

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ACCOUNTABILITY AND OVERSIGHT

**THURSDAY MARCH 6, 2025
DET'ANCHOGH KÚÉ - EAGLE ROOM
8:45 AM**

AGENDA

1. Call to Order
2. Prayer or Reflection
3. Review and Adoption of Agenda
4. Declarations of Conflict of Interest
5. In Camera Matters
 - a) House Planning
 - i. Meetings and Events
 - ii. Previous Day's Business
 - iii. Minister's Statements
 - iv. Members Statements/Oral Questions
 - v. Acknowledgements
 - vi. Written Questions
 - vii. Replies to the Commissioner's Address
 - viii. Petitions
 - ix. Reports of Standing and Special Committees / Reports on Review of Bills
 - x. Tabled Documents
 - xi. Notice of Motion (seconder)
 - xii. Motions
 - xiii. Committee of the Whole
 - xiv. Other Members' Initiatives
6. Public Matters
 - a) Briefing with President of Aurora College Board of Governors and Minister of Education Culture and Employment Re: Closure of Community Learning Centres
 - i. Power Point Presentation
7. New Business
 - i. None
8. Date and Time of Next Meeting: March 11, 2025 at 9:00am
9. Adjournment



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AURORA
COLLEGE**

Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight

Aurora College: Modernizing Adult Upgrading in the NWT

**Board Chairperson Joseph Handley &
President Dr. Angela James**

March 6, 2025





SCAO Question #1: How and why was the decision made to close the Community Learning Centres?

- Over the past 10 to 15 years, Community Learning Centres (CLCs) have become increasingly problematic:
 - With low numbers, high costs, top heavy in regional administration, and being out of scope of Aurora College's purpose to provide adult upgrading.
- CLCs continued not meeting the needs of learners and communities;
- Due to the CLC issues of low enrolment, high costs, and its unsustainable nature, Aurora College Board of Governors made the unanimous decision to close all CLCs, as of June 30, 2025.
- Aurora College can no longer afford to continue to operate a system that is prohibitively expensive, ineffective, and outdated.

SCAO Question #1: Continued

- Overall, the CLCs were not sustainable, especially in the climate of fiscal restraint, apparent in the GNWT's 2024-2025 Financial Sustainability Plan (FSP).
- With a \$1.85M reduction in funding in 2024-2025, and in anticipation of possible further FSP cuts in 2025-2026, Aurora College had to make some tough decisions related to the high costs associated with CLCs.
- Aurora College decided that the “bricks and mortar” approach of delivering on-site face-to-face adult upgrading at 19 CLCs will stop as of June 30, 2025.



SCAO Question #2: What does Aurora College mean by modernizing adult upgrading? And resolving ongoing issues of low enrolment?

- Aurora College's go-forward plan is to move into 21st century learning with a modernized, more effective adult upgrading model.
- The re-designed upgrading plan will be delivered at Aurora College's three campuses, in addition to an online delivery model with wrap-around supports connecting learners in all 33 NWT communities.
- By increasing adult upgrading into 33 communities, Aurora College aims to reach more adult learners, particularly Indigenous students who make up the majority of the population in the NWT communities.



SCAO Question #2: Continued

- Aurora College already has established its success with online learning in its current programs, showing many positive results.
- Current data has also shown that the majority of the students who register and complete these programs are Indigenous women who have demonstrated very capable online abilities to handle their coursework with high success rates.
- The modernized approach will have community students access online wrap-around supports to increase successful course completion levels, such as:
 - Access to technology: new and rebuilt computers, headsets, microphones, applicable software, and internet turbo sticks;
 - Support for learners including an onboarding technology course to ensure student success;

SCAO Question #2: Continued

Wrap-around supports (continued):

- Additional IT capacity: new positions to provide tech support and help with challenges and trouble shooting;
- Dedicated online staff to expand delivery options into communities to ensure subject-matter expertise;
- 1-800 support line with online counsellors, wellness staff, and tutors to support the expanded delivery of adult upgrading in communities;
- Mentors will provide coaching support, regular “check-ins,” and regular networking activities with learners through a team-based approach;
- Plans are underway to initiate regional cohorts of online upgrading students to gather on an annual basis at one of the three Aurora College campuses, in order to showcase their project-based learning and participate in campus-based activities, such as experiential labs, campus tours, and exposure to trades and apprenticeships.

SCAO Question #3: What impacts to staff are expected by this decision?

