

**Aurora College Foundational Review**

Mr. Speaker, expanding opportunities for postsecondary education for our residents is a priority of this Legislative Assembly. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment is pursuing an ambitious postsecondary agenda that is guided by the mandate of this government.

For more than 50 years, residents of the Northwest Territories have relied on Aurora College for their adult and postsecondary education and training. The College continues to be critical to our economic and social development, but we know we can and must do better.

The Government of the Northwest Territories has been mandated to conduct a foundational review of Aurora College. This foundational review will result in significant changes at Aurora College and provide a clear path for the College's future development.

The foundational review process has two parts. The first part is an independent review report provided by a contractor, MNP LLP that I will be tabling later today. The second part will be the Government's response to the recommendations in the review report, including a clear vision of the path forward for Aurora College.

Mr. Speaker, the work done by the independent contractor reveals a number of issues we need to address, including the need for improvements in the areas of governance, operations; academic program processes; accountability; and, student recruitment and retention.

However, rather than simply pointing to what needs to be fixed, the report also recommends an ambitious path toward establishment of a new kind of institution that will better meet the needs of residents, employers and communities. In particular, the report calls for the transformation of Aurora College into a Northern Canada Polytechnic University.

Mr. Speaker, we are committed to establishing a stronger, sustainable and more vibrant postsecondary institution that contributes to stronger communities, an institution that is

built for the Northwest Territories by the Northwest Territories.

I have already shared the report with the Standing Committee on Social Development and look forward to working with my colleagues to develop a whole of government response to address the full set of recommendations made in the report, including the possibility of transforming Aurora College into a Northern Canada Polytechnic University. This response will be tabled in the House in the fall.

The path before us is of critical importance for the future of students in the NWT, and the journey must be collaborative. Therefore, I look forward to continued collaboration with the Standing Committee on Social Development around the government's response to the recommendations. We must work together to take advantage of this unique opportunity and ensure future generations have access to a world-class education in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the important contribution that a great number of stakeholders made in informing the recommendations. The independent contractor worked with Members of the Legislative Assembly, representatives from Indigenous governments and communities, Aurora College students and staff, northern employers, GNWT staff and other key stakeholders from across the territory.

Mr. Speaker, I recognize that some of the recommendations in the Aurora College Foundational Review Report propose significant changes to our territory's public postsecondary institution. We will weigh these changes carefully. I am committed to looking closely at each of the recommendations with the Members of this House and considering what we need to do for northerners to have the best possible adult and postsecondary education and training here in the Northwest Territories.

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.