



# **COVID-19 and beyond**

## The role of colleges and institutes in Canada's resilient recovery



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**Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan)** is the voice of Canada's publicly-supported colleges, institutes, cegeps and polytechnics, and an international leader in education for employment with ongoing programs in over **25** countries.

CICan's members add over **\$190B** to Canada's economy each year and contribute to inclusive economic growth by working with industry and community partners to offer more than **10,000** programs to learners in urban, rural, remote, and northern communities.

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# COVID-19 and beyond

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## The Context

Over 95% of Canadians live within 50km of a college, institute, cegep or polytechnic. With their extensive footprint across the country, these institutions are making a difference in communities from coast to coast to coast. During the COVID-19 pandemic, colleges and institutes have shown resilience and creativity, pivoting quickly to meet the needs of their students and communities through online instruction, providing applied-research services to local businesses re-tooling their operations for the production of PPE, offering free online training to individuals and SMEs affected by the crisis, and donating food, shelter and more to those in need. It is at times like these that the integral place of colleges and institutes at the heart of their communities, is so apparent.

Their role will be just as important as we look to recover from this unprecedented health crisis and its wide-ranging impacts, both social and economic, and deal with the pressing needs stemming from climate change and technological disruption. COVID-19 has changed the way we live, work, and learn, and every Canadian has been affected. Efforts to rebuild a clean, green, sustainable economy and get people back to work, while ensuring their health and safety, will therefore require all of us to pull together. This will depend on future-focused policies and

