

Ontario's 24 colleges are critical to their communities and local industries yet face similar issues confronting Ontario businesses – including financial sustainability, changing stakeholder demands and advanced technology requirements.

The recommendations below will enable colleges to respond effectively to today's challenges – producing a workforce with the expertise to drive economic recovery post-COVID-19.

#### Economic recovery

Pre-COVID, declining domestic enrolment, government funding constraints and policy changes resulted in extraordinary sustainability challenges. Colleges have responded aggressively, increasing international enrolment several fold in recent years.

Along with supporting international students, colleges used international tuition revenues for capital projects and operating expenses to the benefit of all students. With border restrictions impacting travel by international students, these revenues are at significant risk.

Despite taking new steps to address the pandemic's financial impact, the net deficit for the college system is estimated at \$250 million. Reliance on international revenues to balance budgets must be rethought in a post-pandemic world.

- Additional government funding is required to address the colleges' net deficits.

#### Infrastructure capital

- Colleges have \$2.5-billion "shovel-ready" projects that require government investment. These projects would create immediate jobs and produce more highly skilled graduates.

#### Virtual learning

Support college campuses to become leaders in technology-enabled learning:

- Provide \$56 million to add/upgrade critical digital infrastructure, software and services to support the widespread adoption of online programs and 24/7 accessible academic and student support services.
- Provide \$25 million for digital program development, including the expansion of advanced visualization and simulation technologies, new mobile and virtual learning resources and for training faculty to develop high-quality online courses.
- Provide a \$500 credit for students to purchase/upgrade computer and IT equipment.

## Student success

Supports available to students with disabilities must be strengthened.

- Provide a \$6-million grant to expand the universal design for learning resources and training so programs are designed to be inclusive of different learning needs.

## Applied research

Colleges partner with small and medium-sized enterprises in all sectors on practical research resulting in an exceptional return on investment – higher sales or reduced costs.

- Establish a \$20-million annual college innovation fund.

## College degrees

Three-year advanced diplomas offered by Ontario colleges are not recognized anywhere else in the world and can be a detriment to career advancement and the recruitment of international students.

- Allow colleges to award three-year degrees and master's degrees required by the economy.
- Remove restrictions on colleges that limit their honours degree offerings and graduates' career advancement.

## Micro-credentials

Micro-credentials provide intense training for specific skills to upgrade the unemployed and underemployed.

- Provide \$5 million for colleges to launch new micro-credentials in areas critical to the province's post-pandemic economy.

## Skilled trades

Apprenticeship training costs colleges 26 per cent more than revenues received.

- Provide an additional \$20 per diem from government and increased apprentice fees.
- At no cost to government, allow the Ontario College Application Service to provide digital registration, electronic logbooks and job-matching to enable colleges to better support apprentices and employers.

With these strategic investments, Ontario colleges will be a key contributor to Ontario's post-pandemic recovery by delivering world-class post-secondary education and equipping more people for rewarding careers in the province's rapidly changing job market.