

NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Contact North | Contact Nord moves IT infrastructure into secure cloud to support students

Reliability, stability ensure online learners can access the technology they need,
when they need it

(THUNDER BAY, ON) – Contact North | Contact Nord has transferred its information technology (IT) infrastructure to the cloud, ensuring a smooth service for online learners and the ability to respond to rapidly escalating demand.

With 860,000+ post-secondary students enrolled in Ontario¹ colleges and universities – most of them now fully online – learners must be confident that the technology they're using won't fail and that the platforms supporting their online courses will be available at all times.

Contact North | Contact Nord leveraged the information technology expertise, experience and capacity of OCAS, a not-for-profit organization delivering shared technology and application services for Ontario's public colleges, to transition the following IT services to the cloud:

- The Learning Management System (LMS) students use to take online courses;
- The videoconferencing platform they need to take online courses;
- The e-mail servers that provide greater reliability and security.

These changes allowed Contact North | Contact Nord to quickly scale up when the COVID-19 pandemic forced hundreds of thousands of Ontario students online in March.

“The last few months, in particular, revealed how vitally important it is to transition our IT infrastructure to the next level,” says Maxim Jean-Louis, Contact North | Contact Nord's President - Chief Executive Officer.

“Our partnership with OCAS is helping us meet increased demand as we respond every year to more than 1 million requests for services from underserved rural and remote Ontario residents wanting to access education and training without leaving their communities.”

“We are incredibly proud that our partnership has enabled Contact North | Contact Nord to better assist learners across the province at a time when the need for reliable online education and support services is crucial,” says OCAS' President and Chief Executive Officer, Karen Creditor.

“We greatly value the opportunity to support Contact North | Contact Nord in our shared mission of opening and improving pathways to post-secondary education and look forward to continuing this work in the future.”

The transition to the cloud involved two key transformational activities. The first was to move Thunder Bay- and Sudbury-based IT infrastructure (servers, platforms, software applications hosting, telephone system) to offsite hosting by an experienced third-party technology provider. Their staff of 80+ IT professionals deliver guaranteed 99.9999% up-time and 24/7/365 monitoring and support.

The second major activity was to shift away from investing money, time and energy on serving technology to investing in serving students, as well as college and university partners, by providing more customized services.

“Learners all over rural and remote Ontario rely on our technology to help meet their evolving needs and to provide equitable access to online courses that help them reach their education and employment goals,” says Charmaine Kissmann, Contact North | Contact Nord’s Director of IT & Web Services. “We are confident that by improving and expanding our services, we can provide seamless service during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. We’ll also be able to support more learners in every corner of Ontario.”

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About Contact North | Contact Nord

As a community-based organization, established and funded by the Government of Ontario since 1986 with its headquarters in Thunder Bay, Contact North | Contact Nord provides underserved Ontarians in 800 small, rural, remote, Indigenous and Francophone communities with equitable access to education and job training in their own communities.

We respond to 1 million+ requests per year from students and potential students related to Ontarian colleges and universities and provide five local services:

- Information about available online programs and courses
- Assistance with the registration process for their program or course of choice
- Free use of computer workstations and high-speed Internet access to complete online courses

- Free use of web conferencing and videoconferencing distance learning platforms to connect to, and participate in, their live online programs and courses
- Supervision of written exams and tests

Contact North | Contact Nord's teachonline.ca portal showcases hundreds of projects focused on transforming the teaching and learning experience, improving student success and boosting engagement and flexibility.

Learn more about us at contactnorth.ca.

About OCAS

OCAS is an independent not-for-profit organization based out of Guelph, Ontario. As a member of our province's thriving tech hub and a proud partner of the Ontario college system, technology and innovation are at the heart of our business – we leverage the power of data, people, and partnerships to deliver leading-edge systems, dependable technology, and cost-effective solutions across the higher education sector. Every year, we provide the pathways and support that help over 250,000 individuals take the first step toward a brighter future through Ontario's public colleges.

We care a lot about what we do. Learn more about us at www.ocas.ca.