



February 18 2026

Cindy VanBuskirk
Program Manager, Economic Development Services
Strategic Initiatives Department
City of Ottawa
110 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa, ON K1P 1J1

Re: OCOBIA Feedback on Proposed Algonquin College Program Eliminations

On behalf of the Ottawa Coalition of Business Improvement Areas (OCOBIA), representing Ottawa's 18 BIAs who are 'home' to over 7,200 businesses – including hundreds of locally owned and operated, small and independent businesses – we are writing to outline our concerns regarding proposed program eliminations at Algonquin College.

The programs Algonquin College identified for elimination are talent attraction mechanisms for our local economy.

Programs such as Hospitality (Hotel and Restaurant Operations Management), Tourism (Travel), Event Management, Recreation and Leisure Services, and the Honours Bachelor of Culinary Arts and Food Science draw students to Ottawa from across Ontario and beyond. These **students contribute immediately to our economy** as employees in restaurants, cafés, retail shops, festivals, and events. These are sectors that form the backbone of our main streets and commercial districts.

Students represent a significant portion of the workforce in the businesses we serve. In many BIAs, hospitality and retail employers rely heavily on students for part-time and seasonal employment. The very programs now proposed for elimination are the ones that most directly feed these sectors. **A reduction in these offerings will not only affect future graduates; it will reduce the pool of current workers who sustain our businesses today.**

Beyond immediate employment, these programs help anchor young talent in Ottawa. Many graduates remain in the city to launch and grow their own enterprises; opening restaurants, cafés, specialty services, and retail concepts that add character and vibrancy to our neighbourhoods. These are the types of locally owned businesses that animate mainstreets, create jobs, and contribute to Ottawa's unique sense of place.

Eliminating or significantly reducing these programs will result in shrinking Ottawa's talent pipeline at a time when the City is primed for economic growth. This also poses a risk of losing local entrepreneurship. Colleges are central to this.

We recognize the financial pressures facing the postsecondary sector. However, we strongly encourage the City to communicate to Algonquin College and the Province that these programs play an essential role in sustaining Ottawa's workforce, supporting small businesses, and attracting the next generation of entrepreneurs and professionals to our community.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide input and remain committed to working collaboratively to ensure Ottawa's education and economic development strategies remain aligned.

Sincerely,



Michelle Groulx
Chief Advocate
Ottawa Coalition of Business Improvement Areas (OCOBIA)
chiefadvocate@ocobia.org

