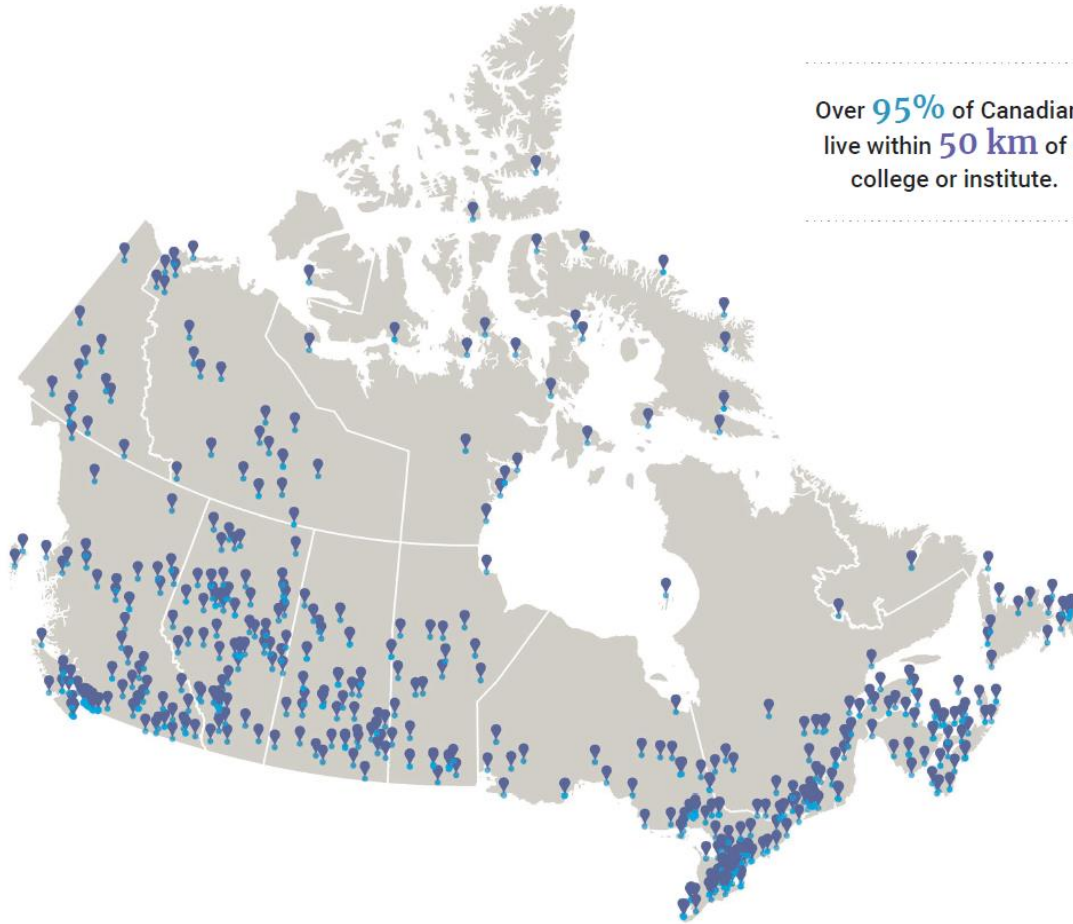




COLLEGES &
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Resilience, Recovery and Reconciliation



House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance

August 2021

Recommendations

Supporting a recovery-ready workforce

Recommendation 1: Increase employment opportunities and address skills shortages by accelerating reskilling and upskilling through an investment of \$40M to develop national micro-credentials for key labour market sectors and support industries that will serve Canada's economic, social and environmental leadership.

Recommendation 2: Strengthen Canada's technical/trades training capacity by investing \$50M to develop over 1,000 shared online resources for college technical/trades programs available on a national collaborative platform.

Recommendation 3: Boost Canada's talent pool through the development and implementation of permanent residency streams for international students graduating from colleges and equip colleges to improve labour market outcomes of international students by providing additional support throughout their transition to Canada.

Mobilizing for inclusive innovation

Recommendation 4: Accelerate recovery, growth and competitiveness by expanding participation in Canada's research and development ecosystem through an additional and permanent investment of \$40M per year in college applied research capacity and the delivery of innovation solutions.

Advancing reconciliation

Recommendation 5: Deliver on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action, including those directed to postsecondary institutions by supporting the development of:

- Indigenous language revitalization and diploma/degree programs in Indigenous languages in partnership with Indigenous institutions and communities;
- Open Educational Resources to train all students, faculty and staff on the history of Indigenous peoples and the legacy of residential schools, Indigenous rights, legal and health issues;
- Skills-based training for all students, faculty and staff in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.

