



CONESTOGA

Connect Life and Learning



BUSINESS PLAN

2025 - 26



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OUR COMMITMENT

Conestoga College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning is dedicated to developing and delivering programs and services that meet the expectations and requirements of our stakeholders, remaining responsive and agile in this unpredictable environment. We will continue to closely follow the policy set by governments, while meeting the needs of employers, students and the labour market to confirm our offerings are both current and future oriented. To ensure the college actions our goals and initiatives, we will plan and monitor our performance using the following goals:



Sustainability
Capacity
Quality



OUR VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

To respond to the needs of our communities, Conestoga must establish measurable goals and initiatives that will address current challenges and help the college, community and the individuals we serve to emerge stronger. The vision, mission and values outlined below will guide our work in the years ahead. A corresponding set of strategic goals and initiatives outline the specific actions we will pursue in support of our ambitious vision.



Vision

A recognized leader in applied learning and research that enables student success in meeting workforce demands.



Mission

To promote the prosperity and well-being of the communities we serve through the delivery of programming, workforce development and industry-focused research that meets local, regional and international demands.



Values

Student focus

We create environments for students to realize their potential and graduate as individuals who can make meaningful contributions to their communities.

Collaboration

We work with government, industry, community and international partners to reach our strategic goals and create a vibrant learning and working environment built on excellence, quality and respectful interactions.

Accountability

We fulfill our commitments to the organization and the broader college community by assuming responsibility for our individual conduct, action and results.

Sense of belonging

We cultivate inclusive, welcoming environments where individuals feel valued, respected and empowered to succeed.

Innovation

We constantly strive to improve, enhance and rethink the programs and services we provide to achieve ongoing improvement and higher standards of performance.

Fiscal Responsibility

We are fiscally responsible and must ensure we are financially accountable within the constraints we are facing.

CONTEXT

Ontario's public post-secondary education system is facing the biggest financial crisis in its history due to the numerous changes made by the previous federal government to the Canadian International Student Program. Changes to the program were announced in late 2023 with implementation beginning in the 2024-25 fiscal year and continuing as we begin the current 2025-26 fiscal year. The federal government reduced the international student enrolment cap for Ontario colleges by 40%, starting in the spring 2024 term, and an additional 10% for the 2025 calendar year. The federal government also made numerous changes to program criteria by limiting the opportunity of international students to qualify for post-graduate work permits (PGWP), limiting the academic programs they were permitted to take, and restricting pathways to Canadian citizenship for all potential international students.

There is no question that there was a need to reduce the number of international students coming to Ontario, and the decision by the federal government to terminate the 15 Public College-Private Partner (PCPP) partnerships, primarily in the Greater Toronto Area, was the right decision. The previous federal government, however, could have implemented these changes in a systematic, more thoughtful fashion rather than make continuous changes over an eight-month period. Moreover, the federal government did not have to denigrate the Ontario post-secondary system and damage Canada's reputation as a welcoming country to immigrants. A recent survey conducted by ApplyBoard determined that 80% of prospective international students now perceive Canada as a country that is not welcoming to international students.

As a result of these changes, no Ontario college will be able to reach its new international enrolment cap which has been reduced by 50%. Most colleges have seen a reduction of 60% to 70% of their pre-cap level one international student enrolments. Conestoga expects a loss of approximately 20,000 international students for the fall 2025 term compared to the fall of 2023, which equates to a loss of approximately \$450 million in revenue over the last two years. The federal government approved Conestoga's growth in international enrolment and this growth permitted us to meet the needs of employers for skilled workers and provided us with the capital to expand infrastructure, including building renovations and new equipment. All Ontario colleges have been impacted dramatically by the decline of thousands of international students. Colleges serving regions experiencing strong demographic growth and comprehensive growing economies need strong international enrolment to counteract Canada's low fertility rates and aging population.

Conestoga is in one of Canada's economic engines in southwestern Ontario and serves Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge, Guelph, Brantford, Milton, Stratford and Ingersoll, with a total population of more than 1.2 million. Local employers face significant challenges recruiting skilled workers in areas such as food processing, advanced manufacturing, trades, engineering, information technology and healthcare. Conestoga offers the largest number of labour force market programs (i.e., personal support worker, nursing, trades and digital imaging) of all Ontario public colleges to meet its mission of serving employers' skill and workforce needs.

Now more than ever, Ontario needs public colleges and the skilled workers they supply as Canada seeks to strengthen interprovincial trade and diversify our export markets in response to the current threat posed by U.S. tariffs. Conestoga will need to deliver world-class training, reskilling and upskill workers in impacted industries. Our goal is to remain a key partner in meeting employer needs to ensure the prosperity of the eight communities we serve by preserving our academic programs, developing new programming, growing domestic enrolment and reducing operational costs.

Revenues generated from international student enrolment have allowed the college to invest significantly in the economic well-being of all our communities. Over the last few years, Conestoga has invested approximately \$500 million to expand and enhance building infrastructure and equipment. The college has completed phase one and commenced phase two of the Conestoga Skilled Trades Campus, purchased several student residences in Kitchener, Waterloo, Brantford and Milton, and completed campus renovations and enhancements of the Waterloo, Doon, Guelph, Stratford and Milton locations to accommodate new programs and encourage domestic enrolment growth.

