

ecampus Ontario



Expanding Access
to Learning

2020-2021 Annual Report



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Message from the CEO

It is an understatement to say that the past year has been challenging. In March 2020 the eCampusOntario team sprang into action to support and guide the Ontario postsecondary education sector as we shifted to Emergency Remote Teaching when learning moved completely online. The entire sector is to be commended for its agility and persistence in ensuring teaching and learning continuity while we collectively grappled with the challenges of remote work.

The pandemic has disproportionately affected those already experiencing marginalization, and this carried into the education sector as well. Without access to in-person labs, laptops and student support services, among other hurdles, many students had new challenges to overcome. The silver lining is the realization that digital remote learning has removed many of the barriers to collaborative educational opportunities and expanded access for so many learners. We've shown that a new normal of high-quality, purposeful digital learning can provide learners access to education anytime, from anywhere.

As Ontario's postsecondary campuses reopen, our Annual Report outlines some of the key ways in which we supported educators and learners in the initial unexpected move to Emergency Remote Teaching through to a future of learning that supports options for all learners.

Our Annual Report outlines three areas of development:

1. Digital Transformation
2. Education and Workforce
3. Connected Systems

Over the past year, we have been focused on promoting excellence in virtual learning while helping to promote collaboration and connections: between Indigenous Institutes, colleges and universities, between learners and our member institutions, between faculty across the sector, and between our sector and the society we serve and support.

This has included the many flagship programs we have continued to offer, such as Ontario Extend, support for micro-credentials and the Educational Technologies Sandbox, while supporting new initiatives such as the Virtual Learning Strategy.

When I joined eCampusOntario in September 2020, making the transition to a new role remotely posed some challenges. I felt welcomed and supported by our team, who have been doing exemplary work across a number of initiatives, including some new ones. It was a good reminder of the importance of the social contexts in which we live and work, and how vital it is to have community support. I think you will find in this Report a unique expression of the value of the postsecondary education community and the benefits of working together.

No matter the times, we remain focused on making the next semester better than the last.

Robert Luke, PhD
Chief Executive Officer
eCampusOntario



Message from the Co-Chairs

It's safe to say that the 2020–2021 academic year was one like no other and will live on in our memories for years to come. In March 2020 the postsecondary sector reacted swiftly and compassionately as it pivoted to Emergency Remote Learning almost overnight. The ingenuity and perseverance demonstrated by educators and learners alike speak to the collective intelligence and resilience that live within our sector.

Challenging times often present opportunities, and this seismic shift in teaching and learning reinforced the benefits of our Digital by Design approach. We recognized the deep value in mindfully and artfully designing virtual learning environments that support all learners and remove barriers along the way.

In September 2020 we welcomed the arrival of Dr. Robert Luke as our new CEO. Dr. Luke's expertise working at the intersection of education and information science to produce useful and usable technology that supports education is inextricably aligned with the philosophy and goals of eCampusOntario. We are thrilled to have him at the helm of the organization and welcomed his leadership as we developed the 2021–2024 Strategic Plan over the past year.

During this time of transition, we continued to focus on our five key pillars:

- » **Student experience:** eCampusOntario leads a learner-first agenda to guide decision making for high-quality online learning, including Ontario-wide campus supports that promote the social aspects of learning essential to student success.
- » **Shared digital content:** eCampusOntario provides critical infrastructure to enable the collaborative design and development of high-quality digital content.
- » **Innovation in pedagogy and the use of educational technology:** eCampusOntario supports experimentation with and adoption of proven tools and instructional methods for quality online learning.
- » **Micro-credentials – Digital recognition of skills and competencies:** eCampusOntario increases the receptor capacity of Ontario postsecondary education to collaborate across education and workforce stakeholders and build networks to retrain workers displaced by COVID-19.
- » **Digital fluency:** eCampusOntario delivers scalable training to deepen digital skills and provide educators with the tools they need to succeed in a digital workforce.

To our staff, this year has surpassed all others in unpredictability and the extraordinary dedication and resilience that you have all demonstrated. We are exceptionally impressed and grateful for your contribution.

Final thanks go to our partners in the Government of Ontario for their continued support and ongoing recognition of the importance of a technology-enabled future for postsecondary education.



Ann Marie Vaughan, EdD
President & CEO,
Loyalist College



Steven Murphy, PhD
President & Vice-Chancellor,
Ontario Tech University

Our Member Institutions (As of March 31, 2021)

Colleges

Algonquin College
Collège Boréal
Cambrian College
Canadore College
Centennial College
Conestoga College
Confederation College
Durham College
Fanshawe College
Fleming College
George Brown College
Georgian College
Humber College
La Cité collégiale
Lambton College
Loyalist College
Mohawk College
Niagara College
Northern College
Sault College
Seneca College
Sheridan College
St. Clair College
St. Lawrence College

Universities

Algoma University
Brock University
Carleton University
Lakehead University
Laurentian University
McMaster University
Nipissing University
OCAD University
Ontario Tech University
Queen's University
Royal Military College
of Canada
Ryerson University
Trent University
Université de l'Ontario
français
University of Guelph
University of Ottawa
University of Toronto
University of Waterloo
University of Windsor
Western University
Wilfrid Laurier University
York University

Indigenous Institutes

Kenjgewin Teg
Six Nations Polytechnic



Board of Directors (As of March 31, 2021)

Co-Chairs

Steven Murphy
President and
Vice-Chancellor,
Ontario Tech University

Ann Marie Vaughan
President and CEO,
Loyalist College

Board Members

Nick Baker
Director Office of
Open Learning,
University of Windsor

Jerika Caduhada
Student,
University of Western Ontario

André Côté
Principal Consultant,
Côté & Company Strategies

Marilyn Herie
Vice President Academic
and Chief Learning Officer,
Centennial College

Peter Hickey
Director, Finance and
Administration, Children's Aid
Society of Toronto

