

Developments in Education Renewal

Mr. Speaker, the transformational changes we have been making across the education system are gaining momentum to help fulfil this government's mandate commitments towards education renewal.

Under the Skills 4 Success strategy, grades nine to 12 students and youth aged 18 to 24 across the North will soon have access to Career and Education Advisors. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment has already hired six to work with students to help them navigate their best academic path from 'classroom to career'.

The Career and Education Advisors have been hired for initial two-year terms based in Yellowknife but each one responsible for a specific region. This will enable the team to research and develop a consistent approach for delivering the educational advisory services to students and youth across the NWT. They will work as a mobile team to provide services both in person and by distance.

School pilots are planned for the 2018-2019 winter semester to pilot the new resources and approach in selected schools throughout the regions. The permanent locations of the positions will be determined once the results of the pilots are available and informed decisions can be made as to where the positions would best be placed. Work is being planned in consultation with education bodies and regional ECE Service Centre staff to build upon and strengthen existing resources.

The Advisors will work as a mobile team to provide advice to students and youth so they can make informed decisions to improve their education and employment outcomes. They will also support youth aged 18-24 to become re-engaged in learning, promote skilled trades as careers, and assist students with finding financial supports for in-demand occupations.

Mr. Speaker, the department has also been working to solidify all of the components of the High School Pathways initiative. This work includes new high school completion options, new courses, counselling supports and technologies to better support students and offers them new opportunities. I am pleased that courses on life skills are being added, so students have an understanding of finances, budgeting, self-awareness and decision-making, as well as preparing them for further education or training and giving them effective tools to manage their lives.

Focus groups with students and teachers, as well as community town halls, will take place in the Spring of 2019 to engage parents, students and communities. The new High School Pathways model will roll out across the NWT one grade at a time, starting with grade 7 students in September 2019-2020.

As a part of the High School Pathways initiative and as a further contribution to indigenizing education, ECE will begin the development of a new Northern Studies 20 course that will be required for graduation.

Northern Studies 20 will be focused on opportunities for students to learn about land claims, treaties and implementation agreements, as well as more in-depth learning about the Northwest Territories' style of consensus government. Northern Studies 20 is expected to be fully implemented in 2023-2024, with the first cohort of grade 11 students following the new High School Pathways model.

Mr. Speaker, another objective of Education Renewal is to assist students to be able to access the courses necessary so they can attend any postsecondary school they choose. A critical initiative we have in place, and that has proven to be successful, is Northern Distance Learning.

Northern Distance Learning allows students to remain in their community and take higher level academic courses via a video conferencing network out of Inuvik. Education, Culture and Employment worked with education bodies to identify the next four small communities to offer Northern Distance Learning in 2019-2020, and they are Fort Providence, Łutselk'e, Paulatuk and Whati.

There will be a total of 15 schools accessing this service in 2019-2020. The program will be expanded further in 2020-2021 for a total of 20 schools that will offer a comprehensive education in students' home communities.

Students will experience high quality and uninterrupted internet service through dedicated bandwidth purchased specifically for the delivery of this initiative. It is important that every student have an opportunity for quality education and we are proud that we are now able to offer this opportunity to students in small and remote communities.

Mr. Speaker, no single group or organization can accomplish change alone. Our partnerships with our school bodies, the NWT Association of Teachers, parents and community members are critical to our success. Positive, healthy experiences for children of all ages are a shared responsibility that includes business and community partners, health services, government and families working together toward a common goal – the healthy development of the children of the NWT.

Masi, Mr. Speaker.