

MEDIA RELEASE

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“Our community college system has been sabotaged”: Ontario college workers vow to fight back amidst 10,000 job losses

Toronto, ON — College workers represented by the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU/SEFPO) are blowing the whistle on the crisis in Ontario’s community college system that has led to one of the largest mass layoffs in Ontario’s history.

After years of deliberate government underfunding and administrative mismanagement, OPSEU/SEFPO has learned that roughly 10,000 faculty and college staff have been or will be laid off *this year* while some 600 programs have been permanently cancelled or suspended – all without public consultation.

“The hypocrisy of the Ford government is shameless – they claimed to be protecting Ontario jobs in the wake of the Trump tariffs while at the same time they are dismantling a public institution that Ontarians turn to in the face of economic instability,” said JP Hornick, President of OPSEU/SEFPO.

“If the Ford government thinks they are going to get away with stripping the livelihoods from thousands of hardworking Ontarians – they’d better brace themselves for what’s coming.”

On Wednesday, representatives from all college faculty and support staff divisions of the union came together outside Centennial College’s Story Arts campus - which is slated for closure later this year - vowing to fight back. They were joined by students, community members and allies.

“This crisis didn’t start today. College administrators have run our colleges into the ground while the provincial government continues to fund our colleges at the lowest rate in Canada,” said Christine Kelsey, Chair of the union’s College Support Full-Time Bargaining Team. “These bad decisions have created the crisis we are in today and we are here to show our employer that we are ready to fight back.”

“We can still stop this destructive path of layoffs, closures and mergers, and build the college system we deserve: one that is accessible, public, and prioritizes the skilled labour force Ontario needs. We’ll do whatever it takes,” added Kelsey.

These program cuts and closures threaten our province’s ability to fill labour shortages - especially in programs that produce qualified workers needed in manufacturing, health and social services, construction and tourism.

While the Ford government is keen to point to \$2 billion in additional funding they’ve announced recently for postsecondary education, they fail to mention they plan on cutting \$1.3

billion in the college sector over the next three years, or that their own review panel - the [Blue Ribbon Panel](#), identified that government underfunding has been a chronic issue in the college system for years.

The government is also trying to place the blame on federal policy which will limit colleges' overreliance on international student revenue. However, [OPSEU/SEFPO research](#) has found that in 2023-2024, the entire college system was sitting on an accumulated \$2.7 billion dollar surplus, raising concern over the reckless decisions on layoffs and program closures. Further, many of the programs cut have been those with mostly domestic enrollment – programs that might still be here if communities could have had their say.

"The fallout from the college funding crisis falls squarely at Doug Ford's feet," says Hornick.

"Workers are united to fight for a future where students, no matter their background, can afford to access the education they need to get a good job."

"This government has picked a fight with not only the 55,000 workers in our college system but with all of OPSEU/SEFPO, and we will not relent until we see the funding and policy changes needed to save our college system."

- 30 -

More information on the program closures and their impacts on local workforces and economies is available.

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