



## **The Cowan Foundation Announces \$5M Investment in Conestoga College to Create Canada’s First Integrated Strategy to Support the Training and Education of Personal Support Workers (PSWs)**

**June 16, 2020, KITCHENER, ON.** — The Cowan Foundation is today announcing a \$5M major investment in Conestoga College and its partnership in a broader \$10M initiative to address the urgent need for additional health care professionals including personal support workers (PSWs) at the frontline of care. This innovative and unique collaboration will create the most technologically advanced PSW and supportive care program of its kind in Canada and lead a change movement in the workforce for seniors care.

Across Canada, the shortage of PSWs has caused interruptions in seniors' care and services, and added to the long wait times for care services in home and community settings, creating undue burden and stress for seniors, their families and care partners. With one-quarter of Canadians projected to be seniors by 2036, this shortage in PSWs is a national priority.

The Cowan Foundation's partnership with Conestoga will build upon the college's existing Cowan Health Science Centre to create an epicentre for remote simulation learning, with a unique emphasis on innovative and tailored delivery approaches to support PSW learning, eliminating many of the financial, travel and time barriers that exist today for PSW students.

Using a unique 'hub and spoke' model of delivery, the Cowan Health Sciences Centre on Conestoga's main campus will enable program delivery in communities across southwestern Ontario. It will use state-of-the-art technology such as virtual reality and gaming theory combined with impactful online learning to support skills development. It will also leverage Conestoga's first-of-its-kind living classroom model to provide PSW students with hands-on learning experience within an expanded number of health care organizations including nursing homes, home care, retirement homes, hospitals and community organizations. In addition, it will enhance Conestoga's applied research capacity to deliver evidence-based care and solutions for long term care.

Because of the expanded program, Conestoga expects to increase PSW student enrollment from 200 students/year to an estimated total of 2,000 students over five years.

“Like so many Canadians with family in assisted living or long-term care, I have always been appreciative of the efforts of PSWs as they work to care for our elderly. Their value in the health care delivery system has been amplified during this COVID-19 crisis, and I am deeply grateful to them for all they do,” says Chairman of The **Cowan Foundation**, Maureen Cowan. “We hope that this \$5M gift, made in honour of my grandmother, Frances Cowan, will elevate the importance of the work of current PSWs and create an opportunity for diverse methods of training and delivery with state-of-the-art technology, not only within the Cowan Health Science Centre but in special on-site labs in hospitals and retirement homes in smaller communities. We want to remove barriers to opportunity and provide more individuals across the Province of Ontario with a pathway to learning and meaningful employment, so we are well prepared to deliver the highest quality care and to meet the future needs of seniors in their homes and diverse care environments.”



"The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the urgent need for innovation and research in developing and maintaining a qualified workforce for seniors care. The Cowan Foundation's generous investment and vision for the future of PSW education will position us as an emerging leader in applied research and innovation focused on education and workforce development to improve the quality of life of Canadian seniors," says Conestoga President John Tibbits.

"I am so thankful to The Cowan Foundation for their generous \$5M investment in Conestoga College. This is an incredible investment for the college and the greater community they represent," says Ross Romano, Minister of Colleges and Universities. "I am excited to see Conestoga adopt a new, innovative 'hub and spoke' delivery model that will capitalize on new technology to expand training for PSWs across Southwestern Ontario. I commend both The Cowan Foundation and Conestoga College for their efforts in bettering the education of our future frontline health care workers."

### **About The Cowan Foundation**

The Cowan Foundation was started in 1995 in honour of Frank Cowan, our founder. The Foundation is sustained by the ongoing success of the Princeton Holdings group of companies including Cowan Insurance Group (and its subsidiary Cowan Financial Solutions), Cowan Asset Management and Fountain Street Finance. Together they provide insurance and risk management solutions to clients. The goal of The Cowan Foundation is to make a positive difference in the lives of Canadians and the broader well-being of our communities. For more information, please visit [www.cowanfoundation.ca](http://www.cowanfoundation.ca).

### **About Cowan Insurance Group**

A preeminent Canadian owned and operated insurance brokerage and consulting operation, Cowan Insurance Group represents leading national and international insurance companies. Cowan specializes in property, casualty and credit insurance, providing the best value to businesses, organizations and individuals for their insurance and risk management needs. The organization also advises and creates retirement, group benefits, disability management and international benefits programs for employee groups and offers wealth management, financial planning and succession planning services to individuals through its wholly owned financial services subsidiary. Cowan Insurance Group and its subsidiary Cowan Financial Solutions has over 450 employees and currently operates in 12 locations. For more information, visit [www.cowangroup.ca](http://www.cowangroup.ca).

### **About Conestoga College**

Conestoga is a leader in polytechnic education, delivering a full range of career-focused education, training and applied research programs through a network of campuses and training centres in Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge, Guelph, Stratford, Ingersoll and Brantford.

Host to Canada's only CIHR/Schlegel Industrial Research Chair for Colleges in Seniors Care, the college is a recognized leader in innovative education, training and applied research for the development of highly qualified personnel to improve the quality of life and care for Canada's growing population of seniors. For more information visit <https://www.conestogac.on.ca/>



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