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The Future of Work in Ontario

Ontario colleges'
submission for the
2020 Ontario Budget



COLLEGES | COLLÈGES
ONTARIO | ONTARIO

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I. INTRODUCTION

The world economy is going through a period of tremendous transformation and upheaval.

Artificial intelligence, robotics and other features of the new economy – along with new business models – are revolutionizing every sector and will have an even greater impact in the years ahead.

Ontario is not immune to this transformation. Major companies such as GM Canada have been rocked by changes, while employees at everything from manufacturing plants to large and small newspapers are hit by downsizing, layoffs and closures.

The workforce continues to change with more people employed in precarious work. For example, an estimated 100,000 people in Toronto work as ride-hail drivers for Uber, Lyft and related firms.

Meanwhile, employers struggle to find qualified people as accelerating automation creates a rising demand for people with more specialized qualifications and expertise. Ontario faces a serious shortage of qualified people in technology and the trades and many other sectors.

The province must develop a comprehensive strategy for the future of its workforce.

It must ensure that people entering the workforce have the expertise and qualifications to fill in-demand positions in rewarding careers.

It must ensure meaningful retraining opportunities are provided to people who have lost their jobs. As well, it must ensure that all citizens can perform at their best, including Ontario's most vulnerable citizens such as persons with disabilities and mental health challenges.

Ontario must be open to new ideas and a significant transformation of education and training in this province.

Ontario's 24 public colleges will be fundamental to the success of this strategy. With their emphasis on career-specific excellence, colleges can provide greater numbers of people – from laid-off workers to university graduates – with the professional expertise to achieve meaningful, long-term success in the new economy.

The 2020-21 provincial budget must be the launching pad for a comprehensive strategy to promote the skills needed for strong job growth across the province.

II. ONTARIO'S COLLEGES

Throughout their history, Ontario's public colleges have played a crucial role in supporting the competitiveness of the province's businesses and industries. Colleges are helping Ontario build a workforce that is equipped with the skills for the future. They are essential partners for the government's open for business, open for jobs agenda.

Today's college programs are at the forefront of innovations in the new digital economy, offering 900 programs that prepare graduates for a wide range of fields that include careers in business, engineering and technology, community services, health care, digital animation, 3D manufacturing, the skilled trades, hospitality, aviation and much more.

Colleges ensure that students acquire the highly specialized skills and expertise needed to succeed in every sector of the economy. Successful college graduates include business CEOs, hospital presidents and Academy Award winners.

Colleges are helping to advance the government's regional development goals, supporting small and medium-sized businesses and assisting at-risk students – including those with mental health challenges – to achieve academic and labour-market success. Colleges provide value for money for those seeking a high-quality post-secondary education.

Supporting regional development

Colleges are located in every region of the province and provide career-specific education and skills training to people in 200 communities – from large urban centres to small and medium-sized cities and towns.

Colleges are central to the economic and social vibrancy of these communities. In addition to supplying local businesses and industries with highly skilled graduates, colleges provide employment for local residents. They also host Employment Services offices that help Ontarians obtain training, build skills or find a job, along with offering specialized contract training for local employers.

Colleges participate in local organizations such as chambers of commerce, economic development councils, training boards and other educational and social development organizations. They help municipalities provide a range of services from health care to arts, to entertainment and support programs for youth.

Each year, colleges serve more than 500,000 students and clients who pursue increasingly complex educational pathways. Without local access to a college, many of these people would not be able to get the skills they need to fill today's jobs.

College programs and credentials

Colleges offer a full suite of programs and credentials to enhance the training and retraining of students at all stages of their careers. This ranges from literacy and basic skills training to apprenticeship and diploma and degree programs and post-graduate programs for university and college graduates.

College programs are developed in close consultation with business and industry leaders to ensure they align with innovations and advancements in the local economy. Colleges continually develop new programs to stay at the forefront of rapidly accelerating automation and other innovations.

In addition to delivering an industry-relevant education, college programs often include educational activities that provide practical workplace experience through apprenticeships, co-op placements, clinical and field placements, internships and applied research projects.

Colleges are among the leaders in the development of new programs that align with the economy and are increasingly engaged in delivering micro-credentials: industry-recognized, short-duration programs that respond to the immediate training and re-training needs of local employers.

