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Sent: July 18, 2019 11:17 AM

To: ewatkins@heqco.ca; akaufman@heqco.ca; 'Martin Hicks' <mhicks@heqco.ca>; hweingarten@heqco.ca

Cc: 'Ellen Permato' <epermato@heqco.ca>; 'Fiona Deller' <fdeller@heqco.ca>; Tina Reed <tina@contactnorth.ca>

Subject: THANKS FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET ON MONDAY, JUNE 24, 2019 AS PART OF THE REVIEW OF ONTARIO DIGITAL ECO-SYSTEM - EXTENDING REACH AND SCALING SERVICES TO MEET UNMET NEEDS OF UNDERSERVED ONTARIANS

Amy, Elyse, Martin, and Harvey

I hope your summer is going well.

As promised in my note below, attached please find a 2-page document (CONTACT NORTH | CONTACT NORD BACKGROUND PACKAGE FOR HEQCO – JUL 2019) with a series of links to key background documents available on our corporate website and references to the attached three Contact North | Contact Nord documents:

- LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE ACCESS FLEXIBILITY QUALITY AFFORDABILITY AND SUCCESS IN APPRENTICESHIP
- COLLECTIVELY BUILDING THE FUTURE FOR DIGITAL LEARNING IN ONTARIO
- ONLINE LEARNING FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ONTARIO).

I also attached a copy of CONTACT NORTH | CONTACT NORD INFOGRAPHIC – JULY 2019 (also referenced in the list of background documents) for ease of review.

I plan to submit a copy of the 2019 Contact North | Contact Nord Indigenous Online Learners Experience Survey report from Forum Research during the week of August 12, 2019. This is a follow-up survey to the 2019 Contact North | Contact Nord Satisfaction Survey, focusing specifically on Indigenous learners, consisting of both quantitative and qualitative surveys.

We purposefully post these key planning and corporate documents to our website as part of our commitment to transparency.

As a community-based organization, we are on standby to work with the Ministry and our partners to continue to extend our reach and scale up our services to help address the unmet education and training needs of underserved Ontarians in the 600 small, rural, remote, Indigenous and Francophone communities we serve. Our services are designed to help these Ontarians enhance their skills and, for those seeking new job opportunities, improving the prospects for employment.

In keeping with the collaborative nature of our relationship with our partners and of the review process you are conducting, I am sharing our submission with them.

If I can provide further information on any of these documents, please do not hesitate to let me know.

My colleague, Tina Reed and I are available to meet with you at any time.

Maxim

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From: Maxim Jean-Louis

Sent: Thursday, June 27, 2019 4:39 PM

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Cc: 'Ellen Permato' <epermato@heqco.ca>; 'Fiona Deller' <fdeller@heqco.ca>; Tina Reed <tina@contactnorth.ca>

Subject: THANKS FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET ON MONDAY, JUNE 24, 2019 AS PART OF THE REVIEW OF ONTARIO DIGITAL ECO-SYSTEM - EXTENDING REACH AND SCALING SERVICES TO MEET UNMET NEEDS OF UNDERSERVED ONTARIANS

Amy, Elyse, Martin, and Harvey

Tina and I thank you for the opportunity to meet with you last Monday, June 24th to:

1. Answer your specific questions about our current work in the digital space;
2. Inform and guide your research, analysis and evaluation; and
3. Discuss more broadly with you how we think digital learning can or should be used to help achieve provincial goals of enhanced: student mobility and credit transfer, access, quality of educational offerings and use of resources.

We also took the opportunity to share with you CONTACT NORTH | CONTACT NORD BY THE NUMBERS – AN INFOGRAPHIC – JUNE 2019 (attached) to illustrate:

- 1) The challenge of local access to education and training opportunities facing one-third of Ontarians living in small, remote, rural, Indigenous and Francophone communities;
- 2) The local services and support available from Contact North | Contact Nord; and
- 3) Our direct impact on these Ontarians living in every corner of the province.

Our focus at Contact North | Contact Nord is indeed about meeting UNMET NEEDS for local access to education and training by underserved Ontarians in these communities in partnership with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, Ontario's education and training providers and local communities.

We are on standby to work with the Ministry to extend our reach and scale up our services to meet these unmet needs and we continue to be community-centric in our efforts to provide access to local education and training opportunities.

The unmet needs in these communities are glaring from an analysis of 2016 Census data on the 28 districts and counties where we currently maintain our 116 online learning centres:

1. 25 districts and counties (89%) are above the provincial average of residents with no certificate, diploma or degree;
2. 26 districts and counties (93%) are below the provincial average of residents with a post-secondary credential; and
3. 15 districts and counties (54%) have an unemployment rate higher than the provincial average, including all districts in Northern Ontario.

Also attached is a document entitled COLLECTIVELY BUILDING THE FUTURE FOR DIGITAL LEARNING IN ONTARIO which reflects Contact North | Contact Nord's perspectives on the future for digital learning.

We are planning to provide you with a set of facts and numbers about Contact North | Contact Nord to consider during your analysis of Contact North | Contact Nord and Ontario's digital eco-system during the week of July 15th.

Fiona, we missed you during last Monday's meeting. Tina and I look forward to catching up with you at your convenience.

Maxim

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CONTACT NORTH | CONTACT NORD BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS FOR HEQCO

As part of Contact North | Contact Nord's commitment to transparency, the following documents are available from its corporate website. Click the links to open.

KEY FACTS AND OUTCOMES

- [Contact North | Contact Nord Key Facts and Outcomes – 2019](#)
- [Contact North | Contact Nord Key Infographic – July 2019](#)
- [100 Snapshots of Online Learners Using Contact North | Contact Nord's Services](#)
- [21 Success Stories of Aboriginal Learners Using Online Learning to Get Their Degrees, Diplomas, Certificates or Upgrade Their Skills](#)
- [List of 4282 local Organizations Contact North | Contact Nord Engages With](#)

PLANNING AND OPERATIONS

- [Contact North | Contact Nord 2019-2020 Budget](#)
- [2019-2020 Business Plan and Funding Request](#)
- [Logic Model - Contact North | Contact Nord – 2019](#)
- [5-Year Framework 2019-2020 to 2023-2024](#)
- [Contact North | Contact Nord 2018-2019 Performance Report](#)

2019 CONTACT NORTH | CONTACT NORD CLIENT SATISFACTION SURVEY

- [Infographic](#)
- [Highlights of Client Satisfaction Survey](#)
- [Client Satisfaction Survey Report](#)

CONTACT NORTH | CONTACT NORD: A CASE STUDY

- [Case Study](#)

