COVID-19: PARTNERING WITH COMMUNITIES FOR A STRONGER ONTARIO

Ontario's universities are playing a vital role as anchors in local regions across the province.

Whether it's by partnering with small businesses to help mitigate the impacts of COVID-19, working with local industry to develop made-in-Ontario solutions, or supporting individuals, families and vulnerable populations, universities are inextricably linked to the communities they serve.

Below are just a few examples that highlight how Ontario's universities are partnering with businesses, municipalities and communities to help improve the quality of life for the people of Ontario, playing a pivotal role in contributing to the economic success of the province.

Working together to build community resiliency

A new virtual tutoring program is helping senior-level high school students achieve academic success. **Algoma University,** in partnership with local school boards, created the Algoma Connect Program. The program matches high school students struggling with math with university tutors who not only provide academic support but help ease the transition to postsecondary studies.

In collaboration with local community members, and by putting personal 3-D printers to good use, **Lakehead University** is creating face shields for those who need it most. By pivoting their operations at the Centre for the Application of Resources Information Systems, the university is helping provide essential protection to frontline workers at the Thunder Bay Health Sciences Centre.

In an effort to keep families and communities safe, many health-care workers on the frontlines of COVID-19 are self-isolating. **Nipissing University** and the North Bay Regional Health Centre are working together to provide temporary, no-cost accommodations to hospital workers, ensuring suites are sanitized between guests and physical distancing measures are integrated.

Since shutdowns began, hospitality and tourism employment has decreased by 43 per cent in Canada. To assist workers who have lost their jobs in communities across Ontario, the Future Skills Centre at **Ryerson University** is partnering with OTEC, helping to equip displaced workers with new skills, while supporting businesses as they respond to changing market realities.

By leveraging a combination of technologies, including virtual reality, the **University of Ottawa** and the Ottawa Hospital are partnering to better prepare local health-care professionals in the fight against COVID-19. The training is helping medical workers run through rapid response simulations and frontline scenarios, mimicking the realities hospitals currently face.

Supporting the needs of Ontario's must vulnerable communities

To help address local food insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic, chefs from the **University of Guelph's** kitchens are helping feed the region's most vulnerable citizens. This collaboration between the university and other regional partners aims to help end food insecurity and eliminate barriers to healthy food within the community.

In an effort to better understand how First Nations communities were affected by the pandemic, **Laurentian University** researchers have curated regional, provincial and local COVID-19 data. To support the community, the data is shared weekly with First Nations leadership to inform them of the progression of the virus and to help determine appropriate response measures.

Volunteering can help older adults combat feelings of isolation while helping them remain active. To better understand how older people and community volunteers are coping with the impacts of physical distancing during the pandemic, **Trent University** researchers have partnered with Selwyn Township to explore how older volunteerism has challenged rural communities.

To gain a deeper understanding of how newcomers are managing during the pandemic, **Wilfrid Laurier University** researchers are studying how refugee families are coping and how losing access to local services has affected them. They will share their findings with community organizations and policymakers to help strengthen their capacity to serve that community better.

● **Strengthening communities through digital connectivity**

● In an effort to bring specialized educational programs to underserved communities, **Carleton University** has partnered with Shopify and the Boys and Girls Club of Ottawa to support STEM education at home for local youth. The Link<ed> program offers a weekly workshop focused on digital skills development to engage youth in technology literacy and coding.

● Cybersecurity risks are increasing as more people work from home. To help mitigate both personal and corporate risks, **University of Waterloo** facilitated a security and data privacy panel. From fraudsters and phishing scams to tracing apps and data collection, they are sharing information to help individuals, companies and policymakers make sound decisions around the use of technology.

● To help shape smarter communities, boost drone security, explore autonomous vehicles, machine learning, AI and more, **Western University** has partnered with Bell Canada to create an advanced 5G research centre. This "living lab" will inform a variety of sectors including medicine, agriculture, transportation, and communications, creating real impacts across Ontario.

● Investing in broadband infrastructure in underserved areas is essential to providing equal access across Ontario. To help service providers build-out Internet infrastructure and increase access in rural communities, the **University of Windsor** has partnered on a non-profit municipally-led broadband expansion project that will build an ultra-high speed Internet network across Southwestern Ontario.

● **Bettering the social and economic fabric of our communities**

● A unique partnership is bringing extensive research and municipal experience together to address low-impact development in Lincoln. Using a high-profile waterfront development project as its initial focus, **Brock University** is working with the Town of Lincoln and Vineland Research and Innovation Centre to develop nature-based solutions to pressing landscape issues affecting the region.

● To meet increasing hospital demand for personal protective equipment during COVID-19, a team at **McMaster University's** Manufacturing Research Institute is leveraging their research expertise to pivot the manufacturing efforts of local industry partners in order to help create critical PPE and supplies for local hospitals and health-care facilities.

● In support of TransformTO, the city's plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve health, bolster the economy and improve social equity, **OCAD University** is designing and delivering short-term resilience planning and solutions that address COVID-19 and climate change. This work involves student research on how transportation design can simultaneously reduce pollution and mitigate "second-tier" COVID-19 consequences.

● Teaching cities are living laboratories that create opportunities for students and academics to work on solutions to urban issues. **Ontario Tech** is partnering with The City of Oshawa and other community partners to collectively work on experiential learning and research opportunities to help address regional issues such as waste management, transportation, digital connectivity and more.

● Many local businesses and non-profits are facing economic challenges posed by COVID-19. To support local business needs, Smith School of Business at **Queen's University** has partnered with the City of Kingston to provide access to students and their skills. Support services include research, strategic planning, digital development, sales, marketing, design and grant applications.

● A new interdisciplinary hub aims to be a global leader in providing innovative solutions to urban issues. The **University of Toronto's** School of Cities – a cross-disciplinary team of experts drawing from over 220 faculty – is working with industry and government to address complex issues impacting our cities, such as transit, public health and long-term care.

● Designed to help small businesses and entrepreneurs access financial support programs as they face the challenges of COVID-19, the Schulich School of Business at **York University** has established the COVID-19 Small Business Support Centre. The centre provides critical assistance to help small businesses stay afloat during these challenging times.