Examples of college micro-credentials

- **Warehousing and logistics training** – Offered by Conestoga College, this was created based on employers’ input to bridge the skills gap in the warehousing and logistics sector. Multiple local employers recruit talent from the program, including Adidas, FedEx, Marco Corporation, Mabe (a division of GE), DHL and Ferrero Rocher.
- **IBM Skills Academy** – Both Mohawk College and Seneca College offer the professional certification program, in partnership with IBM. The program prepares students for IT careers in an accelerated format that builds local employment capability and aligns with international standards. Upon successful completion of the program, students earn IBM digital badges.
- **Shopify basic badge** – Offered by St. Lawrence College, this provides students the opportunity to earn three scaffolded level badges: Shopify Basics, Shopify Seller and Shopify Live.
- **General Motors Product Plus and Service Training** – For more than 25 years, Durham College has been the national training provider for General Motors’ non-technical training. The program delivers highly customized training for GM sales and service personnel.
- **Samsung Pathway** – Centennial College and Samsung Canada have partnered to establish a program that provides electronics engineering technician students, who meet academic eligibility criteria, with a unique opportunity to pursue a career as field service technicians for Samsung appliances.
- **Machine trade skills** – Offered by Loyalist College, this has been designed to provide learners with an introduction to the skills and techniques required to perform machine-related tasks in the machine trade and manufacturing industry.
- **Machine shop fundamentals** – Offered by Sault College, this allows students to develop the skills required to operate the various machines and equipment necessary to work safely and productively in a machining, manufacturing and maintenance setting. There is also a focus on building parts and making repairs in industry.

The government can leverage the colleges' experience in offering such programs as it explores micro-credentials as a part of its strategy to drive prosperity in the auto sector and to help unemployed workers acquire the skills sought by employers.

Apprenticeship

"I'm proud of our 24 publicly funded colleges and the work they do to train ... apprentices in Ontario. We're not just building skills and capacity, we're investing in people and their potential."

Hon. Ross Romano
Minister of Colleges and Universities
Nov. 8, 2019

Ontario's skilled tradespersons are fundamental to the province's continued economic growth. They are critical to export-oriented sectors such as advanced manufacturing, agri-food, mining, forest industries and hospitality. The trades are also well represented in industries as diverse as energy, environment, health care, municipal employment and the construction trades, which are central to advancing the province's ambitious infrastructure agenda.

Many of these industries are concerned about the pending shortages in the skilled trades. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce, Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters, the construction industry and many other industries have identified skills shortages as a primary factor limiting their ability to expand and create jobs.

"More than 25% of Canadian jobs will be heavily disrupted by technology in the coming decade. Fully half will see a significant overhaul of the skills required ... As a government, our priority is to make sure the students of today gain the skills they need for the jobs of tomorrow."

Ministers Monte McNaughton, Stephen Lecce and Jill Dunlop
Toronto Sun
Nov. 3, 2019

The skills training that Ontario's colleges provide – with their highly specialized laboratories and industry-qualified professors – is central to addressing this shortfall. Colleges already provide the in-school training each year for 30,000 apprentices. Colleges can further assist the province to increase the number of apprentices and to improve apprenticeship completion rates to address the skills shortage.

Colleges regularly interact with over 3,000 employers on apprenticeship issues to obtain advice on modernizing the curriculum, purchasing equipment needed for shop classes and scheduling classes to minimize conflict with industry peak work periods. Colleges also engage with employers to find work-

integrated-learning and co-op and apprenticeship placements for their students, including women and others from diversity groups. Examples of employer and college cooperation to improve apprenticeship in-school classes are provided below.

Examples of employer and college cooperation on apprenticeship

- Anmar Mechanical and Electrical Contractors Ltd., Sudbury, supported the women in welding level 1 pre-apprenticeship program at Cambrian College. Two of their Red Seal journeymen taught in the program, and the company offered eight work placements.
- With the closure of the GM plant in Oshawa, Durham College is supporting its employees, creating a customized college portal that is accessible to all GM Oshawa salaried and hourly employees affected by the changes.
- In a new partnership, Eastgate Ford is giving Mohawk College students in the two-year motive power technician diploma program training on the same dealership learning management system (LMS) Ford technicians use across Canada. When students graduate, they won't have to go back to school for apprenticeship training – they just complete the required hands-on training hours and then take their technician's exam.
- George Brown College professor Rainier Bratsch-Blundel authored the *Guide to Canadian Plumbing Codes* and the *Guide to Ontario Plumbing Codes* used by industry.
- Centennial College has modified its truck and coach technician course for the Toronto Transit Commission and its automotive service technician course for GM, Ford, Toyota, Honda and Canadian Tire.
- EACOM Timber Corporation provides enhanced access to its operations for relevant Northern College program areas (i.e., guaranteed placement opportunities), scholarships, equipment contributions, expertise and applied research opportunities. In exchange it receives increased access to students during the program of study, advertising and aid in recruiting.

