

February 25, 2021

Dear Colleagues and Learners,

Let me first start by thanking you for the resiliency, creativity and flexibility you have continued to display each and every day as we navigated the recent province-wide shutdown and its impact through the Winter Term on the delivery of our programs and services.

As we mark the Winter Mid-Term Break period next week (for most programs of study; exceptions include AC Online and apprenticeships), I want to commend you for your hard work and spirit of collaboration in the face of the many unique challenges created by the pandemic.

The Mid-Term Break week (March 1 through March 5) provides learners with the chance to slow down, get caught up, and focus on self-care – and the break supports improved mental health. It is an opportunity for both our learners and academic teams to focus on well-being. To our academic teams and in keeping with the intent of the Mid-Term Break week, I ask you to limit academic expectations of students during this time.

On the subject of expectations, I have an important announcement to make about the Spring term. The College has decided to extend the cancellation of all on-campus events until August 31, 2021. Public health officials continue to underscore the high risk associated with large gatherings, and we wanted to give everyone advanced notice so people can plan accordingly. This decision extends to our Ottawa, Pembroke and Perth campuses.

It is also crucial that we avoid spreading COVID-19 during the Mid-Term Break week ahead. You can [review](#) Ottawa Public Health's COVID-19 Social WISE safety tips and travel recommendations (see here for the [Lanark District Health Unit](#) and [Renfrew County and District Public Health](#)). Key safety tips include:

- Limit your close contacts to your household members.
- Monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 and do not travel if you are sick. Isolate yourself from others when you are sick and get tested immediately if you have COVID-like symptoms. If you develop symptoms, or are in contact with someone who has tested positive, please isolate where you are, avoid public transportation and DO NOT come back to your campus community. Check in with your local Public Health Unit to know what next steps you should take.
- 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.

When we return from the break, self-awareness will continue to be critical. If you have any concerns over exposure to COVID-19 or exhibit any symptoms, take the self-assessment test as soon as possible and follow public health guidance on next steps. If you are feeling ill, or have even one COVID-19 symptom, stay home. You can use the College's [self-screening app](#) before leaving your dwelling.

With the recent announcement of vaccination programs rolling out and the spring season on the horizon, we will all need to ensure we do not let our guard down – especially with COVID-19 variants active in Ontario. Our community has shown its strength and commitment to one another time and time again throughout this public health crisis – and I know that our collective determination will see us through to the completion of another successful term.

As always, stay well and safe everyone,

Sincerely,

Claude Brulé
President, CEO
Algonquin College