

# TRAINING NOW FOR POST-COVID CAREERS

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**Fast. Focused. Local.**

**Career Colleges Ontario**

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## People Are Afraid

As the province reacts to the sudden outbreak of COVID-19, Ontarians are worried about what the future will bring. They're afraid of the uncertainty, and they're fearful of their job security. But above all, they're afraid of how this crisis will affect their families. What will they do if they become one of the thousands of Ontarians to be laid off? How will they remain employable during a shutdown? Will there be a job for them once this crisis is over? Families will no-doubt embrace financial care-packages as short-term support, but how can they adapt, retrain and provide for their families in the long-term?

While the country is taking unprecedented measures to protect unemployed and laid-off workers since identifying its first confirmed case of COVID-19 a little over two months ago, Statistics Canada reported a record loss of more than one million jobs in March, alone. This dwarfs the previous watermark of roughly 425,000 jobs lost over an eight-month period during the last recession still fresh in the minds of many Canadians. To put this into perspective, when Second Career was launched at the onset of the financial crisis in June 2008, it had a three-year goal to support just 20,000 laid-off workers. While a wonderful resource for Ontario's unemployed workers at the time, it is not prepared to meet the needs of our present situation. In fact, economic and labour experts are now labelling our present situation as a conceivably "catastrophic" event with the potential to make the last recession look like an economic blip.

To add to the urgency of our current position, the jobs lost to this crisis may not be there when Ontarians are ready to return. As thousands of workers in industries such as food, accommodation, retail, entertainment and transportation experience partial or full shutdowns, businesses are adjusting to the disruption by adopting new ways to deliver products and services with fewer employees. The crisis has become a catalyst to automation and digital innovation, intensifying the province's need to develop a skilled workforce.

The scale and urgency of COVID-19 will require the province to take immediate and comprehensive action to galvanize the labour market preparedness of Ontario workers and their families. As part of its response, the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development will need to modernize its existing Second Career program while leveraging capable, untapped sectors to deliver straightforward results for Ontario's communities. The program must evolve beyond its decade-old framework into a modern and wholly efficient skills training resource.

## A Hand Up, Not a Hand Out

The ministry has an opportunity to refine one of its successful legacy programs to meet the needs of Ontarians during an unprecedented crisis. Career colleges can play a significant role in transforming Second Career into a program that delivers fast, focused and local training—because that's exactly what career colleges are designed to do. Career colleges have been aligning Ontarians with in-demand jobs since 1866—a full year before confederation. These institutions are specialists in the higher education field, training a primarily adult-learner demographic that is unique to the career college sector. What's more, career colleges are hyper-local trainers. There are more than 600 campuses across Ontario training students within their own communities. Students don't need to uproot their families to find a career, and their success becomes their community's success.

Hands-on, expedient training that is closely tied to the demands of local employers is exactly what is needed right now, providing the comfort of empowerment to the largely lower-paid, adult Ontarians that have been disproportionately affected by this disaster. This is what career colleges have to offer. The ministry, in modernizing the Second Career program to meet the increased demand due to COVID-19, should look to enhance the career college pathway for students. In turn, the ministry can rely on the expertise of the career college sector to deliver quality training to Ontarians, a skilled workforce for local businesses, and assurance to families looking for security during an uncertain economy.

## Lifting Barriers to Success

### Equal opportunity for student

- Lift the arbitrary \$10,000 funding cap for career college students that isn't applied to those training at public institutions.
- Speed up the funding approval process, keeping it to roughly two weeks.
- Empower students who are investing in their future to maintain their financial independence by allowing them to work part-time while enrolled in a Second Career program.
- Embrace innovation and support student accessibility by allowing online and hybrid training initiatives.

### A Need for Transparency

- Providing institutions with relevant information from the government's existing Second Career metrics and reporting could allow colleges to significantly improve the outcomes of the program.
- Share labour market information to allow institutions to swiftly align training with employer demand.
- Eliminate bias by ensuring Employment Ontario is managed only by non-trainers.