# 2023/24



**COLLEGES  
ONTARIO** | **COLLÈGES  
ONTARIO**

# Annual Report

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# COLLEGES ARE FUELING ONTARIO'S ECONOMY

*"Our colleges play a vital role in preparing the next generation for the jobs and careers of the future. Many of Ontario's greatest leaders, thinkers, builders and innovators have benefited from our post-secondary institutions."*

- Ontario Premier Doug Ford

## Message from the president and CEO

The past fiscal year has seen many changes and challenges for Ontario's college sector. As the member association for Ontario's 24 public colleges, and with me as the new president and CEO at the helm, Colleges Ontario spearheaded various initiatives related to the financial sustainability of the sector.

Working with various levels of government on labour-market needs was a top priority. Colleges Ontario worked with institutions and various ministries on the launch of new nursing transformation initiatives. We also undertook important new partnerships, for example with the Association of Municipalities (AMO), to promote economic growth through enhanced workforce training and business-led, college-based research and innovation. One of my highlights of the year was at the 2023 AMO conference, where Humber College president Ann Marie Vaughan and I made presentations to a packed crowd about college applied research and its positive impact on Ontario communities.

Innovation in professional development and training was also a hallmark. Last year thousands of higher education leaders took part in professional development via the annual Higher Education Summit and Premier's Awards gala, which saw record turnout and positive feedback, and programs run through the College Centre.

The following report summarizes the key achievements from March 2023-March 2024.

*Julie Evans*



# Financial sustainability advocacy

## Blue Ribbon Panel

Declining government funding and domestic tuition have meant increasing pressure on the college system's operating costs. In 2021, auditor general Bonnie Lysyk said the fiscal situation was "risky" and many colleges would face financial difficulties if international enrolment trends should change.

In March 2023, the Ontario government announced the creation of a blue-ribbon panel of experts to provide advice and recommendations for keeping the post-secondary education sector financially stable. Colleges Ontario crafted a formal submission outlining the realities of the college sector's business model and strategic risks and facilitated two engagements with panel members and college presidents.

Colleges Ontario president and CEO, Marketa Evans, also met with several different ministries and ministers to discuss the fiscal realities for our colleges.

Colleges Ontario made one formal submission to the panel, held two meetings with the panel, and generated multiple presentations for each meeting that built and expanded on our original submission.

All-in-all there were numerous meetings and conversations with panel members and Colleges Ontario, five submitted products, and the result was that nearly all of Colleges Ontario's feedback was incorporated or addressed by the panel in one way or another.

The report's findings, which were released in November 2023, were: that Ontario should raise per-student funding for its colleges and universities and should also lift the freeze on tuition. The report also recognized many of the key differences between the situation facing Ontario's public colleges and that facing universities and highlighted the need therefore for differential approaches on tuition and part-time enrolment.



## Blue Ribbon Panel continued

Colleges Ontario issued a supporting [statement](#), calling for an immediate end to the province's tuition freeze, a modest five per cent tuition increase and enhanced investments in Ontario's public college students.

Additionally, full details of the colleges' recommendations to the government in response to the panel report are provided in the public colleges' statement of principles, available [online](#).

## International student permit changes

The federal government imposed a cap on international student permits on January 21, 2024. This has added an additional pressure to the sector's fiscal sustainability and prompted Colleges Ontario to advocate about the value international students bring to Ontario's colleges and Ontario's economy.

The Ontario government announced its measures in response to the Blue Ribbon Panel report and the permit cap on February 26, 2024.

These measures included a more than \$1.2 billion financial aid package for colleges and universities and a continued freeze on student tuition for another three years.

While the funding announcement was a positive step forward, it clearly does not address the looming shortfall facing Ontario's colleges as a result of the international student permit cap.

In response, Colleges Ontario issued a renewed call for the province to do more. President and CEO Marketa Evans said "We recognize and support the province's focus on the most immediate pressures, rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all approach...The future of the high-quality programs offered to students remains at risk."

