**Speaking notes for Marketa Evans
President and CEO, Colleges Ontario
AMO conference, Aug. 21, 2023**

--

Good afternoon everyone. I am truly delighted to be here, my first time at AMO!

It’s exciting to see all the great energy in this room and we’re very pleased to be part of your program this year.

My name is Marketa Evans, and I’m the President and CEO of Colleges Ontario – the member association for the province’s 24 public colleges. I joined the organization in May, from our national member association – and I’ve spent the past couple of months getting out on campus. I’ve seen first-hand the incredible positive impact that public colleges have on people’s lives and in our communities. I’m incredibly proud to represent my members. Simply put, Ontario’s public colleges fuel Ontario’s economic success.

I’m here today with Ann Marie Vaughan – the President and CEO of Humber College in Toronto – to describe some of that work.

I’m going to kick the conversation off by sharing with you a little bit about who we are and what we do and why it matters to you – some of which may be very familiar but perhaps some of it less so.

As you could see in the video, colleges fill critical labour market needs and prepare students for a wide range of rewarding and cutting-edge careers. You likely know our programs in healthcare, medical lab technology, vet technician or skilled trades. We are a strong partner in these sectors – as just one example, during the pandemic your public colleges put 1.5MM additional PSW hours into Ontario’s long term care homes.

You may be less familiar with the large number of new programs Ontario’s public colleges have launched in recent years responding to industry needs in fast moving, cutting-edge sectors – critical minerals and the electric vehicle value chain, aviation, power engineering, advanced manufacturing, robotics, mechatronics, cybersecurity and artificial intelligence, just to name a few.

Ontario’s vibrant economy attracts enormous investments in these key sectors, which all require a skilled workforce. Much of this specialized training only happens at colleges. We are your public college system – purpose built to fuel Ontario’s economy with job-ready graduates and support for business-led R&D.

So - Even if you don’t go to college, or your children don’t go to college, every community in Ontario relies on a strong public college system.

Did you know that the average public college tuition for an Ontario student is less than $3000 per year and most of our programs can be completed in 1-3 years? That makes us by far Ontario’s most affordable and accessible post-secondary system, with incredible reach across the entire province.

Each year, there are approximately half a million students and learners in Ontario’s public colleges – our public colleges offer 900 distinct programs across Ontario, including rural, northern and smaller regions - with over 200 campuses and service locations across the province. We offer programs right in your backyard that encourage young people to learn and stay in their communities and that allow people of all ages to upskill, retrain and pursue career aspirations without having to leave their job, family and home communities.

Outside of the greater Toronto area, approximately two -thirds of our domestic students come from the local community – which means those learners do not need to incur moving costs and other expenses. About 2/3 of our students don’t come directly from high school – Ontarians looking for an efficient path to a rewarding career, or who are looking to progress and learn new skills.

Ontario’s businesses depend on Ontario’s colleges.

About 25 per cent of all current job vacancies in Ontario require people with college credentials, which is double that of universities.

It is projected that over the next decade, over 35 per cent of new jobs will require college graduates.

And, there are 40 skilled trades in Ontario where the only available training is at one of our colleges – many of those trades are vital for growing your economies and building homes.

That is why we very much welcome this opportunity to formally celebrate our new partnership with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario – it’s a real opportunity to build on the successful work already taking place in communities, create more connections and to grow new areas of collaboration. For example, Colleges Ontario is a partner in the new AMO municipal workforce development initiative.

This means training people in everything from early childhood education to public administration.

It means ensuring you have the paramedics you need and skilled workers in trades and technologies for the capital and housing projects that are vital to your communities. And an educated workforce to continue to attract business investment.

Let me share an exciting recent development that illustrates how we continue to strive to serve. One important change has been the recent provincial approval to allow colleges to stand up four-year nursing degrees.

This is a significant improvement to health-care training in this province that will grow the pipeline of nurses in your communities.

How?

For many years, any college wanting to offer a nursing degree had to collaborate with a university partner. The student spent the first 2 years at a local college and then the final 2 years at a university often in a different community.

While we valued these partnerships, it often meant students enrolling in the program would have to move to another municipality to complete the nursing degree.

For many students, the cost and logistics were barriers that prevented them from enrolling in nursing. It also meant that often they would then stay in the community where they finished their degree.

Now that we can offer the complete program at the college, there are more opportunities for students to pursue nursing degrees close to home – and then stay to support local health care needs.

Ontario also has a high-quality reputation as a world-class destination for international students. Attracting international students to communities throughout Ontario is an essential part of the effort to bolster the workforce by increasing immigration and dealing with our demographic challenges.

Many of the students who come to Ontario will stay here when they graduate and pursue rewarding careers in your communities.

International students contribute over $12 billion to the Ontario economy, which supports over 118,000 jobs.

That said, we are also well aware that the growth in international students has created challenges.

We’re committed to proactively working with you and other partners to address those challenges.

That’s why over a year ago, Colleges Ontario brought our members together to develop new, performance standards to ensure high quality education and experiences for all our international students.

These new standards mean

* Marketing is transparent and accurate
* International agents are trained and ethical
* Information and assistance on services, supports and facilities before and after arrival

These standards are subject to rigorous 3rd party audits.

One of the most significant challenges – for these students and our domestic population – is the availability and cost of housing.

Colleges have an important role to play both in building more housing on campus and also in ensuring a strong pipeline of talent for home building in your community. This includes skilled trades as well as many other occupations related to home building.

There are some great examples of innovative solutions already found in our communities.

Georgian College is matching students with seniors who have extra space in their homes through an innovative technology platform.

Other colleges are leveraging their campus land to build more housing options for students, including student residences, as well as meeting community needs for long-term care and retirement residences.

In North Bay, Canadore College is partnering with the community to bring 160 affordable beds for seniors in an intergenerational living facility, where students will get access to a very wide range of course-related placements and hands on training.

Through our partnership with AMO, we expect to learn more about the leading practices in your communities to more rapidly implement them across the province.

We can and we must do more and we are committed to doing so.

I’d like to finish up by turning to one of the hidden jewels in our college system.

It’s something I alluded to earlier – college-based business-led R&D that drives commercialization and business growth across the province. College based R&D is complementary to the well known research going on in universities, and has 3 clear differentiators, that Ann Marie will expand upon in her remarks:

* First - The research question is business led
* Second - The Intellectual Property stays with the business
* Third - The projects are fast – most completed in less than a year

Business-led R&D fills a critical need in Ontario’s innovation ecosystem and helps to bridge the gap to commercialization and job creation, especially for SMEs.

Humber College has long been a leader in this space and recently opened the Barrett Centre for Technology Innovation. The Barrett Centre is home to the Advanced Manufacturing Skills Consortium -- a group of nine leading industry partners working with the college to train students and employees of Canadian companies. The building has become a living lab for mechatronics, automation, and advanced manufacturing as students learn alongside representatives from leading companies in robotics, 3D printing, and digital technologies and more. This technology and training prepares students to be world-class leaders in STEM fields – and grow Ontario’s competitive advantage.

Ann Marie is president and CEO of Humber College. I am very proud to call Ann Marie a colleague - she is passionate about what public colleges do to support learners and communities. And she has an incredible reputation for results-driven collaboration.

She began her presidency at Humber in August of last year, as the first woman to hold the position.
She is a highly distinguished senior executive with nearly 30 years of success in the postsecondary sector. She joined Humber from Loyalist College in Belleville, Ontario where she served as President and CEO.

I invite you now to watch this short video which will help set the stage for her presentation. Thank you.