

Aurora College Transformation Update

Mr. Speaker, when this Government committed to establishing a polytechnic university we did so with the promise that we would be transparent in the process.

Guided by the NWT Post-Secondary Education Framework, there were a number of key documents released last fall that explain the process of transformation and those documents, the Implementation Plan and Areas of Specialization for the polytechnic university, continue to guide the process. But transparency does not stop there.

Mr. Speaker, in October we launched the Aurora College Transformation ACT web pages to meet that promise of transparency and accountability, and visitors to the site can track the progress of the transformation. Today, I am pleased to announce another way to keep up to date on the progress of the transformation with the release of the first Quarterly Report. This Report adds another level of transparency and accountability for partners, key stakeholders and the public.

Mr. Speaker, the transformation process is a multi-year initiative that includes meeting 81 commitments and more than a hundred milestones over the course of six years. The Quarterly Report, released today, tracks the progress of these commitments and milestones in the five focus areas of the transformation: Academic Program Management, Accountability, Governance, Operations, and Recruitment and Retention of Students. The report illustrates the number of key milestones that were completed in 2020 and key milestones that are planned for the duration of the transformation. It shows how many milestones are completed, in progress, and not yet started in addition to highlights from each area of focus.

Mr. Speaker, Indigenous governments, the public, our partners, and key stakeholders can expect to see this level of transparency and accountability in quarterly reports until we launch the polytechnic university. Between publication dates, those interested can track our progress on the Aurora College Transformation web pages to get monthly updates on specific milestones, on engagement opportunities and to learn more about the transformation in general.

Mr. Speaker, 2020 was an important year for the transformation and many critical milestones were completed and many key documents were developed and released. In 2021, there are two critical milestones scheduled: amendments to the *Aurora College Act* and the development of the first ever 3-year academic plan. There is also a great deal of work taking place on the other 106 milestones currently planned. That is why we have created the Quarterly Report, with an initiative as important as the transformation, it is important to celebrate all of our successes.

Mr. Speaker, our commitment to transform Aurora College into a sustainable, effective and efficient polytechnic university will provide more post-secondary education opportunities for residents, right here in the territory. Those opportunities will include increased access to learning in every community, ladder programming from literacy to upgrading to certificate to degree, and new programs in the coming years that are aligned with the polytechnic university's areas of specialization. All of these changes are to ensure that Northerners are first in line for in-demand jobs and that we can leverage our strong connections to land, tradition, community and people.

Mr. Speaker, in addition, the successful transformation to a polytechnic university will result in significant and wide-ranging economic recovery for the NWT, including preparing Northerners for employment; supporting business by supporting changing labour demands; expansion of infrastructure; development of co-investment partnerships; focusing on finding innovative solutions to Northern issues and capitalizing on Northern opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, the Quarterly Report delivers on our promise to be transparent and accountable. I hope that it will also help to deepen understanding of what the polytechnic university will mean to residents, to communities and to the territory.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.