



January 31, 2025

Honourable Caitlin Cleveland  
Minister of Education, Culture & Employment  
Government of the NWT  
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Honourable Caroline Wawzonek  
Minister of Finance  
Government of the NWT  
[Caroline\\_Wawzonek@gov.nt.ca](mailto:Caroline_Wawzonek@gov.nt.ca)

Dear Honourable Ministers,

**RE: Aurora College Program and Employment Cuts**

This is further to my letter dated January 24, 2025 on the same topic.

I would like reiterate that Aurora College's decision to close the Community Learning and Literacy Outreach Centres, along with cutting all the programs and workers' positions is a terrible idea. These cuts and closures will affect the marginalized residents of the NWT the most.

The CLCs provide so much more than just the official programming they are tasked with. This is not just about Adult Literacy – as crucial as that is. They are the face-to-face, personal level of support for residents who are trying to better themselves. I know you are aware of the struggles in the smaller communities with unreliable and costly internet access. There are many people who do not have computers or are not comfortable using them. Moving exclusively to online and distance learning is simply not acceptable.

These cuts are taking away 47 positions from the public service. The people who need these services – seniors, persons with disabilities, residents of small communities, and so many others – are being disregarded and left behind.

After reviewing reports and recommendations from the past ten years, we believe that Aurora College leadership failed to properly manage these centres, neglected the educational needs of communities and residents, and did not actively study or assess better ways to reach the people who need this programming. These publications include but are not limited to: the Aurora College Foundational Review in 2018, a report from the Task Force on Northern Post-Secondary Education in 2022, and the Evaluation of the Northern Basic Education Program July 2021 report.

We have serious concerns about the College's transition to a polytechnic when it cannot live up to its commitments to basic education. We are also concerned about its decision to unilaterally abandon its

public promises of maintaining Community Learning Centres and its willingness to put so many jobs and lives on the line without a concrete plan for affected employees and students.

If Aurora College is going to walk away from supporting these communities and residents, the GNWT needs to step up. Education, Culture and Employment must reinstate the CLCs and LOCs with no gap in service and without job cuts. If, as the college suggests, employees at some of these centres have been under-utilized, they could be tasked with conducting ongoing outreach with community governments and residents on how to serve them in a way that meets their needs, in addition to continuing their duties of administering education programs and support.

Allowing the employees at these learning centres to have meaningful, informed input on the programs and services they deliver will strengthen education in communities and improve outcomes for everyone.

While we are diametrically opposed to a GNWT hiring freeze announced earlier this week, we trust it will not impact transitioning affected workers to new positions within the GNWT, as the programs/centres are scheduled to run until the end of June. This gives ECE and current Aurora College employees time to conduct needs assessments and determine a positive path forward for continuing in-person education in our communities. Perhaps a portion of the funding that ECE would have allocated to the College for these learning centres in the next fiscal year could be put toward this planning.

On behalf of our members, I am always willing to have discussions about ways we can keep northern workers in stable, meaningful jobs through important, reliable services and programs to the public. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you wish to discuss this further.

Sincerely,



Gayla Thunstrom  
UNW President

CC: Aurora College President Dr. Angela James  
All NWT MLAs  
UNW Executive  
PSAC North Regional Executive Vice President Josée-Anne Spirito  
PSAC National President Sharon DeSousa