



POLYTECHNIC  
UNIVERSITY



AURORA COLLEGE  
TRANSFORMATION

# Implementation Plan

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English

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French

Kispin ki nitawihtin ē nīhiyawihk ōma ācimōwin, tipwāsīnān.

Cree

TLĪCHQ YATI K'ĒĒ. DI WEGODI NEWQ DĒ, GOTS'O GONEDE.

Tłıchq

ʔERIH TL'ÍS DĒNE SÚLINÉ YATI T'A HUTS'ELKÉR  
XA BEYÁYATI THEʔÁ ʔAT'E, NUWE TS'ÉN YÓLTL.

Chipewyan

EDI GONDI DEHGÁH GOT'JE ZHATJE K'ĒĒ EDATL'ÉH  
ENAHDDHĒ NIDE NAXETS'Ē EDAHLÍ

South Slavey

K'ÁHSHÓ GOT'JNE XƏDÓ K'É HEDERI  
ʔEDJHTL'É YERINIWE NÍDÉ DÚLE.

North Slavey

Jii gwandak izhii ginjik vat'atr'ijahch'uu zhit  
yinohtan jī', diits'āt ginohkhii.

Gwich'in

UVANITTUAQ ILITCHURISUKUPKU INUVIALUKTUN, QUQUAQLUTA.

Inuvialuktun

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Inuktitut

Hapkua titiqqat pijumagupkit Inuinnaqtun, uvaptinnut hivajarlutit.

Inuinnaqtun

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# MINISTER'S MESSAGE

## Changing the trajectory of the Northwest Territories requires energy and commitment.

Perhaps more importantly, it requires a vision of the future that has the potential to make a difference in our lives. The transformation of Aurora College to a polytechnic university is one such opportunity.

This follows recognition that work was needed to strengthen the institution to increase the quality of post-secondary education opportunities for residents of the Northwest Territories (NWT). Those new opportunities mean the future of the NWT will be in the hands of the people who live here and reflect their priorities for the future.

We acknowledge the legacy of colonialism and the generational impacts of residential schools on Indigenous peoples in the NWT and in the rest of Canada. We further acknowledge that the impacts on Indigenous peoples in the NWT mean we are obligated to engage about post-secondary education in a way that is respectful and meaningful. This does not always mean we will agree, but we will listen and respond in a way that allows for a building of relationship and trust with all the people we serve through this transformation process.

I am excited to lay out a clear path toward the establishment of a polytechnic university and provide an update on our progress. The path ahead remains exciting and increasingly important to our future. Whether you are an Indigenous Northerner or have chosen the North as your home, you can expect a place at the polytechnic university and share in the benefits of its education and research programs.

We have a rare opportunity to re-shape Aurora College into an institution that is more responsive to the education and training needs of the territory, communities and residents. It is not just about being responsive to current needs; it is about establishing a polytechnic university that continues to engage with partners and stakeholders in order to understand where it needs to be in the future.

The challenges we face in response to the COVID-19 pandemic further

highlight the need to empower residents to be resilient and responsive to change. We must not only overcome adversity; we must do so in a way that ensures the prosperity of future generations. Aurora College has been central to the NWT's social and economic development for 50 years, and the polytechnic university will become increasingly critical to overcoming future challenges and reaching our full potential.

At an early stage in the transformation process, through engagement with partners, stakeholders and members of the public, the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) developed a clear vision for the post-secondary system as part of the NWT Post-Secondary Education Strategic Framework 2019-2029 (Strategic Framework). Namely, that every resident of the NWT has an equitable opportunity to reach their full potential by obtaining a

post-secondary education from institutions that are student centred, accessible, high quality, relevant and accountable. Five goals further define how this vision will be realized, including to prioritize student success, increase access to post-secondary education opportunities, remain responsive to labour demands in the NWT, remain responsive to local and regional needs, and support growth of the knowledge economy.

It is clear the polytechnic university will be at the centre of our post-secondary system and play a leading role in realizing the vision and goals of the Strategic Framework. The polytechnic university will be geared toward meeting labour demand in the NWT and ensuring Northerners are first in line for those jobs. The polytechnic university will be the focal point of increasing investments in the knowledge economy and bring wide-ranging opportunities through partnerships with Indigenous governments, communities, industry, non-governmental organizations and other post-secondary institutions.

Most importantly, the polytechnic university will be focused on learners by meeting them where

they are in their education journey and supporting them in achieving their own education and career goals. This will include ensuring a place for every NWT resident at the polytechnic university through access to adult basic education, upgrading, certificate, diploma and degree programs.

As the institution emerges from transformation it will be stronger, more accessible and able to attract a greater number of students from within the NWT and beyond. Through a strengthened foundation, the institution will develop new and ladder programs over time within the areas of teaching and research specialization. This will provide direct economic benefits to Northern communities, particularly the three campus communities.

None of this can be achieved without also increasing the availability of programming in our small communities. Through a new and innovative approach to community learning, the polytechnic university will eventually have a presence in every community of the NWT. From our smallest communities to our regional centres, every NWT resident deserves an equitable opportunity

to achieve their education and career goals.

