

May 8, 2025

Hon. Nolan Quinn
Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security
5th Flr, 438 University Ave.
Toronto, ON M7A 1N3

Hon. David Piccini
Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training, and Skills Development
14th Floor, 400 University Avenue
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1T7

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy
Minister of Finance
Frost Bldg S, 7 Queen's Park Cres.
Toronto, ON M7A 1Y7

Re: Open Letter – As Ontario Races to Secure Manufacturing Jobs, Don't Forget the Next Generation of Workers

Dear Ministers,

On behalf of the manufacturing industry, we have come together with colleges and universities to voice the importance of ensuring Ontario has the next generation of workers to protect this critical industry and secure Ontario's manufacturing jobs.

Qualified labour is essential to Ontario's manufacturing sector's continued growth and competitiveness. Yet, more than 22,000 workers are estimated to leave the manufacturing sector every year between now and 2033. At the same time, the province set a bold target in its last Fall Economic Statement to grow our manufacturing workforce from the current 830,000 workers to 1M by 2035, an objective made more challenging by the deep uncertainty brought on by President Trump's tariffs.

While we work to keep and create manufacturing jobs, implementing productivity enhancing technologies like robotics and AI is more important than ever. If Ontario does not teach today's students to navigate those tools, there is real risk Ontario will lose the race to secure the manufacturing jobs of the future.

Ontario's colleges and universities are working with manufacturers to develop this critical talent. For 30 years, southwestern Ontario post-secondary institutions have partnered with CME's regional branch to provide annual scholarships, helping students buy tools, pay for tuition, and build their career.

More than half of universities offer auto-related programs to train talent and drive innovations, and the university sector has approximately 18 research institutes and centres focused on advancing Ontario's automotive and manufacturing sectors.

Ontario's public colleges are also contributing 40 percent of the workforce in metal manufacturing (primary and fabricated), over 40 percent of the workforce in machine manufacturing and roughly 30 percent of the talent in chemical manufacturing.

But funding of domestic manufacturing programs has not kept pace with the industry's needs. As Ontario faces growing international threats to its economy, addressing manufacturing labour gaps and growing commercialization capacity is more needed than ever. Colleges and universities partner with firms to achieve these objectives in key manufacturing areas like life sciences, automotive, engineering and materials sciences and government has an opportunity to continue to support these initiatives like they have through STEM funding.

On May 1st, CME released [*Keep Calm and Keep Training*](#), a report which provides ideas for workforce resilience based on a series of roundtables in 13 Ontario communities, and with the input of more than 100 individuals from manufacturing businesses, educational institutions and regional stakeholders.

Together, Ontario manufacturers, colleges and universities are united in asking for the province to ensure Ontario's publicly funded post-secondary institutions have the needed financial resources to keep developing the critical talent and innovation the province needs to be competitive.

Immediate action is required as Ontario races to pivot key supply chains to new sources of demand. Examples include building new critical mineral processing capacity, rebuilding our military by drawing on Ontario's strength in full scale assembly of planes and vehicles, using modular factories to solve Canada's housing crisis, and using procurement to provide predictable demand for locally made goods.

But without connecting those efforts to a pipeline of graduates, businesses will fall short.

If we see past the current moment, to a world where Canadian industry is called upon to take greater leadership, provide more processed critical minerals, more high-value, low carbon goods and more energy, we will see that MORE urgency in workforce development is needed, not less.

This is our call to action. Keep calm, carry on. And most importantly, keep training.

Signed:



Dennis A. Darby, P.Eng., ICD.D, President and CEO, Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters



Steve Orsini, President and CEO, Council of Ontario Universities



Maureen Adamson, President and CEO, Colleges Ontario