Building net zero, inclusive and digitally accessible infrastructure

Recommendation 6: Support a green and inclusive recovery by ensuring that college physical and digital infrastructure is included within the scope of national infrastructure investments and contributing up to:

- \$5B to make college campuses more sustainable, accessible, advance innovation and improve learning spaces for Indigenous students; and
- \$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.

Accelerating a green recovery in Canada and globally

Recommendation 7: Accelerate sustainability initiatives at colleges and in communities by investing \$100M over 5 years in a new network of 50 College Sustainability Centres across Canada to leverage college assets including campus infrastructure, industry, and community partnerships to meet Canada's net zero goals.

Recommendation 8: Increase Canada's commitment to international development to support skills training and applied research for the transition to a net zero world.

Introduction

Over 95% of Canadians and 86% of Indigenous people live within 50km of a college, institute, cegep or polytechnic.¹ With their extensive footprint across the country, colleges make a difference in communities from coast to coast to coast. Throughout the pandemic, Canada's colleges have contributed to building resilience, facilitating recovery and advancing reconciliation. The integral role that colleges play at the heart of their communities has never been more evident.

The role of colleges will be just as important as we emerge from this unprecedented health crisis and its social and economic impacts, as well as tackle the pressing challenges caused by climate change, advance reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and build a more inclusive Canada. Efforts to rebuild a clean, green, sustainable economy and get people back to work will require a collective effort across all sectors and communities across Canada. This will depend on future-focused and inclusive policies and support measures that reach Canadians where they are, and that are adaptable to their particular circumstances and challenges.

Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan) and member institutions have a strong commitment to supporting a resilient, inclusive and green recovery within the framework of the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This commitment underpins CICan recommendations as the federal government considers spending priorities for Budget 2022.

Supporting a recovery-ready workforce

Canada's economy is only as strong as its labour market. Diverse, resilient and nimble employees will help our economy recover and grow in the face of crisis. Colleges are essential to producing this talent. Through collaboration with industry and community leaders, colleges create opportunities that get Canadians back to work. Experience-based learning helps people build the employment-focused skills they need to thrive immediately in the workforce.

The world of work has changed. Colleges anticipate the needs of our economy through training, upskilling and reskilling. They offer micro-credentials, continuing education and contract training that help people rapidly upgrade their skills, in particular for the unemployed and underemployed, provide access to skills development for Indigenous people and facilitate the integration of newcomers in the labour market. The pandemic has exacerbated labour market shortages in early learning and childcare, biomanufacturing, digital technology and cybersecurity. The transition to a green economy will require specialized training, especially for engineering and environmental technicians and tradespeople. Sector-specific [stackable micro-credentials](#) will facilitate skill recognition and labour market mobility, accelerating economic recovery.

With labour shortages brought about by an aging population, attracting international talent through immigration will play a critical role in tackling skills gaps and meeting the needs of Canadian employers. Permanent, innovative and streamlined pathways to permanent residency are needed for international students so that they can successfully transition into the labour market.

Mobilizing for inclusive innovation

As trusted industry and community partners, colleges serve as local gateways to the innovation ecosystem, specializing in research that solves technology, business, health and social innovation challenges. Partnered applied research drives innovation at the "speed of business". In 2019-2020 applied research offices reported:

- over 8,000 research partnerships, mainly with small and medium enterprises (SMEs), who often lack the resources, specialized technology and networks to solve innovation challenges on their own;
- 42,000 students participating in applied research activities, gaining valuable work-integrated learning experience;

¹ References to "colleges" refer collectively to publicly-supported colleges, institutes, polytechnics, cégeps.

- over 5,500 new processes, products, prototypes and services, 85% completed in under one year.²

Private sector contributions have increased by 42% over the past two years and now match dollar-for-dollar the support provided by the federal government, demonstrating the value businesses derive from college applied research services.

Applied research will be a key driver in economic recovery for SMEs and will help to build more resilient communities as we emerge from the pandemic. For vulnerable and underrepresented groups such as women, immigrants, racialized communities and Indigenous peoples, COVID-19 has deepened systemic and underlying inequities. By mobilizing students, technology, and faculty to work collaboratively with partners, colleges serve as catalysts and connectors in the broader R&D ecosystem. Because colleges already work closely with underrepresented groups, strengthening colleges' outreach capacity through applied research will enable them to draw new actors into the innovation ecosystem.

