



CONESTOGA
Connect Life and Learning

***Post-Secondary Education
in the 21st Century***

RESPONSE TO POST-SECONDARY REVIEW

HIGHER EXPECTATIONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

November 2004

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I CONESTOGA COLLEGE AND THE REGIONAL ECONOMY

1. Challenge to the Regional Economy

Wellington County and the Region of Waterloo face a set of dramatic challenges. Its business enterprises produce a disproportionate percentage of Ontario's exports directed predominantly at the highly competitive U.S. market. These enterprises, such as Linamar Corporation, Guelph Tool and Die, Engel, RIM, ATS, COM DEV and Rockwell Automation, are highly successful in this market.

The value of these exports is larger than the GDP of several provinces. The economy of Wellington and Waterloo Counties is complex, based on hundreds of large and medium-sized businesses. There is an unusually high concentration of advanced manufacturing, information technology and agri- and biotechnology companies. Conestoga College's economic area spans the Cities of Guelph, Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo (over 750,000 population, including Perth and Huron Counties.) According to media coverage of a recent Bank of Montreal economic forecast:

"Workers and business are flocking to Southern Ontario's so-called technology triangle, creating economic growth that exceeds even the hot pace in the rest of the province. A report, prepared by the Bank of Montreal, found that growth over the past three years in the region encompassing Kitchener-Waterloo, Cambridge and Guelph is among the strongest in the country, thanks to the influence of technology companies based there...manufacturing accounts for 28% of the area's employment, compared with 10% for the province as a whole. The triangle's economy is expected to grow at an annual rate of 4.5% over the next two years, a full percentage point faster than the Ontario average."

In addition to the robust economy, our region is experiencing demographic growth at twice the national average.

2. The Education and Training Gap

The numerous studies, as well as surveys, conducted in Wellington and Waterloo Counties have demonstrated that the Region's economic growth is being restricted by a significant shortage of skilled workers. For example, in 1999, in co-operation with Communitech Association Inc. and Human Resources Development Canada, Kitchener, Conestoga College administered a two-year survey of 76 employers in Advanced Manufacturing and Information Technology. This resulted in a comprehensive employment needs report entitled the **Skills Dialogue**.

The **Skills Dialogue** underscores the strong desire of employers to hire graduates who are capable of integrating theoretical knowledge with practical know-how, preferably with significant hands-on experience and problem-solving as a major part of their education. Employers emphasized their need for graduates equipped with the learning skills to adapt to rapidly changing environments. Too often they find they must deal with job applicants who are either too general or too focused in their preparation to assume key positions in production processes within relatively short periods of time. Industries

participating in the **Skills Dialogue** report that, “for the CEA merely to maintain its past growth of skilled workers, it must add 1,451 skilled tradespersons, 20,163 college graduates and 15,560 university graduates between 1997 and 2001”.

Conestoga College has been growing significantly to meet this demand. Post-secondary enrolment has grown by approximately 35% during the last five years. However, the present funding formula presents significant challenges to colleges in growth areas. Colleges have a slip year funding formula and do not receive money for growth for 2 to 3 years. In addition, we have doubled the number of apprenticeship students from 1,250 in 1996 to 2,500 in 2001. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities has set a goal to double the number of apprentices by 2008. However, Conestoga College is undersized vis-à-vis its catchment area. The following chart depicts the situation:

Conestoga College Undersized				
College	Regional Population 1999	Student Numbers 2000	Ratio of Population per Student	*C.C. Student Numbers
Canadore	84,700	FT 2,643	32.0	23,806
Cambrian	176,500	FT 3,540	49.8	15,297
Fanshawe	630,930	FT 9,331	67.6	11,269
Niagara	366,517	FT 4,944	74.1	10,281
Fleming	463,000	FT 5,101	90.8	8,383
St. Clair	488,100	FT 5,299	92.1	8,271
Mohawk	972,600	FT 7,556	128.7	5,919
Conestoga	761,800	FT 4,713	161.8	4,713

*C.C. - Conestoga College numbers if Conestoga had similar ratio of population per student.

The above chart highlights the fact that there has been an under-investment in College plant and facilities in the Counties of Wellington, Waterloo, Perth and Huron. Although our region is underserved for college-bound students, we have more than 50,000 university students at three universities. In areas such as apprenticeship, it is extremely difficult to find government programs that will facilitate expansion of classrooms and workshops.

3. Conestoga College: Scope and Reputation

Conestoga has been ranked first in the provincial government's Key Performance Indicator system for each of the last six years. Our average student graduate job placement rate over the last decade has been 92.5% six months after graduation. The scope of our operations is as follows:

POST-SECONDARY	6,100
APPRENTICESHIP	2,500
CONTINUING EDUCATION	37,000
TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT	8,500
INTERNATIONAL	350

We serve the Counties of Perth, Huron, Waterloo and Wellington with a population of more than 750,000.

Conestoga College is by far the largest supplier of labour skills to the area economy, having provided education or training to local residents who represent between 40 to 50 percent of the labour force. The offerings range from two-hour workshops to multi-year diplomas and degrees, each having a specific role in the continuing development of the local labour market. It is well understood that in a dynamic and complex marketplace, the full development of the labour market requires many different types and levels of education. By providing so many different ways to extend skill, the College directly contributes to the adaptability of its students and to their career success. The scale and thus the value of this contribution to the local area is very large, by any measure.

By examining the income of the College's local diploma and certificate holders, an explicit number can be calculated for *part* of the economic value of *part* of the College's teaching services. The College's local graduates are worth what their employers pay them, a payment that reflects the employers' estimation of their productivity. Using 1995 income levels, today's local graduates would have earned an estimated 1.266 billion dollars. At 2001 income levels, the graduates would have earned approximately 1.476 billion dollars. This is thus a partial reflection of the value the College has created for the local economy.

4. Rationale for Further Expansion of Conestoga

- i. Region of Waterloo and Wellington County is experiencing demographic growth that is twice the Canadian average.
- ii. Growth is exacerbating existing skill shortage problems. Numerous studies have documented skill shortages and skills gaps in Canada, Ontario and Waterloo/Wellington.
- iii. Skill shortages are restricting economic growth.

- iv. Conestoga College is not large enough to meet existing and future skill shortages.
- v. Conestoga College is undersized for its catchment area compared to all other Ontario colleges. This restricts accessibility for the youth of our region.

II CONESTOGA'S VISION FOR POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION FOR WATERLOO, WELLINGTON, PERTH AND HURON COUNTIES

Global competition, rapid technological change and growing societal expectations require Canadian companies and public institutions to have a highly educated and trained workforce. It is important that access to higher education is broadened. It is our belief that this is the most important and fundamental issue that the government must address. Colleges have expanded their mandate since their start-up in the 1960s to better respond to both individual and societal needs. They must continue to respond to the changing economic environment. Colleges have expanded the breadth of their programming to meet these needs. They have developed a continuum of learning for full-time and part-time students, which ranges from preparatory and upgrading to applied degree, degree completion in collaboration with universities and post-diploma/post-degree programs for college and university graduates.

Clear pathways to career and post-secondary education must be established to provide better opportunities for students. It must be recognized that individual aspirations for post-secondary education change over time. In addition, individual development and readiness for post-secondary education vary.

The present Ontario post-secondary system does not fully recognize these realities of human development. In fact, Ontario's public post-secondary system is unique in this regard. There is very little transferability of academic credits from colleges to universities. Ontario college graduates face significant barriers to degree completion. Other Canadian provinces show greater student mobility than Ontario. In British Columbia, 8% of the graduates of college career programs transferred to university. In Alberta, 8% of the graduates of career preparation programs at the Northern Alberta and Southern Alberta Institutes of Technology transferred to university programs. The comparable transfer rate for Ontario college graduates ranged between 3.5% and 4.5% between 2000/01 – 2002/03.

