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March 25, 2026

Peter Devlin, President
Fanshawe College
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Stacey Pipicelli, Associate Dean
School of Health Sciences
spipicelli@fanshawec.ca

Dear Fanshawe College Leadership,

On behalf of the Ontario Association of Orthodontists, we are writing to express our significant concern regarding the recent decision to suspend the Dental Assisting I and II (DAS3) program, with no new student intake beginning in September 2026.

We understand that this decision was made following a comprehensive review of program viability, including financial sustainability, enrollment trends, and alignment with institutional priorities. We also recognize the broader pressures currently facing post-secondary institutions. However, we respectfully urge Fanshawe College to reconsider this decision given the critical role dental assisting education plays in supporting Ontario's oral health care system.

Dental assistants are essential members of orthodontic and dental teams. They are integral to the delivery of safe, efficient, and high-quality patient care. Ontario is currently experiencing a well-documented shortage of dental assistants, with many practices facing ongoing recruitment challenges. This shortage is expected to intensify in the coming years due to increased demand for services and workforce attrition.

Importantly, these concerns are not theoretical. During the COVID-19 pandemic, reductions and interruptions in program admissions led to measurable workforce shortages across the profession, shortages from which many practices have still not fully recovered. The proposed suspension of the DAS3 program risks recreating and compounding these same challenges at a time when stability and growth in the workforce are urgently needed.

This cancellation will also have a ripple effect across oral health care provision. From an orthodontic perspective, the certification of dental assistants as orthodontic assistants depends on the availability of properly trained Certified Dental Assistants. A shortage of qualified dental assistants has already been felt, even prior to this program suspension, and this decision will further limit the pipeline of candidates eligible for advanced training and certification.



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Furthermore, in an era where governments are actively working to expand access to care for all Canadians, the elimination of a key training pathway for dental assistants runs counter to this objective. Reducing the supply of trained oral health professionals will inevitably impact access, leading to longer wait times, delayed treatment, and reduced capacity to meet patient needs.

Fanshawe College has long been recognized as a leader in dental assisting education, producing graduates who are well-prepared, highly skilled, and valued across the province. The DAS3 program represents an important pathway into a stable and rewarding health care profession, and its loss would have meaningful consequences for both the profession and the communities we serve.

We respectfully request the opportunity to meet with your leadership team to better understand the factors that contributed to this decision, including financial and regulatory considerations. We would also welcome the opportunity to explore potential solutions collaboratively. These may include initiatives to support student recruitment, strengthen clinical placement opportunities, or identify alternative funding or partnership models that could help sustain the program.

The OAO, alongside our colleagues in the broader oral health community, is committed to working constructively with Fanshawe College to address these challenges. We believe that, together, we can identify a path forward that preserves this important program while aligning with the College's strategic goals.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to the opportunity for further discussion.

Sincerely,
Ontario Association of Orthodontists

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ashley Phuong', written in a cursive style.

Dr. Ashley Phuong
President

cc: Minister Marjorie Michel, Ministry of Health
marjorie.michel@parl.gc.ca; hcmminister.ministeresc@hc-sc.gc.ca

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