



**The Honourable François-Philippe Champagne**

Minister of Finance  
c/o Department of Finance Canada  
90 Elgin Street  
Ottawa ON  
K1A 0G5  
yourbudget-votrebudget@fin.gc.ca

**Re: 2025 Pre-Budget Consultations**

August 28, 2025

Dear Minister Champagne,

On behalf of Ontario's 24 public colleges and polytechnics, I strongly support the *Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan) Pre-Budget Submission 2025: Training for a Strong and Secure Canada*. I would like to highlight issues that are critical to Ontario's colleges, students and communities, and that should guide the federal government's workforce development efforts.

**Building Canada's Workforce**

CICan's recommendations—including a One Canadian Training and Workforce Strategy, new capital funding for training spaces, Apprentice Wayfinding Accelerators and expanded College and Community Innovation Program funding—are timely and essential. These measures will help address Ontario's urgent labour shortages in trades, technology, health care, housing and infrastructure.

Over the next five years, Ontario is projected to face a skilled labour shortfall of nearly 200,000 workers in sectors such as construction, mining, health care, advanced manufacturing and electrical energy distribution. Ontario colleges are already helping close these gaps by:

- Training **50 per cent of Ontario's mining workforce**;<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Mining Industry Human Resources Council, "**Monthly Labour Market Dashboard**," *Mining Industry Human Resources Council*, accessed August 21, 2025, <https://mihr.ca/labour-market-information/monthly-report/>

- Training **over 40 per cent of the automotive sector workforce**, including electric vehicle (EV) fields;<sup>2</sup>
- Training **40 per cent of the advanced manufacturing workforce**;<sup>3</sup>
- Graduating **nearly 66,000 students in construction-related programs** between 2012 and 2022; and
- Delivering **over 80 per cent of in-class training for new apprentices annually**.

Ontario's colleges provide hands-on training for youth, mid-career workers, newcomers, international students, veterans and under-represented learners, making them indispensable to both provincial and national workforce strategies.

## Supporting Canada's National Security and Defence Agenda

Ontario's college system is also critical to the advancement of Canada's defence and security goals. The federal government's \$9-billion defence investment, new recruitment targets and the launch of BOREALIS demand an all-hands-on-deck approach.

Ontario's colleges are essential partners in talent development, applied research, workforce development and force generation.

Ontario's colleges are uniquely positioned to support federal initiatives and to train and scale the defence workforce through microcredentials, online courses, apprenticeships and specialized post-secondary programs. Examples already underway include:

- **Algonquin College:** Credit recognition for military learners; advancing stress and resilience research using wearable technology and AI;
- **Fanshawe College:** Canada's first Military-Connected College, partnering with Helmets to Hardhats, the Army Reserve and the Air Force to support pathways in skilled trades and maintenance;

---

<sup>2</sup> **Job Bank**, *Motor Vehicle, Body, Trailer and Parts Manufacturing (NAICS 3361–3363): Ontario, 2024–2026*, Job Bank (Employment and Social Development Canada), accessed August 21, 2025, <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/trend-analysis/job-market-reports/ontario/sectoral-profile-motor-manufacturing>

<sup>3</sup> **Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters**, *Keep Calm and Keep Training – 2025 Manufacturing Workforce Report*, accessed August 21, 2025 — “Manufacturing insights for a resilient Ontario workforce,” Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters, accessed via CME website, July 2025, <https://cme-mec.ca/initiatives/2025-manufacturing-workforce-report/>

- **Seneca College:** A joint program with the Air Force enabling students to earn a Bachelor of Aviation Technology and pilot credentials three years faster than at the Royal Military College of Canada;
- **George Brown and Centennial Colleges:** Partnerships with the Royal Canadian Navy to support culinary training, easing recruitment and reducing military training loads;
- **Georgian College:** Home to Ontario's only Transport Canada–approved marine training centre, partnering with the Navy to train marine engineers and facilitate placements;
- **Cambrian College:** Partnered with RufDiamond to design a mobile lifting platform for amphibious all-terrain vehicles that was showcased at CANSEC 2025; and
- **Niagara College:** Applied research in advanced manufacturing and photonics, with direct applications in defence.

These examples demonstrate how Ontario colleges are already embedded in Canada's defence readiness and innovation ecosystem.

### Ensuring Federal Policy Reflects Regional Needs

In supporting CICan's One Canadian Training and Workforce Strategy, Canada and the provinces must work collaboratively, and with urgency, to address regional labour market needs.

One way forward is to ensure colleges have direct access to funding for workforce development and skills training. Currently, implementation barriers across different levels of government often prevent colleges from being eligible for federal funds transferred to the provinces. As a result, colleges are unable to respond to local workforce needs as quickly, or effectively, as they otherwise can.

Another way forward is to align the Post-Graduation Work Permit (PGWP) program's approved CIP list with regional labour market needs. Successive changes in previous years to the PGWP have already resulted in colleges having to suspend programs and reduce training options. This impact is being felt particularly in smaller, rural and northern communities that depend on colleges for economic stability and workforce supply.

To build one strong economy today and for the future, the federal government can help more Canadians train and retrain for jobs. Ontario colleges retrained 45,000 workers

following the 2008 crisis; today they're ready to do it again. To effectively do so, however, the Government of Canada can help Canadians and those looking to come to Canada by offering enhanced coordination and alignment with provinces, and their key workforce development generators – colleges.

Policy changes that affect how colleges support international and domestic students can be enhanced if they align with regional labour market needs, the academic calendar and are announced with at least six months' notice to institutions, their students or candidates.

Sudden reversals—such as removing programs from PGWP eligibility in 2024 and reinstating them in 2025—cause confusion for students and delay the sector's ability to meet labour needs and support one strong economy for today and in the future.

### **Recommendations for a Path Forward**

In addition to the recommendations put forward by CICan, including the call for the federal government to develop a One Canadian Training and Workforce Strategy and to increase investments to the College and Community Innovation Program, Colleges Ontario respectfully ask the federal government to:

1. Implement federal funding “guardrails” to help public colleges access federal funding programs;
2. Strengthen structured consultation with provinces and the postsecondary sector well in advance of policy changes, such as changes to the PGWP program;
3. Align international student policy decision-making with regional labour market needs, academic cycles, and provide institutions with at least six months' notice; and
4. Ensure federal policy changes, including those related to the PGWP program and for accessing funding for workforce development and training, recognize regional differences so that Ontario can best support one strong economy today and for the future.

### **Conclusion**

Ontario's colleges are committed to building Canada's skilled workforce, advancing national defence priorities and ensuring that education strengthens both local communities and the national economy. By adopting CICan's pre-budget



recommendations and committing to more predictable, collaborative policy reforms, the federal government can safeguard Canada's competitiveness and the uphold integrity of its education system.

We look forward to continued collaboration to support students, strengthen communities and build a more secure and prosperous Canada.

Thank you,

Maureen Adamson  
Interim President & CEO, Colleges Ontario