Establishing an effective, efficient and sustainable polytechnic university that continues to be responsive to the employment needs of Northerners requires taking steps in the right order and at the right time. Since the initial announcement of a polytechnic university, tremendous progress has been made through planning and engagement with partners and stakeholders. Both take significant time but are essential to our success.

I want to thank all those who have been involved with supporting this important work, including the Aurora College team, GNWT staff and the many partners and stakeholders who have helped to shape the path toward a polytechnic university. We are strongest when we work together for the good of all peoples of the NWT.



**R.J. Simpson**  
*Minister of Education,  
Culture and Employment*



# INTRODUCTION

Following a decision-making process that is informed by research, best practice and ongoing engagement, Aurora College will be transformed into an effective, efficient and sustainable polytechnic university that is responsive to the needs of Northerners.

There are wide-ranging benefits to establishing a polytechnic university, many of which are described in the Government Response to the Findings and Recommendations of the Aurora College Foundational Review (Government Response).

As the transformation process advances, a key part of reporting will be to help partners and stakeholders, including prospective students and employers, understand the substantive improvements that have taken place and the wide-ranging benefits they will bring to the NWT. The establishment of a polytechnic university is about increasing access to quality post-secondary education and training opportunities for NWT residents so they can reach their education and career goals.

The Aurora College Transformation Implementation Plan (Implementation Plan) provides a clear understanding of the path to

establishing a polytechnic university, with most changes completed by October 2024 and a formal launch of the institution in May 2025.

The path laid out in the Implementation Plan will ensure a strong foundation to support wide-ranging changes. The Implementation Plan does not describe what the new polytechnic university will look like: it won't reveal new programming, organizational structures or buildings. Rather, it will help partners, stakeholders and members of the public understand how the transformation will unfold. It is essential that those changes happen in the right order and at the

right time and are rooted in strong connections to Northern land, tradition, community and people.

It is also important to recognize the distinction between a “transformation” and a “transition”. Whereas transitional change is about replacing existing processes with new processes, transformational change reshapes an institution's strategy, operations and organizational culture. While the GNWT set a direction to establish a polytechnic university, transformational change means that establishing a clear picture of the destination will be part of the journey.

# TRANSFORMATION PHASES

The transformation process is divided into three phases. This helps to ensure the work is being completed in the right order and at the right time. It also helps signal what the focus will be at any given time.

## Phase 1: Strengthening the Foundation and Planning for Change

The transformation process is currently in this phase, and work has been underway since the commitment to transform was made by the GNWT in October 2018.

The first phase includes strengthening the foundation by developing up-to-date policies and procedures to ensure quality service, including the development of a program review framework to guide future program decisions. All of this work has begun. A program review framework was developed and is being used to review the Social Work Diploma and the Bachelor of Education programs. Currently both programs are in the self-study phase of the review. It is expected that both reviews will be completed and decisions made about these programs in Phase 1. Planning for change will be done through the completion of facilities planning studies, jurisdictional scans and engagement with subject matter experts. An important feature of this phase will also be wide-ranging engagements with

partners and stakeholders. Their input will help to shape many aspects of the transformation process, including most recently through feedback on the Aurora College and Polytechnic University Governance Discussion Paper in August 2020 and the Polytechnic University Areas of Teaching and Research Specialization Discussion Paper in September 2020.

Together with the Implementation Plan, important planning documents will be released during Phase 1, including the Aurora College 3-Year Strategic Plan, Polytechnic University Areas of Teaching and Research Specialization and the Aurora College Corporate Plan 2020-2021.

## Phase 2: Transformational Change

During this phase the majority of changes to the College's organizational structure will be completed to reflect a polytechnic university model. The College will also undergo a quality assurance review to show that it has created sustainable processes, demonstrated its financial and operational resources and shown

that an atmosphere of academic freedom exists. Restoring the Board of Governors under a new governance system is an important step in preparing for the quality assurance review and will be required during this phase. At the end of this phase, Aurora College will have developed another Strategic Plan and Academic Plan and will take the final step under Phase 2, which is to complete the legislative process for a *Polytechnic University Act* that formally recognizes the new polytechnic university.

## Phase 3: Polytechnic University Launched

Operating as a polytechnic university under a new governance structure, the institution will continue to develop and expand programming, human resources and infrastructure. This will include the launch of a new "made in the NWT" degree program offered by the polytechnic university. Phase 3 will end when all commitments have been met and all major projects have concluded.

# PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Although the transformation is often presented as one project, it is in fact a collection of over 200 projects to be completed over approximately 8 years.

However, as highlighted in the transformation timeline below, the polytechnic university will be formally launched before some projects are completed, approximately 6 years from when the process was started. Unlike a government program that may seek to have an immediate impact, the transformation is about ensuring an effective, efficient and sustainable polytechnic university starting with its launch in May 2025.

Improvements to Aurora College will increasingly become apparent through the incremental changes that will take place in the coming months and years, particularly during Phase 2: Transformational Change.