Ontario needs a post-secondary system that is more accessible, diverse, and integrated if we are to achieve the goal of 50% of high school graduates attaining degree status. The system must accommodate the needs of different regions. There is great regional diversity in Ontario and according to the provincial government's Task Force on Competitiveness, no single recipe will work for all regions. Other countries such as the United States, Great Britain, Germany, Australia, etc., have a greater range of institutions (e.g., private universities, public research universities, four-year undergraduate, polytechnical degree-granting and two-year colleges to meet differing individual and societal needs). They also have a greater range of academic standards than exists in Ontario's universities. For example, in the State of Massachusetts there is Harvard at one extreme and a host of degree granting institutions that have a significant variation of academic standards. We need a post-secondary system with a greater emphasis on programs, which contribute directly to increased productivity, competitiveness, and economic growth.

Therefore, we are recommending that:

1. The Government of Ontario establish a new Admissions and Transfer Council with the mandate and resources to improve the transfer of credits within the post-secondary sector.

This is a complex issue, however, if we conduct a review on a program-by-program basis, there can be significant improvements made in the interests of students and cost-effectiveness for the taxpayer.

- i. There are clear cases of arbitrariness regarding credit transfer from some college programs to university programs. Third-party intervention is necessary, as well as funding to encourage collaboration.
 - ii. There are situations where bridging programs are necessary to accommodate gaps in college applied programming to permit better integration with university programs (e.g., engineering). Third-party intervention will be necessary. There should be additional funding to encourage bridging.
 - iii. There may be areas where program differences restrict significant program transfer opportunities.
2.
 - i. Student pathways to a university degree should be expanded by developing more articulated college/university transfer programs such as Guelph/Humber, Conestoga/McMaster (Nursing), Conestoga/Windsor (Business). There are many areas of study that lead to differentiated staffing positions in industry. College-level certificate and diploma programs provide technicians and technologists for industry whereas degree programs may provide better access to professional certification and higher-level positions. The government should encourage colleges and universities through financial incentives to develop joint programming in such areas of study to provide seamless pathways for prospective students as well as employees presently in the workforce. For example, expansion of university programming in dietetics, biotechnology, etc., should involve partnerships with colleges so that two-year college technicians can complete university degrees if they have the appropriate marks. The provincial government's goal is to increase post-secondary places by 50,000 students. Currently, provincial funding per college student is \$4,800 and \$6,600 per university student. Spread over 50,000 spaces the government could save \$90 million a year by putting these spaces in colleges. The Californian post-secondary system is much more diverse, comprehensive, and accessible than Ontario's. It has some of the best universities in the world (e.g., Berkeley, Stanford). However, it restricts university undergraduate education to 40% of the post-secondary enrolment to ensure both excellence and accessibility.
 - ii. College two-year programs should lead to an associate degree designation as they do in the United States. Colleges should be encouraged to deliver the first two years of some university programs as they do in the United States and some other provinces. This would

promote accessibility and an emphasis on teaching and learning and be more cost-effective.

3. The Institutes of Technology and Advanced Learning should be permitted to offer more vocational degree programs beyond the niche applied degrees they presently offer to meet local economic needs. This is especially important for Institutes of Technology and Applied Learning such as Conestoga that are in regions experiencing rapid demographic growth and experiencing significant skill shortages. For example, the provincial government's Task Force on Competitiveness, Productivity and Economic Progress claims that Ontario produces half the number of business degree graduates compared to economic powerhouse states in the United States. Why not permit some colleges the right to offer generic business degrees to meet employers' demands if they can meet appropriate standards? These standards should be determined by the broader community, not arbitrarily set by existing universities. The strength of the American, British, Australian and other systems is that they have a range of standards. There is differentiation that meets both students' abilities and needs as well as employer needs. No one claims that all universities in the State of Massachusetts should have the same standards as Harvard.

In this community, Conestoga is surrounded by three excellent universities (University of Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University and the University of Guelph). Many very good local students cannot meet the business school admission standards of these universities. Laurier's business school requires high school graduation marks in the high eighties. In addition, calculus is required to be able to obtain a Bachelor of Business. It is important for universities such as Laurier to strive for excellence by attracting the best high school students who go to the best academically oriented business schools. Many business graduates who do not have calculus have been known to run successful businesses. Approximately 60% of Conestoga's first-year business students do not come directly from high school. They have work experience in the community and many could benefit from a general business degree program offered by Conestoga. It would also make them better educated and trained employees. Only 16% of our university graduates stay in the community, however, approximately 70% of college graduates remain. We need to expand business degree places in this community to meet the needs of this group. The fact that the academic standards are different from the top-rated academic university program should not be the primary concern. These college degree programs will be designed to meet the needs and standards of the Ontario economy. The best post-secondary systems in the world have variable academic standards. The Conestoga degree would place a greater emphasis on applied learning, which is undervalued in Ontario. It is not possible to expand degree granting to 50% of the population without some reduction of admission standards. Surely we do not want the "best" university business schools to reduce their entrance requirements?

It is interesting to note that this fall the University of Waterloo could not fill its first-year class in a number of programs. The University did not have enough high school students who met their admission requirements. Therefore it had to recruit students from overseas to meet its enrolment targets. We think it is important for the University of Waterloo to maintain high academic standards.

After all, it is one of Canada's best universities. However, there are many capable local students who cannot meet these standards. If Conestoga had broader vocational degree granting powers, they could attend Conestoga and, upon graduation, make a stronger contribution to the local economy. In our region a high school graduate with an 80% average cannot gain admission to the Business program at Laurier. The students must leave the region to attain a business degree.

The looming provincial and national shortage of nurses has been exacerbated by the recent insistence on a university degree for entry to practice. The government should also permit an applied degree in nursing that meets national standards to complement the joint college/university nursing degrees. The university admission standards have reduced access for many capable students. These standards are not necessarily related to the ability to function as an effective nurse.

Degree granting in Ontario has been a virtual monopoly of the eighteen public universities who continue to jealously guard their rights. This monopoly does not serve the best interests of students, society or the highest goals of the universities (i.e., academic excellence). In our region there are over 50,000 university students and only 6,000 college students. Accessibility to post-secondary could be enhanced for local residents if Conestoga was permitted to offer more vocational degree options.

The Post-Secondary Quality Assurance Board has held colleges to academic standards that are more stringent than some university degree programs. Ontario needs to place a higher value on applied learning. The requirement that college applied degree staffing must be composed of at least 50% PhDs is inappropriate. Colleges need professors with at least a Master's degree with significant work and practical experience to have credibility in the classroom and with industry.

4. Besides limiting access, the Ontario degree granting system does not give applied learning its due. A clear need exists to educate more citizens to a degree level. However, we should establish a range of degrees offering a different array of applied skills, academic skills, employability and technical skills. The Ontario university system should not be the sole determiner of degree standards in this province. Ontario is faced with looming skill shortages, yet 90% of Grade 9 students aspire to a university education. One per cent of Grade 9 students want to be apprentices. Ontario has established an academic value system that is not congruent with societal needs. Ontario needs to develop and strengthen its applied learning system by permitting more degree granting at the Institutes of Technology and Advanced Learning such as Conestoga. These Institutes should be encouraged to develop clear pathways from apprenticeship to diploma to applied degrees. Apprenticeship should become one of the pillars of the post-secondary system. We need to establish a provincial credentialing system that provides acknowledgement of higher learning in trades to the level of Master Craftsman. We have attached a credentialing model in Appendix A that should be implemented in Ontario.

Ontario needs to promote and market apprenticeship as a viable option for students in high school. The linkage to diploma and degree would raise the profile and make apprenticeship more attractive.

5. The federal government has made a significant commitment to provide research monies for our universities to enhance innovation (\$1.2 billion annually). We need to see a similar commitment to invest in colleges to deal with the issue of skills shortages. The federal government used to purchase a substantial amount of training from colleges. Almost 15% of Conestoga's budget in the late 1980s comprised federal direct purchase monies. Presently, less than 1% of our budget comes from federal investment in training.

Ontario is the only province in Canada without a Labour Market Development Agreement. Ontario needs an integrated labour market and training system to meet its needs. This new federal-provincial framework should ensure that there is adequate support for the public training infrastructure in Ontario.

