

From: Maxim Jean-Louis <maxim@contactnorth.ca>
Sent: September 11, 2019 2:17 PM
To: hweingarten@heqco.ca; 'Martin Hicks' <mhicks@heqco.ca>; akaufman@heqco.ca
Subject: FW: Help and advice please

Harvey, Martin, and Amy

Thank you for the opportunity to review the draft below.

I copied your draft text below into a Word document and added 10 boxes throughout the text with my comments / suggested additions in bold for ease of review. See attached file "MAXIM JEAN-LOUIS COMMENTS TO HEQCO RE DESCRIPTION OF CONTACT NORTH | CONTACT NORD – SEP 11, 2019". The two attached PDF documents are referenced in my comments.

I remain on standby to answer any questions you may have or meet at any time.

Maxim

From: Harvey Weingarten <hweingarten@heqco.ca>
Sent: Wednesday, September 04, 2019 11:27 AM
To: Maxim Jean-Louis <maxim@contactnorth.ca>
Cc: Martin Hicks <mhicks@heqco.ca>; Amy Kaufman <akaufman@heqco.ca>
Subject: Help and advice please

Maxim:

I attach below a section of the Digital Review that speaks about Contact North. We would appreciate if you would review what we say and identify any errors of fact or innuendo. Also, please feel free to point out anything we have mis-represented or any significant point that in your view we failed to identify or make clearly or accurately.

If you could get this back to us no later than the middle of next week that would be greatly appreciated.

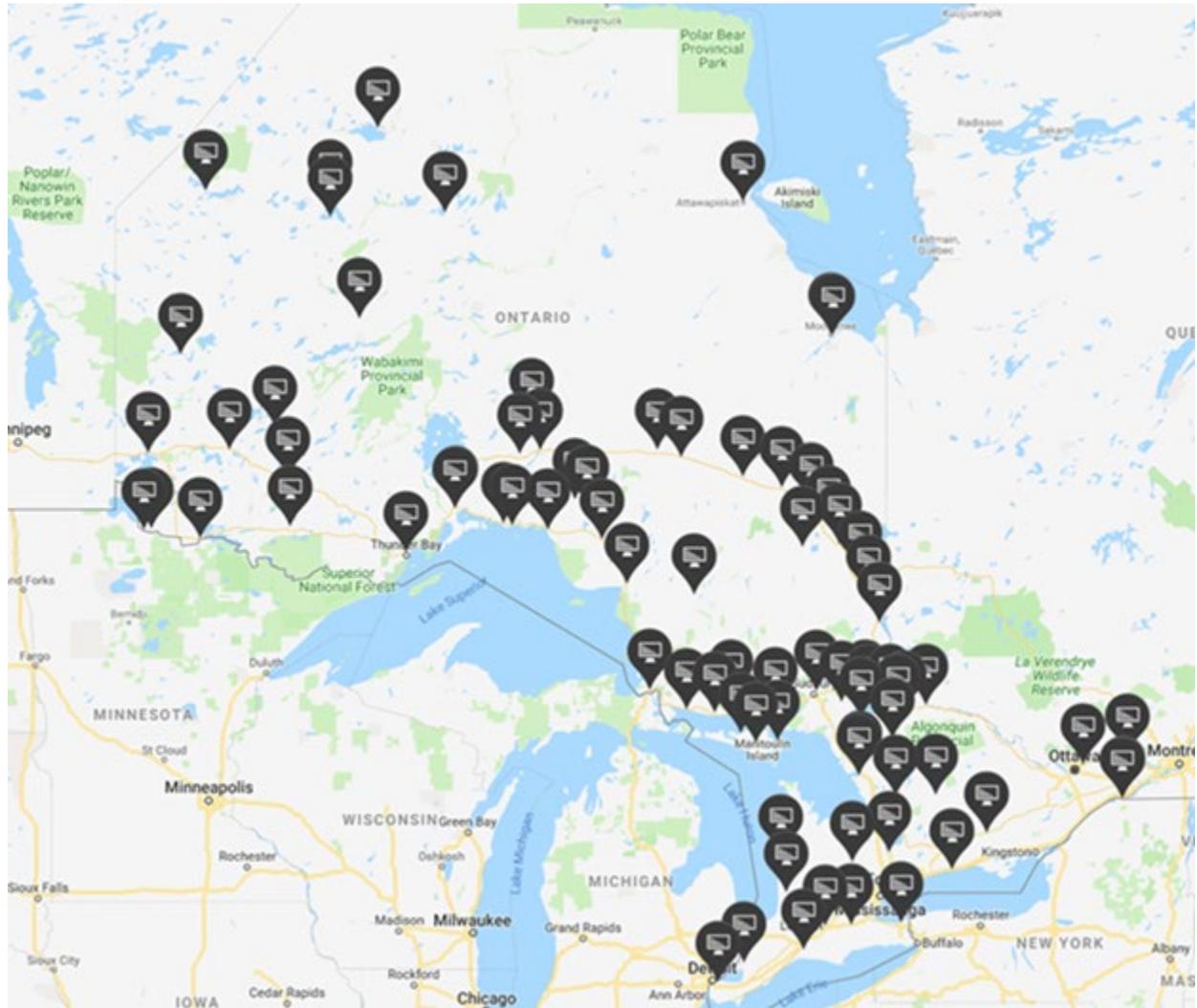
Thanks.

