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The “2020-23 Fiscal Plan: A Plan for [cutting Alberta’s future]”

Calgary, AB. (February 28, 2020) – The budget announced yesterday is contradictory and harmful to the Alberta economy. Many of the points outlined work against one another and are detrimental to the ongoing viability and success of the post-secondary landscape with resulting long term negative impacts on Alberta students, job growth and economic diversification.

The government claims to be taking steps to control spending while supporting the most vulnerable; however, increases to tuition being made by universities to accommodate an overall 8.3% budget cut decrease access to education and increase costs. This amplifies the stress and pressures for learners, thereby making them more vulnerable.

The government stresses the need to reduce red tape, yet the ill-advised performance metrics being introduced to the post-secondary funding model not only increase the bureaucratic complexity, the red tape of higher education, they also create a negative feedback cycle wherein institutions are held to account for things beyond their control. Many of the proposed metrics do not align with developing the skills needed in today's labour market. In fact, many of the proposed metrics take a short-term focus and miss the critical point that universities build a knowledge base graduates use throughout their careers. Critical thinkers and well-rounded citizens are the foundation upon which the labour market will ultimately thrive, and a brief timeline focused only on skills is not ensuring Albertans have what is needed to succeed in today's increasingly complex global economy.

The government’s mandate that universities produce outcomes that align with government priorities is a direct attack on the very heart and soul of what universities are intended to do. It is critical that we have the independence to produce and monitor our own mandates to ensure we are able to produce research and teach about matters that we, the people who have devoted our lives to our disciplines, know best serve the needs of our learners. Dictating that we fall in line with government priorities shows the government has no understanding of the true purpose of, and value derived from, post-secondary education.

About the Mount Royal Faculty Association: The Mount Royal Faculty Association (MRFA) represents all credit academic staff at Mount Royal University as stipulated under Alberta’s Post-Secondary Learning Act (PSLA). For more information, please visit www.mrfa.net.