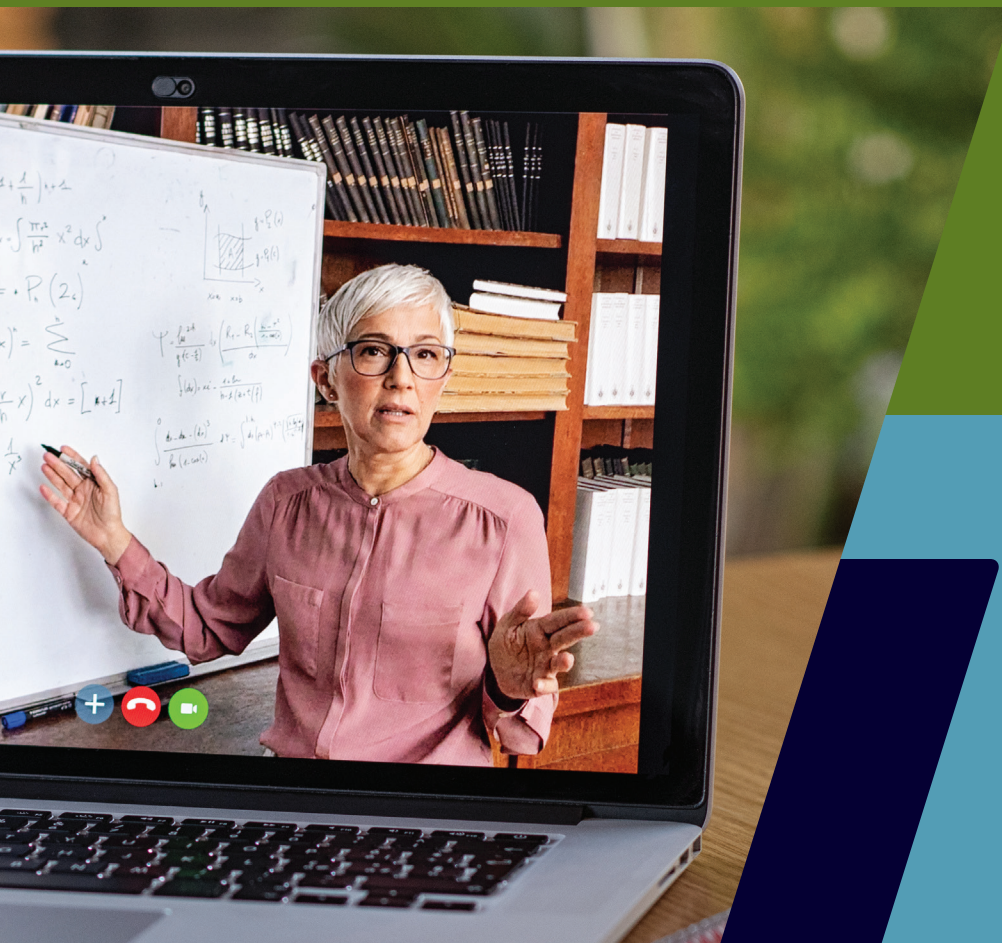
André Léger
Associate Dean, School of
Contemporary Teaching &
Learning, St. Lawrence College

Lyne Michaud
Vice-President – Academic
Affairs, Collège Boréal

Lisa Philipps
Provost & Vice-President,
Academic, York University

Nikita Ravi
Student, Humber College

Jill Scott
Provost & Vice-President,
Academic Affairs,
University of Ottawa



About eCampusOntario

Committed to the evolution of teaching and learning

eCampusOntario plays a critical role in championing and advancing virtual learning and innovation for postsecondary institutions in Canada, connecting them to the future of learning. A not-for-profit organization, eCampusOntario supports colleges, universities and Indigenous Institutes in Ontario by building systems that are open, collaborative and responsive to shifts and opportunities in the educational landscape.

Our Mission: To imagine and co-create Ontario's postsecondary digital learning ecosystem by supporting academic institutions, educators and learners to navigate change and deliver excellent and innovative digital learner-centric experiences.

Our Vision: Support Ontario and its academic institutions to be global leaders in the design of rich, inclusive and flexible digital learning experiences grounded in an evidence-based, creative understanding of learners, educators and communities.

Our Values: We align our activities with the needs of Ontario's postsecondary education ecosystem to achieve meaningful impact through the following values:

Inclusion: We strive to build a digital postsecondary ecosystem that allows every learner to thrive.

Curiosity: We ask questions and bridge connections that leverage the community's strengths and visions to realize our collective goals.

Creativity: We use human-centred design practices to iteratively co-create solutions and learn what works best for our educators and learners.

Experimentation: We test ideas for digital learning to push boundaries and set new paths toward more equitable, fairer and thriving futures.

What we do

- Train the next generation of digitally fluent educators
- Create open platforms that connect our community
- Support institutions to embrace virtual teaching and learning
- Improve the quality of online learning
- Foster partnerships across the sector to create products and programs for jobs and wealth in the economy
- Expand experiential learning and adaptive training opportunities for Ontarians
- Provide access to and support for development of open educational resources

Why it's important

Ontario's world-class postsecondary institutions have a chance to be at the forefront of a digital revolution that is already underway, spurred by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Providing the right guidance, support, expertise and resources on this journey is critical to the institutions' success and to Ontario's position as a global leader in advanced postsecondary education.

Driving Growth in Online Learning: The Virtual Learning Strategy

Announced on December 11, 2020, the Virtual Learning Strategy (VLS) is an historic \$50-million investment by the Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities (MCU) intended to drive growth and advancement in virtual learning across the province's postsecondary institutions. The strategy will expand the possibilities for traditional and lifelong learning through the accelerated use of both online and hybrid learning.

The VLS is built on three key pillars:



Being the Future

Providing sector supports to drive a continued co-existence with hybrid learning



Being a Lifelong Learner

Enabling learners to meet the needs of the rapidly evolving labour market



Being a Global Leader

Strengthening Ontario's leadership domestically and globally

eCampusOntario is administering funding made available to the postsecondary sector to support:

- Digital content: the development and adoption of a portfolio of high-quality online materials at Ontario postsecondary institutions;
- Digital capacity: for institutions with low current capacity;
- Digital fluency: the development and adoption of professional development resources;
- Digital delivery: the identification, procurement and deployment of educational technologies for digital course and program offerings; and
- Indigenous Institutes: targeted funding for virtual learning initiatives (administered directly by MCU).

The Government of Ontario has invested in the VLS to foster a province-wide postsecondary education system that collaborates to compete together in the global marketplace. Where pre-COVID-19 the province's colleges, universities and Indigenous Institutes competed against each other, under the VLS the sector is working together to create a globally competitive postsecondary education brand where the whole is greater than the sum of its many parts. This is a seismic shift in the sector. Under the VLS, collaboration is a competitive advantage.

