

March 27, 2020

Dear Colleagues and Learners,

A second full week of physical distancing has now passed, and I wanted to reconnect with all of you before the weekend. I know email traffic has surged, but I also want to stay in touch and make sure that I provide important updates.

In light of the City's declaration of a State of Emergency and the increasing severity of the COVID-19 pandemic in our region, a number of new interim measures for the College will be put in place. As of Monday, March 30, 2020, only staff who have been identified as having a critical function will be permitted on any of our campuses. We have also added new restrictions regarding access to our buildings at all campuses. You can find all the details about this [here](#).

I know our learners are still adjusting to the online delivery of their courses. You are doing an excellent job helping us fine-tune our approach and I thank you for the feedback I have received about the overall transition to the online world – ranging from very positive to expressing challenges. If you are struggling at all, please be sure to contact your teachers or your program coordinator for assistance. We have also prepared a Student Learning Kit to help you with your studies — it contains lots of resources to assist you, and you'll find it [here](#).

We have continued to add more information to our special [COVID-19 site](#), too. There are now FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) for Students, Employees, International, Residence, Academic Continuity and more. You'll also find other resources to help you get through this time, whether you need technical support or have a question about how to contact Health Services. Among the most important resources are those that will support your mental health. I know I have mentioned this before, but I want to make sure you know about these resources — if you need help at all, just click on the Resources tab and you will find websites, phone numbers and contacts for both employees and students.

I also want to mention that we have made some decisions about the 2020 Spring Term. I know this weighs heavily on everyone's mind and therefore wanted to convey this information as soon as possible. I will relay to you now the broad strokes of our framework with more details to come in the days ahead. This framework hinges on one key assumption: when we think we can resume face-to-face academic activities safely. Should this assumption change as we learn more about the evolving pandemic and its effects, we may need to adjust that framework. For now, our plan is to re-introduce face-to-face academic activities as of the end of June 2020.

Therefore, completion of the 2020 Winter Term for those skills-based academic activities and placements that will still need to be completed after April 17, 2020 will occur after the end of June (as per our earlier assumption) once face-to-face academic activities can resume. Planning for these activities is in progress. You will receive details of the plans for

your program from your Program Coordinator through email and your Brightspace account as soon as these plans are complete.

We propose to start the 2020 Spring Term on Tuesday, May 19, 2020. We would first offer six weeks online, followed by a one-week break, and then resume face-to-face academic activities on campus for six more weeks. This would apply to existing cohorts of returning students. We will only offer new intakes of programs (i.e. Level 01) if those programs already exist as fully online programs. Programs that are highly skills-based dependent and cannot start with an online component would be deferred to the Fall term. Our AC Online activities will continue according to their existing schedule. Co-operative education placements will start on May 4, 2020 as per our current schedule.

Today we also took the unprecedented step of postponing our spring convocation at all of our campuses, which was scheduled to take place in June. This decision was not made lightly, but it is in the interests of the health and safety of our College community and our learners' families, and is in line with the direction that most post-secondary institutions are now taking. We will reschedule these ceremonies to the fall and will update you when we have more information regarding dates and venues.

I know it is challenging to keep up with these changes. One by one, it can seem as if the traditions and routines we have held dear are slipping away. At first, I think many of us hoped that this would be a brief period of isolation. But as time went on, reality set in that we would be apart for a much longer period of time. I understand how difficult it can be to come to terms with this.

I have received heartfelt notes from employees and students describing circumstances that were difficult to imagine just a short time ago. Our learners miss the camaraderie of their classmates. Our faculty miss the ability to engage with students face to face. Our support and administrative employees miss close friendships with colleagues and all the people they supported every day. All of us, and I include myself in this, miss the regular rhythm of our College — from the big events and celebrations to the smaller things that mark the passage of time and to which we once attached less importance, but that are now imbued with much greater meaning. I want to let you know that I hear you, and that I share your sense of loss.

I hope that we can convert these feelings of loss into feelings of resolve. Resolve to return to our classrooms and labs the moment it is safe to do so. Resolve to celebrate convocation as we have never celebrated it before. Resolve, when we are all together again, to live the College experience with renewed energy, passion and appreciation for everything, big and small, that makes Algonquin such an incredible place.

I know this kind of resolve requires great strength, and that our strength is being tested — but I have also received feedback that strength is something we have in abundance. I have heard of a faculty member who somehow managed to get his courses online and work as a peer-to-peer mentor, even though his child was in and out of hospital. I have also heard of a student trying to accomplish the impossible by writing a three-hour test with a toddler on their lap. I have also heard of countless people who face financial uncertainty. I have been greatly moved by these stories, and have profound respect for your resilience under such trying circumstances.

I ask two things of you as we head into the weekend. The first is that I would like you, as much as you are able, to unplug and spend time with loved ones who are with you at home, or, if you are on your own, to connect with friends and family, virtually, as much as possible. All of us can

do some simple things to reduce our stress, whether it's going for a walk, listening to music, or cooking a nice meal.

The second is that I want you to know that I am aware of the difficulties and challenges this extraordinary situation presents, and you have my word that we will do all that we can to help you. If you have ideas about how we can better assist you, please don't be afraid to share them with your teachers, your supervisors or directly with me. It is true that we have lost some things in the wake of this situation, but we will never lose our caring. It is fundamental to who we are as a college, and I intend to keep it this way.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Claude Brulé", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Claude Brulé
President and CEO