Harvey, Martin, Amy

ContactNorth.

ContactNorth is a non-profit corporation created in 1986 to facilitate access to formal education and training at the basic skills, secondary and postsecondary levels. Although the initial intent (reflected in its name) was to focus on northern Ontario, and to provide better access to educational services for underserved and underrepresented populations, the Ontario government subsequently asked Contact North to expand its services into the south. It is clear from Figure 1 that it now serves all of Ontario, mainly, but not exclusively, in rural and remote communities. It operates on an annual budget of \$10.5M, provided by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, a 300% increase from 2014.

Figure 1. Locations of the Contact North Access Centres



Source: Contact North <https://studyonline.ca/map>

Relevant observations for the purposes of this report are:

1. ContactNorth supports 116 access centres across the province. Each access centre is equipped with distance education technologies such as audioconferencing, videoconferencing, web conferencing, computer workstations and high-speed internet where available (in some locations, Contact North must use older and slower technologies to deliver internet-based services in light of bandwidth limitations). These access centres can provide in-person assistance for students seeking advice on online programming available in Ontario's public colleges and universities and help with registration for courses or programs. This same advice can be derived through Contact North's web site and its chat line. Access centres provide free use of computer stations and can be used as a site for the invigilation of written examinations.

More informally but importantly, access centres (officially "online learning centres") are also positioned to provide wrap-around services and support for students considering or taking

online courses. Contact North personnel at access centres typically live in the community they serve, understand the issues students face, and provide advice both practical (eg: how to apply) and the motivational (eg: turning up for online class discussion) advice and support for students.

Our discussions with northern colleges and universities suggest that while they are also positioned to reach out to remote communities, they would be pressed to replicate the range of services and the geographic footprint that Contact North provides. A single Contact North access centre can efficiently broker services for learners using educational offerings from school boards, colleges, universities and other educational providers.

2. ContactNorth supports *studyonline.ca*, a web-based gateway that provides access in both English and French to information about over 1000 programs and 18,000 courses available online and at a distance from Ontario's public colleges and universities, Indigenous Institutes, school boards, and literacy and skills training providers. This portal ultimately directs the reader to institutional websites. Other portals or gateways that provide similar and overlapping services regarding online education in Ontario include: eCampusOntario's Learn Online portal, the college system's OntarioLearns listing of shared college online courses and programs, ONCAT's "ontransfer.ca" course transfers directory, and of course the individual institutions' websites.
3. Contact North works with some, but not all of Ontario's postsecondary institutions. Contact North is used by some institutions, largely colleges, to market their programs and to help recruit students to programs that may be unsustainable because of small enrolments.
4. ContactNorth mounts a variety of other related activities that promote online learning or that share ideas or best practices such as an annual conference and opportunity to learn more about digital learning and how to do it better. Topics include: emerging pedagogies, course/program design, models and theories of technologically enabled learning, and the use of data analytics to improve student recruitment, engagement and success.
5. ContactNorth provides a large set of numbers documenting its activities. It has a well-developed strategic plan with targets. Existing performance metrics are largely inputs and descriptions of Contact North's activities, such as the number of visits to its web site or the number of course registrations. What is difficult to derive from these numbers is the real impact of Contact North's services. For example, while we know the number of students who use Contact North, we are not sure how many students from rural and remote communities enrol in similar programs without the assistance of Contact North (ie: what difference the interventions make). Similarly, we do not know if students working with ContactNorth enjoy any greater postsecondary success, such as a higher graduation rate, than a similar cohort who navigate these same programs on their own.

