

Chris Westwell
10 Pine Crescent
Fort Smith, NT X0E0P0

February 15, 2017

Dear Members of the 18th Legislative Assembly

I am writing you to request that you reverse and/or reconsider the proposed budget cuts to Aurora College. I write you not as a previous Town Councilor for the community of Fort Smith, a long serving member of the UNW Local 12 Executive or as an employee of Aurora College. I write you as an actively engaged and concerned citizen of the Northwest Territories. Since learning of the proposed expenditure reductions to Aurora College, I have been trying to educate myself as to the possible reasons and rationale behind the decision, beyond the simple direction to reduce expenditures for the sake of fiscal policy. I have managed to go back over 16 years of Aurora College annual reports thanks to publicly available resources and documents of the Legislative Assembly, Department of Finance and Aurora College. Based on this information I believe that Aurora College could justifiably be given additional funds to deliver on its vision, goals and objectives, instead of cuts to its core funding.

Over the last 15 years Aurora College has received incremental increases to keep up with forced growth and inflation but seems to have otherwise operated within the same contribution agreement funding with the GNWT since 2001. During this time, as with all departments and organizations funded by the Government of the Northwest Territories, wages have increased, inflation has continued. Efforts were made to ensure those basic funding increase demands were met. Yet during this same period many new or expanded facilities were opened through Aurora College. Technology needs evolved, and grew from barely a handful of computers in limited roles throughout the organization to nearly 1000 devices proliferated throughout 3 campuses and 23 communities. Programs have grown or evolved into more advanced deliveries with 4 year degrees and post graduate certifications. Credit transfer agreements were made with numerous universities and partners. Aurora College began reaching out further and delivering more and more programs in smaller communities with mobile labs and expanded offerings at Community Learning Centres. Trades programs have modernized and expanded their offerings. There have been special projects and additional funds through 3rd parties and other contribution agreements. But in the end, there has been more demand for staff resources and program deliveries but I do not believe there has been the long term fiscal support to maintain this new capacity and demand. In-short, though Aurora College receives no small amount of funding, I truly believe it should be applauded for its effort and success at delivering more with, what is effectively, less.

From 2001 until today Aurora College has undergone several program reviews, internal reviews and complete corporate structural changes. Students have been surveyed and many consultants have been hired to ensure Aurora College remains modern, competitive and attractive to students throughout the north while ensuring the ability to deliver on its overall vision, goals and objectives. There have been years where enrollment has dipped substantially, but there have been years where it has grown exponentially. Certain programs enjoy more consistent enrollment throughout tough economic conditions where others may not. Economics both nationally, regionally and locally have all had an influence on student enrollment. I believe technological and societal changes have also played a huge role in effecting student enrollment.

It was not all that long ago that Canadians viewed social media as just another passing craze. Yet today access to social media and the internet has become such a priority that some view it as a basic human right. The desire for connectivity and technological advancement increases every year, while the core funds to deliver or develop it have not been specifically provided. The more recent student information system review and the GNWT support and funds to research, train and implement a new system have been an excellent advancement, yet the project has not had time to be completed, and the full impact of this substantial investment will take time to realize.

Throughout the years of annual reports that have been tabled at the Legislative Assembly some included a report from Student Support Services that presented the results of student satisfaction surveys. All of which indicated 80-90% positive feedback for student services like computer labs, counseling, library services, admissions and the registrar. I believe this is evidence of Aurora College's ability to adapt and meet the ever-evolving needs of northern students. I think this shows an organization that has a proven track record of doing more with less, yet seldom receives the recognition for this ability. It is worth noting that Aurora College is not without recognition as a recipient of multiple Premiers Awards for Excellence and Premiers Awards for Collaboration.

In conclusion, I believe in Aurora College. Whether in its ability to perform under the pressures of fiscal restraint, or navigation of complex political environments. Their dedication to the delivery of cultural and cross cultural programming. Their adoption of the Colleges and Institutes Canada's (CICan) historic Indigenous Education Protocol. The essential assets and strengths that they bring to the Northwest Territories ability to meet and act on the Calls to Action laid out in the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions Report. I believe in the committed and dedicated staff who year after year put in everything they can to ensure Aurora College students have access to the resources they need to be successful. I will not say that Aurora College is perfect, because I know that perfection is something that is pursued but never truthfully attained. I believe Aurora College is an organization that pursues perfection, but it is a path that is often wrought with challenges and setbacks. Challenges that are only exacerbated by budget cuts to core funding and members of the Legislative Assembly who may seek to remake the organization as they see fit. I ask that you re-consider the budget cuts to Aurora College and that you allow the College to complete its strategic plan and trust it to find its own direction as it has in the past. I love Aurora College, I support Aurora College and I believe in Aurora College; I hope you will do the same.