CORPORATE INFORMATION

- [Overview](#)
- [Board of Directors](#)
- [News](#)
- [External Presentations](#)
- [Careers](#)
- [Past Editions of Online Learning News](#)
- [studyonline.ca / etudiezenligne.ca](#) portal for students and prospective students

REFLECTIONS OF CONTACT NORTH | CONTACT NORD THINKING ON KEY ISSUES

Contact North | Contact Nord actively contributes to showcasing the breakthrough innovations in online learning, research in online learning and ideas and insights about online learning:

- Leveraging Technology to Improve Access, Flexibility, Quality, Affordability and Success in Apprenticeship (working draft attached)
- Online Learning for High School Students (working draft attached)
- Collectively Building the Future of Digital Learning in Ontario (working draft attached)
- [An Apprenticeship Skills Agenda: Report and Recommendations by Maxim Jean-Louis](#)
- [185+ Pockets of Innovation in Online Learning](#)

FURTHER INFORMATION

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July 18, 2019

**LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE
ACCESS, FLEXIBILITY, AFFORDABILITY,
QUALITY AND SUCCESS
IN APPRENTICESHIP**

AN ONTARIO STRATEGY

July 11, 2019

Around the world, innovation is taking place in the way apprenticeship is organized and delivered. The focus of all of these initiatives is on modernizing and reforming skilled trades training and apprenticeship systems to increase access and completion by making apprenticeship flexible, faster and affordable.

Apprenticeship is key to meeting the skills gap Ontario faces. Up to 1.8 million skilled job vacancies will exist in Ontario by 2031 if no significant and innovative action focused on the skills gap is taken¹. Over half a million of these positions will be in the skilled trades². This is why the Government of Ontario has moved to change the design of the apprenticeship system by abolishing the College of Apprenticeship, changing the supervision ratios³, introducing portable skills and modernizing employment services⁴.

Many small and medium firms cannot afford to hire an apprentice and keep them for the full duration of their apprenticeship. Yet Ontario is a province of small and medium-sized firms – 99.9% of the 400,000+ businesses in Ontario are just that⁵. We need new thinking about apprenticeship that will make hiring and retaining an apprentice more attractive and the work of becoming an apprentice a journey that many more can complete. Raising completion rates from less than 50%⁶ to nearer 75% should be a major goal of all initiatives related to the skilled trades. This will lead to greater opportunities for employment and a more prosperous future for the communities and the province.

One approach used in many parts of the world is to leverage digital technologies to enable flexible and affordable learning for skills. The United Kingdom makes [extensive use of e-learning and blended learning](#). The EU provides multinational support for e-apprenticeship through [EAPPREN](#) and has developed an inventory of [best practices in e-learning for the skilled trades](#). In New South Wales (Australia), the TAFE supports over 50,000 apprenticeship [through blended and online learning, enabling flexibility and higher completion rates](#). New Zealand is [pursuing micro-credentials](#), which are modular and stackable as a way of meeting a variety of skills needs.

1 See <https://www.collegesontario.org/policy-positions/MinerReport.pdf>

2 See <chrome-extension://oemmnrcbldboiebfnladdacbdmfmadadm/https://www.ohba.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/ohba-skills-gap-final.pdf>

3 In October 2018, the Government moved to change the journeyman:apprentice ratio for all skilled trades to 1:1 <https://news.ontario.ca/maesd/en/2018/10/open-for-business-modernizing-ontarios-apprenticeship-system.html>

4 <https://news.ontario.ca/maesd/en/2019/07/ontario-builds-skilled-workforce-with-strengthened-employment-services.html>

5 See <https://www.cfib-fcei.ca/sites/default/files/2017-12/on0622.pdf>

6 The Auditor General's report on apprenticeship put completion rates at app. 47% overall, with completion rates for the compulsory trades higher (59%) than for the voluntary trades (35%). See http://www.auditor.on.ca/en/content/annualreports/arreports/en16/v1_304en16.pdf

Given that [Ontario leads Canada in online learning](#)⁷ and it is expanding the online learning activities required to graduate from high school⁸, it is the right time to focus on how digital technologies can support new thinking about apprenticeship and skills development for Ontario.

Ontario has Canada's largest apprenticeship program, with a strong pattern of registration in compulsory trades. Its colleges are already using augmented and virtual reality to support blended learning for apprentices⁹.

RETHINKING APPRENTICESHIP – A MADE IN ONTARIO APPROACH

For the last three years, Contact North | Contact Nord has looked globally and consulted locally on the question: how can we change our apprenticeship system to better serve the needs of Ontario, business and provide the skills needed for the jobs we need for the future? These explorations have produced ten specific suggestions.

1. **Modularize all apprentice programs.** So that a defined trade is made up of key components – skills modules - which firms and apprentices can “mix and match” to their needs. This enables new trades – mechatronics, robot repair – to quickly emerge by adding new modules to the pool of modules available. Skills modules could then be made available on a just-in-time basis, removing the idea of start dates – creating new, short program, micro-credentials – something New Zealand sees as key to their skills strategy¹⁰. Learners can “stack” modules to secure certification in a defined trade. They could also access these modules on the job, reducing time taken to study at a college or trade school.
2. **Move all of the learning that does not require “hands-on” experience to an online environment.** Make these learning modules available 24/7 as massive, open online courses (MOOCs) so that learners and their employers do not pay for learning, only for skills and competency assessment. Hands-on learning can be achieved through workplace learning, especially if supervision and assessment are also making effective use of online tools (video recording skills, real-time video of an apprentice performing a skill, peer assessment, self-assessment using online tools).