It is the primary function of the Aurora College Transformation Team, based in the Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE), to coordinate and support Aurora College, ECE and other GNWT departments that are working collaboratively to strengthen and transform Aurora College. As the transformation

process advances, Aurora College employees will increasingly be doing the majority of transformation planning and implementation, but must at the same time continue delivering quality programs and supporting students.

How change is implemented can be as important as what changes. Involving members of the Aurora College team in the design and implementation of change draws on their significant experience while increasing their skills, knowledge and abilities as they prepare to become part of a polytechnic university.

An online project management system is being used to coordinate the many projects, ensure appropriate workloads, and support monitoring and public reporting on the transformation. Through this system, ECE and Aurora College employees are able to collaborate on projects and maintain reporting relationships across the organizations. The Aurora College team have been trained on this system and it has been in place since January 2020.

This Implementation Plan identifies and describes the major components of transformation, including a clear timeline to help track progress. At the core of the Implementation Plan are Critical Milestones – one of three types of transformation milestones.

- **Critical Milestones** shape and affect the overall transformation process and timeline. Meeting Critical Milestones means that the overall timeline for the transformation stays on target and on time. These milestones are at the heart of this Implementation Plan and should not change.
- **Key Milestones** represent a significant achievement in the overall transformation of Aurora College, such as the completion of a Government commitment. The completion of Key Milestones may be updated as the transformation planning advances and will be reported publicly throughout the transformation.
- **Project Milestones** mark the completion of specific work that is required for an individual project to move forward. Project Milestones are likely to change as projects advance and are only visible to Aurora College and ECE team members who support the project.





# AURORA COLLEGE GOVERNANCE DURING THE TRANSFORMATION

Given the focus on governance in the Government Response and the anticipated changes to Aurora College in this area, on June 06, 2017 the former Minister of Education, Culture and Employment (Minister) appointed an Administrator of Aurora College under subsection 31(1) of the *Aurora College Act*.

The appointment of an Administrator, in place of a Board, has ensured stability and continuity, as Aurora College was expected to maintain normal operations through the course of both the year-long Aurora College Foundational Review and through the initial phase of the transformation process.

Following section 32 of the *Aurora College Act*, the Administrator exercises the powers and performs the duties of the Board in accordance with the direction of the Minister. As such, the Administrator holds the President of Aurora College accountable for upholding the policies and bylaws of the institution.

The process of transforming Aurora College into a polytechnic university is being led by the Minister and will continue to require significant support and coordination by ECE until the end of Phase 2: Transformational Change. From there, as Aurora College develops

further capacity as an effective, efficient and sustainable institution, it will gradually assume direct responsibility for most aspects of the transformation.

# FUTURE GOVERNANCE OF AURORA COLLEGE AND POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY

In recent years, the governance of post-secondary education institutions in other jurisdictions has been changing, particularly around the role of government.

Looking holistically at other governance models and the opportunities they provide is helping to guide this area of the transformation. However, consideration is also given to the NWT's own economic, social, cultural and geographic contexts.

Although much can be learned from the experience of other jurisdictions, there are a wide range of considerations that remain unique to the North and considerable strengths to draw upon, including strong connections to Northern land, tradition, community and people.

The Government Response outlined an approach to governance that is very different from the one currently in place at Aurora College. In particular, it was noted that the greatest potential for success in all areas will be achieved under a governance system that more effectively defines, supports, recognizes and rewards success. Such a system includes continuously evaluating what success means to the institution through regular renewal of its strategic plan and

internal processes of continuous quality improvement.

In the long term, establishing an effective, efficient and sustainable institution will rely on an appropriate relationship with government. Specifically, it is evident that the polytechnic university must be empowered to function at arm's length in its strategic decision-making and operations. Such empowerment will come through legislative change, but will also be contingent on increased capacity within Aurora College to take on new responsibilities.

The Government Response and this Implementation Plan commit to resuming board governance. In order to ensure an effective, efficient and sustainable institution, significant changes are required