ContactNorth provides an impressive set of snapshots of students who have benefitted from their engagement and services. But, as the saying goes, a set of anecdotes is not data. It is difficult to assess the benefit of Contact North without the ability to compare to others from similar circumstances taking similar educational trajectories who do not use ContactNorth. The simple step of tagging ContactNorth's involvement with a student to an Ontario Education

Number would, in and of itself, open a world of student tracking and data analytics that is outcomes focussed.

Harvey P. Weingarten

President & CEO

[Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario](#)

I step down as President & CEO of HEQCO in September. New contact information:

Email: hpweingarten@gmail.com

Cell: +1 647 969 7581

PLEASE UPDATE YOUR ADDRESS BOOKS.

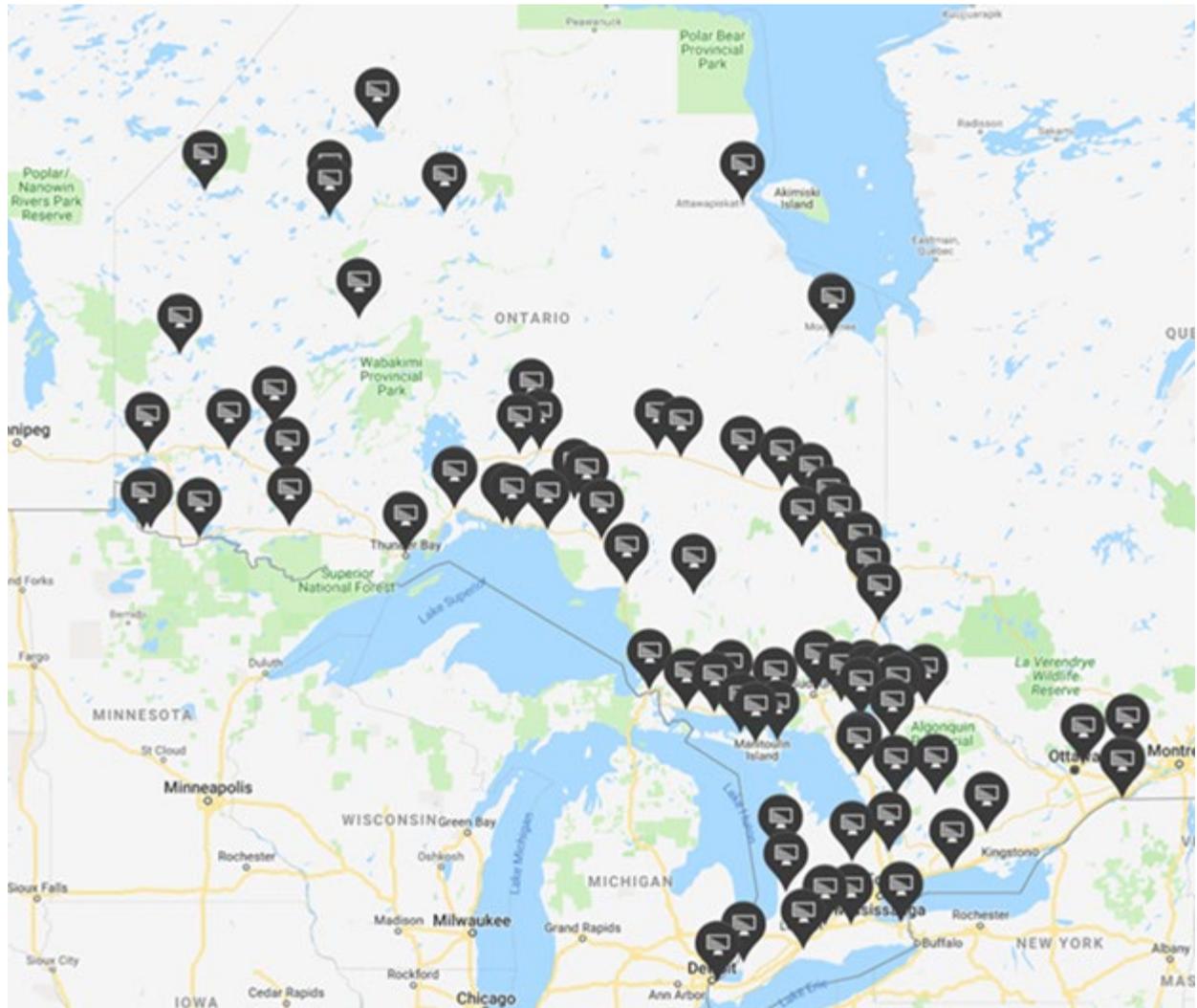
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Harvey, please identify in this paragraph that Contact North | Contact Nord provides its services in English and French.

