



CITY OF YELLOWKNIFE

**PRESENTATION TO STANDING COMMITTEE
ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
RE: AURORA COLLEGE FOUNDATIONAL
REVIEW**

Submitted to:

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

By:

CITY OF YELLOWKNIFE

OCTOBER 25, 2018

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1 INTRODUCTION

The City of Yellowknife (the “City”) strongly believes that this is an opportune time for the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) to re-assess and reinvent the vision for post-secondary education in the Northwest Territories (NWT). It is of utmost important that the decision to implement a new vision be made as early as possible to enhance opportunities for Northerners and to attract a wide cross section of students from outside the NWT given the increasingly global and competitive nature of post-secondary education. The NWT is not only competing with other northern institutions, but institutions from across Canada and the circumpolar world for status, students and resources.

It is the City’s position that a decision to continue “as is” and make only incremental improvements will not result in a sustainable and long term solution for higher education in the NWT for future generations. As such, it is imperative that the GNWT take immediate steps to work with key partners, including municipalities, to create a successful vision for post-secondary education in the territory.

2 AURORA COLLEGE FOUNDATIONAL REVIEW REPORT

The GNWT commissioned a Foundational Review of Aurora College’s “governance and accountability structure, as well academic programming and supporting operations to ensure programs are managed effectively and efficiently, are meeting the diverse needs of students, and are responsive to changes in the labour market”¹ (the “Review”). The report presented a vision and pathway for the transformation of Aurora College into a polytechnic university over the next six to eight years. The Review examined five key areas: governance, accountability, academic programming, operations and recruitment and retention of students.

2.1 Governance

Aurora College is established and guided by the *Aurora College Act*, S.N.W.T. One of the biggest challenges of this governance model is that the College does not operate at arm’s length. Furthermore, the Act does not allow for the creation of any additional post-secondary institutions in the NWT. The City supports amendments to the Act to allow for establishment of additional types of post-secondary institutions in the territory². The legislative framework must enable the physical presence of universities and establish regulatory and quality assurance framework models that allow for expansion into the NWT.

¹ Aurora College Foundational Review, May 4, 2018

² City of Yellowknife Letter re: Governance of Postsecondary Education in the NWT

The City strongly endorses the concept of academic freedom that enables universities to be autonomous and receptive to engagement with a range of private and public partners. The ability to set their own research and educational priorities in response to a broad range of influences is critical to the success of postsecondary institutions.

2.2 Accountability

It is vital that the GNWT establish a vision for postsecondary education in the NWT. The established vision will guide the GNWT and partners, including municipalities, in establishing a model that meets the needs of residents and communities across the north.

2.3 Academic Program Management

When reviewing current and future programming, the focus must be on the future needs of the NWT with respect to labour market demands, while also considering the unique opportunities available in the NWT for post-secondary education and research. The City wants to see northern students with a range of opportunities for academic advancement. As well, in order to establish a destination university, there must be world class curriculum, customized to northern realities and culture and supported by a distinct student experience that incorporates the hospitality and customs of the NWT.

The City supports the recommendation set out in the Report that the GNWT undertake a comprehensive review of all programming offered by the College to determine whether it meets the needs of stakeholder and labour market needs.

2.4 Operations

The Review recognizes that serving communities in the NWT is core to the mandate of the College and recommends that it remain a fundamental component of any future model of higher education in the NWT. Further analysis and discussion of the established vision of higher education for the NWT and a full review of all programs currently delivered by the College will inform the development of this new model. The City supports the Report's recommendation to integrate the regional communities within the overall academic planning that will align with the vision of higher education in the NWT.

2.5 Recruitment and Retention of Students

The recruitment and retention of students is critical to the success of higher education in the NWT. Providing a supportive and positive student experience is critical to delivering programs that meet the needs of a diverse student population, and aids in student retention and success. The City of Yellowknife is committed to working with other orders of government, educational institutions and local partners to ensure a successful student experience – for students from

Yellowknife, the NWT and beyond. There are a range of potential strategies and actions that the City could take to support an enjoyable, affordable and positive student experience.

2.6 Community Consultations

Interviews, focus groups and surveys were completed and recognise that a post-secondary institution must operate and evolve in a manner that reflects stakeholder and community needs. Eight of the thirteen Indigenous Governments and organizations were interviewed as a part of the Report process. The City submits that continued engagement with stakeholders and communities is vital to a successful model for higher education.

3 CITY OF YELLOWKNIFE

Diversification of the economy is a key goal of the current City Council, with a specific objective to position Yellowknife as a knowledge center.

The infographic features the City of Yellowknife logo on the left. The main title is 'COUNCIL'S GOALS & OBJECTIVES 2016 - 2018'. A dark grey box on the right lists five goals. Below this, five colored boxes (orange, blue, teal, light green, yellow) each contain a goal number and a detailed objective description. The word 'OBJECTIVES' is written in large, semi-transparent letters at the bottom of the infographic.

