

Thursday, Dec. 10

Dear Colleagues and Learners,

No doubt you have been watching the news in the last few days and like me, felt a genuine sense of hope that with the approval of the first vaccine against COVID-19 and the start of inoculation in the United Kingdom, a most significant milestone has been achieved – one that allows us to finally see a light at the end of the pandemic tunnel.

As exciting as this news is, the road ahead will continue to present challenges for many months to come as the roll-out of this vaccine takes place over the winter, spring and summer. This means that our continued vigilance will be paramount during this period of time, and in order to protect the people dearest to us the holiday season ahead will look very different this year.

Amidst rising COVID-19 cases across many regions of the province, Ontario's [Premier has recommended](#) celebrating the holidays exclusively with people in our own household (with the exception of those who live alone) and avoiding large celebrations and gatherings. Ottawa Public Health also recommends avoiding travel, if possible, for the holiday season.

That said, the need for human connection is understandable – and we recognize that many may choose to travel to their home communities over the holidays.

But let me be clear: Commitment, selflessness and self-awareness will be crucial to us all getting through the holidays safely – and ensuring our College campuses and communities remain healthy upon our return.

That means being extra cautious throughout this period – before leaving, during the break and upon returning.

You can find Ottawa Public Health's COVID-19 holiday guidelines [here](#). Key safety tips include:

- Monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 and do not travel if you are sick. (In January, this could mean delaying a return trip to your campus – especially if you live with roommates or in Residence.)
- Avoid close contact with others without physical distancing and wearing a mask.

- Avoid visiting those at greater risk from COVID-19 such as the elderly and those with chronic health conditions.
- Wear a mask when in public, stay two metres from others, and exercise proper hand hygiene.

Also, Ottawa Public Health offers [suggestions](#) for safe ways to shop, travel and celebrate with family and friends – including sharing a virtual meal or opening gifts together online.

I cannot stress this enough: if you have *any* concerns over exposure to COVID-19 or *any* symptoms, take the [self-assessment](#) test as soon as possible and follow public health guidance on next steps. Do not risk exposing friends, family and peers.

When we start up again in January 2021, we must be more vigilant than ever. If you are feeling ill, or have even one COVID-19 symptom, stay home. Do not come to campus. Do not go shopping. Do not put anyone on campus or in our college communities at risk. You can use the College's [self-screening app](#) before leaving your dwelling.

As the fall term comes to an end shortly, I want to take a moment to wish our learners all the best during next week's final assessment period for the majority of our programs of study. I also wish to thank our faculty for their tremendous efforts and support to help our learners succeed in an academic term like we've never experienced before. My thanks also go out to our employees for supporting our learners with adapted on-campus and remote services, and keeping our campuses and learning environments safe.

In closing, our connections to one another remain our greatest gift of all – peers, colleagues, mentors, family and friends. And keeping them safe must remain top of mind, even as we enjoy a well-deserved period of rest and relaxation.

Wishing you a safe, happy and healthy holiday season,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Claude Brulé". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Claude Brulé  
President, CEO  
Algonquin College