Supporting small business

As the pace of technological advancements accelerates and transforms products and production processes, local small businesses are at risk of falling behind if they do not have access to the specialized researchers, laboratories and technical skills training that are readily available to their larger, international competitors.

Colleges have been evolving to meet the emerging demands of the local businesses they serve. They now work with more than 1,300 companies each year to pursue market-driven applied research activities. Many of these businesses report improved products and production, higher sales and new job creation because of their college collaborations. In addition, colleges engage students in applied research activities, providing students with opportunities to develop an innovative mindset that they will be able to rely upon as they transition to the workforce.

Colleges have a clear understanding of the innovation requirements of small businesses across the province and the need for enhancing economic development in local communities. Over 280,000 small businesses are owned by college graduates and five in six college graduates are employed in firms with fewer than 500 employees.

Students at risk

With their low tuition rates, colleges provide a post-secondary alternative that is affordable and accessible, particularly for people with financial and other challenges. Colleges are the key providers of education and skills training for students from a variety of backgrounds, such as people from low-income households and students with disabilities, including mental health challenges. Such students often face a range of barriers to achieving academic success and subsequently labour market success.

To address the barriers to success that such individuals face, colleges provide a number of supports and services that include recruitment and outreach programs, orientation programs, learning supports and retention and intervention services. By assisting more students to achieve academic success, these programs help produce more highly skilled graduates who can succeed in the labour market and contribute to Ontario's future economy and their own well-being.

III. FISCAL OVERVIEW OF ONTARIO COLLEGES

Operating revenues

Ontario's colleges continue to experience reductions in provincial funding for their programs.

The colleges' per-student revenues from operating grants and domestic tuition fees – adjusted for inflation – declined after hitting a peak in 2007-08. By 2017-18, these revenues were estimated to be six per cent lower than 10 years earlier.

The decline is attributable in part to the decrease in the value of the weighted funding unit (WFU) used in the calculation of the core operating grant to flow enrolment-based funding. Under the new corridor funding model for colleges, which was fully adopted in fall 2019, the WFU value will be \$4,150 – more than \$200 lower than it was in 2012-13.

Before the full impact of the corridor model on college funding could be assessed, the government announced that starting in 2020-21, a much larger proportion of funding will flow on the basis of performance outcomes and much less on the basis of enrolment.

In 2020-21, 25 per cent of funding will be flowed based on performance outcomes, ramping up to 60 per cent by 2024-25. At the same time, the WFU value will fall further to \$2,990 in 2020-21 and \$1,089 in 2024-25. For some colleges, the shift in funding approaches will likely result in lower revenues than at present.

Furthermore, the government directed colleges in January 2019 to reduce domestic tuition fees by 10 per cent in 2019-20 and freeze tuition fees in the following year. It is estimated this tuition cut will reduce college tuition revenues in 2019-20 by about \$80 million.

Ontario colleges already charge lower tuition fees for their regular programs than most other provinces in Canada. Tuition fees for typical Ontario college programs are also significantly lower than those for typical undergraduate university programs. Given the college-university fee differential, colleges have long advocated that Ontario must move to separate tuition fee policies for colleges and universities.

Deferred maintenance

Most colleges were established more than 50 years ago and have aging infrastructure. Deteriorating college facilities do not support effective learning environments and pose risks to students, faculty and staff, and visitors to the campus. Their energy consumption exceeds current standards.

As noted in the 2010 annual report of the Auditor General of Ontario, the “ongoing funding for maintenance of existing facilities has not been sufficient to maintain the aging college infrastructure, and the backlog of deferred maintenance is increasing.” The deferred maintenance backlog currently stands at about \$1.5 billion and is expected to grow to more than \$3 billion in a decade, without significant new investments.

Mitigation strategies

To mitigate the impact of the funding challenges they face, colleges have implemented a number of efficiencies and collaborate on a number of fronts. This includes a provincewide approach to collective bargaining, a provincewide pension and group-insured benefit plans, a centralized student application service and shared support services for libraries and resource centres.