1	2	3	4	5
<p>Better Engagement with Stakeholders, including public engagements that follow a process based on structured decision-making, and establishing a Council Communications Protocol (email, etc.).</p>	<p>Downtown Revitalization, including presentation of 50th Street revitalization concepts, providing direction on the long and short term plan for public lands on 50th Street, development of a critical path document and updating this strategic plan annually.</p>	<p>Strengthen and Diversify the Economy, including a review of the Business Licence By-law, a review of procurement policies and procedures, undertaking business incubation, positioning Yellowknife as a knowledge center, lobbying the GNWT for a Hotel Levy, and discussions with the GNWT regarding airport improvements to allow for international travel.</p>	<p>Community Sustainability, including investigating strategies to incorporate non-market housing in densification strategies, lobbying for changes to GNWT legislation for LIC implementations, implementation and support for the Community Energy Plan, lobbying for Utility Credits and legislative or policy changes to support Net Metering, completing a new waste audit/strategy, and developing an agricultural strategy.</p>	<p>Stronger Internal Working Relationships and Accountability, including building upon the Governance Review and holding a facilitated workshop with Council and Administration to establish a common vision of leadership/management within the organization and clarifying decision-making roles and information sharing, establishing facilitated collaborative processes involving Council and Administration to address department-specific challenges, establishing and implementing follow-up processes with timelines in order to address recommendations from Operational Reviews, and implementing an annual staff survey.</p>

To further this objective, in July 2018 the City of Yellowknife engaged StrategyCorp Inc., an Ontario based consulting firm with post-secondary feasibility experience, to develop a feasibility study to determine whether the City has the capacity to support and sustain a university/post-secondary institution.

At the same time, the City established a Committee of Council, the University Advisory Committee, to build a coalition of expertise around enhanced academic development in the City, and the North.

The City's position is outlined in the following paragraphs:

(i) Programming (aligned with Labour Market needs):

It is the City's position that the Review provides a strong case for review of the current program delivery model and is an opportunity to develop programming that is specialized and aligned with labour market needs for both applied and academic learning as well as supporting students from smaller and remote communities who may need some pre-university access programs to ensure success.

Draft findings from the City's consultants confirm that a polytechnic university is most aligned with the NWT's labour market needs and can help to drive the City of Yellowknife's overall growth objectives through new educational pathways and research to drive economic diversification. Post-secondary education transformation is essential to advancing and supporting the labour market in Yellowknife and the Northwest Territories

A polytechnic university can combine and more closely align an array of partners to develop a collective approach to competitive, relevant post-secondary education and research.

(ii) Student Recruitment and Retention

As indicated in the Review, there must be a focus on keeping students home and supporting Indigenous, Francophone, and local needs. As such, marketing efforts must be prioritized and directed to southern and international students to achieve the student population required to support a new model for higher education in the NWT. It is the City's position that Yellowknife is an attractive headquarters location, in part given the size of the City's population, our amenities, housing and part-time employment opportunities, as well as interest from southern and international students to study in a major diverse Northern city centre. However, the City submits that community campus locations (i.e., Fort Smith and Inuvik) are well positioned to specialize in particular programming focuses and will be critical to achieve success.

(iii) Costs

The City recognizes that cost of living, including housing affordability, will be key to a successful post-secondary model and as such, the City is prepared to proactively work with developers and other partners to create affordable student housing as student population increases, as well as with the community to identify and establish student supports (e.g., daycare, mental health supports, apprenticeships, part time employment and social opportunities).

(iv) Governance

Most importantly, a polytechnic institution needs academic independence and sound governance to succeed and compete at the university level. The City proposes that a polytechnic university represents the most feasible path forward for the NWT and all communities.

(v) Opportunities

The current College model results in many missed funding and research opportunities. Over the past five years, significant federal funding has been awarded for Northern and Arctic research initiatives but in 2016—17, Aurora College/Aurora Research Institute captured just \$390,000 of this funding –a significant lost opportunity for the local knowledge economy.

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)	\$16.97 million
Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC)	\$39.62 million
Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR)	\$32.28 million

Improving competitiveness for, and access to, federal research funding can have a positive impact on the GDP of the entire Northwest Territories –every \$1.00 invested in a university can generate \$1.36 in economic activity.³

It is the City’s position that the time to act is now and both territorial and municipal governments have a duty to NWT residents and taxpayers to take action to address this funding drain from our local economies.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS

In summary, the City recommends the following:

(i) *Establish a Vision for Higher Education*

In Canada, there is a concerted political and policy effort to drive the development and diversification of the knowledge economy. The NWT must make the knowledge economy a priority and establish a vision for higher education that will guide development of a new model that addresses the needs of residents and government alike.