6. There needs to be a greater emphasis on funding preparatory programming in colleges to enable Ontario's youth and unemployed to attain the required education and skills to take part in Canada's economy. Presently there is significant duplication of programming which is costly and confusing for clients. Ontario should have a federal-provincial system that is co-coordinated with a greater emphasis on longer-term remediation. There should be less emphasis on attaining the high school diploma for adults over twenty and more emphasis on employability skills that lead to apprenticeship, college and university credentials.
7. There needs to be stronger interface between the secondary school curriculum and college programs. In addition to better integration of trades programming, there should be advanced college credits for some high school graduates in curriculum areas that relate to college programs. The curriculum needs to be revised to deal with the rising issue of high school dropouts.
8. There has to be a greater focus on retention at all levels of the education system. Strong literacy and numeracy skills are vital for success in the post-secondary system. There needs to be a greater emphasis on these topics from an early age, i.e., Grade 1.

Motivation is an important ingredient for secondary school success. It is imperative that students gain an exposure to career options and the workplace at a younger age. The primary and secondary systems are primarily geared to an academic education leading to university. Approximately 90% of Grade 9 students consider university to be their goal. Unfortunately, any other pursuits are considered to be lesser endeavours. More high school students need to be introduced to apprenticeship education and training.

Colleges have lower retention rates than universities because they are admitting high school graduates with a greater range of literacy and numeracy skills. Colleges need the resources to provide appropriate remediation in the form of preparatory programs, in some cases with reduced workloads – pre-apprenticeship, longer programming, more part-time programming with the

appropriate counseling and tutoring support. These students need appropriate financing over a longer period to make the transition to academic and vocational success.

The federal training system should be aligned with the provincial system to more effectively use provincial and federal resources. Presently there is too great an emphasis on short-term training programs to get people into the work place as soon as possible. This philosophy often leads to a cycle of poverty and upheavals as the unemployed are trained for low-end jobs that are often eliminated in the mid-term. We need to provide adjustment programs that make a real difference in upgrading education and skills.

9. Elementary and secondary school students need better information about career options and the full range of education and training options.

Both the high school curriculum and culture are geared primarily to university education. There is an opportunity for the federal and provincial governments to develop a national career information network with a strong web case. In addition, teachers, students and parents need to be exposed to a broader range of career options and educational opportunities at a younger age.

Career education centres should be established in each college with a focus on school-to-work, school-to-apprenticeship, and school-to-college pathways. They should be open to the community at large with strong links to the elementary and secondary schools. Testing and assessment should be an important function of these centres.

Ontario needs to develop a post-secondary system that promotes excellence without limited access. For example, if we wish more people to have business degrees in Ontario we must have a greater range of business programming with different admission criteria. For example, at one extreme we have the Harvard Business School. However, there is a larger range of business schools in the U.S. than in Ontario using "academic standards" as criteria. The U.S. has some of the best academic and research universities in the world. These are meant for the academically elite. Only students with extremely high marks in secondary schools will be accepted. However, Americans realize that extending business education and training to a wider range of the population has a direct benefit on economic productivity.

Ontario business leaders understand that high school marks by themselves do not mean success in the workplace. Also, graduating from the "best" university business program does not mean that you will be the CEO. There are many factors that contribute to success in the workplace. High school marks and academic success at university at a young age are one factor. The Americans have realized this for some time. The American post-secondary system also allows multiple entry points to degree programs. They realize that many intelligent individuals do not realize their full potential in high school. Many individuals go directly to the workforce after finishing high school or they might go to college. We need to have more options for these students to complete degrees.

On the other hand, we need to foster excellence. Presently we have eighteen public universities that have essentially the same mandate. Ontario needs to have a more differentiated university system. Perhaps only half of the eighteen should be research institutions. It will be difficult for all eighteen public Ontario universities to become world-class research institutions. It is also very costly for the taxpayers. All Ontario universities require professors to devote 40% of their workload to research, therefore, they are teaching roughly six hours per week. Obviously research is important, however, society would receive greater benefit from these efforts if research were concentrated in a small number of research-intensive universities that have the resources to be cutting edge.

We need to have better funding for our post-secondary system (colleges and universities). We agree that Ontario universities need better funding. However, it is constantly overlooked that colleges receive \$2,000 less per student via the provincial government grant. In addition, tuition is at least \$2,000 less per student. If one adds in research monies (the University of Guelph received approximately \$120 million last year) and fund raising (the University of Waterloo has launched a \$200 million campaign), the gap is even larger.

Colleges are desperate for additional funding. College administrative overheads are far less than universities. We are much more cost-effective.

We need to invest significantly in research. We need to strive for excellence. We also should invest in a cost-effective fashion. We need a vision that is both bold and innovative. The vision for post-secondary is the crux of the issue. We need to invest more but we also need to invest wisely.

The Council of Ontario Universities would like to restrict colleges to a mandate that was established in the 1960s. The world has changed. Ontario's vision needs to change. The vision of Ontario universities divides Ontarians into two classes: "Those who aspire to go to university and those who do not". This is both simplistic and dangerous for citizens and Ontario's economic future.

Unfortunately, Ontario's universities have opted for a vision that dates back to the 1960s. This view does not reflect the realities of the 21st century. It will also put Ontario at a disadvantage since the U.S., Great Britain, Australia, Germany, etc., as well as B.C. and Alberta, have post-secondary systems that are more integrated and diverse.

We recommend more funding for a reformed post-secondary system that encourages collaboration, accessibility and excellence.

Compared to fifteen years ago, Ontario colleges are educating students for approximately 70 cents on the dollar. Revenue per student has dropped over 30% since 1987/88 (adjusted for inflation). We are serving 40% more students but receive 44% less grant funding per student in constant dollars (adjusted for inflation). Ontario colleges rank last in a provincial comparison of revenue per student. This must change. We are recommending that grants attain the level of the college national average. Since post-secondary education is one of very few government programs that actually contributes positively to the province's

financial bottom line, we believe there is both urgency and importance in this request.

III HIGHER EXPECTATIONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION
WORKING THROUGH THE POSSIBILITIES
(THE WORKBOOK)

POSSIBLE APPROACHES TO IMPROVING ACCESS AND SUCCESS

1. Good Information for Good Choices

• ***WOULD ADDRESS AN IMPORTANT GAP AND SHOULD BE PURSUED***

It will be important not to duplicate what already exists. There are two very important issues that must be considered. First, the culture, curriculum and values of the elementary and secondary schools promote university education. Secondly, approximately 60% of first-year college students and a higher percentage of apprentices do not come directly from high school. We need a system to deliver information to these individuals.

2. Helping High School Students Make More Informed Decisions

• ***WOULD ADDRESS AN IMPORTANT GAP AND SHOULD BE PURSUED***

- i. There needs to be a stronger focus on career counseling starting in elementary school and continuing through high school linked to the proposed information clearing house highlighted in the booklet. Most teachers and counselors are university arts graduates and are poorly equipped to advise students regarding college or technical post-secondary or apprenticeship programs. There are not enough high school graduates pursuing careers in science, technology, engineering and trades. This is a significant societal issue. Since 60% of first-year college students do not come directly from high school, we recommend that a career counseling centre be established in each college that is open to the public. It has to be understood that learning is lifelong and we should have a one-stop centre in each community that is accessible to high school students, parents and adult learners. Also, career courses should be started in Grade 7 and continue through to Grade 12. The courses should focus on academic and career pathways.
- ii. Ensure that high school guidance counselors and teachers have access to comprehensive career and post-secondary education information. All should receive some basic training and orientation in this area.
- iii. It is important that more value is attached to workplace and applied learning in elementary and high schools. There needs to be better school-to-apprenticeship linkages. The Minister of Education should initiate curriculum modifications in the high school to facilitate this initiative. College/apprenticeship training facilities should be expanded and enhanced so that they become regional training facilities. The average age of an apprentice in Canada is 26. This is at least eight years older than a European apprentice. Older apprentices face more financial barriers to certification than do younger apprentices as they often have significant family and financial responsibilities. We need to get more high school students involved in apprenticeship training. Rather than trying to build training

capacity in each high school, it would be better to expand college apprenticeship training facilities into regional skills training facilities. High school students could do their apprenticeship training in the regional skills training facilities on their local college campus.