7 See <https://www.tonybates.ca/2019/04/01/ontario-leading-canada-in-online-learning/>

8 See <https://news.ontario.ca/edu/en/2019/03/education-that-works-for-you.html>

9 For example, see this case study of Northern College <https://www.northernontariobusiness.com/regional-news/timmins/the-new-reality-in-training-638605>

10 For more information on micro-credentials in New Zealand, see <http://mportfolios.blogspot.com/2018/09/microcredentials-nz-perspective.html>

- 3. Make skills certification about demonstrable skills, not time served.** Skills are assessed by trained assessors (using video-based evidence) and validated by qualified validators. A person either possesses a skill or they do not. How they acquired that skill and how long it took to do so are of marginal interest. We could establish both virtual and local assessment centres for skills to enable anyone at any time to have their skills assessed. New developments in assessment enable skills to be assessable 24x7.
- 4. Leverage technology to make skills learning is both effective and fun.** Many apprenticeship students report a high level of boredom with the way in which they are asked to learn. Yet simulation technologies, gamification, new uses of augmented reality could make learning both more powerful and effective plus more enjoyable. Fun and effective learning are not mutually exclusive. Some of the new approaches to coding, robotics education and learning about artificial intelligence show just how powerful such learning can be.
- 5. Fast track innovative approaches to literacy and essential skills and embed these in apprenticeship programs.** Too many of our workforce do not possess the literacy, numeracy and basic computer skills needed for a modern worker. New approaches to the development of these skills, such as the use of cell phones as teaching tools for literacy¹¹, need to be embedded in all apprenticeship programs. We need to increase the number of employees who can function at high levels of literacy and cognitive understanding if we are to compete in the global economy – doing so could have significant impact on productivity.
- 6. Develop skills assessment centres throughout Ontario offering skills assessment and prior learning recognition “on demand”.** Skills can be acquired in a variety of ways. Using systematic, competency-based assessments (changed frequently using artificial intelligence systems), validated by skilled assessors, individuals can receive skills validation and a roadmap for securing their certification or Red Seal through a personalized program focused on the gaps between the competencies needed and those they are certified to have. A pilot program for chefs in British Columbia showed how powerful and effective this can be¹². This work is a form of prior learning assessment and validation, something growing in apprenticeship programs around the world.

11 See, for example, the work of Cell-Ed in this regard - <https://www.cell-ed.com/>

12 For more information, see <https://bccampus.ca/2015/04/28/professional-cook-gap-training-program-status-report/>

- 7. Develop degreed apprenticeships.** The UK, as part of its strategy to refocus investments in trades, developed the idea of the “degreed apprentice” – the minute an individual registers in an advanced apprenticeship program in certain fields, they are automatically registered in an applied degree program, with their apprenticeship counted for credit towards their degree. These programs are free to apprenticeships in key domains (paid for by employers and government in a cost sharing arrangement) – power systems, chartered surveyors, aerospace, laboratory science – and can lead to a bachelor’s or Master’s degree¹³. Not all skilled trades require a degree, but a growing number of emerging skilled trades will (e.g. Simulation Engineer, Informatics, Cultural Heritage Conservator, Building Control Surveyor, Smart Building Engineer).
- 8. Significantly expand dual credit programs in high schools.** Dual credit permits a high school student to secure part of their apprenticeship (both practice and academic study components) before they leave school, creating links to local employers but also incentives for program completion. For many students, dual credit provides meaningful, authentic learning, which connects to both skills and the world of work. Expanding this program¹⁴ through additional investment would fast track apprenticeship for more individuals.
- 9. Develop a network of apprenticeship mentors and coaches.** Young people entering apprenticeship receive the support of their employer and their teachers, but often need more. Leveraging recently retired skilled trades workers – their pride and success in their trade speaks to the ambitions of young apprenticeship – and connecting them to apprenticeship in both virtual and in-person support networks can make a real difference to completion rates. The US are considering legislation¹⁵ that would enable well-qualified employees over 55 to have their working hours “substantially reduced” and to be able to draw on their pension plan if they devote at least 20 percent of their remaining hours to apprentice mentorship.
- 10. Support the growth of innovative approaches to learning evidenced across Ontario. Ontario is a powerhouse for online learning.** Not only do we have examples in trades education of real innovative uses of technology for learning, of effective public/private partnerships, of deep collaboration between colleges offering skills programs, we also have a

13 For more information, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-rolls-out-flagship-degree-apprenticeships> An example of such a program can be found at: <https://www1.chester.ac.uk/degree-apprenticeships/our-courses/chartered-manager-degree-apprenticeship>

14 For details of the program, see <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/morestudentsuccess/DualCreditFS.pdf>

15 For more information, see <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/1352>

vibrant private online learning sector which includes global powerhouses on our doorstep. A summit focused on new approaches to skills and incentives for rapid prototyping of new approaches to skills education would help cement a new era for lifelong learning in Ontario.

There are more ideas, such as develop work-based learning diploma and degree programs, which can be completed with no class time; make much more use of MOOCs to deliver skills development; and more challenge and project-based learning across geographic boundaries for apprentices. However, implementing these ten would produce significant systems changes quickly.

Other jurisdictions have also developed, for [higher apprenticeship](#) in fields such as aerospace, cybersecurity and law, what are known as “degreed apprenticeships¹⁶”. Using online and blended learning, apprentices pursue their applied bachelor or master’s degrees while working with support from their employer. Completion can take between three and six years but leads to enhanced qualification and skills.

Ontario’s distance and online learning expertise, coupled with its growing competencies in artificial intelligence, simulation and gaming, augmented reality can all be used to support innovation in apprenticeship. There are a great many education technology companies based in Ontario, which can be challenged to respond to the skills gap¹⁷, working in partnership with employers and colleges. Many colleges offering apprenticeship programs are also innovators in online, distance and flexible learning¹⁸ and Ontario is home to some of the leading thinkers and practitioners of innovative approaches to open, distance and flexible learning. It is time to leverage this range of expertise and resources to first reduce and then eliminate the skills gap.

Leveraging these ideas would reduce the costs of apprenticeship for learners – less time lost on the job, less travel time and costs, no need for overnight stays at a college location. Because of the flexibility of the modular approach, some learners could also accelerate their apprenticeship, securing mastery of knowledge at a pace appropriate to their ability. Coupled with a tool allowance and incentives for completion, Ontario’s apprenticeship system could be revitalized by these developments.

Ontario could also accelerate innovation in apprenticeship by encouraging the rapid development and deployment of the modular approach and competency-based assessment methods by its colleges.

16 See <https://www.ucas.com/alternatives/apprenticeships/apprenticeships-england/what-apprenticeships-are-available/degree-apprenticeships>

17 For a searchable directory, see <https://teachonline.ca/tools-trends/best-practices-around-world-including-ontario/edtech-startups-directory>

18 See Pockets of Innovation series at www.teachonline.ca

Savings in costs could be reallocated to create assessment centres in communities throughout Ontario – centres that leverage technologies to enable anytime assessment. Shifting from a small number of admission points for apprenticeship programs to enrol at any time modules would also transform the formal educational component of these programs, facilitating improved completion rates and greater efficiency.

THE TIME TO INNOVATE IS NOW

Ontario has a highly educated workforce – one of the most educated in the world, yet 82% of employers say that they have a challenge recruiting and retaining the employees they need with the skills they need¹⁹. It is time to rethink how we develop skills, how we support lifelong learning and how we create a flexible skills system for a future workforce. The time to innovate is now.