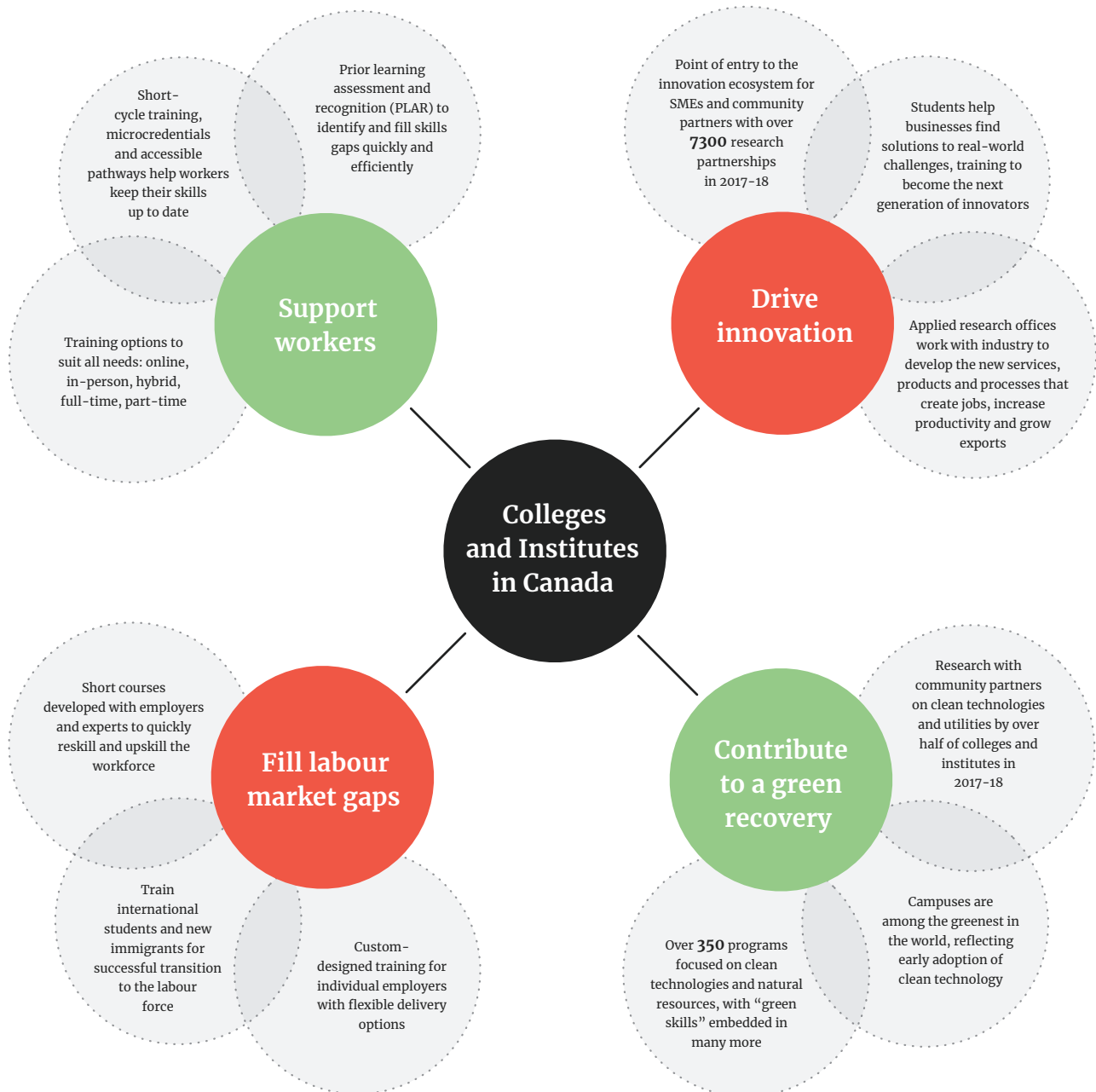
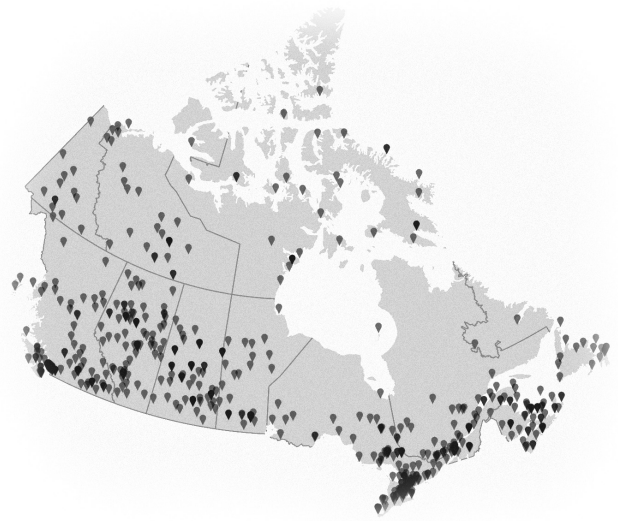
support measures that reach Canadians where they are, and that are adaptable to their particular circumstances and challenges. Given the global nature of this pandemic, which has interrupted international travel, ensuring Canada continues to attract the international students who will become such an important part of our future workforce will be equally important.

Colleges and institutes are ideally placed to support Canadians and help their communities recover in the months ahead. Through their deep community connections, their commitment to respond to the evolving needs of local stakeholders and employers, and their proven track-record in terms of skills development, they are poised to support a strong and sustainable economic recovery. This starts by helping Canadians develop the skills they need to succeed in uncertain times and meeting the evolving labour requirements of employers, in part by attracting international students to Canada and helping them transition to the labour market and citizenship. Helping Canadian businesses, particularly SMEs, innovate and grow by leveraging the full potential of college and institute applied research capacity will also be critical as we look to rebuild a resilient, sustainable and green economy.

# COVID-19 and beyond

## The role of colleges and institutes in Canada's resilient recovery

Over **95%** of Canadians live within **50km** of a college, institute, Cegep or polytechnic. With their extensive footprint across the country, these institutions are making a difference in communities from coast to coast to coast.



