

June 21, 2021

The Hon. Monte McNaughton  
Ministry of Labour Training, and Skills Development  
400 University Avenue  
14<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Toronto, ON  
M7A 1T7

The Hon. Jill Dunlop  
Ministry of Colleges and Universities  
5<sup>th</sup> Floor, 438 University Avenue  
Toronto, ON  
M7A 2A5

**Re: Niagara College and the Micro-credential Challenge Fund**

Dear Ministers McNaughton and Dunlop,

Thank you both for your continued leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic. I am reaching out on behalf of our [Workforce Development Council](#), [Ontario Cannabis Policy Council \(OCPC\)](#), and the broader business community in support of Niagara College's proposal for the Micro-credential Challenge Fund.

Amidst rapidly shifting labour market demands, and the evolution of new sectors such as cannabis, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) has underscored the importance of demand-driven training programs that help Ontarians acquire the skills needed to compete in today's economy.

Training that is flexible and responsive to the needs of cannabis retailers has become critical as the sector continues to grow and Ontario emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic. Micro-credential learning opportunities will help facilitate the rapid re-employment of workers that have been displaced during the COVID-19 crisis and can help the cannabis industry adapt and respond to a quickly evolving labour market. Additionally, lifelong learning allows workers to continually upgrade and develop their competencies to improve employability within their industry.

With that in mind, the OCC welcomes the opportunity to support the creation and development of a micro-credential program that is focused on providing the necessary skills training to ensure the cannabis sector can continue to grow and contribute to Ontario's economic recovery. As outlined in our 2019 report, [Supporting Ontario's Budding Cannabis Industry](#), the sector employs over 10,400 Canadians, with the majority of cannabis employment in Ontario.

This program can also help small, independent retailers who often understand the benefits of this type of training but lack the funding and capacity to effectively educate their employees on areas such as cannabis compliance and regulations, as well as point-of-sale systems and inventory control. Knowledgeable and well-trained retail staff are critical to the consumer experience, store compliance, and displacing the illegal market. With the opening of many new cannabis retail stores, there is both an immediate need for skilled employees

and a long-term need to ensure cannabis retail training can be adapted to support the evolving regulatory environment and consumer expectations.

The OCC's Ontario Cannabis Policy Council intends to support this project by providing insights on relevant curriculum and course materials, as well as recommending modifications to content to meet future requirements of the sector.

We would be happy to discuss this program further and look forward to continuing to work with you and your government on solutions that support the rapid recovery of Ontario's economy.

Sincerely,



Rocco Rossi  
*President and CEO*  
*Ontario Chamber of Commerce*

CC: The Hon. Doug Downey, Attorney General of Ontario