Youth unemployment in Ontario is (app.) 11.3%²⁰. Harnessing innovative approaches to apprenticeship, especially modular training and assessment on demand, could provide a basis for upskilling some of those currently unable to find work and create new opportunities.

It is time to offer a “new deal” to those unable to find work and a new deal for employers looking to hire. Innovation is the key to their future.

19 See <https://www.mentorworks.ca/blog/market-trends/2017-09-ontario-skills-shortage-trends/>

20 Based on May 2019 – details at <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/190607/t005a-eng.htm>

COLLECTIVELY BUILDING THE FUTURE FOR DIGITAL LEARNING IN ONTARIO

A Contact North | Contact Nord Perspective

June 14, 2019

This is the Age of Re-Learning, a time when career paths lead to jobs that don't exist yet. When the market for hard skills can go soft fast, and when soft skills might be the only hard currency. It's an era where we simultaneously have skills shortages and mass underemployment. We have gig-economy jobs that go nowhere, and yet have millions migrating for a chance to get one. Everyone in the ecosystem, from colleges and universities, to employers and HR managers must adapt to this new normal.

True North Conference 2019

"We are facing a demographic shift with an increase in mature and non-traditional learners requiring us to re-evaluate who, why and how we teach. This shift necessitates us examining the expectation that educational experiences be available without geographical boundaries and the demand for up-skilling and mid-career retraining. Technology has made this possible more than ever before"

George Zegarac, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Training,
Colleges and Universities – June 6, 2019

We outline in the next few pages some reflections in response to Deputy Minister Zegarac's call for ideas and actions by some of us who are part of Ontario's digital learning eco-system.

Online learning, leveraging emerging technologies, is one key component of this new landscape for the development of a robust, agile Ontario economy which continues to need a skilled and educated workforce. Its pro-active and responsive education and training providers are already delivering a lot in this key area and, with more support, poised to do way more.

UNDERSTANDING THE EMERGING CONTEXT

Significant social, economic and technology shifts are occurring, which require a renewed focus on learning as a key driver for economic growth and human/humane development. These shifts include, but are not limited to, the following five:

- **Demographic shifts** require both a growth of skills/competencies in a diminished labour force and an expansion of immigration. We need to build a vibrant, agile workforce. There is created pressure to increase access to and success in lifelong learning activities.
- **Technological shifts** will change the nature of work and the relationship between technology and human capital. Some 30-45% of jobs are likely to be impacted over the next decade by these shifts, with many of these changes already starting to happen. “These technological shifts are dramatically changing our understanding of being human and what it means to flourish as humans in a digitally mediated world.
- **Shifts in the use of capital** changes the nature of wealth generation. Intangible assets (e.g. intellectual property, know-how, effective supply chain management) now drive more economic growth in Canada than tangible assets (oil, gas, land, forests). This places emphasis on high quality people (HQP) in the drive for growth and well-being. New Zealand has adopted ‘well-being’ instead of ‘growth’ - <https://thehill.com/policy/international/446254-new-zealand-government-to-prioritize-well-being-over-economic-growth-in>
- **Shifts in regional economic hubs**, with more GDP growth and higher future investment now occurring in Asia (especially China, Indonesia, South Korea) than the “old” economies of North America and Europe. McKinsey sees growth continuing to occur, and many [future-focused analysts](#) see the top ten economies by 2050 to be China, India, US, Indonesia, Brazil, Russia, Mexico, Japan, Germany and the UK. Canada [is forecasted to drop out](#) of the top 20 economies by 2050 (it is currently the world’s 17th largest economy).

- **Challenges related to sustainability of communities and economies** are caused by the frequency of extreme weather events and the relationship between sustainability and the food supply. This creates opportunities and challenges, especially for a country like Canada due to our having such a large geographic footprint.

To strengthen Ontario and Canada's competitiveness, productivity and innovation, continuous lifelong learning is a key investment. Strengthening of the innovation eco-system, increasing access to capital, building capacity of managerial and marketing competencies will significantly help us establish a [jurisdictional advantage](#).

THE LEARNING IMPERATIVE

Realizing that learning is key to their social and economic future, other jurisdictions are embracing learning as a key driver for economic development. Singapore, for example, has launched [SkillsFuture](#) for all of its citizens. This provides subsidies of between 40% and 90% for those pursuing learning that can be related to current or future work opportunities. Other jurisdictions pay the full costs of higher education (Germany, Norway, Sweden, Austria, Finland, France, Belgium, Czech Republic, Greece, Spain) for citizens and charge modest fees for international students. Yet others are exploring how digital learning, especially related to needed skills, can support their economic agenda, as is the case with Malaysia and many other fast growing Asian economies.

Some states have rapidly expanded flexible learning and micro-credentials. New Zealand, for example, is [consolidating its polytechnic sector](#) and, in doing so, strengthening the system capacity to offer and support online learning and micro-credentials. Similar developments have taken place in the college (TAFE) sector in certain parts of Australia, most notably [TAFE New South Wales](#), where 10 colleges were merged into one and online learning activities consolidated to better serve the 500,000 learners (120,000 of whom are online).

Malaysia has developed a [credit recognition strategy](#) for MOOCs and integrated these into degree programs. The MOOC providers have also developed a [suite of degrees and certificates, which may now be obtained anywhere in the world through low-cost MOOC](#) platforms. Corporations are also stepping up through partnerships to upskill their workforce, with [AT&T being a leading example](#) through a partnership with Georgia Tech. Universities and colleges are responding to emerging opportunities through [an expansion of online programs](#) and through the offer of [assessment only degrees](#), diplomas and certificates. A great many jurisdictions are also examining public

policies with respect to access, funding, quality, cybersecurity and accountability related to online learning (for a review, see [here](#)) and as policies change, so does the post-secondary landscape.

The post-secondary landscape is changing rapidly and will continue to do so, and yet at the same time, many things will remain the same. Universities and colleges will still offer in-demand degrees, diplomas and certificates. There will continue to be demand for face-to-face tuition and for traditional programs and qualifications.

ONTARIO'S STRATEGIC INTENTIONS

The Government of Ontario is building momentum around significant changes in direction for the post-secondary education system in the province. It is making significant changes to apprenticeship; it is seeking to find new ways to bridge the skills gap; and it is looking to hold colleges and universities strongly accountable for outcomes.

