



**Canadian Corrugated and  
Containerboard Association**  
**Association canadienne du  
cartonnage ondulé et du  
carton-caisse**



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**CCCA**

### **Valuable College/Industry Affiliation**

Conestoga College offers a two-year co-op diploma program supporting students interested in the packaging industry. The Packaging Engineering Technician Co-op program will bring in highly trained fulltime and contract opportunities to employers.

The Packaging Engineering Technician program provides training in the structural design of packaging materials. Students design and evaluate packaging utilizing different materials: metal, glass, plastic, paper, and corrugated. Students receive hands-on experience in a number of areas, including principles of packaging, 3D ArtiosCAD, and packaging testing. Concepts and issues in durability, material selection, cost, and product safety are all covered in detail.

Graduates of this program are prepared for employment in the manufacturing and packaging material supply industries. Since its development in 2011, the program has seen a high graduation employment rate. The program is especially valuable as it is more hands-on and practical. Students start their hands-on experience in a co-op work term after the first 8 months of study. This experience is invaluable to the students' future success in the industry.

Throughout the pandemic, the program was delivered as a hybrid model. It is now 100% in-person with hands-on and classroom instruction. In the second semester, students benefit from an in-person packaging testing class—providing a fully comprehensive packaging experience.

During the hybrid in-person and online semester last year, students were exposed to more online modelling programs. With more companies adopting a hybrid work schedule and centralized working platforms, the co-op students have a strong grasp of the emerging technologies.

“This Conestoga co-op program is very industry specific,” said Ken Buitenhuis, the Employer Relations Consultant for ten co-op programs at Conestoga. Focusing on meeting the demand for mid-level packing specialists and new sustainability commitments, the program is the only technical packaging program in Canada.

Buitenhuis acts as the bridge between employers and students. Routine check-ins with both student and employer ensure a smooth transition into the working trades. With pride, Buitenhuis speaks on the students’ behalf and shares their broad capabilities with his industry partners.

With the help of the CCCA, Buitnehuis is up to date with employer needs. As a giant in the packaging industry, the CCCA acts as a consultant—providing industry insights that benefit students and employers in the co-op program.

For employers, there is a great benefit in a partnership with this program. The students provide outstanding results, while the employer has verified pre-interview information, gets students at value price, and may be eligible to receive up to \$3000 per student per work term by qualifying for the Ontario Co-operative Education Tax Credit.

Students have many opportunities to get hands-on experience with companies throughout Ontario—eventually leading to part-time or full-time positions. Buitenhuis asks individuals interested in the trades to “come with flexibility and an open mind.”

For more information, please email Ken Buitenhuis <[kbuitenhuis@conestogac.on.ca](mailto:kbuitenhuis@conestogac.on.ca)>.

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