



-- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY --

## Remarks by President Rob MacIsaac

### 2011 President's Breakfast

Wednesday, Aug. 31

Thank you Sam.

And good morning everyone.

At our breakfast two years ago, I set out a challenge. A challenge that was pretty bold. Maybe it even raised a few eyebrows. I challenged us to improve Mohawk's KPI scores in a big way.

To settle for nothing less than first.

To be the best college in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area.

There was no question that we had to do it.

We needed to turn those scores around. To turn our KPI results into a point of pride.

After all, those scores are a reflection on our college. Even with all of their warts, KPIs are a reflection of the work we do.

And, a reflection on our graduates.

Now, I was confident we'd get to number one. But, I less certain on the timelines.

And I was in for a pleasant surprise.

It took us just two years to reach our goal.

Only two years to finish first overall among all colleges in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area. Ahead of George Brown, Humber, Sheridan, Seneca and Centennial.

First in overall student satisfaction.

First in graduate satisfaction.

First in quality of facilities.

First in quality of services.

First in quality of programs

And first in quality of learning.

Now you don't finish first through dumb luck or good fortune.

So what happened?

There is no doubt that the renewal of our campuses has had a lot to do with our results.

The Fennell Campus is our largest and oldest campus. It's also been our weakest link.

So we've built and opened the new Mohawk Learning Exchange. The new Harold Cummings Library and Collaboratory. We've renovated and expanded classrooms, hallways and the cafeteria. We've added new common areas that are always full of students at all hours of the day and night. We've created a campus where students stick around.

Fennell Renewal follows the 27 million dollar transformation of our skilled trades campus in Stoney Creek. A transformation that included the new Gerald Marshall Centre for Transportation. Mohawk is the largest trainer of apprentices in Ontario and we have the best facilities hands down.

There's no question that the investments we've made in our facilities have paid big dividends on our KPI scores. Among Ontario's 24 public colleges, we posted the largest percentage point increases over last year.

But the renewal of our facilities doesn't tell the whole story for why we're number one.

We're first because of you.

Mohawk's outstanding KPI scores represent the sum total of your collective efforts. Efforts to consistently go above and beyond for our students. A day to day commitment and a constant striving to make Mohawk an even better place.

Mohawk finished first in the GTHA because you put students first in everything that you do.

You built our scores through your day-to-day interactions. Your work in the classroom, and on the front lines in our service areas and behind the scenes.

We owe our KPI scores to people like Sue Prestedge who got students and colleagues involved in a big way with International Women's Day at Mohawk.

Marco Felvus did the same with Day of Pink celebrations.

Mohawk is number one thanks to people like Rita LaChance, the host of “Wednesdays with Rita” at the Mohawk Laurier Centre in downtown Brantford. Once a week, Rita brings in colleagues from across the college to meet with students and answer their questions about everything from financial aid to resume writing.

And then there’s Duane Bender and Christy Taberner who dreamed up the Apps for Health competition so teams of students could imagine innovative technology solutions to real health challenges.

There’s Julie Ryan who turned her Insurance students into a high powered and top selling sales force for the Good Shepherd Centre and the Raising the Roof toque campaign.

Darcy Hepner took his Music students on a concert tour of lower city elementary schools with his innovative Jazz in the Hubs project.

We owe our KPI scores to people like Laura Hyk, who helped an international student finish her studies and graduate from Mohawk. When the student’s family ran into financial hardship back in Africa, Laura found the student free accommodation and a part-time job so she could complete her final semester.

Brad MacDonald put a crew of 100 students to work in turning a former church into a community centre in Hamilton’s east end.

Christine DiCarlo had her Financial Services students run a record setting blood donor drive for Canadian Blood Services.

And Tracey Kadish spent a Saturday helping a cast of 100 Broadcasting students create three lip dub videos in 24 hours and set a new record among colleges and universities.

For the 24<sup>th</sup> straight year, Peter Olynyk, Paul Cronkwright and the Building and Construction Sciences Team put the engineering skills of high school and college students to work with popsicle sticks and glue.

And then there were the people like Charles Honey who mentored Keith Holloway, a 54 year old Second Career student who won gold at the Ontario Technological Skills Competition and later graduated to a new job and a second chance.

There was Coach of the Year Alex Paris who led our Rugby team to a perfect regular season and taught our student athletes invaluable life-long lessons about leadership, teamwork and perseverance.

Cathy Ozols and Jef Petrossi who coached our Advertising students to a gold, silver and bronze medal sweep at the Canadian Marketing Association Awards.

Our team in Accessible Learning Services who helped students overcome barriers and realize their potential. One of those students was Anthony Ramuscak. Anthony was inspired to leave his wheelchair. Walk across the stage during his Spring Convocation Ceremony. And bring everyone in the McIntyre Theatre to their feet for a standing ovation.

And then there was our Student Services team. Many of you spent the winter and spring on the move. Living out of boxes and makeshift offices as we turned the old library at our Fennell Campus into a new centre for student services. You never once allowed any of those inconveniences and disruptions to become interruptions for our students.

These are the special moments and the transformative experiences that build KPI scores. That unlock the promise and potential of our students. That lead to future ready graduates. And make Mohawk the best college in Greater Toronto and Hamilton.

I'm proud of what you've achieved. And I'm going to brag about you everywhere I go and with everyone I meet in the year ahead.

Now, I think we're up for a new challenge. To recalibrate and aim higher. To redefine what students should expect from a great community college.

It goes without saying that we want to stay number one in the GTHA. That we should hold our gains and stay in the lead.