Regarding your statement “a 300% funding increase from 2014”, see attached “Contact North | Contact Nord’s Funding Increase from MTCU Since 2013-2014”.

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Source: Contact North <https://studyonline.ca/map>

Relevant observations for the purposes of this report are:

1. ContactNorth supports 116 access centres across the province.

Each access centre is equipped with distance education technologies such as audioconferencing, videoconferencing, web conferencing, computer workstations and high-speed internet where available (in some locations, Contact North must use older and slower technologies to deliver internet-based services in light of bandwidth limitations).

These access centres can provide in-person assistance for students seeking advice on online programming available in Ontario's public colleges and universities and help with registration for courses or programs.

Harvey, please reflect in the highlighted sentence above that these access centres have two key roles in line with our focus as a “community-based organization”:

- 1) They are the local base for proactive outreach by our Online Learning Recruitment Officers (local staff) to Ontarians in 600 small, remote, rural, Indigenous and Francophone communities.

Online Learning Recruitment Officers spend between three and four days a week recruiting students in the communities within their territories.

They proactively engage with community and business organizations, Ontario Works offices, Employment Ontario offices and other local stakeholders to recruit students for the online programs and courses offered by Ontario’s 24 public colleges, 22 public universities, 9 Indigenous institutes, 76 district school boards, 200 literacy and basic skills providers, and 50 skills development training providers.

Contact North | Contact Nord generates 58,000 registrations for these education and training providers each year.

- 2) They provide the services noted in the paragraph and below to Ontarians.

We list the services available in five bullets for consistency:

- Information about available online programs and courses
- Assistance with the registration process for their program or course of choice
- Free use of computer workstations and high-speed Internet access to complete their online courses
- Free use of web conferencing and videoconferencing distance learning platforms (Contact North | Contact Nord also provides training to instructors and trainers on how to use the web conferencing and videoconferencing platforms to teach or train effectively) to connect to, and participate in, their live online programs and courses
- Supervision of written exams and tests

Contact North | Contact Nord responds to 700,000+ requests for services each year.

These services are available free of charge to Ontarians.

This same advice can be derived through Contact North's web site and its chat line.

Harvey, for clarity, our website does not provide the same advice a prospective student can get from a live staff person either in one of our access centres or the Student Information Hotline.

We use studyonline.ca / etudiezenligne.ca website (first launched in 2011) to drive prospective students to contact one of our access centres or the Student Information Hotline to get the high-touch, personal services. During one-on-one, F2F or phone sessions with prospective students, we help them explore options. We centre our customized support on the development of "study options" the prospective student can use to decide if, when and in which program(s) they wish to register. We record every interaction with students and prospective students in our CRM. We set up reminders to prompt students and prospective students on specific dates.

Similarly, our Student Information Hotline staff respond to inquiries from prospective students and promptly direct them to the closest access centre to ensure we can provide the local, high-touch services.

The key objective for studyonline.ca / etudiezenligne.ca and the Student Information Hotline is to drive prospective students to an access centre for face-to-face, local, high-touch service.

Our staff engages with each individual on the basis of their specific needs, aspirations and concerns.

Access centres provide free use of computer stations and can be used as a site for the invigilation of written examinations.

More informally but importantly, access centres (officially "online learning centres") are also positioned to provide wrap-around services and support for students considering or taking online courses. Contact North personnel at access centres typically live in the community they serve, understand the issues students face, and provide advice both practical (eg: how to apply) and the motivational (eg: turning up for online class discussion) advice and support for students.

Harvey, for clarity regarding the word “typically” in the paragraph above, all Contact North | Contact Nord staff at the access centres do live in the community and reach out to a cluster of communities within their assigned territory.

Our discussions with northern colleges and universities suggest that while they are also positioned to reach out to remote communities, they would be pressed to replicate the range of services and the geographic footprint that Contact North provides. A single Contact North access centre can efficiently broker services for learners using educational offerings from school boards, colleges, universities and other educational providers.