Digital Transformation

Digital transformation has been slow to come to the higher education system. Then, with the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, the sector transitioned to Emergency Remote Teaching almost overnight and accomplished in a few months what was expected to take five to 10 years.

The situation highlighted significant gaps in the system, including discrepancies in accessibility, particularly for those living in remote communities and for vulnerable students. It also revealed a segment of educators who were newly and unexpectedly faced with remote teaching and required immediate support and guidance. Given eCampusOntario's focus on developing innovation and collaboration across Ontario's postsecondary institutions through access and empowerment, our programs and services were uniquely placed to address these challenges and respond to these needs.

Exponential growth for Open Library, making it the largest in Canada

The Open Library is the home of open educational resources (OER) in Ontario, where educators can find, customize and create educational resources. Ontario has a thriving community of educators writing openly licensed textbooks, modules and other resources, experimenting with open pedagogy and supporting colleagues in the pursuit of more flexible and adaptable learning. It is regularly accessed by educators and learners from around the world.

As educators and learners pivoted to Emergency Remote Teaching, they faced challenges accessing the required resources to deliver or complete coursework. Many educators also looked for the first time to digital tools or platforms to enhance the online learning experience. The result was exponential growth for open resources and support of Open Library, making it the largest OER repository in Canada.

The Open Library also supported Ontario postsecondary institutions to continue the year with a new service for students and faculty: unlimited access to the open-source publishing platform PressbooksEDU and eCampusOntario H5P Studio.

In addition to enabling faculty to create textbooks and interactive learning content from scratch or customize existing OER, the Open Library also allowed educators to use student co-creation as a form of formative assessment and participation marks. The resources could be exported and formatted for e-readers, PDF readers or print, which removed technical barriers to access and helped learners in a difficult-to-navigate digital world.

New platform H5P Studio launched

Building on the success of OER, eCampusOntario launched H5P Studio in March 2020, a one-stop shop to create, share and discover interactive learning content. The platform enables educators to create and add interactive elements to their courses and share resources quickly and easily with other educators globally. The studio was a huge asset to both learners and educators.

Open Education Global Conference 2020

Ontario's impact in the open education arena can be seen on an international scale, from the widespread adoption of Ontario-created open textbooks to the global community of educators taking part in programs like Ontario Extend. As co-host of the virtual event, eCampusOntario helped to drive the global conversation about open education.



Quick Facts: Open Library



Page views increased by **700%** from 2019

Downloads increased by over **100%** from 2019



232 new resources added to total 613 (largest in Canada)

100,271 learners impacted to date, with cumulative savings of **\$11.7 million**

90 new OER adoptions

reported, **impacting**

5,713 learners, with

savings of over

\$1.6 million

H5P Studio:

- **340,535 page views 2020–March 2021** (598 in 2019–2020)
- **69,462 unique users** (55 in 2019–2020), **over 126,000% growth**
- **2,900 new user accounts** (160 in 2019–2020)
- **17,858 new content creations** (102 in 2019–2020)

Educational Technologies Sandbox: Risk-free testing of new technologies

eCampusOntario's Educational Technologies Sandbox provides a testbed and a safe space for member institutions to test, co-design and report on real-world use of educational technologies. Each experience builds a network of professionals who then explore how technology may combine with pedagogy to provide solutions for today's educational challenges.

In early 2021, the Sandbox further broke down barriers and ensured equal access to the technology testbed for both institutions and vendors. This was achieved by creating a Common Contract framework to support sector-wide licensing on which the Council of Ontario Universities, Colleges Ontario and the Indigenous Institutes Consortium have agreed.

The Common Contract makes the Sandbox a safe environment to undertake critical testing, as it removed concerns over privacy and security risks or competitive access to this important test field. In addition, eCampusOntario, through the Digital Delivery tranche of the VLS, has managed the procurement process of educational technology tools for member institutions. This removed another barrier, allowing institutions to focus on how to use the technology for teaching. The result is a collaborative community that is building and learning from each other's experiences.

Another Sandbox initiative was a VLS grant program that helped institutions to experiment with extended reality (XR). Through this program, six institutions were awarded up to \$200,000 to work with Ontario-based vendors and explore XR technology to support the digital delivery of their courses at no cost to the institution or the students. There are many more opportunities to come as eCampusOntario expands the function and reach of Sandbox activities in 2021.

Quick Facts: Educational Technologies Sandbox

- Number of technologies **increased by 150%**
- Number of participant institutions **increased by 75%**
- Number of participant colleges **increased by 116%** (from 6 to 13)
- Number of participant universities **increased by 20%** (from 10 to 12)
- Number of distributed licenses **increased by 1,118%** (from 5,170 to 62,963)



SXD Lab research captures snapshot of online learning realities

The Student Experience Design (SXD) Lab is an innovation hub that tackles some of the most complex problems facing postsecondary education today. The Lab empowers student-led, open innovation to create purposeful learning for a meaningful life. Potential project ideas are generated, collected and curated continually from a variety of sources, such as student representatives, educators, learners, institutional support staff and industry partners. From there, ideas are shaped by students and then developed by the SXD Lab.

Before March 2020, the SXD Lab team worked with students in person in the design lab, many coming from distances across Ontario to participate. Overnight this activity went virtual; a drastic, fast-paced shift. However, the flexibility had many benefits: barriers to access were removed (travel time, costs, inability to travel due to family obligations and more) and efficiencies were found. Ultimately this shift created the opportunity for more learners to engage, expanding accessibility and including voices that may have been previously excluded.

A unique opportunity

The SXD Lab team quickly realized that this was a unique opportunity to understand what worked and what didn't—and what could be better for educators, learners and administrators as they delivered and experienced Emergency Remote Teaching. The SXD Lab led a multi-pronged investigation into how institutions were pivoting to virtual delivery and how learners were responding. The goal was to take an appreciative approach to the pandemic to better understand how to support institutions, learners and educators with strategies for virtual learning and wraparound supports.

A starting point was bringing together learners, educators and administrators from across Ontario colleges and universities to form a resource pool dedicated to exploring the impact of the sudden shift to Emergency Remote Teaching and learning. This group helped us understand how we could best support virtual learning now and into the future.