Colleges engage in collaborative purchasing through partnerships with other colleges and with others in their local communities and participate in the Ontario Education Collaborative Marketplace. Colleges will also be part of the government’s centralized procurement initiative.

In addition to sharing administrative costs, colleges share academic programs and services. Colleges collaborate in the development and delivery of online education, both through OntarioLearn and eCampusOntario.

Colleges also use revenue-generation approaches to help alleviate the fiscal pressures on their budgets. It is widely recognized that colleges have benefited from increasing their international activity by enrolling more international students in Ontario and providing educational services abroad.

Colleges use the tuition revenues from international students to support the costs of providing education and training programs and services for these students, which are not covered by provincial funding. As well, the revenues have allowed colleges to avoid the large deficits that might have come from the drop in domestic enrolment and supported new investments in equipment and capital repairs.

The provincial government also benefits from increased international enrolment. The international student recovery fee the government levies on colleges generated close to \$90 million for the province in 2018-19.

Furthermore, international students contribute to the strength of the economy. A [federal study on the economic impact of international students in Canada](#) estimated that all international students in Ontario spent about \$7.8 billion on tuition, accommodation and discretionary spending in 2016.

International students add to Ontario's labour supply and help meet the skills needs of employers, both in the short term when they are students and over the longer term when graduates immigrate to Canada. They help to create international networks that strengthen Canada's and Ontario's economic, social and scientific linkages with other countries and contribute to the cultural enrichment of local communities and college campuses.

However, there is some uncertainty around the sustainability of international activity over the longer term. Other countries are increasingly looking to expand their own post-secondary education systems, rather than sending their students abroad. As well, the flow of international students is subject to international political events.

Through these mitigation strategies, colleges have been able to minimize the impact of their fiscal challenges on programs and services for students and the local economies of their communities. Going forward, it is uncertain whether these approaches will generate sufficient savings or enough new revenue to offset the consequences of the funding constraints that colleges have faced for many years.

IV. SUPPORT FOR COLLEGES

For colleges to help Ontario build a skilled workforce that will position the province to fulfil future labour force requirements, colleges need government support.

Recognizing the government's focus on restoring trust and accountability in the province's finances and to control provincial spending, colleges are only putting forward a limited number of requests for new

investments. These proposals are directly linked to the government's open for business, open for jobs agenda and its priority to improve mental health and addictions services.

In addition, colleges are asking the government to make policy changes that would help stabilize and strengthen colleges. These proposals have been previously presented to government and include reducing red tape and modernizing college credentials.

V. NEW INVESTMENTS FOR COLLEGES

Student success and mental health

With the onset of mental health issues often coinciding with the age of entry to post-secondary education, colleges are frequently the first point of contact for students in crises. Furthermore, as students progress from high school to college, and transition from child and youth mental health programs to adult services, they often experience significant service gaps.

Camille Quenneville, the CEO of CMHA Ontario, said in an October 2018 news release: "Mental health is a concern on any campus as young people often face challenges during significant transitional periods in their life".

Working with health-care organizations and community partners, colleges aim to connect students to appropriate treatment and resources to help them manage their mental health and wellness.

Colleges recognize that early interventions on campus save lives, help alleviate pressures on Ontario's health-care system and contribute to student success. The failure to address mental health issues can put students at risk of not completing their studies, which can diminish their chances of succeeding in the labour market and contributing to Ontario's future economy and their own well-being.

As the volume and complexity of student mental health challenges has increased, addressing the mental wellness of college students has become a priority for college administrators and faculty. While colleges appreciate the government's investments in mental health supports to date, the demand for such supports has risen dramatically over time and the current level of funding is insufficient to address student needs. For colleges to meet the growing demand from students, they require additional targeted funding for mental health services and supports.

Colleges are pleased the government has committed to investing \$3.8 billion over 10 years, supported by a funding agreement with the federal government, to develop and implement a comprehensive mental health and addictions strategy. Colleges are requesting the province allocate a portion of this funding to colleges.

Specifically, colleges are asking the government to invest an additional \$75 million over the next three years to strengthen mental health services and supports available on college campuses. The funding would enable colleges to bring an increased focus on early intervention and prevention measures, which may lessen the severity and duration of a student's illness, as well as reduce the number of students experiencing mental health crises.

Small business competitiveness and job creation

Ontario's prosperity depends on the ability of its small business community and its employees to be creative and innovative in meeting ever-tougher customer requirements. However, only three per cent of Ontario businesses perform any research and the record suggests that their performance on other innovation indicators is also lacking.