But on top of that, I think we should now aspire to become the best of Ontario's eight large colleges.

Better than Fanshawe. Better than Algonquin.

I'm confident that we'll prove equal to the task at hand. And here's why.

Our new one-stop centre for student services should give a real boost to our KPI scores. We've taken services previously offered in 17 different places and put it all under one roof in a space we're calling the Square. It's now easier for students to get all the help and support they need in one central location. The Square will also provide back office support to student services at all our campuses.

And starting this fall, our graphics programs will be offered at our Fennell Campus. The move from Brantford has triggered a marked increase in applications and confirmations.

With the relocation, we've created a new cluster of creative programs and given students a pretty cool learning environment to call their own.

Fennell Renewal will continue with two more key projects on the immediate horizon. Together with public and private sector partners, we're looking to add a new multi-modal transportation hub. The hub will make it even easier for the community to connect with our college.

Our second project is a much needed and long overdue fitness and recreation centre. Our new centre will accomplish three important goals.

It will better support our current and future academic programs. Opening a new rec centre will allow us to close our Elgin Street Campus in Brantford and relocate all of the remaining students and programs. This is a move that the majority of students are eager to make.

The new centre will better serve our varsity teams and recreational sports.

And the centre will better meet the health, wellness and fitness needs of all our students and staff.

Renewal is not limited to our facilities. We're also renewing our commitment to remain relevant and responsive to employers and the communities we serve.

We're developing an academic plan for Mohawk. The plan is our roadmap and blueprint for the next 10 years. The plan will help us be more strategic about our program mix and the skills our students will need today and into the future. And how best to build and strengthen our reputation as Ontario's best college for health and technology.

I want to thank to everyone who's already taken part in one of the many consultation sessions. Your input is invaluable in pulling together a plan that plays to our strengths as a college.

More academic plan consultation sessions will take place in the weeks ahead. So I encourage you to sign up and share your ideas.

We're also looking at how to better serve the growing number of students who juggle work, family and school. The students for whom the traditional Monday to Friday, 9 to 5 model of postsecondary education is not practical or doable.

We need to offer our students more choice and greater flexibility. We need to do a better job of meeting the different learning preferences, styles and speeds of our students.

We have an incredible opportunity to be leaders in blended learning. To offer students the absolute best blend of class and online experience.

Now, these are early days for blended learning at Mohawk. We're still finding our way and determining the right balance and mix of face-to-face and web-based learning.

Blended learning requires a leap of faith. It challenges us to teach in ways that are different from how we ourselves were taught in an age before the Internet.

To Mohawk's early adopters...to the faculty who already use technology and social media ... thank you for leading the way and showing us what's possible.

You know, innovation is in our DNA. Mohawk was the first college in Canada to offer co-operative education. We were among the first to collaborate with universities. With blended learning, we can once again lead the charge and get ahead of the curve.

Blended learning, with all its great attributes, can set us apart from all other colleges ... and universities.

And we can set the standard for meeting the 21<sup>st</sup> century needs of students and the expectations of employers.

And, just before I finish my remarks, I would like to tell you about a very exciting development in our pursuit of Applied Research.

We have just learned Mohawk will receive two new applied research grants totally nearly one million dollars.

The first grant of \$750,000 from FedDev Ontario will support students working with industry partners on mobile technology, eHealth, energy and advance materials projects

The second grant of \$220,000 grant from the Ontario Centres of Excellence Experiential Learning Program will be used by idea WORKS to support two start-up projects in the fall.

The first involves two students who are working on a mobile application for reducing medication-related incidents through prescription encoding technology, and the second will support a co-op student developing mobile technology for massage therapists, physiotherapists and chiropractors to chart and document clinical notes electronically. Congratulations to all the staff at iDeaWORKS . Your innovation, enthusiasm and determination is building a great new path for our College.

In closing, on a personal note, I want to thank you for your continuing support of me. There have been many faculty and staff who have expressed words of encouragement and you should know it is much appreciated. Others have been thoughtful enough to give me their advice when they think I am on the wrong track. I appreciate that feedback too.

We might not always agree but I am committed to listening.

Every month, I have breakfast with a small group of support staff and faculty. These are informal meetings. No agendas. No scripts or speeches.

Just candid conversations with everyone joining in. Yes, we talk about issues, concerns and the occasional complaint.

But the majority of our time is spent on solutions and ideas. The sharing of best practices. And a common focus on making Mohawk an even better place to learn and work.

I've left every one of those meetings with at least one new insight. One idea for follow up. And always a reaffirmation that we have a great team at Mohawk. A team that puts students first.

Yet like typical Canadians, we don't fully appreciate just how good we really are. How far we've come and how fast we've turned things around. The impact that we have on the lives of our students. And the contributions we make to the strength, the prosperity and the wellbeing of our community.

Mohawk has always mattered. We've long made a difference. Walk through any organization in the Greater Hamilton Area and you will find Mohawk alumni in key positions at every level.

As labour shortages grow...as demand for a highly skilled workforce intensifies...as education continues to hold the key to personal prosperity...Mohawk will matter more than ever before. Our graduates and our college will be counted on more than ever before. The decade ahead belongs to us. And we will be ready for whatever the future brings.

During the past year, you proved time and again that we have what it takes to build Mohawk's reputation for quality and excellence.

We became the best college in the GTHA because you did your personal best for our students and for each other.

Bricks and mortar played a part. But it was, and it will remain, your passion, your commitment and dedication that puts Mohawk over the top. The best college in Ontario. And the best college for our students.

So thank you for an outstanding year. And, here's to another great year of accomplishments.

Thank you.

