

Post-Secondary Education Update

Mr. Speaker, this Government is committed to ensuring that the people of the Northwest Territories have access to a wealth of high-quality post-secondary education opportunities. Educated citizens are critical to a healthy northern society and a strong and prosperous economy. Our Government is acting on the 18th Assembly's Mandate priorities to expand opportunities for post-secondary education, trades-oriented learning and northern educational institutions and to foster the knowledge economy.

Mr. Speaker, we have developed the territory's first-ever overarching post-secondary education legislation, which regulates post-secondary institutions operating in the territory. This is a critical step in expanding high-quality education programming and providing a greater variety of post-secondary opportunities. The new quality assurance measures in the legislation will help us build a strong and sustainable post-secondary education system.

Later today at the appropriate time, I will also table the post-secondary education vision and goals developed through engagement with residents and Indigenous governments, as part of the *Post-Secondary Education Framework*. Our Government is committed to an ongoing process of collaboration with post-secondary education institutions and key stakeholders from across the territory as we continue to improve the post-secondary education system.

Through community engagement we have developed our Government's post-secondary education vision. The vision statement is that *every resident of the Northwest Territories has an equitable opportunity to reach their full potential by obtaining a post-secondary education from institutions that are student-centred, accessible, high-quality, relevant and accountable.*

We have also identified goals to achieve our vision. We know we must prioritize student success; increase access to post-secondary education opportunities; remain responsive to

labour demands in the NWT; remain responsive to local and regional needs; and, support the growth of the knowledge economy.

We are already working towards our goals as the transformation of Aurora College into a polytechnic university moves forward. I am pleased to announce another project milestone: the Terms of Reference for the Academic Advisory Council is complete and available on the departmental website. The Academic Advisory Council is not a governing body for the institution; however it will provide expert guidance throughout the transformation. The full list of member institutions from across Canada will be confirmed in the coming weeks. I look forward to the significant academic and administrative experience the Council will bring to the transformation process.

Mr. Speaker, this fall, as recommended in the Government's Response to the Aurora College Foundational Review, Aurora College will be developing a three-year strategic plan. This strategic plan will guide the College while the institution strengthens its foundations and plans for the transformation. The College will develop its strategic plan through engagement in campus communities, regional centres and at least one small community in each education region.

Once the transformation is complete, the new polytechnic university will provide students with challenging, relevant and accessible post-secondary education opportunities. The Department of Education is already piloting a new team of Career and Education Advisors to help students plan for these opportunities, starting as early as Grade 7. The Advisors will help students make education decisions that keep them on a pathway to the job or career of their choice. They will also provide youth with current information about jobs in the NWT that will have a high demand for workers both today and in the future.

The NWT labour market data forecasts that 78% of these jobs will require post-secondary education. We will continue to support NWT post-secondary students through Student Financial Assistance, apprenticeship and labour market programs. All of these initiatives support the development of our people and economy.

Mr. Speaker, I am confident that we are taking the right steps today to strengthen our post-secondary education system and provide more opportunities to our residents in the years to come.

Masi, Mr. Speaker.