Here are our internal reflections at Contact North | Contact Nord, which we are pulling from a discussion paper we have been developing for the upcoming **ONLINE LEARNING 2019** international conference we are organizing in Toronto this October:

- We are sharing our observation of the current situation with regards to technology-enabled learning in Ontario.
- We provide examples of innovative and imaginative uses of technology from around the world, linked to the future skills focus of the Government agenda.
- We describe the eco-system needed to support the next stage in the development of online and technology enabled learning in Ontario.

This is of course from the particular viewpoint as an Ontario-wide network in its 33rd year of operations focused on helping Ontarians, especially underserved Ontarians in 600 small, rural, remote, Indigenous and Francophone communities get jobs by making it possible for them to access education and training without leaving their communities.

ONTARIO A POWERHOUSE IN DIGITAL LEARNING

Despite constraints – funding mechanisms, dated quality assurance regimes, faculty contract limitations, availability of instructional design supports, technology access – digital learning is thriving in Canada. Indeed, Ontario leads Canada in the adoption and deployment of online learning in its college and university system. According to the [2018 report](#) from the most recent Canadian Digital Learning Research Study:

1. Demand for online and flexible learning is growing faster than demand for face-to-face learning in post-secondary education in Canada and the US.
2. Universities and colleges are beginning to use learning analytics to better understand, explain, predict and prescribe effective, appropriate and ethical pedagogy, learning and the allocation of resources. Amid cautions about privacy, bias and the definition and impact of data proxies on the collection, analysis and use of student data, there is ample evidence of the potential of learning analytics to improve learning and teaching.
3. Students taking at least one online course in Ontario universities account for 16% of all course registrations and 22% of students. 7% of students in Ontario's colleges took at least one online course.
4. More than three quarters (78%) of Ontario higher education institutions identified online learning as very or extremely important to their future academic and strategic plans.
5. Just over half (58%) of institutions in Ontario report that they have a plan to develop and grow online learning, while 27% report their plan is fully implemented.
6. Ontario institutions are more likely to report extensive use of on-demand streamed video and have a much higher use of mobile technology and social media than their counterparts in other Canadian and US jurisdictions and, by doing so, lead in the adoption of these technologies.
7. Institutions in Ontario also reported much higher use of adaptive learning and simulation than their counterparts across the country.
8. Ontario has invested in and promoted open education and the use of open educational resources across the post-secondary sector and the proportion of institutions offering some form of training in OER is marginally higher than that reported nationally.
9. As 5G emerges as a core technology (see [here](#)), it is anticipated that colleges and universities will expand the use of augmented and virtual reality (simulation and games), which in turn will create new opportunities for hybrid/blended and online learning as well as new costs (upgrading of infrastructure, new skills for design and development) and issues of equity of access.

Across Ontario there are 20,088 online courses and some 981 certificate, diploma or degree programs available online¹ – far more than in any other province or territory². A 2011 review of online learning in colleges and universities conducted by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities found that completion rates for online courses in colleges were 76% and for universities 89% - not significantly different from completion rates for other forms of delivery.

There are some uses being made of [micro-credentials](#) and [digital badges](#) in Ontario colleges and universities, with more being planned. [Open education resources](#) – textbooks, course materials and support resources – are also growing in use in Ontario.

No data is currently available on the use of online learning and related technologies for apprenticeship and literacy/essential skills in Ontario. Colleges offering apprenticeship make use of blended/hybrid learning, some of which is now making use of simulation using augmented and virtual reality, but no catalogue of these technology enabled learning experiences is readily available. In 2017, the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum provided [a review](#) of the cross-Canada state of technology-enabled apprenticeship education and support and concluded that online learning was yet to make its mark in apprenticeship training and that there remained many skeptical voices. Other jurisdictions around the world, especially Australia and the UK, are systematically accelerating their use of digital technologies to support apprenticeship. An audit of the current uses of e-learning would be helpful.

Ontario leads in Online Learning in Canada because of the pioneering work of faculty members and administrators who began to grow online learning from 1995 onwards by building on a long tradition of distance education. Some colleges and universities have grown their online learning portfolio as a core component of their strategic plans, while others see it as important but not mission critical. It is important to recognize that bottom-up innovation³ and supportive leadership has secured Ontario's leadership position to date.

ANTICIPATING THE FUTURE: DIGITAL LEARNING AND FUTURE SKILLS

Most who engage in strategic foresight about the future of learning beyond secondary school see the following developments as next

1 Source: [studyonline.ca](#) – the Contact North | Contact Nord portal.

2 According to Tony Bates – see <https://www.tonybates.ca/2019/04/01/ontario-leading-canada-in-online-learning/> and also <https://www.tonybates.ca/2019/03/29/who-dunnit-identifying-the-major-online-providers-in-canadian-post-secondary-education/>

3 Many Ontario innovations are captured in teachonline.ca Pockets of Innovation series – see <https://teachonline.ca/pockets-innovation/ontario>.

steps in the emerging landscape, with each component of this future currently being undertaken somewhere in the world:

- **Lifelong Learning will become increasingly essential**, as reskilling and continuously updating existing knowledge and skills will be essential as the nature of many jobs change. It will also be essential for the development of personal wellness and sustaining community. This is why [Singapore is investing in personal learning accounts](#).
- **Learning will be increasingly modular** – not necessarily based on “courses”, but on competencies and capabilities. [A module may be taken in a day, online, through a boot camp, through work-based learning](#). The question that should be asked is whether or not the learner can demonstrate mastery of the knowledge, skills and capabilities as measured through [effective, authentic assessment](#). Ontario could develop a suite of such modules, reflecting known and predicted demand for skills – something non-traditional learners seek.
- **Modules may then be stacked to form a credential**. Some programs will become increasingly flexible. We can expect to see a number of diplomas, certificates, degrees and micro-credentials based on stackable modules linked to specific needs (career related), emerging fields of study or established areas of study. Given that the 2.4 million new Canadian jobs [expected to be created between now and 2025](#), many of which will require skills and capabilities we cannot yet identify, flexibility and responsiveness to emerging skills needs is an essential feature of emerging systems.
- **Micro-credentials will grow in number and range and will become the backbone for certification and degrees**. It is already the case that [some institutions accept](#) micro-credentials earned as continuing education certificates as part of established degree programs. Also, micro-credential awarded through [work-based learning](#) are also now forming parts of degrees and diplomas in various parts of the world.
- **Modules can be “called” or taken by the learner at anytime**, unless the learning requires teamwork or other forms of collaborative learning. Flexibility as to when learning takes place will be a hallmark of [Learn on Demand learning systems](#). Online learning is one way in which this can occur, but short courses (half day, full day, weekend), which have online components are already growing significantly. Building a learning portfolio is increasingly what many employers are looking for.