Colleges are strongly committed to helping Canada build a world-class R&D ecosystem by incorporating strong research data management systems, equity, diversity and inclusion principles, ensuring research integrity and security, and meeting regulatory and ethical standards. Colleges need support to ensure these initiatives contribute to the proven success of partnered applied research. Current trends indicate that both government direction towards commercialization of research and the real value proposition college-based applied research brings to businesses and other innovation partners will only accelerate the growth of this portfolio.

Advancing reconciliation

Recent discoveries of unmarked graves at former residential schools demonstrate the urgent and critical need to act on the 94 Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) Calls to Action. All sectors identified by the TRC must do their part, including postsecondary institutions.

The Calls to Action target postsecondary programs and skills training required for reconciliation, including health and medical programs, law, justice, early childhood education and journalism. Education is required for all students, faculty and staff on the history of Indigenous peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools; the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; Treaties and Indigenous rights; Indigenous law; Indigenous people and the law; Indigenous–Crown relations; Indigenous health issues and Indigenous teachings and practices. The TRC also identifies the need for postsecondary institutions to revitalize Indigenous languages and create degree and diploma programs in Indigenous languages. Skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism are also a TRC requirement.

Some colleges have started to develop educational resources on TRC priorities on their own, but they must be scaled up and shared to build synergies across postsecondary institutions, while at the same time being adaptable to different First Nation, Métis and Inuit history and cultures and made readily available to integrate into all postsecondary programs.

Building net zero, inclusive and digitally accessible infrastructure

[Infrastructure investments](#) are foundational to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050, ensuring Canadians and employers across all economic sectors have what they need to succeed in a changing economy, and building a more inclusive society. Colleges serve learners, employers, and communities in urban, rural, northern and remote areas, at over 670 campuses or facilities across the country. As early adopters of clean technologies, they strive to have some of the greenest campuses in the world, adopting “whole of institution” approaches to

² CIGan 2019-2020 Applied Research Survey

campus greening through initiatives such as LEED certified buildings, adopting innovative waste management practices and reducing energy and water consumption.

Investments in college infrastructure have not kept pace with the needs. CIGan members have over [300 shovel-ready projects](#)³ the majority of which are for renovations, repairs and retrofits to improve energy efficiency and reduce campus GHG emissions. Investments in green infrastructure will support job creation and the transition to net zero.

Like all sectors, colleges and their partners are vulnerable to cyber-attacks, IP theft, and other [economic - based threats to national security](#). We encourage the federal government to help create and maintain a safe teaching and research environment at colleges. Supporting the creation of new technology safeguards and training a skilled cyber workforce at colleges will create hubs for sharing resources with the broader public. By leveraging the close partnerships colleges create with industry, municipalities and community organizations, these investments in digital infrastructure can play a key role in creating a more cyber secure Canada.

Accelerating a green recovery in Canada and globally

Colleges can help their communities immediately fast-track the actions needed to meet Canada's goals to drive to net zero by 2050. [A network of 50 regional College Sustainability Centres](#) in urban, rural, northern and coastal communities across Canada would catalyze climate action at colleges and their communities and deepen the impact colleges can have on achieving net zero. This network will:

- Mobilize and *practically* equip Canadians – students, SMEs and communities to take action;
- Leverage college assets and link sustainability centres in related sectors;
- Rapidly scale good practices across Canada;
- Scale up rapid reskilling and upskilling for the net zero economy;
- Accelerate GHG emissions reductions through green infrastructure investments;
- Seize business opportunities and drive innovation with a net zero lens through college applied research.

To accelerate towards a net zero world, increased international development assistance should be directed to support skills training that equips people in developing countries to work in a green economy and tackle climate change, including through partnerships with Canadian colleges. For example, CIGan's Skills to Access the Green Economy Program is helping six Caribbean countries become more resilient through demand-driven skills training in economic sectors most affected by climate change. This will also facilitate the growth of curriculum development and innovation capacity in developing countries by supporting research partnerships between educational institutions with local business and community organizations.

Conclusion

Colleges are uniquely positioned to support Canadians, companies and communities across the country as we emerge from the pandemic and to address the simultaneous challenges of advancing reconciliation and tackling climate change. Colleges are ready to work with the federal government and partners to support efforts to build resilience and foster inclusive social and economic development by increasing access to skills training for vulnerable Canadians, improving SME and community innovation, advancing reconciliation, and contributing to local, national and international efforts to drive to net zero economies by 2050.

³ CIGan 2019 Survey of Infrastructure Needs