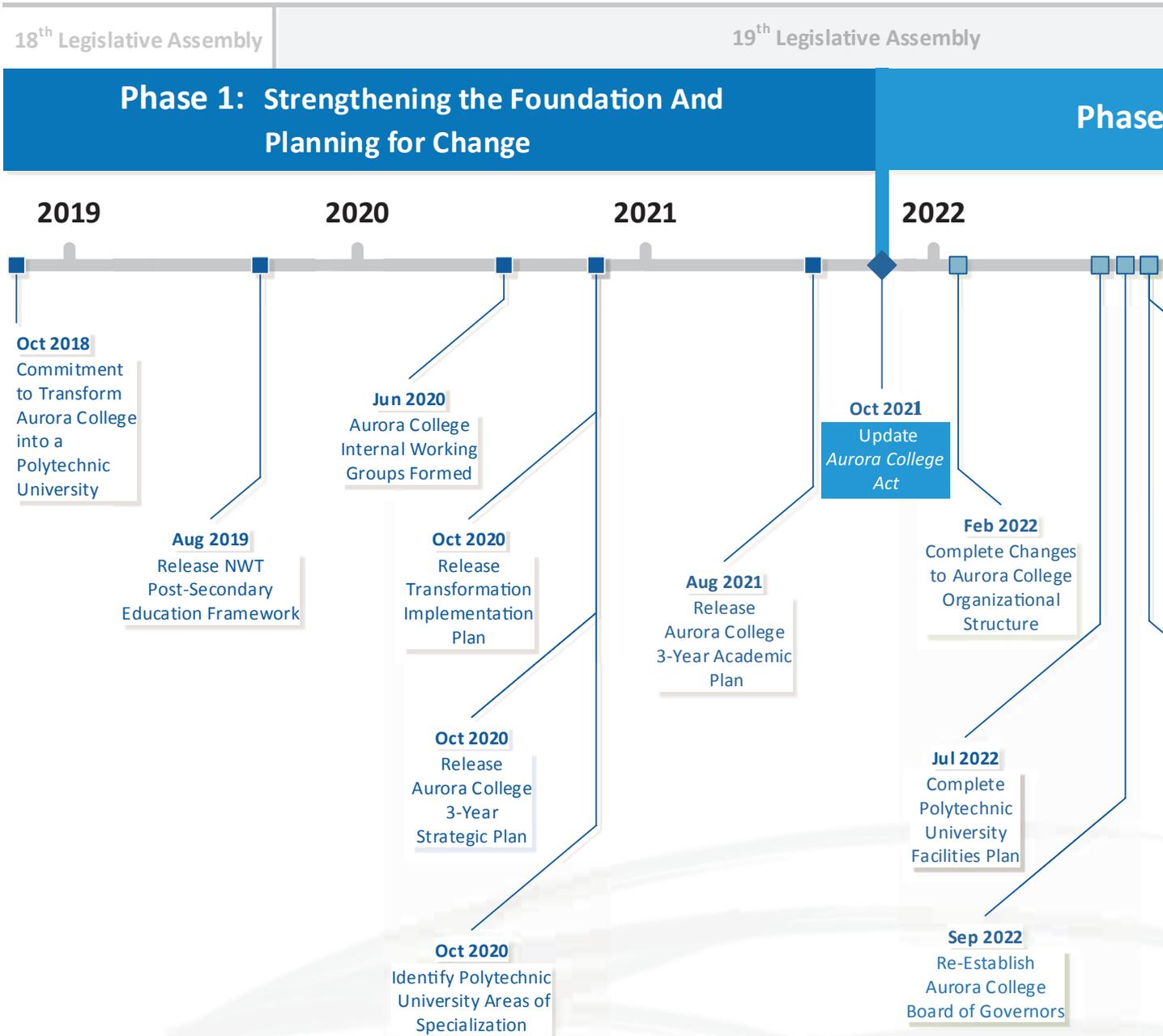
before this can happen. This includes legislative changes to the *Aurora College Act* and the addition of new policies, procedures and supports that ensure the new Board is set up to succeed. Later in the transformation process, new legislation will be introduced to replace the *Aurora College Act* and establish the polytechnic university. This second legislative process will include further changes to the governance system to align with national standards and best practice, as well as to meet the unique needs, and draw on the considerable strengths, of the NWT.

Governance has been and will continue to be an important topic for engagement with partners and stakeholders.



