



February 15, 2024

Hon. Minister Jill Dunlop
Ministry of Colleges and Universities
5th Floor
438 University Ave.
Toronto, ON M7A 1N3

RE: Letter of support for the University of Guelph

Dear Minister Dunlop,

The City of Guelph is the proud home to one of Canada's top comprehensive, research-intensive universities, the University of Guelph (U of G). The U of G has been a cornerstone of the City of Guelph for over 150 years and an economic engine for our local economy. As the second largest employer in the Guelph Wellington region and a contributor of \$2 billion to Guelph's GDP, our community depends on continued and sustainable operations at the university, which is why I am writing to you today to share my concerns about policy decisions which are challenging the financial sustainability of U of G.

At the core of U of G is its role as a regional university. Over 90% of students at U of G come from Ontario, with 12% coming from rural Ontario. Demand for a U of G education continues to grow and we welcome these students, as well as over 2,000 international students, into the fabric of our community. The estimated economic contribution of students to our local businesses is \$444 million annually and they contribute their time and ideas by collectively providing 1.5 million volunteer hours in our community each year. Further, we know that when students choose U of G for their education, they then often choose Guelph as a place to live, work and raise their family, supporting the ongoing health of our community.

U of G's focus as a regional university also means that the provincial government's decisions around the tuition framework and operational funding freeze have had a more significant impact on their operating budget than other post-secondary institutions. To date, the 2018 tuition reduction and freeze has cost U of G nearly \$150 million and operating funding has declined by 31% in real value since 2006. These decisions and the lack of investment have impacted the university's financial operations, resulting in a fourth consecutive year of operating deficit.

Leadership at U of G understands that it is not sustainable to continually run operating deficits and has taken several steps to find efficiencies and grow revenues including the launch of their transformation initiative. In a recent meeting with U of G, I learned that despite their efforts, expenses continue to increase and the outlook is increasingly

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challenged with pressures from Bill 124 and the Government of Canada's cap on international students.

As Mayor of Guelph, I am concerned that if Ontario does not provide sufficient support to institutions like U of G, the impact will be felt by our local businesses and wider community.

Just as the City of Guelph has been a vital partner to the university, I am asking your government to work with U of G and provide the tools to support a sustainable funding model so that U of G can continue to be a pipeline for workforce needs in Guelph.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cam Guthrie", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mayor Cam Guthrie
City of Guelph