

September 30, 2020

Dear Colleagues and Learners:

Earlier this week, the Premier confirmed Ontario is officially dealing with a second wave of COVID-19 cases – and medical experts believe a key factor in this increase is the casual following of health and safety guidelines.

Dr. David Williams, Ontario’s Chief Medical Officer of Health, said we need to “hunker down and stay on task” – a call to action I fully support on our own campuses. Dr. Vera Etches, Medical Officer of Health at Ottawa Public Health, echoed that theme in a recent [message](#) asking the city’s institutions to “promote key practices that will help us get through these challenging times.”

We cannot afford to be casual about health and safety – nor to let our guard down in the slightest. We must all put the needs of our community first. Our collective wellbeing is the number one priority.

So, if you have [COVID-19 symptoms](#), do not come to campus. Get tested. If you have had a close contact with a positive case, you should also be tested. If you have taken a [COVID-19 test](#), self-isolate until you receive the results and then follow the required self-isolation measures indicated by public health. Do not attend campus. (Learn more about COVID-19 testing and attending campus [here](#).)

I know we are all longing for a return to the way things used to be. I am too. I miss bustling campuses filled with our innovative learners and colleagues; I miss having the opportunity to meet and engage with each of you in person – to have a face-to-face conversation without the cover of a mask. While this pandemic shall eventually pass, we will need a lot more determination, sacrifice and self-restraint to get to that finish line. The limited number of people required to visit our campuses need to exercise caution and strictly adhere to all health and safety guidelines – at *all* times.

We need to come together as a College community, a city, a province and a country in order to deal with this second wave. Only with our collective commitment – both now and in the months ahead – can we hope for a potential return to a more normalized campus life.

I want to thank the majority in our College community for steadfastly following guidelines. While we have had a handful of COVID-19 cases, they have all been isolated situations – and we must continue to be vigilant. (To learn more about our approach to cases identified on campus, visit [here](#).)

I know the fall and winter will be tough on many of us – and I encourage everyone to look after one another. Reach out to a colleague or peer who may need extra help, encouragement or support. As we grapple with the isolation and stress of COVID-19, seeing to our mental health is crucial – and I encourage you to explore College resources [here](#).

Keeping with that theme, next week marks Mental Illness Awareness Week (Oct 4-10), an annual national public education campaign designed to help open the eyes of Canadians to the reality of mental illness and reduce stigma. Students and employees can find a link to virtual programming [here](#).

As I have said before, I have full confidence in our campus health and safety plans and protocols, [and campus access procedures](#) (for Pembroke campus, click [here](#)) – but they need everyone’s buy-in to be truly effective. In our own community, more isolated cases can be expected in the days, weeks and months ahead – but *your* daily actions can minimize the impact and risk of those cases.

I simply cannot reiterate enough the role each and every one of you can play in reducing the spread of infection. Follow public and College health guidelines such as frequent hand-washing, not touching your face, physical distancing and wearing masks when on campus. Again, do not expose yourself to peers, family, friends or the College community if you have any kind of COVID-19 symptom; take the [self-assessment test](#) and follow public health guidance on next steps.

Your cooperation and diligence will allow us to continue to operate select programming and limited services on our campuses this fall and winter – and, most importantly, to protect each other.

As always, stay safe and healthy, everyone.

Sincerely,

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

Claude Brulé
President, CEO
Algonquin College