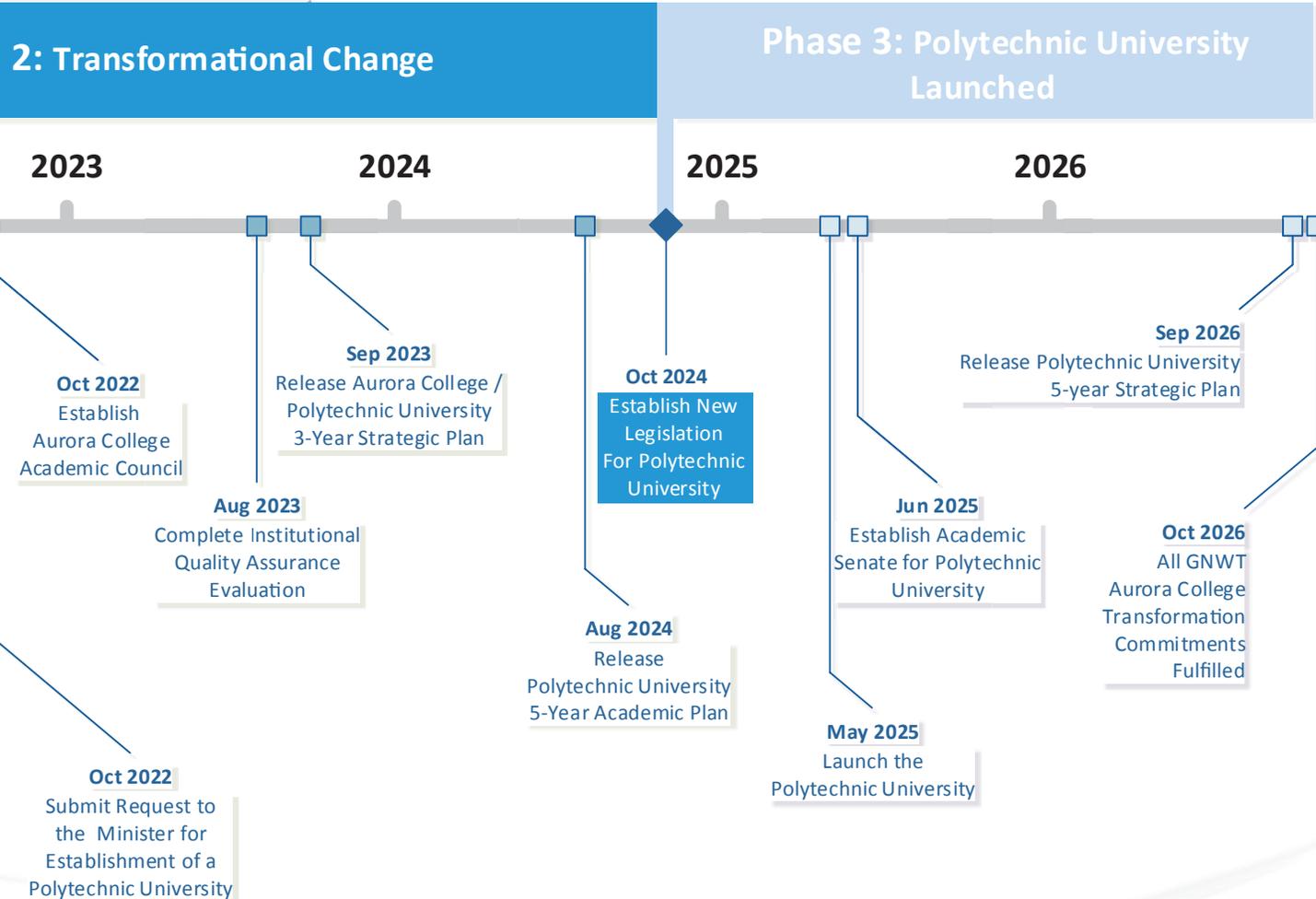
# AURORA COLLEGE TRANSFORMATION

## Critical Milestones





20<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly



*Critical Milestones shape and affect the overall transformation process and timeline. Other key milestones will be identified as planning in Phase One advances.*

Government of  
Northwest Territories

# CRITICAL MILESTONE DESCRIPTIONS

The following Critical Milestones form the basis of the Implementation Plan and help to ensure the work required is fully understood and timelines are realistic. It is essential that Critical Milestones be completed in the right order and at the right time in order to meet the GNWT commitment to transform Aurora College over a 6 year period.

## **Aurora College Internal**

### **Working Groups Formed (June 2020)**

A working group structure has been established to oversee transformation projects, including an Executive Leadership Team, four Working Groups and multiple Project Teams. This has defined additional roles for Aurora College employees, and has helped to manage the workload. It should be noted that some Project Teams were formed in June 2019 and have been engaged in transformation since that time.

### **Release Transformation**

#### **Implementation Plan (October 2020)**

This provides an overall timeline of work required to complete the transformation of Aurora College into a polytechnic university.

### **Release Aurora College 3-Year Strategic Plan (October 2020)**

The Strategic Plan includes a renewed vision, mission and values to guide Aurora College through the next three years of the transformation, primarily during the work to strengthen the foundation and plan for change

in the first phase of the transformation. Aurora College will demonstrate leadership in the delivery of relevant and meaningful education and research rooted in strong connections to Northern land, tradition, community and people. The next Strategic Plan will be developed during the second phase of the transformation under the supervision of a new Board and will guide the remaining transformation work.

### **Identify Polytechnic University Areas of Teaching and Research Specialization (October 2020)**

— Following the overall vision and strategic direction for the polytechnic university, this document establishes robust, well defined areas of teaching and research specialization to inform further planning and engagement. Having areas of specialization identified is the first step in building new strategic partnerships with industry, other post-secondary institutions, the federal government, and Indigenous and community governments. It will ensure academic and research excellence in these areas of specialization, help to inform future programming decisions and support an effective, efficient and sustainable institution moving forward.



**Release Aurora College 3-Year Academic Plan (August 2021)** – The Academic Plan is an important standard for any modern post-secondary institution. It will eventually be shaped around the areas of specialization, but this first version will focus largely on existing programming at Aurora College. It is an important step in preparing for the development and expansion of programming under the polytechnic university.

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**Update Aurora College Act (October 2021)**  
This existing legislation establishes Aurora College as a post-secondary institution. Anticipated amendments will result in a more arm’s-length relationship. This is expected to include changes to the Board appointment process and their powers in governing over administrative and academic matters. Conversely, the role of the Minister is expected to narrow in scope. The introduction of the *Polytechnic University Act* later in the transformation process will lead to additional changes to the governance system.