³ Strategy Corp Inc. WORKING DRAFT Report: University Feasibility and Benefits Study, 2018

The GNWT must lead this effort and, in collaboration with key partners, develop a clear and consistent vision for all post-secondary education in the Northwest Territories, built through consensus and recognizing the importance of strong regional centres.



(ii) Enhance Economic Opportunities

A polytechnic university provides the opportunity to capture additional Northern and Arctic research dollars. A polytechnic university will create opportunities for economic diversification for the City and Territory, as has been the case elsewhere in Canada (e.g., University of Northern British Columbia, Thompson Rivers University, Ryerson University, etc.).

(iii) Amend Legislation

The *Aurora College Act* must be revised to remove the overriding control by the Department of Education, Culture and Employment and to set the groundwork to permit development of a Northern Polytechnic University.

(iv) Plan Creatively for the Required Infrastructure

The GNWT must consider the capital requirements of setting up a new university or polytechnic university in relation to existing and future infrastructure priorities. Recognising fiscal limitations, potential opportunities exist that can leverage the required physical space with partners in Yellowknife, for both the university and all the associated satellite requirements such as student housing and social supports.

5 CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

For the GNWT to truly deliver impactful post-secondary education, significant change must be made to transform Aurora College into a polytechnic university that will meet the diverse educational needs of students and faculty from the NWT and beyond. Ultimately, a fresh and innovative Northern approach is needed to support current and future students in developing the skills they need to meet labour market demands.

It is the City's vision that the new model will support NWT students to a new level of academic achievement here at home, while also becoming a destination institution that offers unique, made-in-the-north programming and research opportunities.

Appendix A
UNIVERSITY/POST SECONDARY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
TERMS OF REFERENCE



CITY OF YELLOWKNIFE

TERMS OF REFERENCE **University/Post-Secondary Advisory Committee**

Whereas, pursuant to the Council Procedures By-law, Council may establish a special committee to investigate and consider any matter; Yellowknife City Council hereby establishes a Special Advisory Committee to be known as the “**University/Post-Secondary Advisory Committee (UPAC)**” with the following terms of reference.

INTRODUCTION

The City of Yellowknife has identified that there is a need to establish an Advisory Committee that will provide advice and guidance to Council during the development of a University/Post-Secondary Institution Feasibility and Benefits Study.

BACKGROUND

1. On December 11, 2017, Council approved the City of Yellowknife’s 2018 Budget, which includes \$50,000 to undertake a University/Post-Secondary Institution Feasibility and Benefits Study (the “Study”). An external consultant will be hired to complete this work and Council is seeking the expert advice and input from potential partners who share an interest in seeing a university/post-secondary institution presence in Yellowknife.

SCOPE

2. The purpose of the UPAC is to assist the City in an advisory capacity by considering and making recommendations to Council through the appropriate Standing Committee of Council on the feasibility and opportunities for advancing the establishment of a university/post-secondary institution in Yellowknife, and the associated benefits.

Section 3 as amended by Council Motion #0265-18 on July 23, 2018

3. A key focus will include building the case for the establishment of a polytechnic university in Yellowknife, as articulated in the *Aurora College Foundational Review Report*,
4. The role of the UPAC is to provide advice and guidance to the City on the scope and content of the Study, bring forward information and ideas that can contribute to the work underway, and collaborate on assessing options, recommendations and next steps so that there can be a

coordinated and collaborative approach to advancing the presence of a university/post-secondary institution in Yellowknife.

MEMBERSHIP

Composition:

5. The UPAC will consist of the following members appointed by Council:

- a. The **Mayor** of the City of Yellowknife - ex-officio;
- b. One (1) Member of **City Council**;

Section 5.c as amended by Council Motion #0292-18 on August 27, 2018

- c. Two (2) non-voting advisory representatives from the **Government of the Northwest Territories** :
 - i. One (1) representing the Department of Education, Culture and Employment; and
 - ii. One (1) representative with expertise in knowledge, research and leadership;
 - d. Two (2) representatives from the Yellowknife business community;
 - e. One (1) recent graduate from a university/post-secondary institution;
 - f. Up to four (4)representatives from **academic independent research organizations** (such as University of Alberta, Institute for Circumpolar Health Research, Hotii T'seeda, Dechinta, etc);
 - g. Up to four (4) representatives from **Indigenous Governments** and/or research institutes attached to Indigenous Governments; and
 - h. Any additional representation as deemed appropriate.
6. The Member of City Council shall be the Chair of the UPAC.
7. Members shall be appointed for the duration of the contract to complete the Study.
8. Support for the UPAC will come from City of Yellowknife Administration.

MEETINGS

9. The UPAC shall meet as required to provide support to the Study. This may include:
- a. Initial Meeting with the consultant once hired;
 - b. As and when meetings with the consultant to inform and guide the content of the report; and
 - c. Final meeting to review the final draft report.