# Supporting a recovery-ready workforce



COVID-19 has had a significant impact on Canadians all across the country threatening the livelihood of thousands of people and their families. With unemployment reaching an all-time high of 13.7 percent in May 2020, this was a sudden and profound shock to those directly affected, and the Canadian economy as a whole. Though emergency measures such as the CERB helped absorb some of that initial shock, the situation remains delicate for many who have permanently lost their jobs, or still face uncertainty as countless employers in hard-hit industries struggle to stay afloat.

Many Canadian businesses have had to close their doors as lockdown orders were implemented, while those who remained open have had to completely rethink some of their most basic functions. The pandemic has been especially hard on SMEs. As of November 3, only 28% were making normal sales and only 42% were fully staffed according to a survey by the Canadian Federation of Small Businesses. To get them back on track, they will need access to skilled labour. Not just to adapt to the challenges of the pandemic, such as teleworking, but to rebuild their businesses in a landscape that will be forever changed.

The job market was already evolving before the pandemic, with advances in technology and the impacts of climate change pressuring traditional employment, and an aging population creating labour shortages that need to be addressed through immigration, with a particular emphasis on pathways to the labour market for international students. COVID-19 has only compounded these disruptions, creating a new sense of urgency. In fact, according to the World Economic Forum “automation, in tandem with the COVID-19 recession, is creating a ‘double-disruption’ scenario for workers”. Safely reopening our borders to international talent will play a critical role in tackling skills gaps in many sectors and meeting the labour needs of Canadian employers.

It is also important to note that this pandemic has been especially hard on already vulnerable individuals whose

employment situation was less stable or who, by serving in essential positions, found themselves at higher risk working on the front lines. Among the most affected were people with only a secondary-school credential, women, and youth. Upskilling is going to be especially important for this segment of the population in economic recovery, so we must focus on removing barriers to training.

While the federal government had started to put in place measures to encourage Canadians to continue learning throughout their career, namely through the Canadian Training Benefit (CTB) announced in Budget 2019, there is now a clear need for additional measures, whose impact can be felt much faster. Since the 2019 announcement of the CTB, CICA and other national organizations have expressed concerns about its design. An annual credit of \$250 is insufficient to motivate individuals to pursue training. The CTB’s reliance on the Employment Insurance (EI) Program is also viewed as an impediment for those who are employed but require retraining.

Getting employers involved is also critical. Colleges and institutes often work with businesses to develop the competency-based assessment component of short-cycle training programs. This type of support can help align training and assessment to the skills the employers need most. This ends up being cost-effective for learners and employers, which is more important than ever as workers and employers adjust to our new reality.

COVID-19 has also forced us all to rethink education delivery by making online-learning the new normal, at least for the time being. While the efforts of colleges and institutes have been nothing short of miraculous, transitioning tens of thousands of courses online, including many that traditionally involve hands-on training and work-integrated learning opportunities, and supporting students throughout the process, the current crisis has also exposed significant gaps.

Access to broadband internet remains uneven across the country and security concerns are still a challenge for both institutions and students. Upgrading Canada's digital infrastructure should be a cornerstone of any stimulus package and recognize the importance of providing all Canadians with the means to access learning opportunities. This has already been identified

as a priority by the federal government, as well as the CRTC, which, as of 2016 recognizes broadband internet as a "basic" or essential service, on par with local landline telephone services. COVID-19 has only reinforced this conclusion and created an urgent need for measures that can have an immediate impact, especially in rural and northern communities.

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## How colleges and institutes can help

### Putting collaboration first

Every program at a college or institute is developed in collaboration with experts and employers through program advisory committees and reviewed on a regular basis. This is part of an ongoing conversation with the community that facilitates the flow of ideas to find innovative solutions to specific challenges. It ensures programs are up to date and meet the needs of both students and employers. In fact, the services offered by colleges are always tailored to the needs of their region, whether urban or rural.

This is especially valuable in these times of rapid technological progress and profound disruption where many jobs and sectors are changing dramatically. It is this deep connection of colleges and institutes to local employers that makes Canada's post-secondary education system among the most adaptable in the world.