Learner-centric design

The SXD Lab engaged key stakeholders to support a learner-centric design process that involved conducting user research and then synthesizing the challenges, gaps and opportunities facing educators and learners across



Ontario, as well as ideation and prototyping processes to develop virtual learning and wraparound support strategies. The Lab also established a research partnership with the Manulife Centre for Community Health Research (MCCHR) at Wilfrid Laurier University. Researchers spent months diligently leading a process that explored the current contexts of surviving and thriving in a COVID-19 remote learning environment.

To arrive at a robust snapshot of learners' experiences during this unparalleled time, the researchers prioritized one-on-one contact where possible with the students to get specific feedback. Lots of listening, talking and collaboration fed into critical ideation about ideal and realistic virtual learning strategies. The research is based on qualitative and quantitative data but enlightened by the voices of those who were experiencing this paradigm shift first-hand.

Timely research

The result is fresh research that offers a window into the experiences of learners and educators during an historic global event. This research and accompanying strategies can help optimize virtual learning to better suit the long-term needs of educators and learners, making each semester of virtual learning better than the last.

Cumulatively, the SXD Lab and MCCHR engaged approximately 650 students and 200 educators from Ontario colleges, universities and Indigenous Institutes. Both efforts provided a rare opportunity to see how Ontario institutions responded to a global emergency that will forever change postsecondary education.

The results of this research will be released and will impact the work of eCampusOntario going forward.

At eCampusOntario, we believe this shift has accelerated an evolution of education delivery that's here to stay—both virtual and in-person as well as hybrid.



In 2020, 85.3% of the courses that students were taking and 75.3% of the courses that instructors were teaching were delivered fully online

Design Elements badge

We issued the Design Elements badge to 14 students for conducting a design process, undertaking user research and co-creating and designing wraparound support strategies for online learning.

The students represent both colleges and universities and come from diverse academic backgrounds, including neuroscience, psychology, anthropology, design, education, media production and hospitality.

Education and Workforce

The future of work is constantly evolving, and when a global pandemic entered the equation, profound change happened almost overnight. With it came an urgent and critical need for people to reskill, upskill and find new pathways to both education and employment. Never before has opening doors to lifelong learning been so essential.

Micro-credentials: Making the future more accessible

The flexibility of micro-credentials offers benefits not only to learners, but also to employers and postsecondary educators. For learners, micro-credentials help develop the most relevant and in-demand skills and competencies through fast, accessible and affordable education. For employers who are seeking critical skill sets, using micro-credentials can help them hire the right person for the job as well as train current and future employees. In addition, micro-credentials help educators and institutions support a more diverse set of learners.

At the core of eCampusOntario's approach is a Micro-Credential Framework, developed in collaboration with the postsecondary sector, employers, and learners to guide the development of new micro-credentials. The Framework brings together workforce representatives, who understand current and future skills needed in the workplace, and postsecondary institutions, who build programs for those skills. Together they co-create micro-credential programming that responds to needs in the market, benefiting learners, employees and employers.

In 2020–2021, eCampusOntario funded the development of 22 pilot projects at 22 different universities and colleges to promote learning and experimentation in this emerging area. The pilots were a great success, but just as important was the community of practice that was cultivated during this period. Monthly community calls with project leads allowed for questions, sharing of best practices, discussions about challenges and opportunities to

learn from each other. Participants found common ground and made connections that would otherwise not have been possible. eCampusOntario will take this practice forward and open it up to include even more voices.

Open Competency Toolkit

As part of our efforts to support lifelong learning and micro-credential development, eCampusOntario also created the Open Competency Toolkit, a resource with templates and examples of open competency frameworks used to establish a common language and understanding of competencies across the postsecondary sector and the workforce. This toolkit also prepares people for cross-occupational mobility, which was heightened during the pandemic, as some sectors face a lengthy recovery while others are seeing sudden and unanticipated increased demand for workers with the right skills.

Given this disruption, access to lifelong learning had never been more essential. This was the theme for the fourth annual micro-credential forum: Opening Doors for all Learners, held in February 2021. The virtual event was framed by the voice of the learner, enabling discussions to focus on how to design a micro-credential ecosystem that ensures flexibility, broad access to education and opportunity for all learners, at any stage of life. Topics included nomenclature, policy, quality, access and equity, connected systems and infrastructure.

Central Virtual Learning Platform: Making connections to build high-quality virtual learning content

A key component of eCampusOntario's role in implementing the VLS is the development of the Central Virtual Learning Platform (CVLP).

The CVLP is a marketplace matchmaker, connecting suppliers such as instructional designers, multimedia developers, copy editors and additional supports with applying member institutions so they can collectively produce high-quality virtual learning content.

