

# Government Policy, Credit Transfer Systems and Applications

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*Conference on Credit Transfer Practices in  
Higher Education: Partnership for Success  
Hong Kong Polytechnic University*

**Yvette Munro** | Executive Director, ONCAT

**oncat**  
Ontario Council on  
Articulation and Transfer



**caton**  
Conseil pour l'articulation  
et le transfert – Ontario

# Ontario's Higher Education System

- **Universities:** 25 (first established in 1827 and as recently as 2017). Independent Acts of Legislature
- **Colleges:** 26 (1967). Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act
- **Indigenous institutes:** 9. Indigenous Institutes Act, 2017.
- Private career colleges and universities
  
- **Differentiated system; not designed for transfer**

# System Shifts

**1980s:** No system-wide approach to transfer. A few universities grant credit for college learning. Labour market demand for degree graduates increases.

**1990s:** Colleges, frustrated by lack of opportunities for their graduates, put additional pressure on Government and advocate for new degree-granting institute.

**1996:** Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges & Universities creates the **College University Consortium Council** in partnership with the Council of Ontario Universities and Colleges Ontario.

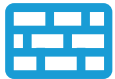
# Transfer Reality

## Reasons

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Switching programs



Not the right fit



Personal circumstances



Additional studies

## Benefits

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Time\*



Money\*



Multiple credentials



Learning styles

# Transfer Figures

60,000 +

Transfer students enrolled in Ontario HE  
(publicly assisted)

25%

of college applicants "aspire to a  
degree"

29%

of university applicants had previous HE  
study

Academica Applicant Data, 2019

# System Evolution

## 2011 Policy Statement for Ontario's Credit Transfer System

Ontario will have a comprehensive, transparent and consistently applied credit transfer system that will improve student pathways and mobility, support student success and make Ontario a postsecondary education destination of choice. The credit transfer system will assist qualified students to move between postsecondary institutions or programs without repeating prior, relevant learning (Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges & Universities).

# Government Commitments

**\$73.7M** towards credit transfer improvements over 5 years:

1. Creation of ONCAT
2. Creation of provincial web-portal for transfer info
3. Funding to institutions through Credit Transfer Institutional Grant

\$73.7M CDN = \$439M HKD, \$56.7M USD

# ONCAT Mandate

Established in 2011, the Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer (ONCAT) was created to **enhance academic pathways and reduce barriers for students looking to transfer among Ontario's public colleges, universities, and Indigenous Institutes.**

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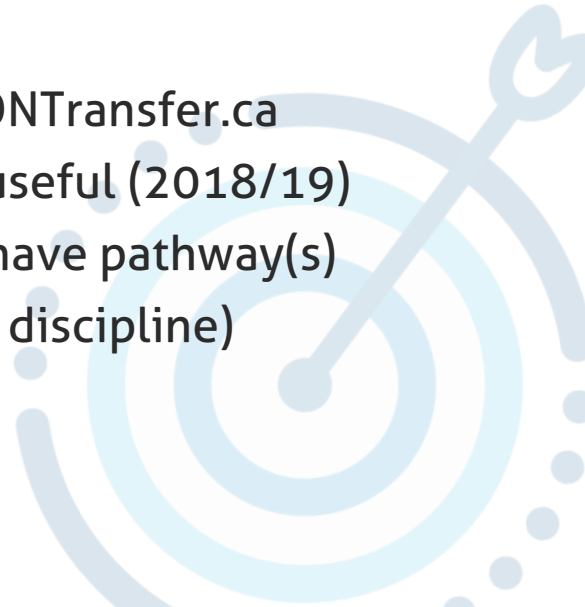
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# Key Accomplishments

- 277,000+ credit equivalencies on ONTransfer.ca
- 100% of colleges and universities have posted transfer information on ONTransfer.ca
- 88% of students report satisfaction with credit transfer experience (up from 79% in 2015/16)
- 55% of transfer students have visited ONTransfer.ca and 96% of them find the information useful (2018/19)
- 67–84% of college diploma graduates have pathway(s) into degree studies (high affinity/broad discipline)



# Current state of Ontario HE

- Less differentiated system; multiple credential type
- Labour and student demand for 4 year degree still high
- Interest in career-oriented programs growing
- Majority of transfer pathways are bilateral, college to university. Despite transfer in multiple directions.
- College to university transfer policy focus has been less about access and equity; more about system efficiency and cost savings.
- Limited capacity for monitoring system performance.

# Institutional Autonomy

**Universities:** Collegial governance, often bi-cameral governance and high institutional autonomy

**Colleges:** Independent Board of Governors, moderate autonomy

**Program Quality Assurance:** Multiple quality assurance bodies; Ministry approval (for tuition funding and financial aid eligibility)

# Role of Government

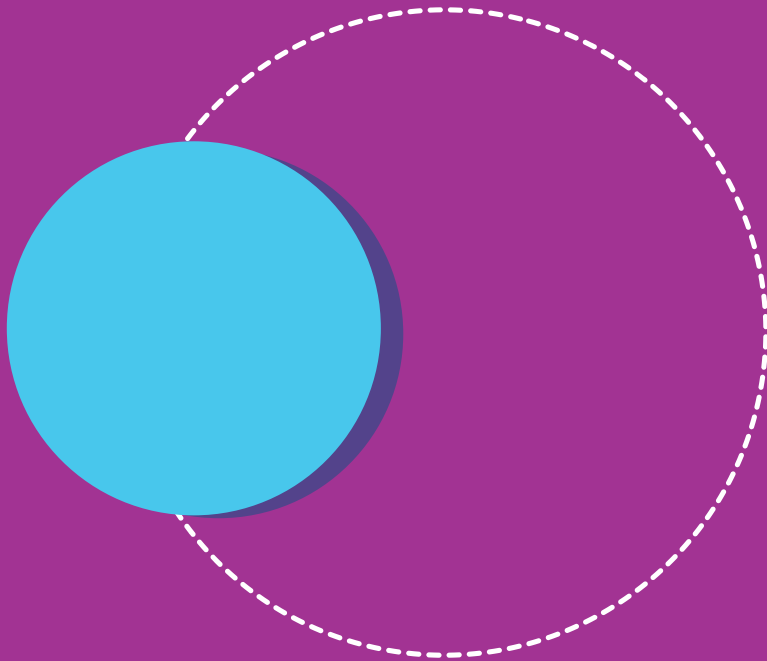
- **ONCAT:** Set Vision and Objectives, Transfer Payment Agreement
- **System Policy Levers:** Strategic Mandate Agreements, performance-based funding, special enveloped funding, policy statements, etc.
- **System Policy Actions:** Institutional reporting mechanisms, data analysis with unique student identifier, communications with institutional Executive Heads

# ONCAT/Government Collaboration



Underway:

- Developing Credit Transfer System Strategic Plan
- Coordination of strategic funding and system accountability efforts
- *Better for People, Smarter for Business Act 2020*



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