I have included some charts that reflect data collected from the 2000-2001 to 2015-2016 Aurora College Annual reports. Also included are the links to the online sources for this data as well as many of the Aurora College Annual Reports that are cited, for Annual reports prior to 2007-2008 you will need to consult an Aurora College library or the legislative assembly archives.

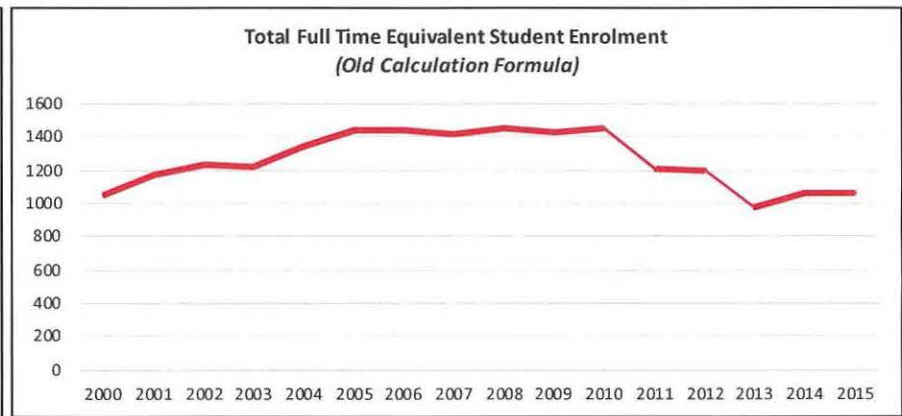
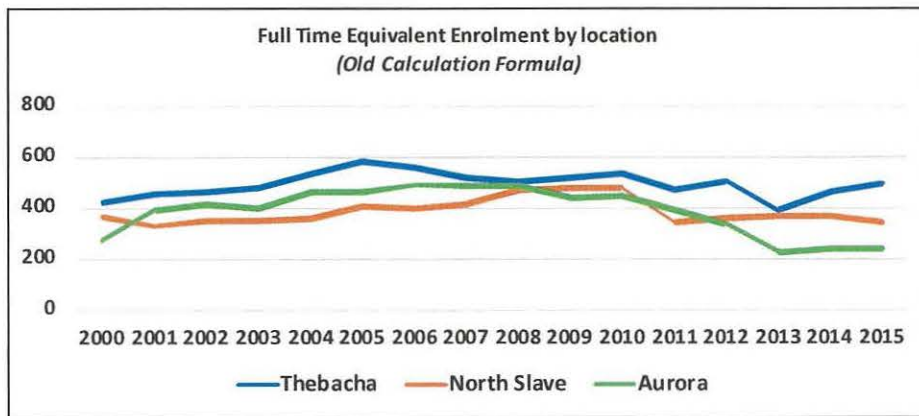
Thank you for your consideration.

Chris Westwell

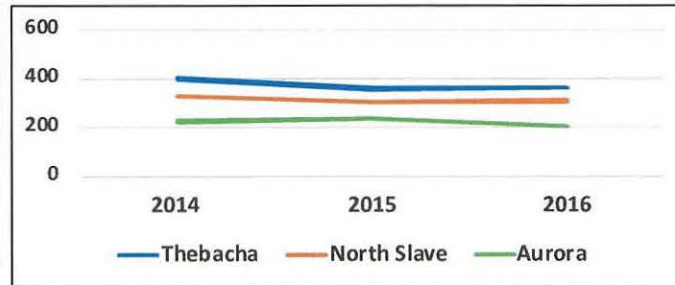
Full-Time Equivalent Student Enrolment by location

(OLD Formula - 1 FTE = 1:10 Part Time or 1:4 Trades or 1:1 Full Time Student) Full Time Student = 6 or more courses per year

| | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|-------------|-------------|
| Thebacha | 422 | 454 | 461 | 480 | 532 | 581 | 555 | 516 | 497 | 518 | 534 | 469 | 503 | 388 | 460 | 494 |
| North Slave | 365 | 331 | 351 | 350 | 353 | 406 | 398.8 | 412 | 469 | 477 | 474 | 344 | 357 | 366 | 361 | 337 |
| Aurora | 265 | 388 | 416 | 394 | 457 | 457 | 491 | 481 | 481 | 434 | 442 | 390 | 333 | 221 | 235 | 235 |
| TOTAL | 1052 | 1173 | 1228 | 1224 | 1342 | 1444 | 1444.8 | 1409 | 1447 | 1429 | 1450 | 1203 | 1193 | 975 | 1056 | 1066 |