- **Learners will rightly expect that learning, once demonstrated through assessment, would be accepted by any institution.** Both prior learning recognition systems and transfer credit systems will need to be expanded and modernized to focus on learning outcomes not learning processes or comparable courses (much of this can be automated through [AI and effective competency-based assessment](#)). Learners may need an e-portfolio, managed effectively through blockchain technology, so as to enable effective transfer. This requires a policy commitment to [learner mobility as a central component of the system](#) and the adoption of appropriate methods to scale transferability of learning between institutions, possible through a [blockchain enabled e-portfolio](#).
- **Student engagement in online learning will be an increasing focus for the next stages of development,** especially given the growth of augmented and virtual reality and the use of AI supported teaching. Whether the student is studying on their own or in a team, there is a growing focus on [engaging the student in both learning](#) and self and [peer assessment](#). [Quality Matters](#) – a standard in use in online learning in Ontario by some institutions – places significant emphasis on student engagement in their learning.
- **Learners should expect to be able to be assessed for competencies and capabilities no matter how they developed them or where.** This is becoming an imperative for many employers, who are less interested in what program or courses a potential employee took and much more interested in what the potential employee can actually do. The growth of assessment only credentials is growing, with the [University of Wisconsin](#) and [Western Governors](#) leading the way in the US. This will give impetus to the development of effective distributed assessment systems, such as are proposed in [New Zealand as part of their unbundling of assessment from course delivery](#).
- **The globalization of learning will continue.** The [MOOC providers, in 2018](#), offered a range of micro-credentials and full degrees. Coursera, edX, FutureLearn, and XuetangX all announced new degrees, taking the total number of online degrees available as MOOCs to 47, up from around 15 in 2017. In 2019, this number is expected to be in excess of 100 and will continue to grow. It is still the case, however, that most students who pursue online learning [chose a local institution as the provider](#).

Online learning is not a homogenous phenomenon. It includes a range of learning experience with varying degrees of connectivity, ranging from low levels of person:screen interaction to fully online. Even with regard to “fully online”, there is a wide range of possibilities – ranging from high quality online courses with low levels of student to student interaction to highly engaged, peer-to-peer, project-based work through to simulations and game-based courses. Different modes of delivery involve different costs, expert roles and expectations of students.

While these are emerging features of the landscape, the landscape will also remain largely unchanged with many programs and courses offered now at colleges and universities continuing, provided that funding remains stable. What can be expected is more widespread adoption of [blended learning](#) and [open education resources](#) and a learner led growth in online learning. An increased emphasis on [outcome-based funding](#) will, however, give new emphasis to program review and seeking to increase the measured outcomes from existing and emerging programs.

DIGITAL LEARNING AND APPRENTICESHIP

In other jurisdictions – the UK for example – [much more substantial use of online learning](#) is being made to support accelerated apprenticeship. In part this is facilitated by the modularization of apprenticeship skill sets (similar to the [portable skill sets](#) recently announced for Ontario), and in part because the apprentice system is competency-based not time-based. This modularization of skills makes blended and online learning a feasible proposition for skills development. In Australia, [online learning tools](#), such as video-based skills review and assessment, are also being used to permit remote supervision and support of apprentices in the workplace. Advanced economies are making significant investments in skills development strategies and, in doing so, are [integrating technology-based learning](#) into their planning.

DIGITAL LEARNING AND ESSENTIAL SKILLS

Literacy and essential skills pose a major challenge for future-skilling of Ontario, as recent reports from [HEQCO make clear](#) (see also [here](#)). Online learning is being used to support skills development for literacy with products like [Cell-Ed](#) making use of mobile learning to support literacy and essential skills.

Similar products and services have been developed by People for Words and Learning Upgrade – joint winners of the [X-Prize for literacy in 2019](#).

Contact North | Contact Nord currently supports both literacy providers and learners through its e-Channel services.

Ontario's online Literacy and Basic Skills e-Channel program developed from a pilot project, and its complete integration in the Literacy and Basic Skills system can be fully leveraged only when resources and policy development needed are provided from the outset for online or blended delivery as opposed to being an add-on. The e-Channel currently serve 4,800 literacy/essential skills learners annually and could serve a great many more. We are exploring ways in which "on-demand" literacy skills development, such as that facilitated by e-channel, can be a critical resource supporting individuals in their search for employment.

THE ECO-SYSTEM TO CONTINUE TO GROW DIGITAL LEARNING IN ONTARIO: WHAT DO WE NEED TO SUPPORT FUTURE SKILLS?

Given the possible future outlined here, what are the key elements of the needed eco-system to support these developments aligned with the socio-economic agenda of the province of Ontario?

Five principles could drive the next stage of development in the online learning strategy for Ontario's post-secondary sector.

These are:

1. Collaboration for Development, Deployment and Delivery
2. Common Platforms for Delivery and Student Support
3. Shared Services for Recruitment, Marketing, and Support
4. Quality Learning Experiences
5. Outcomes and Learning Focused Delivery and Assessment

So as to fully leverage available resources (people, technology, time and money), collaboration not competition needs to continue to drive development and deployment. Our system can boast many exemplary practices in this area. This requires:

- a. **Collaborative in the development of programs, learning modules and assessment**, based on available expertise across the system;
- b. **Collaboration in delivery** – the best available learning supports for the learner from across the system and encouraging diverse delivery – different delivery systems for different students aimed at achieving the same learning outcomes;

- c. **Automatic credit transfer** for courses across the system – using both AI and blockchain technologies to facilitate and accelerate this work;
- d. **Linked or integrated technology platforms for delivery** of online programs and courses with an emphasis on the ones created, developed and based in Ontario as job creators for our economy;
- e. **More extensive use of shared services** for marketing, synchronous delivery, technology support and student services;
- f. **Adherence to widely accepted quality standards** for online learning, such as [Quality Matters](#), which give particular emphasis to student engagement in their learning;
- g. **Shared innovation** – innovation and experimentation should be open and shared across the system and should focus on growing capabilities, capacities and opportunities to meet learner needs across the system; and
- h. As with other modes of learning, the key is a **focus on the student’s mastery of learning outcomes**, which places emphasis on the authentic assessment of learning.

Many elements of these principles are currently evident in a multitude of “pockets” across Ontario. They have enabled the growth of online learning programs, increased access and success in online learning, the growth of OER and the adoption of technologies such as AI, augmented and virtual reality and, where appropriate, remote laboratories and learning projects. What is now needed is some focus on a strategy for growing online and flexible learning, supported both by policy and by the way funds flow to colleges, universities and their eco-system partners, including the private sector.

