

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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On February 25, 2021, the Alberta government introduced its 2021/22 budget in the Alberta legislature. While the budget is a response to an ongoing and significant economic downturn made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic, reductions in operating support for colleges, polytechnics and universities will create challenges in Alberta's post-secondary sector.

The budget included a 6.2 per cent reduction in operating support to Alberta's post-secondary institutions at the system level. These reductions are on top of 10 per cent reductions to the system over the past two years. Prior to the cuts introduced this year, the percentage of provincial operating support making up institutions' overall budgets had already fallen below that of British Columbia.

"Alberta's post-secondary institutions are positioned to work with the province to support economic recovery, future growth in employment and economic diversification," says Dr. Mike Mahon, Chair of the Council for Post-Secondary Presidents of Alberta (COPPOA). "Predictable and sustainable funding is critical for institutions' ability to provide an environment that fosters student success and supports the collective communities we serve."

The newest cuts will transfer more financial responsibility onto the backs of students and the reductions will affect the livelihoods of all Albertans. It is likely further layoffs will result from this funding reduction and COPPOA members will have to decrease programming for students. These programs also help Albertans retrain in order to secure employment, are essential to individuals who want to improve their skills, and continue to support their families.

The fiscal outlook for Alberta institutions has been worsened by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Public health measures have significantly reduced revenue derived from on campus program delivery, reduced enrollment of international students and increased costs associated with alternative delivery. The Alberta government has not provided any COVID-19 related funding to institutions to address these impacts, in contrast to some other provinces.

The ongoing reductions in funding and the absence of a sustainable model are having an impact on institutions' ability to attract and retain faculty, staff and students necessary for Alberta to compete in the global market.

Despite the challenges, Alberta's post-secondary institutions will work to fulfill their individual mandates.

“Our members understand the challenging fiscal circumstances Albertans are facing, including a global pandemic and an economic downturn. We are committed to work with the province over the next year through initiatives in budget 2021 pertaining to job growth that support an effective economic recovery,” said Mahon.

In its submissions to government, COPPOA members advocated for the need to reduce red tape and government-imposed rules that prevent institutions from realizing more own-sourced revenue to improve their financial sustainability.

“A strong post-secondary sector needs an element of public funding,” says COPPOA Executive Director Bill Werry. “If the province is not able to provide stable funding, it needs to remove restrictions preventing institutions from managing their current revenue sources, programming, facilities and lands.”

For more information or media enquiries contact [info@coppoa.ca](mailto:info@coppoa.ca).

COPPOA’s 26 member organizations are all publicly supported post-secondary institutions that operate in the province of Alberta. For more information about COPPOA, please visit our web site at [www.coppoa.ca](http://www.coppoa.ca).