- iv. Apprenticeship needs to be promoted as one of the pillars of higher education. Trades need to be better promoted by both the federal and provincial governments. We need to develop stronger links with Skills Canada and businesses to market trades.
- v. High school curriculum should be better linked to college programming. Apprenticeship needs to have stronger links to diploma/degree programs. Colleges need more access to grant degrees with fewer restrictions by the Post Secondary Quality Assurance Board. There is too little value placed on applied learning in Ontario. Ontario universities have a virtual monopoly on degree granting in Ontario.
- vi. The post-secondary system needs to be redesigned to ensure better transferability between colleges and colleges and universities. Our present system is not as diverse and integrated as most other jurisdictions (U.S., U.K., Australia, New Zealand, British Columbia, Alberta). This point will be expanded in the section on system design. Funding processes need to be developed that encourage better college/university pathways.
- vii. Colleges should have more rights to offer vocational degrees in business, health and engineering technology where there are skill shortages.
- viii. Prior Learning Assessment Review (PLAR). Review and re-energize the low-profile PLAR program.

3. Focus on Retention

- **WOULD ADDRESS AN IMPORTANT GAP AND SHOULD BE PURSUED**

- i. Each college should have a comprehensive Learning Skills Centre to assist students with literacy, numeracy and other learning deficits. The Learning Skills Centre should incorporate a testing centre. All first year students admitted to college should be tested for literacy and numeracy deficiencies so that appropriate intervention can be implemented soon after the student enters college. “High risk” students should be identified early in each semester so that appropriate remediation can take place. In addition to peer tutoring, which exists in most colleges, there is a need for professional tutoring.
- ii. Disability services at each college need to be enhanced and expanded
- iii. An academic advisory service needs to be built into each college.
- iv. Ontario needs a Labour Force Market Development Agreement that invests more resources into college training programs. Presently federal training monies focus on short-term programming that restricts access to the post-secondary sector. A greater investment would permit colleges to expand access. The federal funding

should be focused on the public training infrastructure. College should receive a significant portion of the existing training dollars.

- v. There should be better funding for college continuing education programs so that colleges can offer career counseling, the proposed Learning Skills Centre, disability services and other student services to part-time students. If these services were offered in the evening and on weekends, perhaps they could be offered on a fee-for-service basis to the broader community.
- vi. Better school-to-work linkages and school-to-apprenticeship/college linkages would improve high school retention and increase post-secondary participation rates as they raise expectations and provide hope for secondary students.
- vii. Both accessibility and retention could be improved if there was a greater emphasis on remediation and preparatory programs in colleges. Preparatory students need income support and institutions need to be funded for small class sizes and the appropriate tutoring and counseling supports to be effective.
- viii. Create and/or enhance a teaching excellence centre in each college to provide in-house professional development for teachers in curriculum development, on-line learning, working with students with disabilities, etc.

4. Other Possible Approaches

- i. Merge the college and university application centres, as well as college and university fairs – one-stop for students.
- ii. Each college should establish a professional career planning centre funded by the government. There should be provincial service norms established. It should be staffed by career counselors to serve college, and elementary and secondary students. It should ensure that there are strong links to the elementary and secondary systems. The career counseling centre should assist students and prospective students with determining career pathways and providing assessments of career suitability. It should also incorporate testing and job placement services.
- iii. Provide comprehensive information regarding transfer between institutions that is available in a central information bank.

POSSIBLE APPROACHES TO IMPROVING QUALITY

1. Focus on the Student Experience

- ***MAY BE VALUABLE AND SHOULD BE EXPLORED FURTHER***

Colleges have a system-wide feedback mechanism with the KPIs. In addition, Program Advisory Committees provide valuable input to college programming. Programs in the health sciences areas have to attain national accreditation. Also, each college has a Board of Governors that is composed of representatives from the

community. A provincial governance review process is underway. There are also national college standards for libraries. The primary quality issue for colleges is the fact that they are so poorly funded. Investment in student services such as career counseling, test centres, tutoring services, full-time faculty, etc., would be the most effective way to improve the student experience. Also, further investment is required in equipment, library resources, computer hardware and software, professional development and teaching excellence, curriculum and on-line learning materials to enhance the academic experience.

The KPI system should be expanded to the apprenticeship programs and appropriate academic supports should be provided for these students.

2. Focus on Teaching Excellence

- ***IS NOT NECESSARY OR PRACTICAL FOR ONTARIO***

The government should fund Centres of Teaching Excellence in each college. Scarce resources should be invested within the institutions not on a central resource.

3. Focused Approach to Research and Graduate Education

- ***WOULD ADDRESS AN IMPORTANT GAP AND SHOULD BE PURSUED***

The post-secondary system needs to be more differentiated in order to be more cost-effective and ensure excellence in research and graduate education.

- The wording implies that the only institutions to be considered are universities.
- A fundamental question for the colleges is how to keep professors at the leading edge:
 - Through professional development
 - Through interaction with industry via consulting and applied research.
- A focused approach would need to ensure that colleges delivering degree programs were appropriately resourced to participate in applied research projects.
- There needs to be a greater emphasis on applied research and the commercialization of research.
- Support commercialization at colleges by ensuring that colleges have access to the \$27 million Technology Transfer Capacity Fund.
- Develop dedicated “college competition” envelopes within provincial research funding and research infrastructure program budgets.

4. Measure Our Performance and Compare Ourselves to the Best in the World

- ***WOULD ADDRESS AN IMPORTANT GAP AND SHOULD BE PURSUED***

A system-wide Program Quality Assurance Process Audit is being developed by the colleges. Colleges already demonstrate a commitment to program and service review via regular assessments by program advisory committees and the KPI process.

- In many other countries of the world, quality assurance reports on educational institutions are being made available to the public; if we are unable to do the same, our recruitment of international students may be negatively affected.
- On a regular basis, our program standards should be benchmarked against the same or similar programs in other countries.
- There will be significant costs to implement a system of quality audits that result in public reporting, as well as to implement quality assurance models that require benchmarking against international standards.

5. Internationalize the Experience

- **WOULD ADDRESS AN IMPORTANT GAP AND SHOULD BE PURSUED**

Australia aggressively markets post-secondary education. Ontario's post-secondary system should be marketed as a system to enhance benefits for all institutions that wish to pursue international directions. Ontario should work with the federal government to facilitate visa entry for foreign students. Such an approach would increase export revenues and assist in recruiting well educated immigrants.

6. Other Possible Approaches

The province should develop a provincial credential and qualification system that is based on learning outcomes. There also needs to be a greater focus on credentialing of applied learning. Apprentices should have access to a learning system that leads to an applied degree and credentialing to the level of a Master Craftsman. This system would facilitate credit transfer between colleges and universities which is sometimes based on input criteria (i.e., the academic qualifications of the professor).

There should be targeted funding to enhance college program advisory committee operations. Orientation and best practices materials, as well as better staffing, could improve this process.

- Although we have access to our three local universities' libraries through the Community Borrowers Program, it is limited. Further collaborative initiatives and activities are essential for college libraries to support teaching and learning at colleges in Ontario. These initiatives would also increase cost-effectiveness.

POSSIBLE APPROACHES TO IMPROVING SYSTEM DESIGN

1. Encourage Specialization and Collaboration

- **WOULD ADDRESS AN IMPORTANT GAP AND SHOULD BE PURSUED**

It is crucial that the system become more specialized and integrated at the college and university level. Colleges should be encouraged to meet local economic needs. Conestoga is in a unique situation. We are in a rapidly growing region

demographically with three universities with very high admission standards. Therefore, there are many highly qualified local students who cannot access degree programs in careers such as business, health and engineering.

Not all universities should be research-focused. We need to create a range of universities. Some, like Queens, University of Toronto, should be research institutions. There should also be specialization. Not all universities should attempt to become comprehensive institutions offering a full range of programs.

- a) Expand programming at Institutes of Technology and continue to allow differentiation at college level to meet local economic needs.
- b) More vocational degrees in business, health/biotechnology, engineering technology.
- c) University academic standards should not be the sole standard for determining all degree granting in Ontario.

2. Clarify College Role in Skills Training

- **NOT SURE THERE IS A PROBLEM**

Colleges are committed to offer a full range of programs.