A theme in this thinking is the gradual blurring of boundaries between institutions and related service providers *from the learners point of view* so that the focus is on the post-secondary system meeting the needs of learners and the community. The development of collaborative approaches fostered over the last two decades, the sharing of learning resources and the development of shared services are all components of this eco-system. Seamless movement between institutions, automation of processes, single points of contact (a kind of concierge service) are all key to enabling the future-skills Ontario needs.

In addition, each of the following 10 organizations (listed in alphabetical order) plays an enabling and complementary operational role in the eco-system in Ontario:

- [Contact North | Contact Nord](#)
- [eCampusOntario](#)
- [Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario \(HEQCO\)](#)
- [Independent Learning Centre \(ILC\)](#)
- [Ontario College Application Service](#)
- [Ontario Universities' Application Centre](#)
- [OntarioLearn](#)
- [ONTransfer](#)
- [Télévision française de l'Ontario \(TFO\)](#)
- [TVOntario \(TVO\)](#)

Let us continue to strengthen the linkages between these eco-system organizations and encourage them to focus on enabling growth of online and flexible learning as a deliberate and focused system strategy.

Let us provide more support to Ontario colleges and universities – technical, financial and evaluative – for innovations in pedagogy. A growing number of our higher education institutions have strong and effective learning development centres and support for those developing and delivering online courses is needed plus sharing with others.

Let us not simply develop innovative solutions to learning challenges, but take deliberate and collective steps to scale them. [teachonline.ca](#) houses over 185 ground-breaking projects and the bi-weekly [Online Learning News](#), connects instructors, instructional designers and policy-makers to innovative work, materials and research around the world.

[Conferences](#), workshops, boot camps, learning events and [online seminars and podcasts](#) all provide reinforcement and encouragement to faculty and institutions to innovate. These are essential contributions to the eco-system.

WHAT IS REQUIRED TO ACHIEVE THE GOALS SET BY THE GOVERNMENT OF ONTARIO

The Province is seeking to enhance student mobility, enable and accelerate credit transfer, increase access, improve the quality of educational offerings and ensure the effective, efficient and judicious use of resources.

To achieve these goals requires:

- Seeing learning mobility as a strong policy driver for all aspects of the system such as quality assurance, residency requirements for programs, funding and automated credit transfer.

- Recognizing that essential skills (especially literacy, numeracy and digital skills) are a critical component of any response to future skills needs and that Ontario will require more of its workforce to have more advanced literacy and numeracy skills than is presently the case.
- Growing online and flexible learning through modular, stackable credentials and the growth of micro-credentials relevant to emerging skill needs and the skill shortages, driven by focused market analysis of need.
- Strengthening the assessment of capabilities and competencies and seeing this work as not necessarily related to programs or courses, by offering assessment only qualifications.
- Providing common systems and strong integrated supports for learners in all areas of the province. We need to increase availability of broadband and local supports for online learners, recognizing that a growing number of learners are “mobile-only” users.
- Strengthening shared services especially for marketing, program deployment and support.
- Enabling innovation across the system and supporting the scale-up of effective practice.

Ontario can build on its national leadership in online learning, leverage its investments in both technology infrastructure and support organization to grow from 150,000 students taking at least one online course and 550,000 online course registrations (41% of the total in Canada) to double this number by 2030⁴.

Yes, like you, all of us at Contact North | Contact Nord are bullish about the future of online learning in Ontario.

The sky is the limit based on the innovative and relentless work and leadership Ontario’s public colleges, public universities, the literacy and basic skills and training providers and the support networks!

⁴ See <https://www.tonybates.ca/2019/04/01/ontario-leading-canada-in-online-learning/>

**ONLINE LEARNING FOR HIGH SCHOOL
STUDENTS IN ONTARIO:
A CHALLENGE AND AN OPPORTUNITY**

CONTEXT

Most predictions about the future of work in Ontario suggest that up to 42% of all existing jobs will require employers and employees to engage in learning to adapt to emerging technologies, with some of the jobs being replaced entirely by technology¹. They also suggest that Canada will create up to 2.4 million new jobs by 2035 based on these technologies². On top of these two changes, we continue to experience skill shortages, especially in the skilled trades.

Key to any response to these challenges – the need for reskilling, the need to develop new skills and a response to the skill shortages – is learning. More people will need to engage in lifelong learning more often than has been the case in the past. This is one reason online and flexible learning, micro-credentials and new approaches to qualifications and skills are now appearing. It is also a reason for the Government of Ontario to rethink apprenticeship and to better connect the work of schools, colleges and universities to the social and economic future of the province.

POLICY LEADERSHIP

The Government of Ontario, recognizing the importance of these developments, has decided to require all high school students to complete four online credits³ out of thirty as part of their high school diploma program. This is a bold and significant move. No other jurisdiction in North America has this requirement, though many encourage online learning, and some require some credits to be completed online. It will enable more learners to discover that online learning, done well, can be a route to successful lifelong learning and a way to continually upgrade knowledge, skills, capabilities and credentials.

In 2018-19, approximately 5% of high school students (between 50,000 and 60,000 students)⁴ took one or more credits online in Ontario. A great many more are currently engaged in blended learning, where some of their work is completed online. Across Canada, enrolment in online learning amongst K-12 students is growing⁵. Beginning in 2020-21, the number of Ontario high school students studying for credit will grow tenfold.

This is a substantial change. It is coupled with changes to the

1 Source: <http://brookfieldinstitute.ca/report/the-talented-mr-robot/>

2 Source: <https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/mckinsey/featured%20insights/Future%20of%20Organizations/What%20the%20future%20of%20work%20will%20mean%20for%20jobs%20skills%20and%20wages/MGI-Jobs-Lost-Jobs-Gained-Report-December-6-2017.ashx>

3 Source: <https://news.ontario.ca/edu/en/2019/03/education-that-works-for-you-2.html>

4 Source: <https://k12sotn.ca/blog/ontario-modernizing-classrooms/>

5 Source: <https://k12sotn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/StateNation18.pdf>

way in which such courses are delivered – the model involves the centralization of these services and the integration of support services for online learners. The Government is yet to clarify the ways in which it envisages the further centralization of the delivery of e-learning courses and how this would allow students greater access and choice.

In 2017, the five-year high school graduation rate in Ontario was 86.3%, and the four-year graduation rate was 79.8%⁶. To maintain and improve on this graduation rate while introducing a significant change in the requirements for online learning requires a focus on maintaining a graduation rate at this or better levels from online learning. Ontario's current model for online learning has local support and access to courses with completion rates comparable to or better than classroom-based courses (up to 94% completion in some consortium models)⁷.

