

# Support our local college

BY BARBARA FARBER

As the chairwoman of the **Algonquin College** Foundation and as a member of the Ottawa business community who has been associated with **Algonquin College** for many years, I appreciate the critical importance of the current post-secondary review led by former Ontario premier Bob Rae to the future of industry in Ontario.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my support for quality post-secondary education and training in this province. From personal experience, I know how heavily business and industry rely on the post-secondary education system, especially the Ontario **colleges**, to provide the skilled workers needed to compete in today's global marketplace.

If our province is to continue to prosper, we must provide educational opportunities that are both attractive to learners and relevant to current business and industry practices.

This is particularly challenging and important in Ottawa, a region that, on a per-capita basis, has been identified as the fastest-growing community in Canada and where our economy is driven in part by dynamic, technology-based industries.

The technology sector requires a flexible and responsive system that can stay abreast of the ever-changing needs in an innovation-oriented workplace, a system that will also provide employees with easy access to retraining throughout their careers.

The Ottawa business community has certainly been satisfied with the calibre of graduates coming from our local post-secondary institutions, and the commitment to technology at **Algonquin College** in the past few years has been one of the key factors. The **college** has realized that it is critical to keep pace with technological change if its students are to learn the skills required in today's rapidly changing work environments.

Thriving post-secondary institutions, including **colleges**, are also essential for research that enables commercialization and fuels continued innovation and growth. Again, **Algonquin College** is playing a lead role in applied research in the region by creating marketable products from theoretical concepts. The economic prosperity of our city and our province depends on our ability to continue producing quality graduates, for all sectors of the economy, who can both theorize and create.

Community partners, such as the Greater Ottawa Chamber of Commerce and the Ottawa Centre for Research and Innovation, have stated a firm belief that investments in the higher education system are investments in our future economic prosperity. I wholeheartedly concur.

Having the poorest-funded post-secondary system in Canada will ultimately erode the economic strength of Ontario. The government's first priority must be to provide more funding to our **colleges** and universities to ensure they can meet business and industry's performance expectations. As in any business, that funding model should be longterm and sustainable in order to support appropriate planning.

I also support our community vision, which is one of a shared system of accountability in which industry, education and government work together to define key performance measures. **Algonquin College** has long embraced a "partnership approach" with local business, industry and government, and that partnership has helped the **college** respond successfully to the needs of the communities it serves. Such partnerships are invaluable if we want our local economy to grow and prosper.

Ontario needs a post-secondary education system that is affordable and effective in order to provide the skilled workers essential to the province's future economic needs.

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