3. Recognize Learning and Qualifications

- **WOULD ADDRESS AN IMPORTANT GAP AND SHOULD BE PURSUED**

4. Other Possible Approaches

- * *This section is a repeat of our Vision Statement in Section II*

Global competition, rapid technological change and growing societal expectations require Canadian companies and public institutions to have a highly educated and trained workforce. It is important that access to higher education is broadened. It is our belief that this is the most important and fundamental issue that the government must address. Colleges have expanded their mandate since their start-up in the 1960s to better respond to both individual and societal needs. They must continue to respond to the changing economic environment. Colleges have expanded the breadth of their programming to meet these needs. They have developed a continuum of learning for full-time and part-time students, which ranges from preparatory and upgrading to applied degree, degree completion in collaboration with universities and post-diploma/post-degree programs for college and university graduates.

Clear pathways to career and post-secondary education must be established to provide better opportunities for students. It must be recognized that individual aspirations for post-secondary education change over time. In addition, individual development and readiness for post-secondary education vary.

The present Ontario post-secondary system does not fully recognize these realities of human development. In fact, Ontario's public post-secondary system is unique in

this regard. There is very little transferability of academic credits from colleges to universities. Ontario college graduates face significant barriers to degree completion. Other Canadian provinces show greater student mobility than Ontario. In British Columbia, 8% of the graduates of college career programs transferred to university. In Alberta, 8% of the graduates of career preparation programs at the Northern Alberta and Southern Alberta Institutes of Technology transferred to university programs. The comparable transfer rate for Ontario college graduates ranged between 3.5% and 4.5% between 2000/01 – 2002/03.

Ontario needs a post-secondary system that is more accessible, diverse, and integrated if we are to achieve the goal of 50% of high school graduates attaining degree status. The system must accommodate the needs of different regions. There is great regional diversity in Ontario and according to the provincial government's Task Force on competitiveness, no single recipe will work for all regions. Other countries such as the United States, Great Britain, Germany, Australia, etc., have a greater range of institutions (e.g., private universities, public research universities, four-year undergraduate, polytechnical degree granting and two-year colleges to meet differing individual and societal needs. They also have a greater range of academic standards than exists in Ontario's universities. For example, in the State of Massachusetts there is Harvard at one extreme and a host of degree granting institutions that have a significant variation of academic standards. We need a post-secondary system with a greater emphasis on programs, which contribute directly to increased productivity, competitiveness, and economic growth.

Therefore, we are recommending that:

1. The government of Ontario establish a new Admissions and Transfer Council with the mandate and resources to improve the transfer of credits within the post-secondary sector.

This is a complex issue, however, if we conduct a review on a program-by-program basis, there can be significant improvements made in the interests of students and cost-effectiveness for the taxpayer.

- i. There are clear cases of arbitrariness regarding credit transfer from some college programs to university programs. Third-party intervention is necessary, as well as funding to encourage collaboration.
 - ii. There are situations where bridging programs are necessary to accommodate gaps in college applied programming to permit better integration with university programs (e.g., engineering). Third-party intervention will be necessary. There should be additional funding to encourage bridging.
 - iii. There may be areas where program differences restrict significant program transfer opportunities.
2.
 - i. Student pathways to a university degree should be expanded by developing more articulated college/university transfer programs such as Guelph/Humber, Conestoga/McMaster (Nursing), Conestoga/Windsor

(Business). There are many areas of study that lead to differentiated staffing positions in industry. College-level certificate and diploma programs provide technicians and technologists for industry whereas degree programs may provide better access to professional certification and higher-level positions. The government should encourage colleges and universities through financial incentives to develop joint programming in such areas of study to provide seamless pathways for prospective students as well as employees presently in the workforce. For example, expansion of university programming in dietetics, biotechnology, etc., should involve partnerships with colleges so that two-year college technicians can complete university degrees if they have the appropriate marks. The provincial government's goal is to increase post-secondary places by 50,000 students. Currently, provincial funding per college student is \$4,800 and \$6,600 per university student. Spread over 50,000 spaces the government could save \$90 million a year by putting these spaces in colleges. The Californian post-secondary system is much more diverse, comprehensive, and accessible than Ontario's. It has some of the best universities in the world (e.g., Berkeley, Stanford). However, it restricts university undergraduate education to 40% of the post-secondary enrolment to ensure both excellence and accessibility.

- ii. College two-year programs should lead to an associate degree designation as they do in the United States. Colleges should be encouraged to deliver the first two years of some university programs as they do in the United States and some other provinces. This would promote accessibility and an emphasis on teaching and learning and be more cost-effective.
3. The Institutes of Technology and Advanced Learning should be permitted to offer more vocational degree programs beyond the niche applied degrees they presently offer to meet local economic needs. This is especially important for Institutes of Technology and Applied Learning such as Conestoga that are in regions experiencing rapid demographic growth and experiencing significant skill shortages. For example, the provincial government's Task Force on Competitiveness, Productivity and Economic Progress claims that Ontario produces half the number of business degree graduates compared to economic powerhouse states in the United States. Why not permit some colleges the right to offer generic business degrees to meet employers' demands if they can meet appropriate standards? These standards should be determined by the broader community not arbitrarily set by existing universities. The strength of the American, British, Australian and other systems is that they have a range of standards. There is differentiation that meets both students' abilities and needs as well as employer needs. No one claims that all universities in the State of Massachusetts should have the same standards as Harvard.

In this community, Conestoga is surrounded by three excellent universities (University of Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University and the University of Guelph). Many very good local students cannot meet the business school admission standards of these universities. Laurier's business school requires high school graduation marks in the high eighties. In addition, calculus is required to be able to obtain a Bachelor of Business. It is important for universities such as Laurier to strive for excellence by attracting the best high school students who go to the best academically oriented business schools. Many business graduates who do

not have calculus have been known to run successful businesses. Approximately 60% of Conestoga's first-year business students do not come directly from high school. They have work experience in the community and many could benefit from a general business degree program offered by Conestoga. It would also make them better educated and trained employees. Only 16% of our university graduates stay in the community, however, approximately 70% of college graduates remain. We need to expand business degree places in this community to meet the needs of this group. The fact that the academic standards are different from the top-rated academic university program should not be the primary concern. These college degree programs will be designed to meet the needs and standards of the Ontario economy. The best post-secondary systems in the world have variable academic standards. The Conestoga degree would place a greater emphasis on applied learning which is undervalued in Ontario. It is not possible to expand degree granting to 50% of the population without some reduction of admission standards. Surely we do not want the "best" university business schools to reduce their entrance requirements?

It is interesting to note that this fall the University of Waterloo could not fill its first-year class in a number of programs. The University did not have enough high school students who met their admission requirements. Therefore it had to recruit students from overseas to meet its enrolment targets. We think it is important for the University of Waterloo to maintain high academic standards. After all, it is one of Canada's best universities. However, there are many capable local students who cannot meet these standards. If Conestoga had broader vocational degree granting powers, they could attend Conestoga and, upon graduation, make a stronger contribution to the local economy. In our region a high school graduate with an 80% average cannot gain admission to the Business program at Laurier. The students must leave the region to attain a business degree.

The looming provincial and national shortage of nurses has been exacerbated by the recent insistence on a university degree for entry to practice. The government should also permit an applied degree in nursing that meets national standards to complement the joint college/university nursing degrees. The university admission standards have reduced access for many capable students. These standards are not necessarily related to the ability to function as an effective nurse.

Degree granting in Ontario has been a virtual monopoly of the eighteen public universities who continue to jealously guard their rights. This monopoly does not serve the best interests of students, society or the highest goals of the universities (i.e., academic excellence). In our region there are over 50,000 university students and only 6,000 college students. Accessibility to post-secondary could be enhanced for local residents if Conestoga was permitted to offer more vocational degree options.

The Post-Secondary Quality Assurance Board has held colleges to academic standards that are more stringent than some university degree programs. Ontario needs to place a higher value on applied learning. The requirement that college applied degree staffing must be composed of at least 50% PhDs is

inappropriate. Colleges need professors with at least a Master's degree with significant work and practical experience to have credibility in the classroom and with industry.

