

Return to Written Question

THE HONOURABLE ALFRED MOSES
MINISTER OF EDUCATION, CULTURE AND EMPLOYMENT

Impact of Proposed Aurora College Program Changes

Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Written Question asked by Mr. Vanthuyne on February 09, 2017 regarding the impact of proposed Aurora College program changes.

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment, or ECE, provides support directly to teachers employed in the Northwest Territories through a combination of education and training opportunities. In response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action No. 62 section ii, ECE provides:

- A four-day orientation to the North for all new teachers that includes a full day of awareness training on the issues related to the history and legacy of residential schools before they begin their teaching assignments;
- Awareness training on the issues related to the history and legacy of residential schools to all ECE headquarters staff;
- Required training for all NWT principals that includes a three-day on-the-land cultural orientation;
- Support for teacher professional development that may focus on cultural and linguistic issues in the North; and
- In cooperation with Aboriginal governments, language learning opportunities for educators and community members, such as the Certificate of Aboriginal Language Revitalization from the University of Victoria.

The Northwest Territories Teacher Association also offers professional development

funding for current language teachers to attend language learning opportunities, such as the University of Alberta's Canadian Indigenous Languages and Literacy Development Institute.

In response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action No. 63 section i, ECE is currently working on renewing the Aboriginal Language and Culture-Based Education Directive, which ensures that NWT students have access to Aboriginal language and culture-based education, and that their schools reflect their communities and cultures. The renewed directive will be implemented in the 2018-2019 school year.

Working in partnership with the Government of Nunavut and the Legacy of Hope Foundation, ECE has developed a collection of teaching resources that address the history and legacy of residential schools in Canada. The Residential School System in Canada: Understanding the Past – Seeking Reconciliation – Building Hope for Tomorrow is now mandatory for all grade 10 high school students in the Northwest Territories.

We continue to work with jurisdictions from across Canada through the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada to respond to a wide range of Aboriginal education issues, including:

- Developing and implementing K-12 curriculum and learning resources on Aboriginal peoples in Canadian history, and the history and legacy of residential schools;
- Sharing information and best practices on teaching curriculum related to residential schools and Aboriginal history;
- Building student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy and mutual respect; and
- Identifying teacher training needs.

With regard to the concerns around the social deficit in the Northwest Territories, it should be noted that the significant demand for social workers described in the recent

Labour Market Information Report is not being met by the graduation rates of the Aurora College Social Work Diploma Program. On average, there are four students who graduate from the program each year with an average annual cost of \$500,000 per year. Operating this program at Aurora College with so few graduates is not economically viable and is not producing enough graduates to meet the future labour market demands. Furthermore, the Labour Market Information Report identifies a need for registered social workers, who require a degree. As a diploma granting program, Aurora College Social Work graduates are unable to meet this need.

Students have access to Student Financial Assistance to support completion of a diploma or degree program at another institution. Southern institutions are able to provide a broader spectrum of courses that can better equip students as they progress through the program. They also provide a wide range of similar support to Aurora College, such as tutors, Student Wellness and Life counsellors and flexibility for students who face work-life balance issues.

Following the GNWT mandate, ECE is seeking to expand opportunities for postsecondary education in the NWT. However, in order to contribute to this goal, Aurora College must be effective, efficient and aligned with labour market demands.

As Aurora College continues to align its programming with labour demands identified by the Skills 4 Success Framework and Labour Market Information Report it will be able to provide new opportunities for Northerners.

ECE is also developing legislation for the creation an overarching framework to govern postsecondary education in the NWT. This work is a critical step toward increasing postsecondary opportunities for NWT residents. Aurora College, the Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning and Collège nordique francophone are expected to benefit from having a more inclusive and transparent governance structure. Within this structure, they will be better positioned to align their efforts and fill key gaps in education and training opportunities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.