- With the upcoming closures of the CLCs by June 30, 2025, the College will reduce the number of indeterminate and term positions, expected at approximately 31 employees;
- The College will formally notify all impacted staff on or after March 20, 2025;
- Currently, Aurora College is collaborating with Human Resources to advance the GNWT Staff Retention Policy to ensure one-on-one support for all affected employees, in order to increase the number of staff who may possibly be retained by Aurora College or transfer to the GNWT public service.

SCAO Question #3: What impacts to students are expected by this decision?

- Aurora College will be stepping into 21st century learning, by strengthening, enhancing, and promoting online / distance education learning into 33 communities for the future students who require adult upgrading.
- With the paradigm shift towards distance education, online learning will be a regular part of business for all students for both online adult upgrading, as well as in other current and future Aurora College programs.
- Aurora College's modernized adult upgrading with wrap-around supports for students will commence in new 2025-2026 academic year.

SCAO Question #4: What is the estimated cost savings from closure of the learning centres?

- Current CLC positions total 4 program heads, 19 adult educators, 19 custodians, 3 regional admin assistants, plus O&M, leases, and maintenance costs of buildings equal \$6.67M.
- ECE collaborates with Aurora College via a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for project based funding that supports Adult Literacy and Basic Education (ALBE). This has included \$1.619M for ALBE, \$865K of which is sunsetting in 2025-2026 due to fiscal sustainability measures.
- Discussion with ECE will be undertaken to explore the re-profiling of these funds with the desire to see cost savings. This will be dependent on any additional supports that are seen as necessary to provide education and training within communities to fill any gaps left by the closure of CLCs.
- The estimated cost savings is approximately \$8.29M.

SCAO Question #5: What are the next steps that Aurora College is planning to take and what will implementation of this decision involve?

- Aurora College's next steps in the go-forward plan highlight a three-fold implementation process, with the associated major initiatives that include:
 1. GNWT Staff Retention Policy;
 2. Modernizing and Restructuring NWT Adult Upgrading Plan; and
 3. 2025-2028 Aurora College Mandate Agreement.
- Discussions with ECE will be undertaken to explore the re-profiling of these funds with the desire to see cost savings support Aurora College's go-forward plan of modernizing adult upgrading in the NWT.
- Implementation details and high-level costing are outlined in the chart final slides.

	Implementation Items	Description	Estimated Costs
1)	Implement the GNWT Staff Retention Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first goal is to transfer as many affected CLC employees back into the Aurora College or GNWT work force with one-on-one support; • However, there may be affected employees who select retirement or severance lay-off packages, including potential re-location costs. 	\$1.5M

	Implementation Items	Description	Estimated Costs
2)	Implement Aurora College's Modernizing / Restructuring of Adult Upgrading Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-investment back into Aurora College's ALBE upgrading programs, including the hiring of 6 positions – qualified, specialty instructors to implement the upgrading programs on campus and online; • Hiring 3 qualified online program coordinators to provide one-on-one online support, with regular check-ins, coaching, mentoring. • Hiring 3 IST support staff, wrap-around support services, including 1-800 support line, tech equipment, online student support learning platforms (Advocate and Insight), and regional cohort gatherings. 	\$900K \$360K \$450K \$500K <hr/> \$2.21M

	Implementation Items	Description	Estimated Costs
3)	Implement Aurora College's Mandate Items outlined in the 2025-2028 Aurora College Mandate Agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Studies Diploma Program delivery costs; • Quality Assurance evaluation costs; • Centre for Learning and Teaching Innovation: program design, curriculum development, assessment, and Indigenous perspectives; • Organizational re-design towards a polytechnic university: Academic and Indigenous divisions (IKHC); • Early Childhood Diploma program delivery costs; • Bachelor of Education, Bachelor of Social Work Degrees, Made in the North Degree research and program development costs 	\$1.5M \$60K \$650K \$370K \$500K \$1.5M <hr/> \$4.58M
		TOTAL	\$8.29M





Celebrating What's New at Aurora College 2025-2026

- Pathway to Bachelor of Education and Bachelor of Social Work:
 - General Studies Diploma launching in Fall 2025
 - Hybrid delivery model: in-person in Fort Smith and online in 33 NWT communities
- Practical Nursing Diploma:
 - 2-Year program available in-person in Yellowknife
 - First-year intakes launching in Fall 2025 and Fall 2027
- Personal Support Worker Diploma:
 - 10-Month certificate available in-person, online, full and part-time
- Trades and Apprenticeships:
 - New Apprenticeship programs and levels
- Expanded Distance and Part-Time Options:
 - Early Learning and Child Care and Business and Office Admin

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Thank you

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Questions?