4. Besides limiting access, the Ontario degree granting system does not give applied learning its due. A clear need exists to educate more citizens to a degree level. However, we should establish a range of degrees offering a different array of applied skills, academic skills, employability and technical skills. The Ontario university system should not be the sole determiner of degree standards in this province. Ontario is faced with looming skill shortages, yet 90% of Grade 9 students aspire to a university education. One per cent of Grade 9 students want to be apprentices. Ontario has established an academic value system that is not congruent with societal needs. Ontario needs to develop and strengthen its applied learning system by permitting more degree granting at the Institutes of Technology and Advanced Learning such as Conestoga. These Institutes should be encouraged to develop clear pathways from apprenticeship to diploma to applied degrees. Apprenticeship should become one of the pillars of the post-secondary system. We need to establish a provincial credentialing system that provides acknowledgement of high learning in trades to the level of Master Craftsman. We have attached a credentialing model in Appendix A that should be implemented in Ontario.

Ontario needs to promote and market apprenticeship as a viable option for students in high school. The linkage to diploma and degree would raise the profile and make apprenticeship more attractive.

5. The federal government has made a significant commitment to provide research monies for our universities to enhance innovation (\$1.2 billion annually). We need to see a similar commitment to invest in colleges to deal with the issue of skills shortages. The federal government used to purchase a substantial amount of training from colleges. Almost 15% of Conestoga's budget in the late 1980s comprised federal direct purchase monies. Presently, less than 1% of our budget comes from federal investment in training.

Ontario is the only province in Canada without a Labour Market Development Agreement. Ontario needs an integrated labour market and training system to meet its needs. This new federal-provincial framework should ensure that there is adequate support for the public training infrastructure in Ontario.

6. There needs to be a greater emphasis on funding preparatory programming in colleges to enable Ontario's youth and unemployed to attain the required education and skills to take part in Canada's economy. Presently there is significant duplication of programming which is costly and confusing for clients. Ontario should have a federal-provincial system that is co-coordinated with a greater emphasis on longer-term remediation. There should be less emphasis on attaining the high school diploma for adults over twenty and more emphasis on employability skills that lead to apprenticeship, college and university credentials.
7. There needs to be stronger interface between the secondary school curriculum and college programs. In addition to better integration of trades programming,

there should be advanced college credits for some high school graduates in curriculum areas that relate to college programs. The curriculum needs to be revised to deal with the rising issue of high school dropouts.

8. There has to be a greater focus on retention at all levels of the education system. Strong literacy and numeracy skills are vital for success in the post-secondary system. There needs to be a greater emphasis on these topics from an early age, i.e., Grade 1.

Motivation is an important ingredient for secondary school success. It is imperative that students gain an exposure to career options and the workplace at a younger age. The primary and secondary systems are primarily geared to an academic education leading to university. Approximately 90% of Grade 9 students consider university to be their goal. Unfortunately, any other pursuits are considered to be lesser endeavours. More high school students need to be introduced to apprenticeship education and training.

Colleges have lower retention rates than universities because they are admitting high school graduates with a greater range of literacy and numeracy skills. Colleges need the resources to provide appropriate remediation in the form of preparatory programs, in some cases with reduced workloads – pre-apprenticeship, longer programming, more part-time programming with the appropriate counseling and tutoring support. These students need appropriate financing over a longer period to make the transition to academic and vocational success.

The federal training system should be aligned with the provincial system to more effectively use provincial and federal resources. Presently there is too great an emphasis on short-term training programs to get people into the work place as soon as possible. This philosophy often leads to a cycle of poverty and upheavals as the unemployed are trained for low-end jobs that are often eliminated in the mid-term. We need to provide adjustment programs that make a real difference in upgrading education and skills.

9. Elementary and secondary school students need better information about career options and the full range of education and training options.

Both the high school curriculum and culture are geared primarily to university education. There is an opportunity for the federal and provincial governments to develop a national career information network with a strong web case. In addition, teachers, students and parents need to be exposed to a broader range of career options and educational opportunities at a younger age.

Career education centres should be established in each college with a focus on school-to-work, school-to-apprenticeship, and school-to-college pathways. They should be open to the community at large with strong links to the elementary and secondary schools. Testing and assessment should be an important function of these centres.

Ontario needs to develop a post-secondary system that promotes excellence without limited access. For example, if we wish more people to have business

degrees in Ontario we must have a greater range of business programming with different admission criteria. For example, at one extreme we have the Harvard Business School. However, there is a larger range of business schools in the U.S. than in Ontario using “academic standards” as criteria. The U.S. has some of the best academic and research universities in the world. These are meant for the academically elite. Only students with extremely high marks in secondary schools will be accepted. However, Americans realize that extending business education and training to a wider range of the population has a direct benefit on economic productivity.

Ontario business leaders understand that high school marks by themselves do not mean success in the workplace. Also, graduating from the “best” university business program does not mean that you will be the CEO. There are many factors that contribute to success in the workplace. High school marks and academic success at university at a young age are one factor. The Americans have realized this for some time. The American post-secondary system also allows multiple entry points to degree programs. They realize that many intelligent individuals do not realize their full potential in high school. Many individuals go directly to the workforce after finishing high school or they might go to college. We need to have more options for these students to complete degrees.

On the other hand, we need to foster excellence. Presently we have eighteen public universities that have essentially the same mandate. Ontario needs to have a more differentiated university system. Perhaps only half of the eighteen should be research institutions. It will be difficult for all eighteen public Ontario universities to become world-class research institutions. It is also very costly for the taxpayers. All Ontario universities require professors to devote 40% of their workload to research, therefore, they are teaching roughly six hours per week. Obviously research is important, however, society would receive greater benefit from these efforts if research were concentrated in a small number of research-intensive universities that have the resources to be cutting edge.

We need to have better funding for our post-secondary system (colleges and universities). We agree that Ontario universities need better funding. However, it is constantly overlooked that colleges receive \$2,000 less per student via the provincial government grant. In addition, tuition is at least \$2,000 less per student. If one adds in research monies (the University of Guelph received approximately \$120 million last year) and fund raising (the University of Waterloo has launched a \$200 million campaign), the gap is even larger.

Colleges are desperate for additional funding. College administrative overheads are far less than universities. We are much more cost-effective.

We need to invest significantly in research. We need to strive for excellence. We also should invest in a cost-effective fashion. We need a vision that is both bold and innovative. The vision for post-secondary is the crux of the issue. We need to invest more but we also need to invest wisely.

The Council of Ontario Universities would like to restrict colleges to a mandate that was established in the 1960s. The world has changed. Ontario’s vision

needs to change. The vision of Ontario universities divides Ontarians into two classes: “Those who aspire to go to university and those who do not”. This is both simplistic and dangerous for citizens and Ontario’s economic future.

Unfortunately, Ontario’s universities have opted for a vision that dates back to the 1960s. This view does not reflect the realities of the 21st century. It will also put Ontario at a disadvantage since the U.S., Great Britain, Australia, Germany, etc., as well as B.C. and Alberta, have post-secondary systems that are more integrated and diverse.

We recommend more funding for a reformed post-secondary system that encourages collaboration, accessibility and excellence.

Compared to fifteen years ago, Ontario colleges are educating students for approximately 70 cents on the dollar. Revenue per students has dropped over 30% since 1987/88 adjusted for inflation. We are serving 40% more students but receive 44% less grant funding per student in constant dollars (adjusted for inflation). Ontario colleges rank last in a provincial comparison of revenue per student. This must change. We are recommending that grants attain the level of the college national average. Since post-secondary education is one of very few government programs that actually contributes positively to the province’s financial bottom line, we believe there is both urgency and importance in this request.

POSSIBLE APPROACHES TO PAYING FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

1. More Progressive Student Assistance

- **WOULD ADDRESS AN IMPORTANT GAP AND SHOULD BE PURSUED**

2. Give Students the Money

- **IS NOT NECESSARY OR PRACTICAL FOR ONTARIO**

It would be better to improve student financial assistance, ensure clearer pathways, improve transferability of credits from college to university, increase the number of college degrees in vocational areas such as business, health, biotechnology, engineering technology to create more competition and more opportunities.

3. Go Now, Pay Later

Is not necessary or practical for Ontario if there is more progressive student assistance. This could lead to significant student debt.

