

April 6, 2020

Re: College Employer Council Recognizes Ontario Colleges' Response to Pandemic

I am writing this letter during these troubling and challenging times to recognize the hard work, commitment, and dedication of so many people in the Ontario College system. I am the Chief Executive Officer of the College Employer Council (CEC), which is the organization that, on behalf of Ontario's 24 public colleges, is responsible for, among other things, labour relations, negotiating collective agreements with unionized staff and providing a variety of services for the college system including human resource advice, collective agreement administration, and managing the group insurance benefit plans.

As a result of CEC's mandate, we have insight into the pride, work, dedication, and commitment of so many in the Ontario College system to provide safety and medical care as well as to ensure colleges can continue to deliver their ongoing world class programs so students can continue their learning and career advancement.

College stakeholders include staff keeping school facilities and operations running, professors and instructors providing remote learning, executives and administrators overseeing and identifying strategies to ensure safe operations, OPSEU leadership working collaboratively to meet this mandate, and our elected and government officials facilitating policies and supporting the system with emergency planning.

To this end, an expression of gratitude must be extended to Minister Romano and the Ministry of Colleges & Universities leadership who have participated on almost daily calls helping students, faculty and staff as we transition through this crisis. Their commitment during these unprecedented times has provided strength and guidance to our system, not the least of which was the recently announced \$25 million in emergency funding for post-secondary education as a major investment in student success as the province continues to tackle the COVID-19 outbreak.

While ensuring safe ongoing education during the pandemic, the 24 Colleges quickly mobilized to respond to the urgent need for medical and personal protection equipment. This included hundreds of life-saving respirators, beds, medical carts, masks, gowns, moving equipment, and gloves.

On a recent call with Minister Romano, the Government expressed its appreciation that Ontario colleges have donated more than 300,000 pieces of medical equipment. One only needs a quick google search to learn of the incredible support each of the colleges is providing.

Another significant example of colleges and its faculty working to save lives is where the College of Respiratory Therapists of Ontario (CRTO) have worked with a College so that its more than 40 third-year students can begin putting their skills to work immediately during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many colleges are working to provide secondments and student placements into hospitals and related health care to provide much needed human resources.

Faculty and staff have worked really hard and creatively in continuing to provide their high quality education in a remote or online format in a very short period of time. There are hundreds of examples, including one fitness and health promotion professor and a second-year student hosting free weekday online fitness classes to keep staff moving right in their own home and allowing for healthy breaks, and creative YouTube videos to provide different delivery.

Another college ordered 5,000 Chromebooks so it could assure ongoing education and support students during the teaching at a distance and support their education.

All of this has taken place in less than three weeks. It is this commitment, dedication and pride to our system and for Ontario society that positions Ontario's colleges as true leaders. It is an honour and privilege to work with such a committed group and, during these troubling and challenging times, CEC feels it is important to recognize the dedication of so many people making a difference in the fight against this global pandemic.

Wishing everyone health and safety in this exceptional time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Graham Lloyd', written in a cursive style.

Graham Lloyd
Chief Executive Officer