The province of Quebec provides \$20 million in base funding annually to ensure that its Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel (CEGEPs) have the capacity through 49 (industry and technology-specific) college technology transfer centres (CCTTs) to support innovation and expansion by existing small businesses in their local communities across Quebec.

Through this program, CEGEPs are recognized for helping Quebec businesses compete better and create jobs in industries as diverse as metallurgy and mineral processing, artificial intelligence, robotics and machine vision, aerospace and innovative vehicles, bioproducts and biotechnologies, geosynthetics and polymers, electrochemistry, pharmaceuticals, geomatics and digital imaging and interactive media.

In addition to its direct impact on local business expansion, Quebec's base funding enabled CEGEPs to win \$33 million through 500 federal NSERC awards in 2018-19. In comparison, Ontario colleges won 190 awards, totalling less than \$19 million.

Overall, support from their provincial government enabled Quebec CEGEPs to win three times the per capita funding from the federal government to help their small businesses innovate and compete. Moreover, to increase the competitive advantage for more industries across the province, Quebec has just announced additional funding to support 10 more specialized CCTTs.

More Ontario small businesses need help to strengthen their innovation capacity so they can cut their costs, take improved products to market and create jobs.

Ontario's colleges are proposing the government invest \$45 million over five years to enable colleges to create industry-specific small business innovation centres across the province to provide more businesses with an essential advantage: market-responsive applied research.

College centres would be selected for five-year funding through a competitive process that would assess the strength of their local industry involvement, their specific applied research expertise and the magnitude of local industry demand for their services. Specialized college centres would benefit sectors around the province, especially in smaller and northern communities where effective support for practical help in innovation can be difficult to access.

The new funding will enable established small businesses – from the mining, forest and advanced manufacturing sectors to artificial intelligence, robotics, advanced automotive capabilities, gaming, digital imaging and interactive media – to scale up. They could do this by accessing the technical capabilities and applied research capacity they need to take advantage of new market opportunities required by their customers and to cut their costs.

Each small business applied research partner would be required to match or exceed the funding provided by the Ontario government with a cash/in-kind contribution for applied research and/or development projects, specialized technical assistance and customized technical micro-credentials. A small portion of the Ontario government's contribution would go towards covering colleges' administrative costs, including reporting on outcomes achieved. For example, colleges now report on the number of clients served, the level of industry cash and in-kind received and the number of new or improved processes, services and products.

Environmental adaptation program

In line with the government's recent commitments for green infrastructure investments for smaller communities and not-for-profit organizations, the proposed investments in environmental adaptation infrastructure on college campuses are vital to enable colleges to ensure their graduates are equipped with the skills that are required to implement and manage new environmental adaptation technologies.

Such investments provide an excellent platform for colleges to engage local businesses and communities, as the benefits of the investments are likely to be immediate. Colleges can leverage these partnerships to increase local business awareness of the commercial opportunities – in Canada and abroad – for energy efficiency, leading-edge water and waste water management/reduction technologies, as well as the benefits to be derived from investments in reducing energy demand and making systems more efficient.

The colleges' building infrastructure comprises 700 buildings, with more than 25 million square feet, serving 500,000 students. College facilities are designed to ensure that students can obtain the advanced skills and experience that they need for the workplace.

Colleges are proposing to work with the province to encourage the federal government to ensure that \$200 million over the next three years is made available to invest in environmental adaptation infrastructure on college campuses. Given the financial consolidation of colleges on the province's books

and amortization, the annual financial impact on the province would be much lower (e.g., assuming a 10-year amortization period, the three-year provincial budgetary impact would be about \$30 million).

The immediate goal of the investment would be to reduce utility costs for colleges, which are currently about \$80 million per year. Given this cost pressure and the associated level of energy consumption, there is an urgent need to retrofit college facilities and achieve breakthroughs in energy usage. Retrofitting of old facilities is essential for Ontario to become more energy efficient.

A college environmental adaptation infrastructure program would also help to address the deferred maintenance backlog that colleges face.

Apprenticeship funding

"Technology is changing Ontario's economy and the skilled trades have to keep up. We know we have talented potential workers in Ontario — providing the right training will make it easier to match talent with good jobs, help us grow the auto and manufacturing sector, and make Ontario open for business."