**Changes to Aurora College Organizational Structure Complete (February 2022)** – Following the direction set out in the Government Response and Aurora College 3-Year Strategic Plan, Aurora College will be re-organized to better meet the needs of a polytechnic university. These changes will be considered during Phase 1 of the transformation process and will likely include changes to Vice President positions and reporting structures. Job descriptions across the institution will also be revised to reflect new roles and responsibilities under a polytechnic university. Changes will be made incrementally leading up to the completion of this Critical Milestone.

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**Complete Polytechnic University Facilities Plan (July 2022)** – This will outline current and future infrastructure at the polytechnic university and identify how that infrastructure will meet institutional needs, including the scope of academic and research programs, services and supports available at each facility. The Polytechnic University Facilities Plan will describe the overarching network of facilities distributed across the NWT that form the polytechnic university.

### **Re-Establish Board of Governors**

**(September 2022)** – The updated *Aurora College Act* will support the appointment of a Board with the knowledge, skills and abilities required to lead the institution through the final stages of the transformation process and beyond. It is also essential that the governing body understand, reflect and respond effectively to the needs of those it serves. New training and support for Board members will be instituted as part of re-establishing the Board.

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### **Establish Aurora College Academic Council**

**(October 2022)** - The Academic Council will advise the Board and make recommendations on all academic matters. The Academic Council will build the institution's capacity to make academic decisions. This will enable the institution to move towards arm's length governance, help to ensure academic freedom and meet quality assurance requirements connected to academic decision making. The Academic Council is an interim step in the move toward a bi-cameral governance model with a Senate as outlined in the Government Response.

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### **Submit Request to the Minister for Establishment of a Polytechnic University**

**(October 2022)** – The *Post-Secondary Education Act* requires that an application be formally made to the Minister to establish a polytechnic university. Upon receipt of this application from Aurora College, the Minister shall refer the application to a designated quality assurance body for review and recommendation.

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### **Complete Institutional Quality Assurance**

**Evaluation (August 2023)** – An institutional quality assurance review is required before Aurora College can become a degree-granting institution. A designated quality assurance body will undertake an organizational evaluation that assesses the extent to which the institution has created sustainable processes, demonstrated its financial and operational resources are adequate, established an arm's length governance model and ensured that an atmosphere of academic freedom exists.

### **Release Aurora College/Polytechnic University 3-Year Strategic Plan (September 2023)**

– The Strategic Plan will include a renewed vision, mission and goals to guide Aurora College through the launch of a polytechnic university. It will be completed under the governance of the new Board, at arm's length from the GNWT.

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### **Release Polytechnic University 5-Year Academic Plan (August 2024)**

– The Academic Plan will build on the three-year plan released in 2021, and will continue to develop the areas of specialization at each campus. It will include details of new programming being launched as part of the new polytechnic university.

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### **Establish New Legislation for the Polytechnic University (October 2024)**

– New legislation establishing the polytechnic university will be implemented, and the *Aurora College Act* will be repealed. This will mark six years from the initial commitment to transform Aurora College and represents a completion of work required to launch the polytechnic university.

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### **Launch the Polytechnic University (May 2025)**

Ceremony to mark the formal opening of the polytechnic university.

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### **Establish Academic Senate for Polytechnic University (June 2025)**

– Building on the capacity gained through the intermediary step of an Academic Council, a Senate will be established to make decisions on academic matters.

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### **Release Polytechnic University 5-year Strategic Plan (September 2026)**

– The new institution will set its own Strategic Plan to guide it as it expands the range of academic programming and the scope of research activities in the NWT, while building collaborative relationships with institutions across Canada.



# POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY FUNDING

There are different aspects of funding that will be examined as part of the transformation.

Strengthening and growing the reputation of the institution while at the same time creating new opportunities for revenue growth are long-term goals of the transformation. This will not replace the GNWT role as the primary funder. Rather, more diverse revenue streams will support ongoing development and growth of the polytechnic university, as well as a more arms-length relationship with the GNWT.

## Strengthening the Foundation and Planning for Change

Costs associated with Phase 1: Strengthening the Foundation and Planning for Change include:

- ECE-based Aurora College Transformation Team;
- Additional positions within Aurora College critical to capacity building;
- Support for Aurora College Transformation Working Groups comprising Aurora College employees engaged in transformation planning and implementation; and
- Contractors hired to conduct planning studies in support of specific projects.

These costs will be funded through Aurora College's financial reserves. Aurora College continues to be supported by a GNWT commitment to maintain consistent base funding through the transformation period.

## New and Improved Facilities

Facilities planning requires a clear understanding of how the polytechnic university will operate across the three campuses and network of community learning centres. This includes an assessment of current facilities, future needs and where changes or expansion may be required. This is one of the major undertakings of the transformation initiative during

Phase 1: Strengthening the Foundation and Planning for Change. Although further planning is required, work to date has confirmed the polytechnic university will require enhancements to current facilities and, in some cases, new facilities. In particular, the following changes are anticipated:

- Modifications to existing facilities as part of a new approach to program delivery, research support and organizational structure;
- Expansion of facilities across NWT communities to support increased delivery of programming at the community level;
- Expansion of research support facilities at the Western Arctic Research Centre in Inuvik;
- New student housing facilities at the Thebacha Campus in Fort Smith;
- New facilities at the Yellowknife North Slave Campus to meet the requirements of current and future programming.