4. Flexibility on Tuition Fees

- **WOULD ADDRESS AN IMPORTANT GAP AND SHOULD BE PURSUED**

College tuition at \$1,800 per annum is less than a semester of university tuition. Higher tuition would enable colleges to offer higher quality education and student

services. The 30% tuition set-aside should be reviewed. We recommend that it be capped at present levels and that utilization of set-aside be more flexible.

MISCELLANEOUS

College fund raising opportunities for equipment and scholarships is more limited than the long-established universities. The government programs such as OSOTF disadvantage college students compared to university students. The government should review total institutional revenues when determining college and university grants and tuition. For example, besides the disparities in fund raising abilities is the gap in funding between major research universities and other institutions, notably colleges. The value of the tax credits for employers that offer co-op positions for secondary, college and university students needs to be increased to expand the number of co-op positions.

1. Pay for Delivery of Key Results

- ***WOULD ADDRESS AN IMPORTANT GAP AND SHOULD BE PURSUED***

Predictable multi-year funding is an important goal. However, the more critical goal is ensuring adequacy of public funding. The Ontario government needs to commit to bringing colleges' funding per student up to the national average.

- Collaboration between colleges and universities should be encouraged by special funding for joint programming and seamless transition from college diploma programs to university degree programs.
- Increase performance funding to encourage continuous improvement.
- Provide funding for new programs or the expansion of programs that meet local and provincial economic needs, e.g., nursing, business, physicians, etc.
- Remove college slip-year funding. It inhibits colleges' ability to meet local economic needs.
- The current provincial tax credit of \$1,000 for employers hiring co-op students should be increased to \$2,500 with a matching tax credit of \$2,500 from the federal government for a total of \$5,000.
- Provincial government grants for students in co-op programs should be higher than for students in non-co-op to cover additional institutional costs.

2. Other Possible Approaches

i. More Progressive Student Assistance

The financial aid system needs significant change. This is particularly important for college students as more tend to come from lower socio-economic groups than do university students. Also, 22% of college OSAP recipients were married or sole-support parents, compared to 10% of university borrowers. One of the primary causes of "dropping out" is insufficient funds.

We would suggest the following changes:

- Change the timing of the release of financial aid. Aid is not provided until after the school year begins, yet many expenses are incurred before the start of the school year.
- Increase threshold levels that determine the amount a student can receive – the levels have not been kept current.
- Loan repayment rates after graduation should be reduced.
- Cap the 30% set-aside fund at current levels.
- Public funds for student aid be distributed to those in real need.

ii. Government Grants

- The government should fund the colleges at the national average per student.
- There needs to be an investment in the physical infrastructure of the college system to ensure proper maintenance.
- There should be a fund established to permit growth of classroom and laboratory space to meet the government's goal of expanding apprenticeship training at colleges.

POSSIBLE APPROACHES TO IMPROVING ACCOUNTABILITY

1. Co-Coordinated by Government

- ***IS NOT NECESSARY OR PRACTICAL FOR ONTARIO***

A governance review is presently being conducted by the provincial government vis-à-vis the college system.

This suggestion is not likely the most effective model to achieve the goals of greater system coordination, coherence and seamlessness. Very few other jurisdictions have assigned post-secondary system coordination roles directly to government.

2. An Independent Body, or Bodies with Responsibility for Planning, Monitoring and Advising

- ***WOULD ADDRESS AN IMPORTANT GAP AND SHOULD BE PURSUED***

The college system supports in principle the proposal of an independent Higher Education Council whose mandate covers strategy, funding and policy issues of post-secondary education.

There is a pressing need for a Higher Education Council to have authority and accountability to improve transferability, encourage greater college/university collaboration and expand options with the post-secondary sector.

The role and responsibilities that are normally associated with an Admissions and Transfer Council should be assumed by a Higher Education Council.

This body could incorporate some other existing organizations, such as PEQAB.

The membership of such a council should include both the institutions and the public, including employers, and there must be equal representation from colleges and universities.

3. An Independent Body, or Bodies, with Additional Responsibility for Operational Matters

- ***IS NOT NECESSARY OR PRACTICAL FOR ONTARIO***

The college system does not support the establishment of a Council with extensive operational responsibilities.

Generally, the Higher Education Council should address strategic and policy matters and act in an advisory capacity to the Minister. With the exception of establishing greater transferability within post-secondary education, the Council should not have executive authority for operational matters. Operational matters should continue to be dealt with between institutions and the government.

IV SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Access

- * 1. Conestoga recommends that a comprehensive strategy be devised to achieve a significant increase in post-secondary educational attainment rates. The strategy must include improved school/college pathways, reform/expansion of apprenticeship, improved access for under-represented groups and strengthened workforce training capacity.
2. Conestoga recommends developing clear and viable educational pathways between school boards and colleges, under the leadership of the provincial education ministries. To accomplish this, Conestoga recommends:
 - 2.1 Establishing organizational structures to link the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities with the mandate to identify and address systemic barriers and improve school/college pathways.
 - 2.2 Improving pathways by allocating resources that facilitate the alignment of curriculum and the development of pathways. They should ensure the availability of appropriate courses and encourage the creation of new joint school/college models.
 - 2.3 Requiring all future teacher education graduates to have had, during their pre-service training, exposure to and experience with colleges, their programs, and the careers to which those programs lead.
 - 2.4 Systematically articulating the value and contribution of college programs and graduates from the highest levels of government to generate a broader understanding and appreciation of the college option by the public, particularly parents and students.
 - * 2.5 Establishing career centres at each college linked to the elementary and secondary systems. These centres should have testing and assessment capabilities in addition to a full range of information regarding work, apprenticeship, college and university options.
 - * 2.6 Enhancing learning support systems at colleges (tutoring, mentoring, disability services, learning skills centres) to ensure better retention of students.
3. Conestoga recommends that expansion and transformation of the apprenticeship system be supported so that it is considered the third component of Ontario's postsecondary sector. Key strategies include:
 - 3.1 Expanding the system by extending the co-op diploma model, innovative delivery models (such as e-learning and modular delivery) and pre-apprenticeship programs. The college role in school-college-work transition initiatives should be strengthened.

- 3.2 Improving flexibility and services for apprentices by providing greater choice, better recognition of prior learning and a more student-focused learning and work experience environment.
- 3.3 Provide greater recognition of, and support for, apprenticeship by enhancing marketing and messaging to the public and employers.
- 3.4 Realigning Ministry/college system roles to give colleges responsibility, authority and accountability for outcomes in apprenticeship in-school delivery.
- 3.5 Implementing a new funding model to support a realigned delivery system, better institutional planning and adequate resources to deliver high quality training to expanding numbers of apprentices.
- 3.6 Regional apprenticeship/skills training facilities should be established on college campuses to enable high school students to do apprenticeship training in world-class facilities and raise the profile of apprenticeship training.
- * 3.7 There should be a greater emphasis on applied learning. In addition to expanding linkages to diploma programs, apprenticeship graduates should have clear pathways to attain applied degrees.
4. Conestoga recommends that the federal and provincial governments develop a new labour market development framework to ensure:
- Adequate resources for the education and training system;
 - Increased federal support to address skill shortages;
 - More effective links between individual aspirations and identified skills requirements;
 - Support for the public training infrastructure in Ontario, and
 - Greater federal-provincial co-ordination in program design and delivery.
- * • Greater emphasis on longer training interventions. Presently there is too great an emphasis on short-term training solutions which often lead to a cycle of underemployment and unemployment.
5. Conestoga recommends that new funding be provided to accelerate the development of new approaches to creating and delivering education and skills development to those at risk of exclusion from Ontario's future.
- Immigrants to Ontario;
 - Persons with disabilities;
 - Rural and geographically-dispersed people; and
 - Youth and adults with low literacy and/or foundation skills.
6. Conestoga recommends that reform of the provincial financial aid system must be a component of any strategy to increase participation from under-represented groups as those persons often face significant financial barriers in undertaking and completing postsecondary education.