Premier Doug Ford
May 31, 2019

Colleges share the government's goal that Ontario must have many more apprentices who are prepared to hit the ground running upon completion of their programs so their employers are able to undertake the leading-edge projects that will allow them to compete in a tougher international economy.

However, this goal is at risk unless the serious apprenticeship training funding shortfalls are addressed.

Colleges face high costs due to small class sizes, short in-school schedules and the expense of purchasing the state-of-the-art specialized equipment that is necessary to replicate the equipment that apprentices are required to install, maintain and repair in leading-edge companies.

Apprenticeship tuition fees have not increased since they were first introduced in 2002-03 and the funding for apprenticeship programs is now significantly less than the expected costs in 2020-21.

In view of the rapid technological changes and the environmental adaptation that is occurring in industries ranging from the auto sector to advanced manufacturing to construction, colleges are also concerned the equipment used to train apprentices needs to reflect the advanced equipment they will be expected to use once they enter the workplace.

Colleges are recommending the government announce a four-year plan to expand the number of apprentices by 40 per cent and to address the extreme funding shortfall by positioning colleges and their industry partners as the champions for a modernized apprenticeship system.

Specifically, Ontario should:

- Increase the number of seats purchased by 40 per cent over the next four years.
- Increase the government-paid apprentice per diem by \$5 a day in 2020-21 and a further \$2.50 a day in each of the following two years, to reach \$73.09.
- Establish a minimum payment threshold of 20 per diems paid by government for each class to ensure desperately needed apprenticeship programs are maintained in small, northern and rural communities.
- Increase tuition for apprentices by \$2.50 a day in 2020-21 and a further \$2.50 a day in each of the following three years. In four years, at \$800 per in-school session, it would still fall short of the tuition levels of the western provinces but it would be more comparable to tuition paid by Ontario college students.
- Increase funding for the apprenticeship enhancement fund to \$30 million per year from its current level of \$14 million. This would allow colleges to train the next generation of skilled trades persons on the state-of-the-art equipment that businesses are using. To enable northern and rural colleges to meet the requirements of their local small businesses, the funding method should be designed to ensure they can purchase the industry-required high-technology equipment needed to fully equip specialized laboratories and shops.

VI. POLICY MEASURES TO SUPPORT COLLEGES

The colleges have previously proposed a number of policy measures that would help stabilize and strengthen colleges. The proposals include reducing red tape and modernizing college credentials.

Reducing red tape

The colleges share the government's desire to reduce red tape and improve efficiency. The college sector's proposals for reducing red tape include simplifying and modernizing the transfer payment process, setting materiality thresholds for reporting and decreasing the number of audited reports that colleges are required to submit. Two specific red tape proposals – enabling colleges to offer stand-alone nursing degrees and apprenticeship modernization – are discussed below.

Stand-alone nursing degrees

The current provincial nursing registration regulation requires nurses to hold a baccalaureate nursing degree granted by a university. Thus, to offer nursing degrees, colleges must enter into collaborative partnerships with universities.

While colleges support and value the current collaborative model as one approach to educating registered nurses, it is not the optimal model for all communities and students.

Colleges are proposing that government amend the nursing act to permit colleges to offer stand-alone baccalaureate nursing degrees. The regulatory amendment would come at no additional cost to government and represents an opportunity to cut red tape, support local communities and create better pathways to the nursing profession.

Under the existing model, many students are required to transfer to a university outside of their community to complete their degree, which can impose financial and other burdens on students. Students have to either relocate or drive long distances to attend classes for the final years of the program. Allowing colleges to offer stand-alone nursing degrees would enable these students to complete their program at the college and reduce the costs associated with relocation or commuting.

Once students leave their local college to complete their program, they often do not return. Providing students with the ability to complete their degrees at the college would make it easier for communities – particularly smaller communities – to retain talent and meet their nursing supply needs.

Allowing colleges to offer stand-alone degrees would enable them to update curricula to better respond to the health-care needs of their local communities, such as an enhanced focus on rural health, Indigenous health, seniors' care and mental health. The collaborative model is a barrier to such innovation, as proposed changes to shared curriculum are required to go through at least two approvals processes at the partner institutions – many of which are not co-located in the same communities.

Stand-alone college nursing degrees would also create more career laddering opportunities for registered practical nurses (RPNs) interested in building on their knowledge and skills to enter the registered nursing (RN) profession. Several colleges have created specialized bridging programs for personal support workers (PSWs) to become RPNs and for RPNs to pursue a baccalaureate degree.