The availability of capital funding is not a direct consideration when assessing needs, but it will be a factor in determining how and when those needs will be met. Once the needs of the polytechnic university can be clearly articulated, the order and pace of change must align with available resources to support an effective, efficient and sustainable polytechnic university.

In addition to GNWT funding, the transformation process will involve federal government support, fundraising campaigns, private donations and exploring the potential for public-private partnerships. With support from the Department of Finance and the Department of Infrastructure, ECE and Aurora College will determine the best combination of these options to support the expansion of facilities.

## Ongoing Operations and Maintenance

The change in approach to teaching, research and student support, as well as the expansion of infrastructure, will result in increases to ongoing operating and maintenance costs for the polytechnic university.

Part of ensuring an effective, efficient and sustainable polytechnic university is having a funding formula in place that is clearly understood, meets the needs of the institution and drives success in teaching and research. ECE will be working with Aurora College and the Department of Finance to develop and implement such a funding formula.



# A PLACE FOR EVERY NWT RESIDENT

The polytechnic university will have a place for every resident who seeks an opportunity to further their skills, knowledge and abilities through post-secondary education.

This means meeting students where they are in their educational journey and being supportive through the entire journey, from applying to a program offered by a community learning centre or campus right through to employment success. This requires a learning-centred approach that aligns institutional success with student success.

It is essential that students can pursue an education in a way that makes sense for them and that leads to meaningful outcomes. The majority of Aurora College

students are Indigenous and we are committed to creating a culturally meaningful environment where Indigenous students can grow and succeed. In developing student

pathways, the transformation process will re-examine where and how individual courses and entire programs are delivered, be it in communities, at campuses, through

distance learning or in partnership with other institutions, including specialized NWT-based organizations like Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning or Collège nordique francophone.

The polytechnic university will continue to offer academic upgrading and access programs to increase access to the ever-growing range of certificate, diploma and degree programs. Through enhancements to the processes for recruitment and retention of students, the polytechnic university will never turn away any resident seeking to gain a foothold in the education system. Every resident will be supported in setting and achieving academic and career goals that make sense for them. The success of the polytechnic university and the success of students will be one-in-the-same.

The polytechnic university will serve as a bridge to programs at other post-secondary institutions across Canada and around the world. In some instances, NWT residents will take advantage of learning opportunities close to home in order to qualify them for opportunities at other institutions. In other instances, prospective students, current students or graduates from other post-secondary institutions will take advantage of unique learning opportunities in the NWT by continuing their education at the polytechnic university, where Indigenous, traditional and local knowledge will be respected and incorporated into teaching and research. Employers will benefit



from increased professional development opportunities for their staff that ensure a strong and adaptive NWT labour force.

The polytechnic university will be focused on programming within its established areas of specialization. However, through co-investment partnerships with partners and stakeholders, the polytechnic university can also facilitate the delivery of additional programming at a campus or in a community to meet specialized or short-term training needs.

### **Access in Every Community**

The journey toward a polytechnic university began with the GNWT commitment to ensure increased access for NWT residents to a quality post-secondary education. Through the transformation into a polytechnic university, the institution will be taking a renewed approach to regional program delivery that helps ensure an expanded and sustainable network of community learning centres. The goal is for the polytechnic university to maintain regular programming in every community of the NWT.

The polytechnic university will continue to be the only public post-secondary education institution in the NWT and comprise a student population that is largely Indigenous.



It will engage in Northern research programs and seek innovative solutions to Northern issues. Perhaps most importantly, a future polytechnic university must work in partnership with Indigenous governments and communities on a wide range of teaching and research initiatives. In doing so, the polytechnic university must be responsive to different ways of being, knowing and doing in teaching and research.

Regions, communities and people of the NWT are diverse, and that diversity must be supported by a delivery model that is responsive to the needs of each community. Through the course of planning the transformation, Aurora College and the GNWT have engaged and will continue to engage with Indigenous governments and community leaders to develop a new approach to regional program delivery.

It is clear from engagement that has taken place to date that NWT communities have varying social, cultural and economic priorities, but each have post-secondary education needs. The polytechnic university will work to utilize GNWT funding, third-party funding and co-investment partnerships to continually improve and expand regional learning opportunities in a way that better meets those needs. At the same time, the polytechnic university must remain effective, efficient and sustainable, which means being fiscally responsible.

The anticipated result is a polytechnic university with a more diverse set of regional facilities, including regional learning centres, community learning centres and seasonal learning centres. What these facilities will look like, where they will be located and how they will fit within the overall polytechnic university's network of facilities requires further engagement, research and planning.

