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## **Ontario Online**

Inter-ministerial Public Library Discussion Forum

January 29, 2014

Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities  
Strategic Policy and Programs Division

## GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT

- “Your government will create the new Ontario Online Institute, bringing the best professors in the top programs at Ontario universities to the homes of those who want to pursue this new option for higher learning.” – Speech from the Throne – March 8, 2010.
- This commitment and the intention to create the Ontario Online Institute was reiterated in the 2010 and 2011 Budgets.

## CONTEXT

- Technology-enabled learning is an emerging trend in higher education. It has the potential to bring high-quality learning experiences to many more Ontarians, and to give all students the flexibility to control how, when, and where they learn.
- In consulting broadly with students, institutions and other stakeholders, the Ministry found widespread support for the idea that technology-enabled learning has great potential to improve the student experience. What is missing in Ontario is a level of collaboration needed to sustain student-centred technology-enabled learning at a large scale.
- Research done by the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario found that to properly leverage new research, experience, and emerging trends in technology and pedagogy, institutions must collaborate. The report also found that for many learners, online learning results are at least as good as those found in traditional classrooms.
- The demand for online learning is growing, and global competition is fierce. Institutions and jurisdictions around the world are increasingly seizing the potential of online learning.

## BUILDING ON EXISTING CAPACITY

- Ontario has a strong foundation in technology-enabled learning on which to build, and consultations with the sector have highlighted the need to build on this capacity.
- A survey conducted by the Ministry in 2010 found close to 500,000 online course registrations in 18,000 courses and about 1,000 online programs. The expansion of technology-enabled learning continues at a rapid pace, and there is near universal interest among institutions in expanding capacity for online learning.
- Three organizations also play a key role in Ontario's online learning landscape:
  - **OntarioLearn** is a self-funded consortium of all 24 publicly funded Ontario colleges that facilitates student access to over 1,000 shared college courses.
  - **Ontario Universities Online** is a proposed consortium of seven Ontario universities.\* It aims to enable universities to support technology-enabled learning through collaboration but is still in the planning stages.
  - **Contact North** is a Ministry-funded distance education and training network serving over 600 rural and remote communities and operating 112 online access centres across the province. It aims to be the bridge between the student and the education provider.
- The Ministry is well-positioned to lead the sector toward greater collaboration in online learning and to harness and build on strengths in the system – turning what are now individual pockets of innovation into a coordinated, sector-wide initiative.

\*OUO members: Waterloo, York, Brock, Ryerson, McMaster, Laurier, and Guelph

## ONTARIO ONLINE: CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

- As announced on January 13, 2013, the government is investing \$42 million over three years to establish Ontario Online – a collaborative Centre of Excellence to be governed and operated by colleges and universities.
- Ontario Online will leverage existing strengths in the system and allow institutions to share best practices in pedagogy, collaborate on research, and facilitate the offering of in-demand, state-of-the-art courses to students that are recognized for credit across multiple institutions.
- Ontario will do this through three inter-related hubs:
  - **Course Hub:** offer high-quality online courses that are fully transferrable between participating universities and colleges (see appendix for more details).
  - **Instruction Hub:** allow institutions to develop and share best practices, research, and data on how best to teach online courses.
  - **Support Hub:** provide academic and technical assistance to students, instructors, and institutions.
- Ontario Online will be operational and facilitate the offering of courses no later than the 2015-16 academic year.

## BENEFITS

- Through Ontario Online, colleges and universities will build on existing strengths to:
  - collaboratively offer state-of-the-art courses that are widely recognized for credit across multiple institutions. This will allow institutions to expand their marketplace for delivery and/or ensure their students have access to high quality in-demand courses that they may not offer at their own institution;
  - share best practices and online resources;
  - build the evidence-base to inform best practices in online pedagogy; and
  - provide academic and technical assistance to students, instructors, and institutions – informing the way technology is incorporated into teaching and learning across the system.
- Over time, it is expected that institutions will realize productivity gains and cost-efficiencies as a result of increased collaboration/coordination in courses but also through sharing technology, research, and support services.
- Ontario Online will improve student learning experiences by providing:
  - flexibility for students to learn wherever and whenever works best for them;
  - high quality learning experiences from new and re-designed courses that use only the best in online learning technology and world-class instruction;
  - increased mobility through online courses that are recognized across multiple institutions and easily transferable should a student's learning path change; and
  - comprehensive online student supports.

# MINISTRY'S CONCEPTUAL MODEL

## Board of Directors

### Instruction Hub

- Research Agenda and Knowledge Coordination
- Data Collection and Analysis
- Disseminate Best Practices

### Support Hub

- Course and Instructor Development Support
- Shared Portal
- Student Services
- Shared IT Hardware and Software
- Open Educational Resources

### Course Hub

- Online Delivery Standards
- Credit Transfer Standards
- Course Development Grants

### College Committee

Shared College Courses

Credit Recognition

Credit Transfer

### University Committee

Shared University Courses

Credit Recognition

**THANK YOU!**  
**QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS?**