10. Special meetings of the Committee may be called at the request of the Chair.
11. The rules of procedure for the Committee shall be governed by the City of Yellowknife Council Procedures By-law insofar as it may be applicable.

REMUNERATION

12. The Members of the Committee, including the Chair, shall serve in a volunteer capacity only, with no remuneration.

DUTIES

13. The Chair's responsibilities will be as follows:
 - a. Chair meetings;
 - b. Approve agenda/meeting preparation and any follow up actions; and
 - c. Introduce the Study and any other final information the UPAC recommends to the appropriate Standing Committee of Council.
14. The UPAC Members' responsibilities will be as follows:
 - a. To attend meetings of the UPAC and discuss issues pertaining to the Study;
 - b. To provide advice and recommendations for consideration as the Study proceeds; and
 - c. Where it deems advisable, to make recommendations to the Standing Committee of Council and others as appropriate.

TERMINATION

15. The Committee shall be considered dissolved upon completion of their task, expected to be by end of 2018.
16. Notwithstanding the above, Council may, by resolution, dissolve the Committee at any time, or amend these Terms of Reference.

Appendix B

**CITY OF YELLOWKNIFE LETTER RE: GOVERNANCE OF
POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION IN THE NWT**



CITY OF YELLOWKNIFE
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

March 15, 2018

The Honourable Alfred Moses
Minister of Education, Culture and Employment
Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories
P.O. Box 1320
Yellowknife, NT X1A 2L9

Dear Minister Moses,

RE: Governance of Postsecondary Education in the NWT

The City of Yellowknife appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback to the Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) on the 'Governance of Postsecondary Education in the NWT Discussion Paper.' In addition to providing comments on the issues raised within the paper, the City will take this opportunity to confirm our position on the establishment of a strong postsecondary presence in Yellowknife.

Feedback on the Governance of Postsecondary Education in the NWT Discussion Paper

The City recognizes that the primary focus of the paper is the regulatory context for postsecondary educational institutions present in the Northwest Territories (NWT). The paper seeks to address details like the recognition of postsecondary institutions and quality assurance, both of which are important regulatory tools. The City has the following specific comments:

- (i) *Timeliness* - Key in this debate is the requirement to be timely and move quickly to establish the legislative framework that can advance the NWTs academic, economic and social agenda. The lack of progress over the past 10 years of debate on this means we are being outpaced by other jurisdictions that are providing academic options that we could, and should, be providing in the NWT (e.g., Yukon). We simply cannot afford to defer the opportunities that exist, pending the development of 'perfect' legislation.
- (ii) *Role of Aurora College* - Creation of the Postsecondary Education Act alongside the *Aurora College Act* reaffirms that the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) likely foresees an ongoing, parallel role that Aurora College will continue to play, pending the outcome of the foundational review. We hope the foundational review reaffirms the important role Aurora College plays as a college/institute in supporting community learning centres across the NWT, as well as programs that respond to trade and diploma career options.
- (iii) *Opportunities for existing universities* – The Discussion Paper is not explicitly clear in recognizing/supporting the interest from existing universities to establish a campus in Yellowknife. This is particularly unfortunate as we know there are universities with longstanding links to the NWT that are interested – e.g., University of Alberta North. The legislative framework must enable the physical presence of already existing universities; given these universities have an existing regulatory and quality assurance framework model in place in their home jurisdiction which should expedite their expansion to the NWT. This would be a timely

and efficient option to welcome a university to the NWT, and must be addressed in the proposed legislation.

- (iv) *Academic Freedom* - The City strongly endorses the concept of academic freedom that can enable universities to be autonomous and receptive to engagement with a range of private and public partners. The ability to set their own research and educational priorities in response to a broad range of influences is critical, and is a good complement to the current scope of Aurora College which is guided by the GNWT.
- (v) *Indigenous Institutions* - Acknowledgement of the future potential for Indigenous Institutions is important and the City endorses this proposition. However, the paper suggests that the GNWT will keep ultimate regulatory authority, which in light of at least two Indigenous governments having legislative powers for postsecondary institutions seems out of alignment.

The City is very keen to explore opportunities for a postsecondary presence in Yellowknife - one that can connect with all the progressive and ground-breaking work going on across the NWT, while also welcoming an unprecedented range of academic options into our community, making it a focal point in this part of the circumpolar world. City Council deems this an important initiative, and approved \$50,000 in the City's 2018 Budget for completion of a feasibility study on having a postsecondary presence in Yellowknife.

As such, we strongly encourage your department to consult with the City directly on creation of legislation that will govern postsecondary education in the North, as it will have a direct effect on the City's flexibility to establish relationships with institutions, our ability to attract proponents, and consequently the success of our endeavor.

Sincerely,



Mark Heyck
Mayor

DM #514373