2. ContactNorth supports *studyonline.ca*, a web-based gateway that provides access in both English and French to information about over 1000 programs and 18,000 courses available online and at a distance from Ontario’s public colleges and universities, Indigenous Institutes, school boards, and literacy and skills training providers.

Harvey, please note in this paragraph that *studyonline.ca* (created in 2011) is also available in French at *etudiezenligne.ca*.

This portal ultimately directs the reader to institutional websites.

Harvey, the primary objective of *studyonline.ca/etudiezenligne.ca* is to direct prospective students to contact one of our local online learning centres or the Student Information Hotline so we can provide the face-to-face, local, high-touch, wraparound services to these prospective students.

Right on the landing page of *studyonline.ca / etudiezenligne.ca*, we hit visitors with strong and direct messages to contact us:

- **HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?**
- **CALL 1-877-999-9149**
- **FIND ONE OF THE 116 ONLINE LEARNING CENTRES**
- **CHAT WITH US**

Other portals or gateways that provide similar and overlapping services regarding online education in Ontario include: eCampusOntario's Learn Online portal, the college system's OntarioLearns listing of shared college online courses and programs, ONCAT's "ontransfer.ca" course transfers directory, and of course the individual institutions' websites.

3. Contact North works with some, but not all of Ontario's postsecondary institutions.

Harvey, Contact North | Contact Nord works with all of Ontario's post-secondary institutions to recruit students for their online programs and courses.

See [CONTACT NORTH | CONTACT NORD SNAPSHOT REPORTS ON SUPPORT TO ONTARIO'S PUBLIC COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES](#) for snapshots of how we support each Ontario college and university (these are shared with the colleges and universities).

See [SAMPLE OF 136 TARGETED RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGNS EXECUTED BY CONTACT NORTH | CONTACT NORD FOR 37 ONTARIO PUBLIC COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES](#) for list of province-wide and region-wide Targeted Recruitment Campaigns executed for Ontario's colleges and universities to recruit students from communities across Ontario for identified online programs and courses.

Contact North is used by some institutions, largely colleges, to market their programs and to help recruit students to programs that may be unsustainable because of small enrolments.

Harvey, Contact North | Contact Nord's core focus is recruiting students and providing face-to-face, local high-touch support services to Ontarians in 600 small, rural, remote, Indigenous and Francophone communities (meeting the overall need for local access).

Recruiting for unsustainable programs is a small component of our recruitment focus.

Our work is driven by student and potential student inquiries and demand.

Our primary recruitment target is students in small, rural, remote, Indigenous and Francophone communities across Ontario.

For example, attached is a snapshot from Northern College illustrating how we recruited students for a sampling of their online programs in communities *across* Ontario.

4. ContactNorth mounts a variety of other related activities that promote online learning or that share ideas or best practices such as an annual conference and opportunity to learn more about digital learning and how to do it better. Topics include: emerging pedagogies, course/program design, models and theories of technologically enabled learning, and the use of data analytics to improve student recruitment, engagement and success.

Harvey, regarding the reference to the annual conference, it is important to note this is a public-private partnership between Contact North | Contact Nord and [MediaEdge Communications Inc.](#), a private sector conference organizer. The conference is owned, organized and underwritten by MediaEdge, which pays a fee to Contact North | Contact Nord to provide the programming component, be the public face of the conference and act as Chair of the event.

5. ContactNorth provides a large set of numbers documenting its activities. It has a well-developed strategic plan with targets. Existing performance metrics are largely inputs and descriptions of Contact North's activities, such as the number of visits to its web site or the number of course registrations. What is difficult to derive from these numbers is the real impact of Contact North's services. For example, while we know the number of students who use Contact North, we are not sure how many students from rural and remote communities enrol in similar programs without the assistance of Contact North (ie: what difference the interventions make). Similarly, we do not know if students working with ContactNorth enjoy any greater postsecondary success, such as a higher

graduation rate, than a similar cohort who navigate these same programs on their own.