Colleges Ontario's public statement raised the issue of ongoing fiscal challenges facing colleges, particularly in the wake of the federal international student cap, and that most of the new funding would be going to Ontario's universities.



## International student permit changes continued

On the matter of the provincial application allocations, Colleges Ontario took the position that permits should be exclusively for public post-secondary institutions and that colleges receive 80 per cent of the allocations - and we were successful on both fronts. This maximizes the available potential permits for members.

Advocacy on the long-term fiscal sustainability of the college sector is ongoing.

## Innovation in addressing labour market needs

### Nursing transformation work

Ontario's health-care system faces a critical shortage of health workers, which undermines its ability to meet the diverse needs of the population and provide timely, high-quality care. The shortage of health-care professionals, including personal support workers (PSWs) and nurses, poses significant challenges to access, capacity and quality of care across the province.

In 2023-24, Ontario's colleges took proactive measures to address these workforce challenges through the Nursing Program Transformation Initiative, which involved all 24 public colleges throughout the development of new flexible pathways that allow health-care professionals to upgrade their credentials while continuing to work.

In April 2023, the colleges launched the nursing transformation personal support worker (PSW) to practical nursing (PN) pathway consisting of six upgrading courses. Students who successfully complete the pathway can apply to a 'receiving college' and can be admitted directly into semester two of the PN program. Since the launch of the pathway, there have been over 2,440 course registrations.





## Nursing transformation work continued

Registration in the nursing transformation pathway for internationally educated nurses was also strong last year. Since launching in fiscal 2022-23, there have been over 750 registrations in the courses, which are designed to support internationally educated nurses seeking registration in Ontario. Courses in the French pathway for internationally educated nurses launched in May.

This past fiscal year, the colleges also finalized the nursing transformation registered practical nursing (RPN) to bachelor of science in nursing (BScN) pathway which is designed to support registered practical nurses (RPNs) to more easily ladder up their careers to become a registered nurse (RN).

## Credential reform

Our public colleges were granted the ability to develop three-year degrees in April 2022. Since then many new degree programs are being developed, including:

- Bachelor of computer science
- Bachelor of data analytics
- Bachelor of hospitality management
- Bachelor of skilled trades business management
- Bachelor of construction management
- Bachelor of cybersecurity

And, in February 2024, the Ontario government responded to the public colleges' longtime advocacy to establish applied master's degree programs at public colleges. Colleges are now working to develop applied masters degree programs in high demand fields such as advanced manufacturing, construction and supply chain management, artificial intelligence and animation.

Expanding the options at colleges to include more degree programs is helping more graduates advance in their careers and earn higher salaries. It also helps employers, as more students are completing their post-secondary education sooner and entering the workforce more quickly with career-specific credentials.



# Strengthening and expanding partnerships

## Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO)

With many new changes on the horizon for colleges in Ontario, it was more important than ever to develop and strengthen key partnerships and ties to stakeholders involved in the common cause of bolstering Ontario's labour market and economy.

With this in mind, Ontario's colleges entered into a collaboration last year with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) to enhance the colleges' role in promoting economic growth in communities. This includes driving business growth through new research and innovation, training people for growing sectors in communities and training more people for careers in the municipal workforce.

The partnership was launched in August 2023, during AMO's annual conference in London, Ontario.

The partnership responds to the growing challenge in municipalities to fill key positions and to retain the existing workforce. Colleges and municipalities will explore new opportunities to promote upskilling and retraining in the municipal sector.

The partnership will also pursue measures to address the growing shortage of talent across the entire range of skills and occupations required for home construction, health care and early childhood education.

## Ontario Chamber of Commerce

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) is another key partner of the colleges. Recognizing the key role the public college sector plays in the province's future workforce, Marketa Evans was announced in March 2024 as the new chair of its workforce development council.