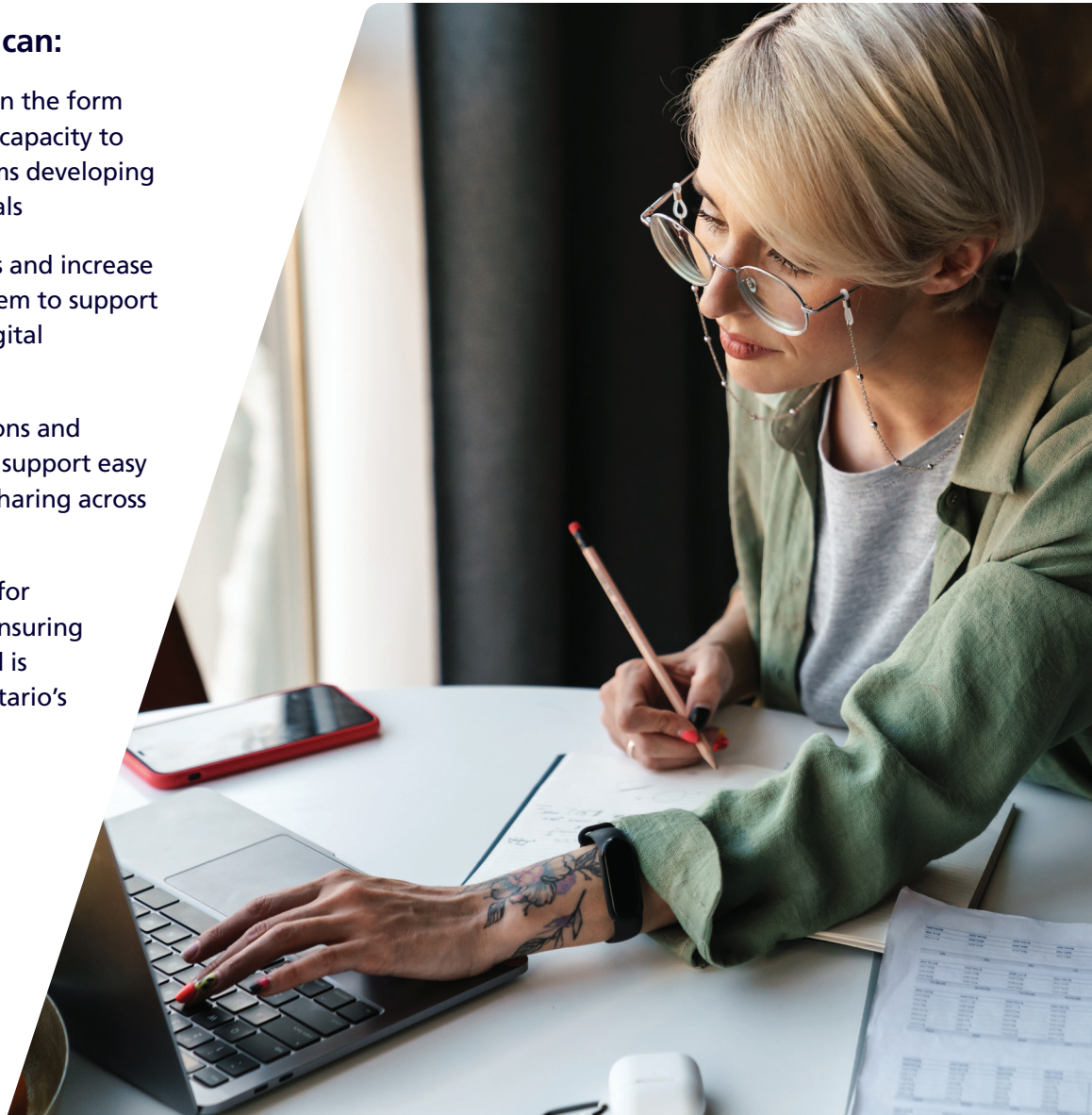
eCampusOntario recognized that many institutions are able to produce virtual learning content but frequently lack capacity in either a key production role or specific expertise, or require funding support. CVLP addresses these needs by connecting suppliers with institutional demand for virtual learning content and, when needed, providing financial support to complete these projects.

CVLP also supports faculty to use, reuse, review and evaluate virtual learning materials by depositing completed CVLP projects through the eCampusOntario Open Library, which provides free access to virtual learning materials to all Ontario member institutions.

The platform differs from other VLS programs in that it directly connects institutions with preferred skilled professionals to support and collaborate with in-house staff developing virtual learning materials.

Through the CVLP, member institutions can:

- Receive direct support in the form of paid-for production capacity to augment in-house teams developing digital learning materials
- Build supplier networks and increase capacity across the system to support the development of digital learning materials
- Promote licensing options and content repositories to support easy and effective content sharing across the province
- Increase available OER for Ontario educators by ensuring that content generated is aligned to eCampusOntario's digital repository requirements





Customized delivery of Ontario Extend amplifies digital transformation

In a world where the pace of change is increasing, lifelong learning is essential. This year, Ontario Extend took a new facilitated approach and enabled postsecondary educators to excel in the digital world.

This took place as the transition to Emergency Remote Teaching in 2020 became ever more critical and learners and educators needed flexible training focused on cultivating relevant digital literacy skills and increasing comfort levels with using technology. The Ontario Extend micro-credentialed professional learning program supported this necessary digital transformation.

This new approach included offering customized facilitated cohorts and connecting with participants more holistically throughout their learning journey. These efforts resulted in a substantial increase in program uptake and badging rates.

Educators demonstrate a powerful commitment to learning in a challenging year

In 2020, 365 educators participated in Ontario Extend, a 60% increase from 2019. Also, 226 digital

badges were issued in 2020, a 50% increase from 2019. Despite the challenges, 11 Ontario educators achieved their Empowered Educator micro-credential by completing all six modules in the program, navigating a year of transformation in education and digital pedagogy.

The instrumental value of the program has also resulted in the launch of a micro-credential endorsement partnership with Conestoga College, which endorsed Ontario Extend and recognized the program as a course credit toward its postsecondary Teaching College Certificate.

This new approach also inspired cohorts to participate in additional programs delivered by teaching and learning centres at colleges including Fanshawe, Georgian and Conestoga.

Ontario Extend partner institutions include Conestoga College and Loyalist College, Durham College, Fanshawe College, Georgian College, and Nipissing University.

Ontario Extend participant survey had 114 respondents:



90% strongly agree or agree they are more comfortable teaching with technology



94% strongly agree or agree they have developed a new skill or discovered a new technology



90% strongly agree or agree they are more interested in incorporating technology into their teaching

Extend highlights:

- **365 educators participated in Ontario Extend**, compared to 220 participants in 2019–2020
- **226 digital badges were issued**, compared to 112 issued in 2019–2020
- **11 Empowered Educator micro-credentials were earned for completing all six modules**
- **16 institutions participated in the Extend program**

Lifelong Learning

“The six modules offered by Ontario Extend’s Empowered Educator program are invaluable resources at your disposal for anyone working in education. After a few years of teaching at the postsecondary level, and over a year under my belt as a virtual educator, I felt that I was getting into the swing of things, but I also knew I had a lot more to learn, especially in the area of digital delivery. Each module challenged me in a different way, and helped me improve the way I delivered my class material to my students ... The badges were used as an incentive to continue onward with our learning, but the biggest incentive for me was the amount of skills I gained through completing these courses.”

~ **Katie Halsall**, Professor, Conestoga College, Ontario Extend Participant

“The Empowered Educator program offered me the opportunity to reflect on my teaching philosophy and teaching practice, and to learn new skills in a safe and supportive community. The scholarly content, module structure and activity-based design of the program was key to helping me focus on and progress pedagogies that are meaningful to me. The flexibility built into the program also allowed me to scaffold and evolve my learning in a way that made sense for my teaching practice and my schedule.”