### Flexible pathways

One of the major appeals of colleges and institutes is their ability to offer flexible pathways to education and meet the unique needs of a variety of learners, from young high school graduates to adult learners, including newcomers, looking to upgrade their skills, transition foreign credentials or reorient their career. The Canadian college and institute system offers over 10,000 programs including a large diversity of degrees and certificates, micro-credentials, as well as part-time and accelerated program options.

Thanks to a variety of formal credentials, including joint degrees, diplomas and certificates, Canadian and international students also have access to many diverse pathways to achieve their education and career goals. Meanwhile, thousands of articulation agreements between colleges, institutes and universities facilitate transferability between post-secondary institutions.

## **Drawing in new talent**

Industry leaders and organizations representing small businesses have identified the risk of labour-market shortages for some time and issued calls for more aggressive immigration targets. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) states that, “Immigrants and foreign workers ... are often instrumental to the success of small businesses struggling with skills and labour shortages,” and that the majority of occupational shortages reported by small businesses are for jobs that require a college diploma or apprenticeship (46 per cent). No surprise then that colleges and institutes represent the fastest-growing level of study for international students in Canada, accounting for just under half of all study permit holders at the post-secondary level in 2019. A majority of these international students will work in Canada and intend on applying for permanent residence.

## **Short-cycle training and micro-credentials**

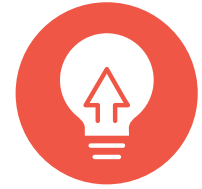
An important part of the college and institute program offerings are short-term programs, including micro-credentials, continuing education and contract training that are ideal options for workers looking to rapidly upgrade their skills, including newcomers seeking to integrate in the labour market quickly. Colleges and institutes have always worked with local employers seeking responsive, short-term training options, and are stepping up these efforts as they develop a growing number of stackable micro-credentials that fit in an employment-centred framework that facilitates broad recognition and labour-market mobility. These efforts are ensuring that the labour force, including those who are self-employed and gig workers, develop the skills to obtain and maintain meaningful employment.

## **Prior-learning assessment and recognition**

To ensure that the training required to enter and enjoy ongoing success in the labour market happens as efficiently as possible, it is essential that prior learning and skills gained through work experience are fully assessed and recognized. This ensures that learners select training options that precisely target their skills gaps and career direction, without spending time repeating material they have already mastered. One of the great tools available at colleges and institutes to ensure training is dispensed in the most efficient and timely way possible is prior-learning assessment and recognition (PLAR). This helps learners save time and money by granting them credit for competencies they already have. It is already common practice at colleges and institutes, 95% of which offer PLAR, however these services usually represent additional costs for learners as they are not covered by tuition and often fall outside the scope of financial aid, bursaries or learning allowances. To maximize the benefits of federal support, upskilling and reskilling allowances, whether they are offered under the Canadian Training Benefit, Employment Insurance, or any other training program, also need to cover PLAR costs.



# Driving Innovation



COVID-19 has forced us all to innovate in unexpected ways as we adjust to a new reality of social distancing, telework and limited movement. As we now begin to reflect on what a post-pandemic recovery will look like, it is clear that our capacity to innovate will remain one of the key success factors. Luckily in Canada we have a strong network of colleges and institutes that has shown over the years, and throughout this pandemic, that post-secondary institutions truly occupy an essential place in our country's innovation landscape.

Canada is a nation of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) that often lack the capacity, equipment and networks to undertake the kind of research and development that would drive their businesses forward. By working directly with thousands of SMEs and serving as gateways to the innovation ecosystem, colleges and institutes have been able to

support many SMEs throughout the pandemic, and will continue to play that role in the months to come.

With over 95% of Canadians living within 50km of their local college or institute, no other innovation system is poised to have such a positive impact right across the country. Local applied-research offices are ready to support Canadians and their communities, including businesses, and in particular SMEs which have been hard hit by the pandemic.