In response, Evans said "I very much welcome this exciting and tremendously important opportunity. Developing a strong workforce is central to our work at Ontario's public colleges. It's more important than ever to ensure people entering the workforce have the expertise and qualifications that align with employers' needs in this rapidly evolving economy."



## Continued opportunities with Ireland

Consul General Janice McGann, the consul general of Ireland to Toronto, participated in the signing of a memorandum of understanding last year between Ontario's public colleges and post-secondary leaders in Ireland to strengthen programs and research opportunities for students.

She joined the presidents of Ontario's 24 public colleges, leaders from the Irish technological universities, Colleges Ontario president and CEO Marketa Evans, Ireland's Technological Higher Education Association, Enterprise Ireland and others at a signing ceremony.

The post-secondary leaders from Ontario and Ireland have been collaborating since 2011, when they signed Canada's first-ever system-to-system agreement. Prior to then, the public colleges' agreements with institutions in other countries were only between individual institutions.

The agreement facilitates Ontario public college students to pursue further studies in Ireland and Irish students to study in Ontario.

The collaboration has also created more professional development opportunities for faculty and staff in Ontario and Ireland and facilitated new partnerships in applied research.

"This is a great opportunity to share the expertise from Ontario and Ireland to develop enhanced opportunities for students, faculty and staff," said Marketa Evans. "Our public colleges have a great partnership with the Irish institutes and we're very pleased to further our collaborations with them."





# Learning and development

## Higher Education Summit and Premier's Awards

Colleges Ontario hosts the annual Higher Education Summit. The theme for the conference in 2023 was “new pathways.” The event was a huge success, with 97 per cent of attendees rating it good to excellent, and a record 645 attendees.

The highlight was a keynote speech by Simu Liu, Marvel's first Asian superhero, who shared his story of how he battled cultural stereotypes. He was joined by CBC Radio host Tom Power onstage for a one-on-one interview.

Other highlights included a fascinating presentation by world-renowned physicist Brian Greene, remarks by the always popular political pundit Chantel Hébert and a speech by former Calgary mayor Naheed Nenshi on Canada's “wet-clay moment” - we must mould the future now before it sets.

The 2023 conference also included an exhibit area with more than 20 exhibitors showcasing a variety of products and services. This included a fundraiser for the CNIB, whose manager of major gifts accepted a donation cheque on-stage with his adorable guide dog, Joe.

The conference concluded with the annual Premier's Awards gala for outstanding college graduates. The audience of over 800 people celebrated a huge range of talented alumni from around the world, and 99 per cent of attendees rated the event good to excellent! Student dance and musical performances kept the crowd entertained.

Award winners this year included automotive technician and professor Saifullah Sanaye, Canada Goose president Carrie Baker, United Nations shelter cluster coordinator Jehan Salim, social injustice and youth advocate Christina Kioke, special projects manager with PCL Construction Cheyanne Hammell, chief and director of the Hamilton Paramedic Service Michael Sanderson, and a post-humous award to former CBC journalist Jodie Porter.



## College Centre

The College Centre is an important hub for professional development for the Ontario college sector, offering board excellence and leadership excellence certificate programs.

All 24 colleges have been involved in the programs over the past year. And the leadership excellence program saw an impressive 124 new enrolments versus 54 during the year prior.

The two programs also saw high levels of participation, with 870 board excellence credits completed, and 980 leadership excellence credits completed.

With sights on improved efficiencies and an engaging learner experience, the centre launched the first steps in a new learning management sector that will have new benefits and features making it easier for program participants to access, track and share their learning.



CONTINUING  
PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT

### The Ontario College Quality Assurance Service (OCQAS)

The Ontario College Quality Assurance Service (OCQAS) is the oversight body for the college's self-regulatory system that was established in 2005. OCQAS operates two quality assurance services for the colleges: the credentials validation service (CVS) at the program level and the college quality assurance audit process (CQAAP) at the institutional level.

The report containing the activities of the credential validation service can be found on the OCQAS website in [English](#) and [French](#).

