

October 8, 2020

Dear Colleagues and Learners,

Fall is that special time of year when we give thanks. And this upcoming Thanksgiving weekend will be unlike any in recent memory. This year, many of us will be thankful for the people most dear to us, ironically, by keeping our distance from them.

Amidst rising COVID-19 cases, Dr. Vera Etches, Medical Officer of Health for Ottawa Public Health, is recommending celebrating Thanksgiving only alongside the “people we live with.” The Premier has also called for everyone to keep two metres away from those outside of our households.

The increased call for vigilance comes with good reason. Recent research conducted by Ottawa Public Health shows that one quarter of all September COVID-19 cases were the result of people socializing with those outside their household.

We need to protect our loved ones, friends, peers and colleagues. For those who still may consider travelling for the Thanksgiving weekend, it means that taking health and safety precautions are vital – before, during and after travel. Consider potential risk factors before departure. Is COVID-19 spreading at your destination? Do you live with someone who might be at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19 – or are you considering visiting someone who is at risk?

It is really about protecting others and ourselves whenever possible. It is about mitigating risk. And it starts with being [COVIDWise](#) – from wearing a mask when in public, staying two metres from others, to exercising proper hand hygiene.

Always be conscious of your own health. If you have any concerns, take the [self-assessment test](#) and follow public health guidance on next steps. Do not expose yourself to peers, family, friends or the College community if you have any COVID-19 [symptoms](#).

While we have been consistent in our application of public health guidelines and have taken considerable measures to make our campuses as safe as possible, there are ways that we can further contribute to helping reduce the spread of infection. To this end, the College is considering the use of a self-screening tool that would be deployed as an app for smart devices with a corresponding website. The use of the tool, along with enhanced access control

measures, would essentially require that all students and employees self-screen for symptoms before coming to campus. In the coming weeks, you will hear more about the development of this approach, which could be implemented before the end of October.

For the time being, I urge you to remain vigilant this Thanksgiving – whatever your plans may be. Do all that you can to protect yourself and those you hold dear – as well as our entire College family. To that end, Ottawa Public Health’s online holiday safety [guide](#) has many suggestions for all of us to consider, as alternate means of satisfying that yearning for human connection while continuing to lower the risk of COVID-19 during holiday celebrations.

While we continue to face the numerous challenges associated with COVID-19, we still have much to be thankful for. During these unprecedented times, I am thankful for you – our-resilient and caring community of learners and employees. Your enthusiasm, empathy, adaptability and ongoing accomplishments are truly inspiring.

As always, stay safe and healthy, everyone.

Happy Thanksgiving,

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