~ **Marie Ritchie**, Professor, Fanshawe College, Ontario Extend Participant



Empowered Educators for 2020-2021:

1. **Brian Nuttall**, Professor, Fanshawe College
2. **Connie Palmer**, Professor, Fanshawe College
3. **Shauna Roch**, Professor, Fanshawe College
4. **Christopher Rowe**, Professor, Fanshawe College
5. **Kim Wilmink**, Professor, Fanshawe College
6. **Diana Degan**, Professor, Conestoga College
7. **Sarah Fischer**, Part-time Faculty, Conestoga College
8. **Dorina Gross**, Professor, Conestoga College
9. **Stephanie Muller**, International Language Specialist, Conestoga College
10. **Vasu Padmanabhan**, Associate Faculty, Conestoga College
11. **Elan Paulson**, Teaching and Learning Consultant, Conestoga College

Connected Systems

First virtual Technology + Education Seminar + Showcase expands opportunities for learning and engagement

Every year, eCampusOntario hosts the Technology + Education Seminar + Showcase (TESS), an event for Ontario’s public colleges and universities to discuss, celebrate and advance technological innovation, community and collaboration.

In 2020 the theme was Humanizing Learning: Inspired Action and Impact, an appropriate theme given what the entire sector was navigating. As the event moved into a completely virtual environment, eCampusOntario benefited from the opportunities this created and the barriers it removed.

People who were unable to attend in the past due to travel time or cost could now participate. The new format allowed us to build bridges outside of Ontario and bring in renowned speakers from across Canada and the United States. They included Mary Burgess, Executive Director of BCcampus; Santa J. Ono, President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of British Columbia; Nicole Johnson, Research Director at the Canadian Digital Learning Research Association; Dr. Ivan Joseph, Vice-President, Student Affairs, at Laurier University; and Dr. Michelle Pacansky-Brock, a noted U.S. leader in higher education whose work has helped online instructors to craft relevant, humanized online learning experiences that support the diverse needs of college students.

The new virtual format also allowed for innovation and experimentation. The event kicked off with a student-led panel made up of diverse learners to reinforce the importance of keeping learners’ perspectives at the forefront, both during the conference and throughout the academic year. Registration was seamlessly expanded due to the virtual platform, which doubled attendance to over 350 attendees.

In addition to two live keynotes and 30 community presentations, four fireside chats with industry experts offered more insights and broadened the day’s conversations. A lively mix of musical entertainment was added into the breaks, which participants commented was welcome and unique.

TESS is a highlight event in the sector’s calendar; it’s been compared to homecoming: an annual in-person community-building event where staff and representatives of the institutions come together to connect with peers. It’s also a time to showcase current projects and our sector’s accomplishments and share new projects and ideas.

TESS is about building connection, increasing collaboration and sharing best practices between educators across the postsecondary sector. At eCampusOntario, we believe that collaboration is a competitive advantage; if you want to go faster, go together.

Quick Facts: TESS 2020



- Following TESS, **88%** of participants felt more equipped to explore humanizing learning approaches in their work



- **83%** of participants found the theme of TESS 2020—Humanizing Learning: Inspired Action and Impact—highly relevant



- **80%** of participants said they would implement concepts and approaches learned at TESS



TESS
 TECHNOLOGY + EDUCATION
 SEMINAR + SHOWCASE

"I really liked that you intentionally included voices from a diverse pool of professionals."

"The theme of partnering with students really stood out. The importance of student voice and ensuring that students felt a sense of belonging really resonated. I appreciated the student panel, the fireside chat with Dr. Joseph [and] presentations by Saddiya Rose and Anna Rodrigues."

"First time joining the conference, and it was so well organized with various topics on e-learning that I was constantly thinking and reflecting as the presenters shared their knowledge."

"The presentations packed a lot of valuable content into short, succinct and well-edited video segments that were easily accessible. Also, questions were posed in writing (via chat) and facilitators/coordinators were superbly effective."





eCampusOntario ushers in a new era by welcoming Indigenous Institutes and French-language university

In the course of 2020–2021, eCampusOntario celebrated the expansion of our consortium to 48 members. The addition of three new members—Six Nations Polytechnic, Kenjgewin Teg and Université de l’Ontario français—marked both the first Indigenous Institutes and the first French-language university to join eCampusOntario.

“eCampusOntario is very excited to welcome these remarkable institutes to our consortium. We look forward to sharing our resources with, and learning from, these institutions. These new members add to our efforts to create new opportunities for more inclusive conversation on technology-enabled learning that are important both to today’s diverse landscape and for future faculty, staff and students across Ontario,” said Robert Luke, PhD, CEO, eCampusOntario.

All three new members join eCampusOntario’s mission to promote accessibility, collaboration and innovation in online and technology-enabled learning in Ontario.

New member Six Nations Polytechnic is a unique postsecondary organization, recognized by the community, government and institutions of higher learning as a centre of excellence for Indigenous knowledge. Established in Canada’s most populous First Nation, Six Nations Polytechnic allows its students to acquire skills that lead to employment as well as learn about the history, culture and philosophy of Indigenous peoples of the region.

“We are thrilled to increase our collective capacity for virtual learning as a new member of eCampusOntario,” said Rebecca Jamieson, President and CEO, Six Nations Polytechnic. “This past year we launched pilots with our partner institutions that recognized the trend toward micro-credentials and preparing students for a fast-changing workplace where micro-credentials can more efficiently determine skills and competencies for hiring,” she said.

President of new member Kenjgewin Teg, Dr. Stephanie Roy, said, “We are extremely excited about our new membership with a higher education sector stakeholder. As a new member alongside Ontario’s colleges and universities and a legislatively recognized Indigenous Institute in Ontario, we look forward to actively participating and contributing to the goals of rethinking learning resources, rethinking recognition of learning and rethinking the learning experience—by sharing our Anishinabek lens and perspectives on teaching and learning.”

Kenjgewin Teg, located on Mnidoo Mnising (Manitoulin Island, Ontario), provides Indigenous, culturally relevant, community-based access and lifelong learning for adult postsecondary students. It provides an Anishinaabemowin community approach to education and training and offers both university- and college-accredited programs, which are open to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

New member Université de l’Ontario français, the first independent French-speaking university in Ontario, is located in Toronto and just opened its doors to students in September 2021. The courses and programs offered allow students to develop skills and knowledge that are specific to their field of study, while others are transdisciplinary and applicable to all Université de l’Ontario français study programs.