The emphasis in 2023-24 was on consultation and enhanced services:

- OCQAS worked closely with its stakeholders to develop and pilot a model of the international education standards of practice (IESP) that is auditable.
- OCQAS developed and released short and relevant training videos in both English and French to support colleges preparing for their audits.
- OCQAS engaged individuals from the college sector in the various working groups to gather input on:
  - Program validation guidelines
  - The functionality and usability of the application used to validate programs.
  - The college quality assurance audit process (CQAAP).
  - The Indigenous thought leaders circle to find ways to introduce Indigenous ways of knowing and being into quality assurance.
- Any gaps and errors in the French versions of its documentation, program application tool and training materials.
- OCQAS developed a new audit system called the Ontario college quality assurance review and evaluation (OCQARE) that incorporates the IESP and CQAAP. The OCQARE is a new and improved quality assurance model to take the Ontario college sector to the next level of quality.

The combined benefit of these strategies allows OCQAS to engage all invested parties in activities that are relevant to their current and future work with OCQAS. It supports accountability, continuous improvement, transparency and builds system-wide connections.

# Partners

## OCAS

### OCAS

For more than 30 years, OCAS has been managing the domestic application for its partners in the Ontario college system. In more recent years they've evolved their offerings to include international applications – through their International Application Service (IAS) – and data and insights reporting through their data warehouse, which contains information associated with all domestic and international applications.

Today, their not-for-profit organization is a proud partner to Ontario's colleges and they work closely with them to continuously enhance the post-secondary learner experience.

In calendar 2023, OCAS processed 194,402 domestic applications – an increase of roughly four per cent from 2022. On the international front, OCAS processed 266,117 applications.

Also in 2023, OCAS launched a new strategic plan that outlines how they will support their partners in the coming years. That plan includes a refreshed purpose, vision, mission, values, and strategic pillars, as well as organizational goals, including:

- Bringing focused attention to elevating its domestic and international application services, and;
- Investing in the foundations – primarily underlying technology – that position OCAS for the future.

These organizational goals have translated into considerable enhancements to the domestic application process, including the addition of a secure, centralized solution for collecting applicant Social Insurance Number (SIN) information and giving applicants the ability to sign up and log into their application using an existing Google account. On the international side, they introduced several new features, including self-serve user management capabilities, enabling college users to add and remove team members themselves instead of having to contact OCAS.

In 2023, OCAS also launched [College Trades](#), a microsite dedicated to helping prospective tradespeople find skilled trades college programs that align with their career goals. The site features trades programs with embedded apprenticeship curriculum, or programs that can exempt graduates from the in-class training portion of a future apprenticeship.

In the coming year, they'll be focusing on building out College Trades, evolving the data warehouse, and forging ahead with their [ontariocolleges.ca](#) revamp project, which involves updating the website through which all domestic applicants apply to college in Ontario.

# Colleges Ontario's financial statements

<b>Statement of financial position</b>		
March 31, 2023, with comparative figures		
	2023	2022
<u>Assets:</u>		
Current assets	56,366,686	29,350,973
Capital assets	6,923,885	6,878,890
Total assets	63,290,571	36,229,863
<u>Liabilities and net assets:</u>		
Current liabilities	54,370,274	25,909,834
Deferred capital contributions	2,958,508	3,058,897
Long-term portion of mortgage payable	0	2,007,862
Net assets	5,961,789	5,253,270
Total liabilities and net assets	63,290,571	36,229,863
<b>Statement of changes in net assets</b>		
Year ended March 31, 2023, with comparative figures		
	2023	2022
Net assets, beginning of year	5,253,270	5,169,470
Excess of revenue over expenses	708,519	83,800
Net assets, end of year	5,961,789	5,253,270
<b>Statement of Operations</b>		
Year ended March 31, 2023, with comparative figures		
	2023	2022
Revenues	12,509,898	12,729,290
Expenses	11,801,379	12,645,490
Excess of revenues over expenses	708,519	83,800