Allowing colleges to offer stand-alone nursing degrees will help reduce red tape as many college-university collaborations impose significant transactional costs on the colleges (e.g., frequent meetings between college-university partners to ensure uniform standards). In many cases, colleges also pay their university partner an administrative fee to participate in the collaboration.

Apprenticeship modernization

Colleges are pleased the government has identified apprenticeship modernization as a core element of its open for business, open for jobs plan and taken steps to advance its agenda:

- Addressed apprenticeship ratios.
- Legislated the wind down of the Ontario College of Trades.
- Strengthened the specialist high skills major program to encourage students to become apprentices.
- Transferred responsibility for apprenticeship to a new Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development in order to place more emphasis on addressing skills gaps.

Colleges are further recommending that government allow the Ontario College Application Service (OCAS) to take responsibility for the new one-window apprenticeship administrative authority. OCAS is ideal for increasing the number of apprentices as it is already the go-to site for hundreds of thousands of Ontarians considering post-secondary options.

Colleges are aware of the government's focus on restoring trust and accountability in the province's finances and its longer-term plan to bring provincial spending under control.

Expanding OCAS's mandate – at no cost to government – to include personalized digital apprentice registration, electronic logbooks, regular reminders and a job-matching service will encourage employers to hire apprentices and students to consider a career in the trades. It will make it easier for parents, guidance counsellors and teachers. It will also lead to an improvement in completion rates.

This will dramatically cut red tape for employers and for apprentices by simplifying the registration process, offering greater scheduling flexibility, an easier and more transparent system for recording apprenticeship progress and simplifying the employers' ability to find and hire new apprentices. Cutting apprenticeship red tape will also mean that colleges have the ability and resources to engage more employers and to help more apprentices succeed by scheduling their own apprenticeship classes and providing similar academic supports to those available to other college students.

As the government winds down the Ontario College of Trades, Ontario colleges also have the potential to take responsibility for a number of activities, including:

- Promoting the skilled trades, since colleges can effectively advocate for apprenticeship to potential employers/sponsors, apprentices, parents, guidance counsellors and teachers.
- Invigilating certificates of qualification examinations.
- Providing ongoing education for tradespersons, including mentorship and business skills development for owners or executives in larger enterprises.

Modernizing college credentials

To keep pace with the rapid developments in artificial intelligence and the transformations in nature of work, Ontario's businesses and industries must have access to a workforce comprised of top-quality, career-focused and degree-credentialed workers with the right mix of professional and technical skills.

However, government policies and processes continue to hinder the colleges' flexibility to make local decisions about the credentials they offer. Over the longer term, Ontario must move to allowing colleges to offer a full range of credentials including three-year degrees and career-specific master's degrees where warranted. As a starting point, colleges are proposing that government remove the mandated caps on the number of four-year college degrees.

Four-year degrees

According to government policy, five colleges (Humber, Sheridan, Conestoga, George Brown and Seneca) may offer degree programs up to a maximum of 15 per cent of their program activity. For all other colleges, degree programs are limited to a maximum of five per cent of program activity. Neither of these limits bears any relationship to employer requirements for a skilled workforce at either the local or the provincial level.

The caps or limits on the number of college degree programs must be eliminated. Not only are these caps artificial and illogical, but they were established at a time when the pace of technological change and global competition was less intense. Managing to the cap represents an additional and unnecessary layer of red tape.

The caps limit the ability of employers to hire enough workers with the right mix of technical and professional skills that they need to fill the new jobs that are emerging. The caps also mean that many students are not be able to access the kinds of college programs that are in high demand in the labour market and have high employment prospects.

VII. CONCLUSION

Ontario should embrace the future of work with optimism.

The government has a tremendous opportunity to lead the world in delivering post-secondary programs that prepare more people for career success – strengthening the economy and communities throughout the province.

Working collaboratively with colleges, the government can empower more people to maximize their potential in this new age of accelerating automation and innovation.

Building on the college system's many strengths, the province must embrace new ideas and measures to ensure more people acquire the expertise that leads to long-term success. In everything from the development of new programs and credentials to the long overdue modernization of apprenticeship training, Ontario can create more opportunities for people of all ages from all walks of life.

That work starts now.

The 2020 Ontario Budget provides the ideal platform to launch a meaningful transformation of post-secondary education. The province is encouraged to commit to the labour force of tomorrow by supporting the recommended investments and policy proposals in this submission.