

Post-Secondary Education Update

Mr. Speaker, these are exciting times in post-secondary education in the Northwest Territories.

This Government is meeting its commitment to expand opportunities for post-secondary education, trades-oriented learning and northern educational institutions while fostering the knowledge economy. This work is essential to ensuring that northerners have access to quality post-secondary programs and supports.

Mr. Speaker, we have introduced new legislation to regulate post-secondary institutions, and we have engaged with residents, campus communities, municipal and Indigenous governments to establish the first overarching vision and goals for post-secondary education in our territory.

Developing the vision and goals for post-secondary education will focus our efforts as we strengthen our system. It will also support our work with partner institutions and organizations to ensure that students have increased access to excellent programs. Together, we will ensure that NWT residents can get the skills and training they need to access meaningful employment today and in the future.

Our vision and goals must be rooted in the dreams, aspirations and needs of our territory. To this end, I am pleased to say that 743 surveys from all regions of the territory were submitted during the engagement phase of the Vision process. Nearly 200 of the submissions were from residents especially important to the future of our labour market: people under the age of 29.

I thank those who took the time to complete the survey and the organizations and institutions who took part in the Speaker Series on Post-Secondary Education throughout the month of March. I look forward to sharing the Post-Secondary Education Framework, including the final vision and goals, with Members of this House and the public in the coming months.

Mr. Speaker, over the past three months the first steps in the transformation of Aurora College to a polytechnic university have been taken. Since assuming the role in March, the Associate Deputy Minister of Post-Secondary Education Renewal has been working diligently to develop the Terms of Reference for the Academic Advisory Council. Initial contact has been made with individuals who have significant academic and administrative experience to help support the transformation to a polytechnic university. The Academic Advisory Council will provide guidance to the Associate Deputy Minister throughout the transformation. The Terms of Reference will be forwarded to Members of this House and posted on the Education, Culture and Employment website within the next month.

As well on plain language summary of Bill 48 is currently available on our website for those interested in learning about the proposed post-secondary education legislation that is currently before the House. This legislation is critical to meeting our objectives to expand high quality education programming and provide a variety of post-secondary opportunities for students. Quality assurance legislation is a key step in building a strong post-secondary education system for northerners.

Mr. Speaker, strengthening the post-secondary education system is part of our larger plan to improve outcomes for students and help them reach their highest potential over the course of their lives. From early childhood, through elementary and high school and all the way to post-secondary, we want to reduce barriers and empower residents to achieve their goals and aspirations.

A healthy, happy kindergarten student should become a well-educated high school student looking for challenging post-secondary opportunities. ECE's new Career and Education Advisors will help students make decisions about their education and give them information on jobs in demand in the NWT. This government will continue to support post-secondary students, as it does now, through Student Financial Assistance, apprenticeship and trades programs and labour market programs. All of these initiatives support the development of our economy and our people.

I am confident that the steps we are now taking to strengthen our post-secondary education system will provide increased opportunities for both in the near-term and for generations to come.

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.