



May 8th, 2024

The Hon. Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
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The Hon. Jill Dunlop
Minister of Colleges and Universities
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Dear Premier, Dear Minister:

We write with urgency to say: the suspension of 29 programs at Fleming College is wholly unacceptable and must be paused immediately.

We are deeply concerned that these suspensions will cause irreparable harm to students' futures and to the ability of employers to recruit trained graduates in occupations critical to the economy and the environment. Graduates from Fleming College are a major recruiting pool for local and regional industry employers, driving economic prosperity back into surrounding communities. We note that several of the programs being cut feed directly into jobs your government is recruiting for in the Ontario Public Service.

In a study calculating the benefit to the regional business community, Fleming College analysed the economic value of the college on the Central Eastern Ontario economy in 2017-18. In total, Fleming College and its students added \$497.5 million in annual income to the Central Eastern Ontario economy, approximately equal to 6 percent of the region's total gross regional product. The college estimated that one of every 18 jobs in the region was supported by the activities of Fleming College and its students. Included in this nearly half-billion-dollar total figure illustrating economic impact is \$37.4 million in local spending by students - contributing directly to local economic prosperity - and \$352.6 million in added income by thousands of Fleming College alumni across the province.

With these stunning figures in mind, we are sounding the alarm around the recent suspensions of 29 programs at Fleming College – which brings the total program suspensions at Fleming College up to 42 in a 12-month period, if we consider the 13 programs cancelled in 2023. Some of these programs are not offered anywhere else in the region. In addition, the cuts to Fleming



programs will limit students from accessing educational pathways to nearby Trent University. Several of the Fleming programs have partnership agreements with Trent and other universities.

Rather than correcting course with a look towards young people's future and economic prosperity, Fleming College is eroding pathways to employment. There are other means of budget management. Publicly accessible reports from Fleming College's Finance and Audit Committee note a projected surplus of \$38.4 million for the 2023/2024 fiscal year, bringing the accumulated surplus over the past couple of years to roughly \$79 million. In such a financial context, why is the Fleming College community left reeling from suspensions to over one-fifth of total offered programs in the period of only a year?

We urge you to put an immediate pause on the suspension of the programs while an open and transparent investigation is carried out. We believe such an investigation must examine:

- Why were Board of Governors' members, internal to Fleming, except for President Maureen Adamson, barred from attending the Board meeting on April 23, 2024, that approved the program cuts?
- Did the Board of Governors meeting have quorum when the vote to cut the 29 programs happened?
- Did Fleming administrators follow the posted Program Efficacy Review process? Was the weighting for various components changed without an open and transparent review process?
- Where is the enrolment data to prove the 29 programs were under-subscribed, as President Adamson claimed in her communication of May 1, and why has the current enrolment data been scrubbed from Fleming's information systems?
- Why were the program advisory committees, mandated under the Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act, 2002, not consulted in advance of the program suspensions, ultimately removing the valuable input of industry and community members?
- Why has the college refused to disclose the data used in formulating these decisions to the union as required by the employment stability sections of the staff and faculty collective agreements? This is a flagrant contravention of an arbitrator's decision issued in February 2023 in a grievance case at Fleming College.
- Why has Fleming College experienced a significantly high turnover of non-unionized staff at the most senior levels throughout the three-plus years of President Adamson's tenure?

- Why do program suspensions come after continued growth in these non-unionized administrative roles across the college, with an estimated 28 unionized faculty and staff positions for every excluded and management role earning above \$100,000?

We are deeply concerned that unless steps are taken, mismanagement will continue at Fleming College to the detriment of students, faculty and staff and the wider community.

President Adamson is claiming that the reduction in international students is the reason for the program suspensions. We categorically do not believe this to be the case. We believe that a transparent investigation, with the results publicly reported, must be undertaken. We are concerned that we are looking at another Laurentian University, where the Auditor General found that the primary cause of the university's decline was not external factors such as the tuition freezes and the COVID-19 pandemic, but poor financial management. We note the Auditor General found that high senior administrator salaries and expenses, and inappropriate human resources practices negatively impacted Laurentian's financial picture.

We urge your government to safeguard students' futures, as well as the economic health and environmental well-being of the province by immediately issuing a binding directive to pause the program suspensions at Fleming.

We look forward to your immediate response.

Yours sincerely,

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