Although international enrolment has dropped considerably over the past 12 months, the college expects to end the 2024-25 (April 1, 2024, to March 31, 2025) fiscal year with an approximate surplus of \$120 million. This year, the college plans to invest \$145 million in capital projects that include phase two of the Conestoga Skilled Trades Campus, phase two of the Waterloo campus renovation, renovations of the Tollgate Technological Skills Centre in Brantford to expand skilled trades programming and Doon campus renovations to accommodate new programming such as the animal care suite of programs. The college is also enhancing its operational capacity by investing in applied research centres and innovation hubs across priority sectors, including engineering, healthcare, information technology and skilled trades. The recent Workplace Safety and Insurance Board investment in Conestoga's Canadian Institute for Safety, Wellness & Performance is a good example of research expansion.

The continuous drop in international student enrolment over each term since spring 2024 and the inability of Ontario colleges to achieve their allotted international enrolment caps are putting serious pressure on college finances. Conestoga's primary focus this year must be the rightsizing of an organization that has lost thousands of international students to ensure we end the 2025-26 fiscal year with a balanced budget. Over the past year, the college has hired fewer part-time faculty, frozen hiring in many cases and has had a number of staff members take early voluntary retirement packages. Also, due to financial constraints in March and April of this year we released full-time administrative staff and gave a notice of layoff to the support staff union. The college has not renewed leases of some buildings in Waterloo, Kitchener and Brantford to reduce operational costs. Reduced hours of operation at campuses for spring and summer 2025 has taken place and the college is reviewing the feasibility of introducing a similar approach for the fall and winter terms. We are restructuring many of our operations to provide efficiencies.

Our focus on increasing domestic enrolment by maintaining our academic programming and improving our marketing strategies is paying dividends. Our winter 2025 enrolment was up 3% domestically, spring enrolment was up by 7.5% and fall confirmations are up by 14%. Colleges are also advocating with the new federal government to provide a more welcoming message to prospective international students so they can reach their allotted international enrolment cap. If Conestoga could reach its cap it would translate into an additional 4,000 international students or more than \$40 million in revenue. This would allow us to better meet the workforce needs of employers in our region. The federal government should focus on working collaboratively with colleges to meet employer needs for skilled workers where there are not enough domestic students to enter programs (i.e., personal support worker, food processing, early childhood education, etc.)

In addition, the provincial government indicated recently it intends to establish a \$750 million fund to support Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) programming for colleges and universities. It is possible that Conestoga could benefit from this fund as we have a large number of STEM programs. Another positive direction from our provincial ministry would be the possibility of a funding formula model review within the next six months that would benefit programming that is labour market-oriented.

Conestoga's focus this fiscal year is to reduce costs and balance the 2025-2026 budget, maintain existing academic programming where possible and develop new programs with a focus on domestic enrolment while convincing the federal government to make Canada a more welcoming country for international students to meet the needs of employers for skilled workers. This direction will be undertaken in the context of our three goals within the business plan: sustainability, capacity and quality.

Conestoga will continue to move forward with a broad range of sustainability initiatives which will support long-term viability and reduce greenhouse gas emissions and waste. A plan has been developed on the foundation of efforts already underway. Conestoga will also move forward with replacing its existing Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system. This project, titled C3 (Connection, Collaboration, Community), will require a \$15 million investment over the next three years. The development of the new system will require a significant commitment of human resources, and we will need to develop a work plan over the next few months. The development of the new ERP system will involve a review of all our business processes, resulting in a major improvement in the quality and efficiency of service levels.

Conestoga will also identify opportunities for artificial intelligence initiatives to improve services for students and employees.

We remain committed to our students, our staff, the employers and the communities we serve to deliver in-demand career skills training and applied research solutions to help employers thrive.



OUR GOALS AND INITIATIVES

1: Goal - Sustainability

Conestoga will continue to review both its non-labour and labour costs to ensure the budget for 2025-26 is balanced. The college will also continue to proceed with initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and waste.

- 1.1 Balance the 2025-26 budget through responsible resource management
- 1.2 Implement a cost-effective sustainability plan
- 1.3 Implement Artificial Intelligence (AI) to improve cost effectiveness and efficiency of business processes

2: Goal - Capacity

Focus on domestic enrolment growth by maintaining existing programming where possible, developing new programs and credentials, and strengthening relationships with alumni, employers and government.

- 2.1 Grow domestic and international enrolment
- 2.2 Alumni relations
- 2.3 Community and government partnerships
- 2.4 Employer engagement
- 2.5 Applied research solutions

3: Goal - Quality

Demonstrate excellence in programming and services while providing an outstanding learning and working environment for students and employees.

- 3.1 Quality assurance
- 3.2 Indigenous success strategy

ACTIONING OUR GOALS

1: GOAL – SUSTAINABILITY

Conestoga will continue to review both its non-labour and labour costs to ensure the budget for 2025-26 is balanced. The college will also continue to proceed with initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and waste.

