

Honourable R.J. Simpson
Minister of Education, Culture and Employment
PO Box 1320
Yellowknife, NT, X1A 2L9

September 25, 2020

Re: Polytechnic University Areas of Teaching and Research Specialization

Dear Mr. Simpson,

On behalf of the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce and the 383 Yellowknife businesses we represent, please accept this formal submission in response to the Government of the Northwest Territories' discussion paper *Polytechnic University Areas Of Teaching and Research Specialization*ⁱ.

The Discussion Paper states that "...the starting point for the polytechnic university is Aurora College. As such, the existing assets and structures of Aurora College are key considerations in developing areas of specialization" (p.9).

We disagree. The existing assets and structures within Aurora College are failing the people of the Northwest Territories – student enrollment is rapidly declining, the cost per graduate is extremely high even when considering our northern reality, student satisfaction is low, and stakeholders from the business community have continuously stated that programming is not meeting local labour needs.

The Aurora College Foundational Reviewⁱⁱ found that, "...the College does not currently possess the traits of the envisioned [polytechnic institution]. The College's present-day leadership, programming, and operations are not adequate to meet the current day challenges and advances in higher education that are happening at an ever-increasing pace. The present state necessitates a complete and deliberate higher education system overhaul, keeping only those programs, services, people, systems and processes that meet the future needs" (p.7).

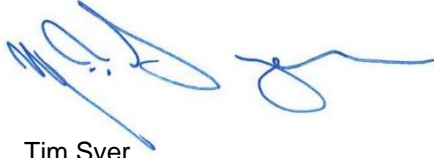
For the polytechnic institution to be successful, appropriate policies supported by clear frameworks must be in place for the creation, review, and elimination of academic programming. As outlined in the Aurora College Foundational Review, Aurora College does not have frameworks for developing new programs or reviewing current programs, there are no policies around suspension / elimination of programming, and the policies that exist for program creation / review are outdated and largely ignored (46-47, 53).

We recommend that the GNWT create a *Development of New Programming Framework* and an *Academic Programming Review Framework*, based on the recommendations of the Aurora College Foundational Review. As part of this process, the GNWT should create policies and procedures that support these frameworks and define how the polytechnic university will make decisions around programming.

We are concerned that instead of creating a sustainable polytechnic institution with relevant programming to meet local labour needs, to capture more Northern and Arctic research dollars, and attract international and southern studentsⁱⁱⁱ, the GNWT is prescribing areas of specialization that will make it difficult for the new polytechnic institution to grow and adapt to market needs.

The creation of a polytechnic institution is an important economic opportunity for the Yellowknife business community. We look forward to continuing our engagement throughout this process.

Sincerely,



Tim Syer
President
Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce



Deneen Everett
Executive Director
Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce

Sent via email to:

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ⁱ GNWT. (2020). *Polytechnic University Areas of Teaching and Research Specialization*. Retrieved from: https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/sites/ece/files/resources/discussion_paper_-_areas_of_teaching_and_reseach_specialization_-_2020-08-20_-_final_final_for_web.pdf

ⁱⁱ MNP LLP. (2018). *Aurora College Foundational Review*. Retrieved from: https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/sites/ece/files/resources/aurora_college_foundational_review_report_0.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ Strategy Corp. (2019). *University Feasibility and Benefits Study*. Retrieved from: https://www.yellowknife.ca/en/city-government/resources/Current_Committees_of_Council/University-Post-Secondary-Advisory-Committee/DOCS-544362-v1-Yellowknife_University_Feasibility_and_Benefits_Study_January_2019.pdf