

Postsecondary Mandate Progress

Mr. Speaker, it is critical to ensure that the northern postsecondary education system meets the changing needs of our students and the demands of the Northwest Territories labour market.

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment's long-term labour market assessment tells us that 78 per cent of Northwest Territories jobs in the next 15 years will require a postsecondary education. This Government has an ambitious agenda that will help us establish a modern postsecondary education system to support our residents' academic and employment success.

Mr. Speaker, the Department is examining all aspects of postsecondary education in the Northwest Territories. We need to make strategic decisions that will result in more graduates working and leading productive lives in the Northwest Territories.

Our first step was to conduct a labour market review through the Skills 4 Success Initiative, completed in April 2016. This information is the ground for our next steps in making sure postsecondary education and training programs support Northwest Territories labour market demand and that they help to close the gap between residents' education levels and labour market needs.

The next step in meeting our commitments is the completion of the Aurora College Foundational Review. I updated Members on the progress of the Review earlier in this sitting. The Review will be a tool to help establish a renewed foundation for the College and will help and inform its long-term strategic plan.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, we committed in the mandate to develop new legislation that will outline a quality assurance system, on the basis of which postsecondary institution will be recognized or authorized in the Northwest Territories.

We envision a new legislative framework that will govern all postsecondary education in the Northwest Territories. The primary objective of this framework is to create a process of recognition for postsecondary institutions that ensures they are effectively governed, that they have appropriate quality assurance measures in place, and that their programs are in alignment with national and international standards and best practices. This legislation will give students the confidence that the postsecondary institution they attend is recognized or registered by the Government of the Northwest Territories, and that it has met the standards for its designation.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed new legislation will create transparency and clarity for new postsecondary institutions in the Northwest Territories. It will also create opportunities for existing qualified institutions to obtain degree-granting status. However, it will not replace the *Aurora College Act*.

The legislative process will include engagement with all key stakeholders. The framework will be a collaborative effort, reflecting the unique cultural, social, economic and geographic contexts in the Northwest Territories today.

Mr. Speaker, the development of a skilled workforce is a pillar of the Government of the Northwest Territories' vision for a strong territorial economy. By making system-wide, foundational improvements to the adult and postsecondary education and skills training system, these initiatives will foster sound, modern and sustainable postsecondary institutions and programs for the Northwest Territories and a thriving Northwest Territories workforce.

Our proposed postsecondary legislation, the Aurora College Foundational Review and the new Aurora College strategic plan are all significant pieces of work, but they do not stand alone. They are aligned with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment's comprehensive frameworks, including Education Renewal and Skills 4 Success, and with strategies like Apprenticeship, Trades and Occupational Certification, Immigration, and, soon, Small Communities Employment.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment has been working hard to carry out our agenda for postsecondary education and make a better future for our residents. These three major pieces of work, along with the work of other departments, governments, stakeholders, and this House, are coming together to create a stronger social, economic and educational foundation for the North.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.