PEOPLE FOR EDUCATION REVIEW

People for Education – a charitable organization that promotes access to and success in public education – has provided [its own review](#) of the planned introduction of the four credits completed online for all high school students. It makes some important observations. In particular, it suggests:

- **The choice of a learning management system (LMS) and the way in which support is provided to users of this system who experience technical issues will significantly impact completion rates.** They base this observation on studies of online learning in schools, in particular a study of US rural learners⁸. Such studies find that a significant reason for dropout is the technology used for learning⁹. Ontario has chosen D2L – an Ontario based LMS provider – to be its partner in the provision of its virtual learning environment. D2L's Brightspace is the embedded system in all K-12 schools in the province. A new feature of the platform is the ability to integrate learning resources and video resources from TVO. The province is also investing in broadband services to enable more locations to have faster connections.
- **Student engagement in their learning is a critical factor in both learner satisfaction and completion rates.** A substantial range of studies support this conclusion whether the learning

6 Source: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/gettingResultsGrad.html>

7 Source: <https://canelearn.net/onelearning-background/>

8 The study can be found at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01587919.2015.955259>

9 The cited study can be found at <https://www.learntechlib.org/primary/p/33040/>

is in a traditional classroom or online¹⁰. The issue here relates to both the design and delivery of learning – it needs to be designed to enable and encourage engagement¹¹. Authentic engagement¹² is a powerful component of effective learning.

- **Studying online is a skill that requires a level of motivation as a self-managing learner.** Some school systems have found this is more likely to exist amongst students in grades 11 and 12 than in grades 9 and 10¹³. The skill can also be developed over time through practice – the more online courses they take, the more comfortable they are with this mode of learning.
- **So as to foster success, students need to feel part of a group or community.** Many have the idea that online learning is an individual work undertaken in isolation from others¹⁴. It can be “lonely” work but does not have to be. The People for Education review draws attention to a variety of studies, which explore the development of social networks and community of learners in an online course. Many courses require both social engagement and personal work, just as they do in a normal classroom.
- **With any form of learning, teachers need to know their students to best meet their needs.** Doing so online requires teachers to be skilled and comfortable in this work especially the student engagement aspects, since students can be anywhere within the province. There are a variety of methods available for doing this¹⁵ and investments in professional development for online teachers often focus on this work.
- **Online learning designs can help accommodate students with special needs or who require accommodations.** Online learning can enable personalized and adaptive learning so that the same learning outcomes can be achieved. In particular, adaptive learning engines built into LMS systems like Ontario’s virtual learning environment support different learning routes for students with different needs¹⁶. The policy decision Ontario has made also includes provisions for exceptions to be made to the four credit online requirements.

10 Source: <https://naspa.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/00091380309604090>

11 Source: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305713495_An_Instructional_Design_Framework_for_Fostering_Student_Engagement_in_Online_Learning_Environments

12 Source: <https://ajet.org.au/index.php/AJET/article/viewFile/1701/788>

13 Source: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.3102/0002831219838776>

14 Source: <http://www.cjlt.ca/index.php/cjlt/article/view/26431/19613>

15 For examples, see <https://teachonline.ca/tips-tools/getting-know-your-students> and <https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/online-education/six-ways-to-get-your-online-students-participating-in-the-course/>

16 Source: <https://www.d2l.com/products/leap/>

- **Class size matters in online learning just as it does in any other form of learning.** Teachers who work on the Ontario online courses will have class sizes up to 35. Outcomes from online learning will be strongly related to the quality of teacher:student relationships, student engagement, and the feedback they provide to each student as to their progress as learners. A variety of studies have explored class size issues in online learning (especially in higher education)¹⁷ and no specific conclusion has emerged. Class size is very much a function of course design and the learning outcomes intended from the learning experience.

The review by People for Education asks questions – for example, why is the policy being introduced; what are the delivery assumptions; what are the planned investments being made in online learning and the professional development of teachers; – and is the implementation being planned in an evidence-based way?. Other groups have asked similar questions, such as CANeLearn – a Canada wide non-profit organization, which supports the growth and development of e-learning in K-12 schools.

A CHALLENGE AND AN OPPORTUNITY

The policy of the Government of Ontario positions it as a leading jurisdiction in North America in the deployment of e-learning. It builds on the strong success of current K-12 online provision as well as the growth of e-learning as a component of post-secondary education in the province, which leads Canada in the delivery of online learning¹⁸.

It also challenges all of us in the sector to collectively think of ways to address current deficiencies, which are an integral part of any dynamic and evolving system. The policy leverages the vibrant and growing e-learning and educational technology industry base in Ontario¹⁹. Youth today are the most digitally aware generation ever and grow up with devices that familiarize them with new ways of playing and communicating. Education through online learning meets an expectation they have regarding a modern educational system.

ⁱ Source: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/memos/march2018/virtual-learning-environment.html>

¹⁷ Source: <https://onlinelearninginsights.wordpress.com/2015/01/14/does-class-size-matter-in-online-courses-three-perspectives/> and also <https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2017/05/17/online-class-sizes-one-size-doesnt-fit-all>

¹⁸ Source: <https://www.tonybates.ca/2019/04/01/ontario-leading-canada-in-online-learning/>

¹⁹ Source: <https://teachonline.ca/highlight/110-edtech-startups>






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-  ASSISTANCE WITH REGISTRATION FOR THEIR PROGRAM OR COURSE OF CHOICE
-  FREE USE OF COMPUTER WORKSTATIONS AND HIGH-SPEED INTERNET ACCESS TO COMPLETE THEIR ONLINE COURSES
-  FREE USE OF WEB CONFERENCING, VIDEOCONFERENCING AND AUDIOCONFERENCING DISTANCE LEARNING PLATFORMS TO CONNECT TO, AND PARTICIPATE IN, THEIR ONLINE PROGRAMS AND COURSES
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58,000+

STUDENT REGISTRATIONS GENERATED AND SUPPORTED IN COURSES FROM ONTARIO'S EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROVIDERS

ANNUAL OUTCOMES FOR ONTARIANS

800,000+

REQUESTS FOR SERVICES FULFILLED, INCLUDING CALLS TO STUDENT INFORMATION HOTLINE AND TECHNICAL HOTLINE

60 PROVINCE-WIDE TARGETED LOCAL RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGNS EXECUTED

92% OF CLIENTS SATISFIED WITH THEIR EXPERIENCES WITH CONTACT NORTH | CONTACT NORD

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