From developing respirators and personal protective equipment for healthcare workers using advanced manufacturing techniques, to using cloud computing to create a real-time COVID-19 outbreak tracker, colleges and institutes, and their students, have already been involved in many projects to help Canada face the pandemic.

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## How colleges and institutes can help

### Fostering collaboration for innovation

Fostering collaboration in all sectors of the economy is a major strength of colleges, polytechnics and institutes. All across the country, they are sought-after partners for SMEs and community stakeholders looking to find innovative solutions to their everyday challenges. Over the past decade, they have become key drivers of Canada's innovation ecosystem.

In 2017-2018, Canadian colleges and institutes were involved in over 7,300 research partnerships. This generated over 4,400 innovations between 2017 and 2018, including new processes, products, prototypes and services, approximately 87% of which were completed in less than one year. This kind of rapid innovation capacity will be more important than ever as businesses across Canada are forced to review their business models and potentially adapt their products and services to fit our new reality.

### Preparing students for the future

Applied-research partnerships also help students gain the skills they need to drive innovation throughout their career. This enables students to become the next generation of innovators, having worked hand-in-hand with innovative employers, while businesses get solutions to their challenges and develop new products. Whether it is testing out new, more energy efficient technology, or developing brand new machinery to improve manufacturing processes, students gain valuable experience, while helping businesses grow and innovate. Instilling this sense of innovation in all we do will be an important asset given the rapid pace of change the world is experiencing and the transformational aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

# Supporting sustainability and a green recovery



Canada's commitments to the Paris Agreement and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will undoubtedly guide investments and policy decisions as the federal government develops its economic recovery plan. Canada's 2030 Agenda National Strategy provides a well-defined roadmap towards both sustainability and well-being: dual lenses through which decision-makers must view Canada's future to create a fair and future-proof recovery that advances on pressing issues such as poverty, inequality, environmental degradation and climate change. Investing in Canada's commitment to the SDGs will make us more resilient, so that our society is better equipped to deal with the next global crisis and help ensure no one is left behind.

Colleges and institutes share this commitment and are increasingly referencing the SDGs as a framework to guide their sustainability efforts, individually and

collectively. They are committed to building a cleaner, greener economy and are leading the way in many respects, from energy efficient facilities and green campuses to research on new green technologies. Most importantly, they are equipping their graduates with the skills they will need to work in the green economy.

Given the federal government's stated objective to implement a green recovery, part of the strategy must include skills development to make sure all Canadians are able to contribute to our transition to clean energies and technologies. That is a challenge for all post-secondary institutions. Colleges and institutes have always played a key role in supporting transitions, by teaching their students to use cutting edge technologies that will help them push industries forward. Promoting green skills has been a part of their focus for years and they will be instrumental in this latest effort.

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## How colleges and institutes can help

### Supporting green innovation

In 2017-2018, over half of Canada's colleges and institutes conducted research on clean technologies and utilities. Whether it is testing new electric vehicles to make sure they work well in cold climates, developing more efficient manufacturing processes, or making agriculture practices more sustainable, these projects have direct impacts in greening their communities while supporting thousands of SMEs who are growing Canada's sustainable economy. Though they are linked to a global effort to protect our planet, colleges and institutes always develop these projects based on the specific needs and challenges of their communities, and in collaboration with local stakeholders, often through sustainability offices.

## Teaching green skills

Colleges and institutes across Canada offer more than 350 programs related to natural resources and clean technologies developed through close collaboration with employers – and this number is growing all the time. They are, in fact, the vital bridge between forward-looking, values-based research and training and the real-world needs of employers, and place partnership with industry, including local employers, at the heart of their operational model. By working with these partners, they are able to infuse local labour markets with graduates equipped and committed to create zero carbon, diverse and resilient communities.