“The Université de l’Ontario français is very pleased to join the eCampusOntario consortium. The current global health crisis has accelerated the transformation of higher education by placing greater emphasis on distance learning,” said Denis Berthiaume, PhD, Vice-President, Studies and Research, Université de l’Ontario français. “In this context, offering courses that guarantee students a high-quality learning experience is a major challenge that can be surmounted with the help of inter-institutional collaborations such as this.”

Leveraging collaboration as a competitive advantage, this expansion will benefit educators and learners in years to come.



KENJGEWIN TEG



SIX NATIONS
POLYTECHNIC



Université de
l'Ontario français





Financial Statements

Ontario Online Learning Consortium

March 31, 2021

Ontario Online Learning Consortium

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Independent Auditor's Report

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To the Members of
Ontario Online Learning Consortium

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Ontario Online Learning Consortium (the "Organization"), which comprise the statement of financial position as at March 31, 2021, and the statements of operations and changes in net assets and cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Organization as at March 31, 2021, and its results of operations and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements section of our report. We are independent of the Organization in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in Canada, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Responsibilities of management and those charged with governance for the financial statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations, and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, management is responsible for assessing the Organization's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the organization or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the Organization's financial reporting process.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements. As part of an audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the organization's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the organization's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the organization to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

Grant Thornton LLP

Markham, Canada
June 23, 2021

Chartered Professional Accountants
Licensed Public Accountants

Ontario Online Learning Consortium

Statement of Financial Position

March 31

2021

2020

Assets

Current

Cash	\$ 13,416,892	\$ 1,086,600
Receivables	-	548
HST receivable	186,677	167,981
Prepaid expenses	<u>33,348</u>	<u>58,235</u>

13,636,917 1,313,364

Property and equipment (Note 3)

47,475 68,884

Intangible assets (Note 4)

671,231 728,710

\$ 14,355,623 \$ 2,110,958

Liabilities

Current

Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 545,919	\$ 159,755
Deferred revenue (Note 5)	<u>13,809,704</u>	<u>1,951,203</u>

\$ 14,355,623 \$ 2,110,958

On behalf of the Board

Peter Hickey

Director

Signer ID: 6JK1TINDY5...

Peter Hickey

06/29/2021

Ann Marie Vaughan

Director

Signer ID: JMSZMPWTZ2...

Ann Marie Vaughan

06/25/2021

Ontario Online Learning Consortium

Statement of Operations and Changes in Net Assets

Year ended March 31	2021	2020
Revenue		
Government grants (Note 8)	\$ 6,585,321	\$ 6,631,525
Interest income	-	60,526
Cost recoveries	-	10,237
	<u>6,585,321</u>	<u>6,702,288</u>
Expenses		
Strategic initiatives	3,097,469	3,406,607
Salaries and benefits	2,364,939	2,148,637
Professional fees	386,727	330,649
Amortization	263,985	268,137
Space rental and insurance	254,952	247,646
Computing and financial services	170,695	132,750
Communications	37,542	61,549
Office supplies and maintenance	8,209	22,709
Meetings, travel, conferences and registration	803	83,604
	<u>6,585,321</u>	<u>6,702,288</u>
Excess of revenue over expenses	-	-
Net assets, beginning of year	-	-
Net assets, end of year	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ -</u>

Ontario Online Learning Consortium

Statement of Cash Flows

Year ended March 31

2021

2020

Increase (decrease) in cash

Operating

Excess of revenue over expenses	\$ -	\$ -
Items not affecting cash		
Amortization of property and equipment	21,409	33,206
Amortization of intangible assets	<u>242,576</u>	<u>234,931</u>
	263,985	268,137
Change in non-cash working capital items		
Receivables	548	(548)
Harmonized sales tax	(18,696)	52,537
Prepaid expenses	24,887	(14,413)
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	386,164	(109,331)
Deferred revenue	<u>11,858,501</u>	<u>(4,940,804)</u>
	<u>12,515,389</u>	<u>(4,744,422)</u>

Investing

Purchase of property and equipment	-	(10,450)
Purchase of intangible assets	<u>(185,097)</u>	<u>-</u>
	<u>(185,097)</u>	<u>(10,450)</u>

Increase (decrease) in cash

12,330,292 (4,754,872)

Cash

Beginning of year	<u>1,086,600</u>	<u>5,841,472</u>
End of year	<u>\$ 13,416,892</u>	<u>\$ 1,086,600</u>

Ontario Online Learning Consortium

Notes to the Financial Statements

March 31, 2021

1. Nature of operations

Ontario Online Learning Consortium (the "Organization") was incorporated on October 3, 2014 under the Canada Not-for-Profit Corporation Act. The organization is exempt from income tax, except for income from property, under Section 149(1) of the Income Tax Act.

The Organization is a collaborative centre of excellence in online and technology-enabled learning, governed and operated by Ontario's publicly assisted post-secondary institutions.

2. Summary of significant accounting policies

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations (ASNPO) using the deferral fund method of reporting externally restricted contributions.

Use of estimates

The preparation of the Organization's financial statements in conformity with ASNPO requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities and the disclosure of contingent assets and liabilities at the balance sheet date and the reported amounts of revenues and expenses during the reporting period. Due to the inherent uncertainty involved in making estimates, actual results could differ from those estimates. Significant items subject to such estimates and assumptions include accrued liabilities and useful lives of property, equipment and intangible assets.

Financial instruments

The Organization's financial instruments are comprised of cash, receivables and accounts payable. Financial assets and liabilities are initially recognized at their fair value. The Organization subsequently measures all financial assets and financial liabilities at amortized cost.

Property and equipment

Property and equipment are recorded at cost and are being amortized over their estimated useful lives. The annual amortization rates are as follows:

Computer equipment	3 years
Leasehold improvements	5 years
Furniture and fixtures	5 years

Ontario Online Learning Consortium

Notes to the Financial Statements

March 31, 2021

2. Summary of significant accounting policies (continued)

Intangible assets

Intangible assets are recorded at cost and are being amortized over their estimated useful lives. The annual amortization rates are as follows:

Website	5 years
Open Library Infrastructure	5 years

The Organization tests their property and equipment and intangible assets (long-lived assets) for impairment whenever events or changes in circumstances indicate that their carrying amounts may not be recoverable. An impairment loss is recognized when the carrying amount of the long-lived asset exceeds the sum of the undiscounted cash flows resulting from its use and eventual disposition. The impairment loss is measured as the amount by which the carrying amount of the long-lived asset exceeds its fair value.

