



September 27, 2016

The Honourable Deb Matthews
Deputy Premier and Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development
3rd Floor, Mowat Block
900 Bay Street
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1N3

Dear Deputy Premier:

We write to request that you, as Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development, direct Colleges Ontario to provide college faculty and members of the public with the details of the recently-signed deal with McDonald's.

As you are aware, Colleges Ontario has announced that under the terms of this deal, McDonald's managers who have taken corporate training through the restaurant will be placed directly into the second year of college business programs. Though this means, for example, that students in a two-year diploma program will receive only half of their education within the public system, they will receive the same diploma from the college as students who complete the entire program.

This raises a number of concerns from those responsible for these students' learning outcomes.

College faculty have raised particular concerns with the way this agreement bypasses the existing Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) process. This well-established system by which colleges can assign credits to students for previous experience is designed to support student success. A faculty member reviews a student's work and life experience on an individual basis to determine which credits they qualify for, and which courses they still need to take, in order to ensure that student can succeed in later stages of the program.

By contrast, faculty are concerned about the outcomes of McDonald's staff entering the program through this deal. With no details on how Colleges Ontario has determined that these students have received sufficient training in all areas covered in the first year of a business program, whether macroeconomics or business ethics, faculty are unable to be sure these students can succeed in later years of the program.

Faculty are also raising questions about whether graduates under this new scheme will have the breadth of knowledge and training required to succeed in the business world.

The future of our province requires students that are positioned to succeed in an innovative and knowledge-based economy. Students who graduate with a business diploma should have the skills and knowledge needed throughout the business world, not merely within one particular company in one specific industry.

This type of broad preparation is what is offered by our colleges. When we sacrifice this breadth of training for the limited scope of a corporate training seminar – trading the skills to succeed in the new economy for the skills to function within a specific company – we fail the next generation of learners, and the business world that will rely on them in the years to come.

We are asking you, Deputy Premier, to use your authority as Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development to direct Colleges Ontario to be transparent about this deal and provide faculty with details on how the corporate training offered by McDonald's has been assessed as equivalent to the courses offered in our public colleges.

The secrecy surrounding this deal raises further questions about why Colleges Ontario will not release the details. Given that this deal has significant implications for our public college system, why is the public being kept in the dark?

Are there additional terms that the public remains unaware of? Has money changed hands in order to ensure that this corporate training program will be accepted in lieu of true education? These questions, and more, will remain unanswered until the full deal is released to the public.

At a bare minimum, faculty who need to teach these students deserve clarity on what students who enter their programs halfway through will have learned. And the public deserves clarity on what promises have been made, and what money has changed hands, to strike this backroom deal between Colleges Ontario and McDonald's.

We look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Warren (Smokey) Thomas
President, Ontario Public Service Employees Union

RM Kennedy
Chair, College Academic Divisional Executive, Ontario Public Service Employees Union

c: All MPPs
All OPSEU Executive Board Members