1.1 Balance the 2025-26 budget through responsible resource management

- 1.1.1 Reduce labour and non-salary costs to balance the 2025-26 operational budget
- 1.1.2 Restructure and rightsize the organization to offset large declining international student enrolment
- 1.1.3 Grow domestic enrolment

1.2 Implement a cost-effective sustainability plan

- 1.2.1 Continue the well drilling program for open loop geothermal at all feasible locations
- 1.2.2 Develop Conestoga's Sustainable and Inclusive Building Standards to inform our consultants of the requirements for new buildings and large renovations combining other standards within it such as Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, diversity, equity, inclusion and signage
- 1.2.3 Launch and implement Conestoga's ShineOn Action Plan, previously named the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Roadmap and Action Plan, to achieve our carbon reduction goals for 2030
- 1.2.4 Continue the expansion of Electric Vehicle charging infrastructure at high-demand campuses and sites
- 1.2.5 Expand access to sustainable transportation options including micromobility programs and employee transportation programs
- 1.2.6 Continue to develop Conestoga's first energy team, energy policy and enhance cross departmental collaboration in energy management initiatives
- 1.2.7 Continue the solar grazing initiative at the Cambridge campus solar field as a landscaping method and engagement tool for Conestoga

1.3 Implement Artificial Intelligence (AI) to improve cost effectiveness and efficiency of business processes

- 1.3.1 Implement AI initiatives in college operations that have a high volume of interaction with students, employers and alumni

2: GOAL – CAPACITY

Focus on domestic enrolment growth by maintaining existing programming where possible, developing new programs and credentials and strengthening relationships with alumni, employer and government.

2.1 Grow domestic and international enrolment

- 2.1.1 Facilitate partnerships with local chambers of commerce, economic development agencies, and industry leaders to identify growth opportunities, promote innovation, and stimulate economic vitality in the communities we serve
- 2.1.1 Maintain existing labour market programs where feasible
- 2.1.2 Develop new programming including 3- and 4-year bachelor's and master's degrees in applied areas of study that meet labour market needs
- 2.1.3 Expand high-demand programming in support of community and government priorities
- 2.1.4 Create and implement engaging student-centric recruitment campaigns
- 2.1.5 Develop and implement targeted marketing and recruitment activities to support domestic enrolment growth
- 2.1.6 Continue to build partnerships locally and internationally to promote college programs
- 2.1.7 Review existing scholarships and bursaries to attract students
- 2.1.8 Expand online programming and services to address diverse needs and geographical locations of our students
- 2.1.9 Implement the Student Mental Health Strategy to address prevention and equitable supports
- 2.1.10 Facilitate strategic collaborations among faculty, alumni, employers and professional associations to showcase the impact of a Conestoga education and expand career opportunities for graduates

2.2 Alumni relations

- 2.2.1 Position alumni as key contributors in institutional development, workforce advancement and student success by deepening their engagement with stakeholders at Conestoga and beyond
- 2.2.2 Optimize communication strategies and initiatives to create opportunities for alumni to remain active contributors to Conestoga's mission and community
- 2.2.3 Establish stronger relations with alumni to ensure that they are aware of

2: GOAL – CAPACITY

2.3 Community and government partnerships

- 2.3.1 Continue our donor stewardship strategy and framework to strengthen long-term relationships, enhance donor experience and foster continued philanthropic investment in Conestoga's mission, strengthening financial sustainability
- 2.3.2 Establish and strengthen relationships with stakeholders at all levels of government including municipal, regional, provincial and federal officials and associated ministries, agencies and community organizations including chambers of commerce, economic development agencies and partner associations

2.4 Employer engagement

- 2.4.1 Advance partnerships with employers to secure co-op and work-integrated placements
- 2.4.2 Continue to partner with employers, school board representatives, government officials, industry experts and Program Advisory Committee (PAC) members to discuss emerging industry and business needs

2.5 Applied research solutions

- 2.5.1 Create opportunities for faculty to engage in research to meet accreditation requirements through external funding opportunities (bachelors, master's, professional programs)
- 2.5.2 Support enriched student experiences in applied research and entrepreneurship
- 2.5.3 Continue to develop research centres and labs in priority areas of research and innovation
- 2.5.4 Support employers and community partners to create economic and social impact through collaboration

3: GOAL – QUALITY

Demonstrate excellence in programming and services while providing an outstanding learning and working environment for students and employees.

3.1 Quality assurance

- 3.1.1 Integrate recommendations from the College Quality Assurance Audit Process across the college
- 3.1.2 Maintain and identify new opportunities for accreditations to align with industry standards and associations
- 3.1.3 Continue to focus on being a top performer in the government's annual Key Performance Indicators (KPI) survey

3.2 Indigenous success strategy

- 3.2.1 Launch and implement the Indigenous success strategy in support of our organizational commitment to Indigenous student success

MEASURING OUR PROGRESS



*Stakeholder Engagement includes and is not limited to the following: Alumni, Donors, Economic Development Agencies, Employees, Employers, Entrepreneurs, Government Partnerships, Indigenous Partners, Industry and Community Partners, Industry Experts and Leaders, Local Chambers of Commerce, PAC members, School Board Representatives and Students.