Accrual of expenses

Expenses have been recorded using the accrual basis of accounting, and all expenses have been recorded in the period to which the expense relates.

Revenue recognition

Grants are initially recorded as deferred revenue and are recognized as revenue in the year in which the related expenses are incurred.

Investment and other income is recognized when received or receivable and the amount can be reasonably estimated and collection reasonably assured.

Contributed goods and services

Contributed goods and services are not reflected in these financial statements as the fair values of these goods and services cannot be reasonably estimated.

Ontario Online Learning Consortium

Notes to the Financial Statements

March 31, 2021

3. Property and equipment

	<u>Cost</u>	<u>Accumulated Amortization</u>	<u>2021 Net Book Value</u>	<u>2020 Net Book Value</u>
Computer equipment	\$ 52,496	\$ 52,496	\$ -	\$ 2,462
Leasehold improvements	75,090	39,750	35,340	50,358
Furniture and fixtures	19,644	7,509	12,135	16,064
	<u>\$ 147,230</u>	<u>\$ 99,755</u>	<u>\$ 47,475</u>	<u>\$ 68,884</u>

The Organization completed leasehold improvements during the 2018 fiscal year. Netted against the cost of the leasehold improvements is a leasehold reimbursement from the landlord of \$124,325.

4. Intangibles

	<u>Cost</u>	<u>Accumulated Amortization</u>	<u>2021 Net Book Value</u>	<u>2020 Net Book Value</u>
Website Portal	\$ 1,207,014	\$ 652,450	\$ 554,564	\$ 572,043
Open Library Infrastructure	200,000	83,333	116,667	156,667
	<u>\$ 1,407,014</u>	<u>\$ 735,783</u>	<u>\$ 671,231</u>	<u>\$ 728,710</u>

5. Deferred revenue

	<u>Balance, beginning of year</u>	<u>Funds received</u>	<u>Expenditures</u>	<u>Balance, end of year</u>
Operations and strategic initiatives 2016 – 2021	\$ 1,803,083	\$ 4,511,827	\$ (4,893,618)	\$ 1,421,292
Ontario collaboration platform	-	499,375	(9,900)	489,475
Virtual learning support for institutions (a)	-	12,193,750	(529,589)	11,664,161
Micro-credentials portal	-	225,000	-	225,000
Lynda.com access	144,357	963,429	(1,107,786)	-
Ryerson University micro-credentials research	-	40,000	(44,428)	(4,428)
Library infrastructure services	3,763	10,441	-	14,204
	<u>\$ 1,951,203</u>	<u>\$ 18,443,822</u>	<u>\$ (6,585,321)</u>	<u>\$ 13,809,704</u>

(a) During the year, the Organization entered in to a transfer payment agreement with the Ministry of Colleges and Universities to support virtual learning for institutions. Total funding under the agreement is \$47,500,000 of which \$12,193,750 was received prior to year end. The Organization has entered into contracts with third parties to execute the initiatives. The related commitments are disclosed in Note 6.

Ontario Online Learning Consortium

Notes to the Financial Statements

March 31, 2021

6. Commitments

The Organization enters into a number of contracts with third parties to execute the strategic initiatives outlined in the transfer payment agreements with the Ministry of Colleges and Universities. At the end of the current year, the commitments related to the virtual learning support for institutions are \$39,889,927 (2020 - \$715,912).

The Organization has entered into a lease for office premises, expiring in 2028. Future minimum annual lease payments for the next five years and thereafter are as follows:

2022	\$	124,325
2023		124,325
2024		130,127
2025		134,271
2026		134,271
Subsequent years		<u>324,488</u>
	\$	<u>971,807</u>

7. Financial instruments

Transactions in financial instruments may result in the Organization assuming or transferring to another party one of more of the financial risks described below. The required disclosures provide information that assists users of the financial statements in assessing the extent of risk related to financial instruments.

Credit risk

The Organization's credit risk is primarily with respect to their accounts receivable. Given the nature of HST receivable, the Organization does not consider credit risk to be significant.

Liquidity risk

The Organization's liquidity risk represents the risk that the Organization could encounter difficulty in meeting obligations associated with financial liabilities. The Organization is exposed to liquidity risk mainly in respect of its accounts payable. The Organization manages liquidity risk by maintaining cash balances in excess of outstanding obligations.

Currency risk

Currency risk is the risk to the Organization that arises from fluctuations in foreign exchange rates. The Organization is not exposed to significant currency risk as transactions in foreign currencies are limited.

Interest rate risk

Interest rate risk is the risk that the fair value (price risk) or future cash flows (cash flow risk) of a financial instrument will fluctuate because of changes in market interest rates. The Organization is not exposed to interest rate risk due to the nature of their financial instruments.

Ontario Online Learning Consortium

Notes to the Financial Statements

March 31, 2021

8. Economic dependence

The Organization is economically dependent on the Ministry of Colleges and Universities for grant revenue.

9. COVID-19

The spread of COVID-19 has severely impacted the global community. In many countries, including Canada, businesses are being forced to cease or limit operations indefinite periods of time. Measures taken to contain the spread of the virus, including travel bans, quarantines, social distancing, and closures of non-essential services have triggered significant disruptions to businesses worldwide. Governments and central banks have responded with monetary and fiscal interventions to stabilize economic conditions.

The Organization has limited the impact of COVID-19 as the Organization has a signed TPA in place for 2021/2022. In addition, with the increased need to provide learning in a virtual environment, the Organization has worked with the Ministry of Colleges and Universities to enter in to an agreement for \$47,500,000 (Note 5) to execute on the Virtual Learning Strategy, which is providing funding to Ontario postsecondary institutions for a variety of virtual learning initiatives. The Organization has the ability to execute on the various initiatives on a virtual basis.

The duration and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the effectiveness of government and central bank responses, remains unclear at this time. It is not possible to reliably estimate the duration and severity of these consequences, as well as their potential impact on the financial position and results of the Organization for future periods.