### Ongoing Engagement

Where we are now in the process of transforming Aurora College into a polytechnic university builds on four years of engagement with Indigenous governments, communities, post-secondary stakeholders, industry and other stakeholders. These engagements have been an essential part of the GNWT's wide-ranging work to strengthen the post-secondary education system and advance

priorities such as establishing a polytechnic university. Over the past four years, input directly or indirectly supporting transformation has come from engagements during drafting of the Aurora College Foundational Review Report, the Government Response and the NWT Post-Secondary Education Strategic Framework 2019-2029, as well as during the legislative process leading to completion of the *Post-Secondary Education Act*. Feedback has been received on two discussion papers, one focusing on governance and the other on areas of teaching and research specialization. Aurora College has also recently completed a new three-year strategic plan that incorporates wide-ranging input from Aurora College employees, Indigenous and community leadership, and stakeholders.

Past engagements have taken the form of meetings between officials, public town hall meetings in campus communities, in-person and telephone interviews, online surveys and email submissions. A speaker series on post-secondary education hosted in conjunction with the development of the Post-Secondary Education Strategic Framework also allowed stakeholders and members of the public the chance to share their vision and ideas at an early stage in the transformation.

Engagement is ongoing and will continue to shape various aspects of the polytechnic university. In particular, at various points in the transformation process Aurora College and the GNWT

will seek input from partners and stakeholders on approaches to meeting regional needs, student pathways to attaining qualifications and future programming. Such input will, in turn, inform facilities planning, resource decisions and programming offered at the polytechnic university.

The GNWT and Aurora College have also developed an Aurora College Transformation Indigenous Engagement Approach. The intent of this document is to outline the GNWT's and Aurora College's approach to engage Indigenous governments during the transformation process. It is hoped that engagement will occur in the spirit of collaboration and a shared commitment to provide all residents with increased opportunities to gain a quality post-secondary education.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action provide the basis for how GNWT and Aurora College will engage Indigenous governments during the transformation process. This approach is not an agreement; rather, it is a public statement of how the GNWT and Aurora College aspire to engage with Indigenous governments. It is a living document that will continue to be updated based on feedback from Indigenous governments for the duration of the transformation.

Knowledge shared by Indigenous governments will help to strengthen Aurora College and create a

polytechnic university that is reflective of the people it serves. For engagement to be genuine it must occur on the right topics, in the right way and at the right time. We are committed to creating a culturally meaningful environment where Indigenous students can grow and succeed.

### Co-Investment Partnerships

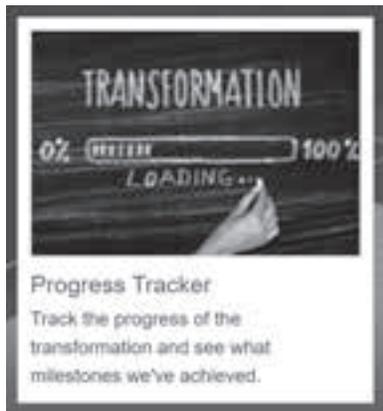
The polytechnic university will be an innovative institution as reflected in its strategy, operations and organizational culture. This will extend to how the polytechnic university collaborates with partners to maximize post-secondary education and research opportunities across the NWT.

The term “co-investment partner” means any organization with a common interest in post-secondary education or research that, through a formal agreement, contributes knowledge, resources or funding to the polytechnic university.

Through co-investment partnership agreements, Aurora College will frame how it collaborates around teaching and research with GNWT and federal departments, Indigenous governments, communities, industry, non-governmental organizations and other post-secondary institutions. Such agreements will, in most instances, continue past the launch of the polytechnic university as ongoing collaboration will be a hallmark of the institution's success.

# MONITORING AND REPORTING PROGRESS

Monitoring progress and providing transparent and regular reporting to Members of the Legislative Assembly, partners, stakeholders and the public throughout the transformation process is critical.



Actions will be taken to ensure all those interested:

- Can gain a clear understanding about what it means to transform Aurora College and establish a polytechnic university;
- Appreciate that this is an incremental and multi-year process;
- Are aware of opportunities to provide input; and
- Look forward to the benefits of a polytechnic university.

The website includes extensive information about the transformation process, makes available all transformation documents, and has an ever-evolving Frequently Asked Questions section. As with any innovative organization, the website will continue to grow and adapt with new elements as they become available.

Social media will include strategic posts on the Aurora College Facebook and Twitter platforms, and ECE Facebook pages when appropriate.



The following methods will be used to report progress of the transformation:

## Website and Social Media

This Implementation Plan is supported by an interactive website that provides its visitors with an opportunity to track both Critical and Key Milestones, follow the timeline and read about current successes throughout the transformation process.

## Quarterly Report

The Quarterly Report will highlight progress in a variety of ways including photos, stories, graphs and charts. The information will be presented in plain language. The quantitative data will be generated from the project management system and the qualitative data will be obtained through Aurora College employees working on transformation projects. The report will be distributed to Members of the Legislative Assembly, partners and key stakeholders and will be available for public download from the website.

[www.ece.gov.nt.ca/en/ACTransformation](http://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/en/ACTransformation)