## Showing the way with green infrastructure

Colleges and institutes across the country have been early adopters of clean technologies for years. From building LEED certified buildings to adopting innovative waste management practices, they strive to have some of the greenest campuses in the world. The range and scope of initiatives related to the greening of campuses also goes far beyond the “low-hanging fruit” of modelling good practices related to waste management or the conservation and reduction of energy and water resources. There is widespread adoption of “whole of institution” approaches to campus greening that seek systemic changes to policy and procedures related to facilities management and campus operations and extend into local communities through partnerships and engagement.

# Leveraging the full potential of colleges and institutes



Canada's colleges and institutes occupy an essential position when it comes to supporting Canadians, getting people back to work and relaunching the economy, which will depend on both local and national initiatives. They have not been spared by the crisis however, and, like many institutions, are facing unprecedented challenges of their own, including sudden drops in enrolment and revenues, as well as switching their entire mode of delivery in a matter of months, if not weeks in many cases. Ensuring they are well supported will be a fundamental part of any recovery strategy. It will be equally important to help Canadians, as well as SMEs, access the multiple resources available at their local college or institute to support them through this.

In order to leverage the full potential of colleges and institutes in these critical times, we have issued the following recommendations to the government of Canada:

## On skills

### **Support reskilling and upskilling to get Canadians back to work and address employers' skills shortages through:**

- an accessible, responsive training allowance that adequately covers training and prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) costs;
- renewed Employment Insurance (EI) program to increase access to training for unemployed, self-employed and gig workers;
- increased apprenticeship training and internship opportunities;
- green skills modules for technical/trades training to support climate change adaptation and mitigation in key industries.

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### **Boost Canada's technical/trades training capacity by strengthening online delivery for college programs through:**

- \$1.4B to upgrade colleges' digital infrastructure, technology and cybersecurity systems; integrate simulation and virtual/augmented reality in hands-on courses; provide digital support services for student success;
- \$50M to develop over 1,000 shared online resources for technical/trades programs, available on a collaborative platform.

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**Improve access to PSE for vulnerable and low-income Canadians through: funding increases for Indigenous PSE programs; extending special Canada Student Loans and Grants provisions; and covering costs for computer equipment and internet access required for online learning.**

## On Innovation

**Invest \$165 million over two years in the College and Community Innovation Program (CCIP) to maintain college applied research capacity to help businesses and communities survive the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and pivot as the economy re-opens:**

- \$80 million in the capacity of college applied research offices and centres to help business and community partners de-risk changes to their operations through market research, problem-solving, testing and prototype development;
  - \$85 million to offer rapid-response grants, reduced company leverage requirements, support for digital adoption for SMEs and retooled applied research facilities to support partner needs and comply with physical distancing requirements.
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## On supporting a green recovery

- Support a green and inclusive recovery through a \$5B stimulus investment in college infrastructure to make campuses more sustainable and accessible, advance innovation and improve learning spaces for Indigenous students;
- Accelerate sustainability initiatives at colleges and in communities by investing \$50M in a national network of sustainability offices.

# CICan Member Colleges and Institutes in Canada

## Yukon

- Yukon University

## Northwest Territories

- Aurora College
- Collège Nordique Francophone\*

## Nunavut

- Nunavut Arctic College

## British Columbia

- British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT)
- Camosun College
- Capilano University
- Collège Éducentre\*
- College of New Caledonia
- College of the Rockies
- Douglas College
- Justice Institute of British Columbia
- Kwantlen Polytechnic University
- Langara College
- Native Education College\*\*
- Nicola Valley Institute of Technology(NVIT) \*\*
- North Island College
- Northern Lights College
- Coast Mountain College
- Okanagan College
- Selkirk College
- Thompson Rivers University
- University of the Fraser Valley
- Vancouver Community College
- Vancouver Island University (VIU)