Harvey, four comments on the above paragraph:

We are implementing a four-prong research agenda and process to assess the impact of our services and very much appreciate any guidance HEQCO can give us:

- 1. We are growing the 100 Student Snapshots posted at <https://studyonline.ca/snapshots>. These snapshots provide the direct voice of students and graduates from around the province regarding the impact on their job prospects, career advancement, skills development and personal satisfaction.**
- 2. We negotiated a set of metrics in May 2019 with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, including outcomes such as employment rates, reflect in our 2019-2020 Transfer Payment Agreement. We jointly committed to closely review the results and also explore other outcomes metrics we may want to add to the 2020-2021 Transfer Payment Agreement.**

We are working with Forum Research to identify the terms of reference of an omnibus survey in April 2020 to report on these metrics. We are making sure the review and analysis is done by an independent third-party.

- 3. In April 2019, we completed a third party survey by Forum Research of the use of our services with a group of students, focusing on whether or not the students achieved their goals, whether or not Contact North | Contact Nord's services supported them, which of our services they used and their satisfaction with the services. We previously provided the reports to you (see <https://contactnorth.ca/about-us>). This sets a baseline for next year's survey where we will survey students specifically on the outcomes identified in the Transfer Payment Agreement in terms of the impact on their job prospects, career advancement, skills improvement.**
- 4. We completed a survey of Indigenous online learners including a series of focus group session in August 2019. The results will be available later this month.**

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difficult to assess the benefit of Contact North without the ability to compare to others from similar circumstances taking similar educational trajectories who do not use ContactNorth. The simple step of tagging ContactNorth's involvement with a student to an Ontario Education Number would, in and of itself, open a world of student tracking and data analytics that is outcomes focussed.

CONTACT NORTH / CONTACT NORD'S BASE FUNDING FROM MTCU INCREASED 6% AND OVERALL FUNDING FROM MTCU INCREASED 4% SINCE 2013-2014

Breakdown of Contact North | Contact Nord's funding from 2013-2014 to 2019-2020*

	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	% since 2013-2014
MTCU Base Funding	9,224,362.00	9,224,362.00	9,224,362.00	9,224,362.00	9,751,469.00	9,751,469.00	9,751,469.00	6%
e-Channel	585,000.00	461,500.00	461,500.00	461,500.00	586,158.00	586,158.00	586,158.00	0%
MTCU Special Projects	100,000.00	369,762.92	214,000.00	200,000.00	231,000.00	-	-	-100%
Total Funding	9,909,362.00	10,055,624.92	9,899,862.00	9,885,862.00	10,568,627.00	10,337,627.00	10,337,627.00	4%

Year over Year % change

1% 1% -2% 0% 7% -2% 0%

*fiscal year is from April 1 to March 31

Contact North | Contact Nord's revenue is comprised of government funding from MTCU and revenues from other sources, such as fee-for-service revenue.

MTCU Funding is primarily Base Funding, through our primary TPA agreement with MTCU, and e-Channel which is part of the Literacy and Basic Skills envelop.

Over the years, we have conducted special projects funded by MTCU (e.g. French-language Online Learning,).

Summary:

1. Base funding has increased 6% since 2013-14
2. e-Channel funding fluctuated but is back to the 2013-14 level with 0% change
3. Contact North | Contact Nord has not had special projects funding since 2017-18
4. Overall funding has increased 4% since 2013-14

COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY REGISTRATIONS GENERATED FOR NORTHERN COLLEGE – BREAKDOWN BY COMMUNITY

College/University Registrations per Online Learning Centre	Count of Registration
Northern College	4,904
Astorville	10
Atikokan	10
Attawapiskat First Nation	104
Bracebridge	165
Brantford	32
Chapleau	4
Clinton	34
Cobourg	24
Cochrane	153
Cornwall	10
Dryden	9
Elliot Lake	33
Englehart	44
Espanola	26
Georgina	88
Geraldton	8
Gore Bay	8
Haileybury	490
Haliburton	25
Hawkesbury	11
Hearst	8
Iroquois Falls	10
Kapuskasing	29
Kenora	31
Kincardine	15
Kirkland Lake	450
Madoc	34

Massey	1
Mattawa	13
MChigeeng	4
Mississauga First Nation	12
Moose Cree First Nation	6
Moosonee	120
North Bay	118
Orleans	103
Parry Sound	91
Sault Ste. Marie	25
Shelburne	83
Sioux Lookout	5
Smooth Rock Falls	3
South Porcupine	2,000
South River	11
St. Catharines	144
St. Thomas	60
Sturgeon Falls	5
Sudbury	22
Thunder Bay	31
Wallaceburg	106
Wawa	1
White River	7
Wkwemikong First Nation	12
Windsor	23
Woodstock	33