Transformation

7. Conestoga recommends that the post-secondary sector be redesigned from the present silo structure to a comprehensive, integrated and diversified system. To achieve this goal, the Government of Ontario must commit to a clear public policy framework that declares the provision of clear educational pathways and expanded educational options as an imperative.
8. Conestoga recommends that an independent Higher Education Agency be created with a mandate that covers strategy, policy, and funding advice to the Minister and operational responsibility for credit transfer.
9. Conestoga recommends that a new Admissions and Transfer organization, under the umbrella of a Higher Education Agency, be mandated and resourced to improve the transfer of credits within the post-secondary sector.
10. Conestoga recommends establishing a policy framework and financial incentives to improve the capacity of colleges to contribute to increased post-secondary educational attainment goals at both the diploma and degree levels. The policy framework and the financial incentives must:
 - Stimulate the further expansion of pathways from apprenticeship programs to diplomas and degrees.
 - * • Enable colleges to continue to develop and offer new applied degree programs in response to economic and social needs, with appropriate access to graduate studies. The definition of applied degrees should be expanded to include vocational programs (e.g., business, nursing, etc.) where there are demonstrated shortages of workers in communities where access to university degrees is limited.
 - Encourage continued expansion of joint diploma/degree programs between colleges and universities.
 - Expand articulated college/university transfer programs, which can broaden student routes to a university degree.

Re-Investment

Public Investment

11. Conestoga recommends that a commitment to excellence in applied education must be made through improved funding for Ontario's colleges of applied arts and technology over a multi-year period by increased college per-student revenue (grant and fee) to the national average.
12. Conestoga recommends that enrolment growth funding for Ontario's colleges of applied arts and technology must be maintained.
13. Conestoga recommends that funding for the maintenance and renewal of facilities at Ontario's colleges of applied arts and technology must increase by at least \$30 million annually by 2007/08.

14. Conestoga recommends that a corridor model of grant distributions for Ontario's colleges of applied arts and technology must be adopted.
15. Conestoga recommends that additional resources must be provided to offset the costs to the college system of implementing a new province-wide quality assurance process audit.
- * 16. Conestoga recommends that a capital fund be established to expand the physical infrastructure to meet the provincial government's goals for apprenticeship growth.
17. Conestoga recommends the development of a more explicit strategy by the provincial government to build on Ontario colleges' underutilized applied research capacity. The strategy needs to:
 - Include dedicated college competition envelopes within provincial research funding and research infrastructure program budgets.
 - Ensure that colleges have access to provincial research funding, research equipment/infrastructure funds, and research commercialization funds, including the \$27 million Technology Transfer Capacity Fund that the government announced in June 2004 for improving capacity for commercialization.
18. Conestoga recommends that the current provincial tax credit of \$1,000 for employers hiring co-op students be increased to \$2,500 with a matching tax credit of \$2,500 from the federal government for a total of \$5,000.
 - * • Provincial government grants for students in co-op programs should be higher than for students in non co-op to cover additional institutional costs.

Tuition Fee Policy

- * 19. Conestoga recommends that the necessary, increased funding come from both government grants and tuition fees.
20. Conestoga recommends that college boards be granted greater authority in setting fees.
21. Conestoga recommends that future tuition fee policy not include the tuition set-aside provision.

Financial Aid Policy

22. The development of an income-contingent repayment system is supported in principle provided the following design principles are incorporated:
 - The repayment requirement sets a reasonable maximum limit on the amount of loan repayment in relation to percentage of income.

- The repayment schedule starts at a lower rate and phases up to the maximum rate as income rises.
- * • Interest rates be set as low as possible.

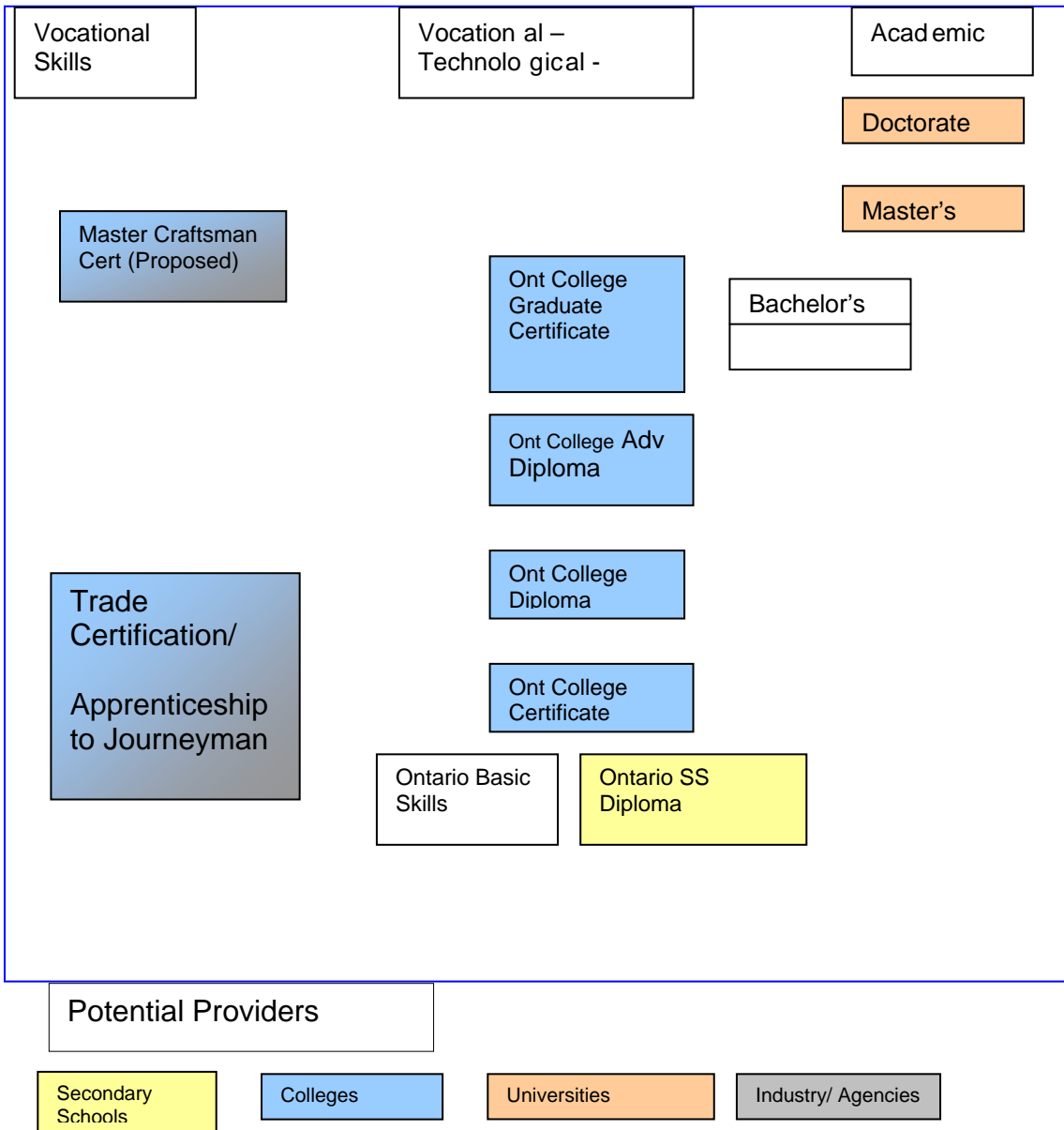
23. There is an urgent need to redesign and improve the financial aid system. Thresholds for financial assistance urgently need to be increased to reflect the real costs incurred by students. These should be reviewed and adjusted regularly to ensure they remain current.

24. Conestoga recommends that future provincial “matching” programs for student financial aid be designed to ensure public funds support those in greatest need. The current “matching” formula needs to be redefined to meet this objective.

* *These recommendations differ or are in addition to the ACAATO recommendations.*

V APPENDIX A

SAMPLE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK INCLUDING POTENTIAL PROVIDERS AND HIERARCHY OF QUALIFICATIONS WITHIN STREAMS



SAMPLE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

Qualification Level	Vocational Skills	Vocational/ Technological	Academic
12			Doctorate
11	Master Craftsman (proposed)		Master's
10		Ontario College Graduate Cert. (e.g. TEFL)	Graduate Certificate
9		Bachelor's	
8		Ontario College Advanced Diploma/ Graduate Certificate (some)	
7	Journeyman	Ontario College Diploma	
6		Ontario College Certificate	
5		Ontario Secondary School Diploma/ Ontario Basic Skills	
4			
3			
2			
1			