## Alberta

- Bow Valley College
- Centre collégial de l'Alberta\*
- Grande Prairie Regional College (GPRC)
- Keyano College
- Lakeland College
- Lethbridge College
- Medicine Hat College
- NorQuest College
- Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT)
- Northern Lakes College
- Olds College
- Portage College
- Red Deer College
- SAIT

## Saskatchewan

- Carlton Trail College
- Collège Mathieu\*
- Cumberland College
- Dumont Technical Institute\*\*
- Great Plains College
- North West College
- Northlands College
- Parkland College
- Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies\*\*
- Saskatchewan Polytechnic
- Southeast College

## Manitoba

- Assiniboine Community College
- École technique et professionnelle, Université de Saint-Boniface\*
- Red River College
- University College of the North
- Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology

## Ontario

- Algonquin College
- Cambrian College
- Canadore College
- Centennial College
- Collège Boréal\*
- Conestoga College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning
- Confederation College
- Durham College
- Fanshawe College
- First Nations Technical Institute\*\*
- Fleming College
- George Brown College
- Georgian College
- Humber College Institute of Technology & Advanced Learning
- Kenjegin Teg Educational Institute (or KTEI)\*\*
- La Cité\*
- Lambton College
- Loyalist College
- The Michener Institute of Education at UHN
- Mohawk College
- Niagara College
- Northern College
- Sault College
- Seneca College
- Sheridan College
- Six Nations Polytechnic\*\*
- St. Clair College
- St. Lawrence College

## Quebec

- Cégep André-Laurendeau\*
- Cégep de Chicoutimi\*
- Cégep de Jonquière\*
- Cégep de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue\*
- Cégep de la Gaspésie et des Îles\*
- Cégep de La Pocatière\*
- Cégep de Matane\*
- Cégep de Saint-Félicien\*
- Cégep de Sainte-Foy\*
- Cégep de Saint-Jérôme\*
- Cégep de Saint-Laurent\*
- Cégep de Sept-Îles\*
- Cégep de Sherbrooke\*
- Cégep de Trois-Rivières\*
- Cégep du Vieux Montréal\*
- Cégep Édouard-Montpetit\*
- Cégep Garneau\*
- Cégep Limoilou\*
- Cégep Marie-Victorin\*
- Cégep régional de Lanaudière\*
- Cégep Rivière du Loup\*
- Cégep Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu\*
- Champlain Regional College
- Collège Ahuntsic\*
- Collège André Grasset\*
- Collège d'Alma\*
- Collège de Bois-de-Boulogne\*
- Collège de Maisonneuve \*
- Collège de Rosemont\*
- Collège LaSalle\*
- Collège Montmorency\*
- Collège Shawinigan\*
- Cégep Heritage College
- Cégep de Rimouski\*
- Dawson College
- John Abbott College
- Vanier College

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\* Francophone

\*\* Indigenous

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## Newfoundland and Labrador

- Centre for Nursing Studies
- College of the North Atlantic
- Fisheries and Marine Institute of Memorial University of Newfoundland

## New Brunswick

- Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick (CCNB)\*
- Maritime College Forest Technology
- New Brunswick College of Craft and Design
- New Brunswick Community College (NBCC)

## Prince Edward Island

- Collège de l'île\*
- Holland College

## Nova Scotia

- Cape Breton University
- Dalhousie Agricultural Campus, Dalhousie University
- Nova Scotia Community College
- Université Sainte-Anne\*

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## Associates

- Association des collèges privés du Québec\*
- Association québécoise de pédagogie collégiale\*
- Atlantic Provinces Community College Consortium (APCCC)
- BC Colleges (BCC)
- Canadian Association of Diploma in Agriculture Programs (CADAP)
- Colleges Ontario
- Fédération des cégeps\*
- Forum for International Trade Training (FITT)
- Horatio Alger Association of Canada
- Indigenous Institutes Consortium
- Inter-American Organization for Higher Education (IOHE)
- Regroupement des collèges du Montréal métropolitain (RCMM)
- Synchronex\*
- Tra Vinh University



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