

Premier Doug Ford and health minister Christine Elliot absent from media conference to get tested for COVID-19

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Colleges and universities minister Ross Romano was on his own at a media conference at Queen's Park on June 2, 2020 to announce a framework to reopen post-secondary institutions this summer for students unable to complete their course requirements online, as Premier Doug Ford and health minister Christine Elliott were absent to get tested for COVID-19. (Screenshot / CPAC)

Colleges and universities minister Ross Romano was flying solo at a media conference at Queen's Park on Wednesday (June 10), as Premier Doug Ford and health minister Christine Elliott were absent so they could get tested for COVID-19.

"I actually just learned about this a matter of minutes before coming up to the podium," Romano told reporters.

Update

Premier Doug Ford, health minister Christine Elliott, and education minister Stephen Lecce have all tested negative for COVID-19.

On Tuesday (June 9), education minister Stephen Lecce was tested after he learned he had come into contact with someone who had tested positive for the virus.

Both Ford and Elliott were with Lecce at a Tuesday announcement about the reopening of child care centres in Ontario.

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Ford and Elliott did not attend Wednesday's media conference "out of an abundance of caution", according to a statement from the Premier's office. As well as getting tested, Ford and Elliott will be monitoring themselves for symptoms, the statement says.

As for Romano, he announced a framework for the opening of Ontario's post-secondary sector for students who were unable to complete all their course requirements online.

Romano said these 'academically stranded' students would have been able to graduate, had they been able to complete some final lab or practicum requirements in person on campus.

The students include those studying to become nurses, personal support workers, engineers, and skilled tradespeople.

"These individuals could be working today, helping in Ontario's economic recovery, but for the fact they must complete a mere matter of hours, in some cases, of in-person learning," Romano said.

Romano announced a framework to allow these students, who number in the thousands, to return to their post-secondary institutions as soon as Thursday, July 2nd, with the program concluding by September.

Publicly funded colleges and universities, Indigenous Institutes, private career colleges, and other post-secondary education institutions may participate in this voluntary reopening.

Institutions that choose to participate will be responsible for establishing their own plans for this limited reopening in accordance with public health advice and any ministry guidance, including screening and essential visitors only.

In September, all students will be able to attend post-secondary education through virtual learning, in-class instruction, or hybrid formats.

This story has been updated to include the results of the COVID-19 tests of Premier Doug Ford, health minister Christine Elliott, and education minister Stephen Lecce.