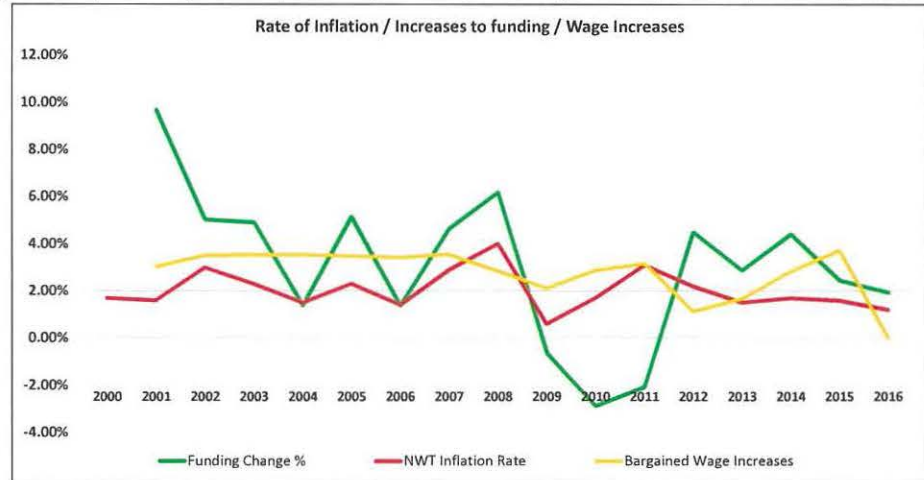
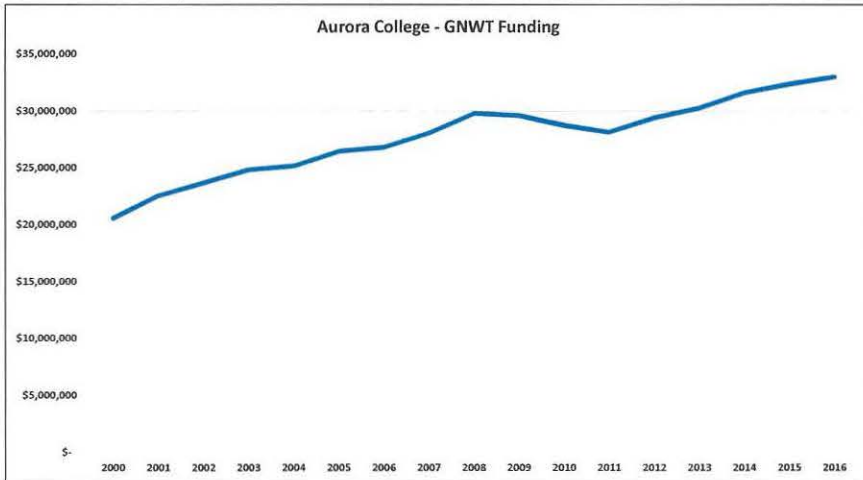


| Full Time Equivalent Enrolment by Location (NEW Calculation Formula) | | | |
|---|------------|------------|------------|
| | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
| Thebacha | 398 | 360 | 358 |
| North Slave | 325 | 300 | 308 |
| Aurora | 224 | 235 | 199 |
| TOTAL | 947 | 895 | 865 |



The revised method of calculating FTEs is based on course hours rather than the number of courses. This eliminates over- or under-reporting due to differing lengths and number of courses. The ratio of enrolment to FTEs will be based on the full program load for a student's program. For example, 1 FTE may be given for a full program of 450 hours over two semesters. A student who enrolls in 360 hours of classes in that program will equal 0.8 FTE (360 divided by 450). Apprenticeship students will equal 0.5 FTE per 240 hours of courses.

| GNWT Operating Revenue Contribution | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
| TOTAL | \$ 20,537,000 | \$ 22,523,000 | \$ 23,652,000 | \$ 24,810,000 | \$ 25,150,000 | \$ 26,441,000 | \$ 26,799,000.00 | \$ 28,041,000 | \$ 29,768,000 | \$ 29,578,000 | \$ 28,724,000 | \$ 28,125,000 | \$ 29,386,000 | \$ 30,225,000 | \$ 31,555,000 | \$ 32,325,000 | \$ 32,947,000 |
| YEAR OVER YEAR % Change | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Funding Change % | | 9.67% | 5.01% | 4.90% | 1.37% | 5.13% | 1.35% | 4.63% | 6.16% | -0.64% | -2.89% | -2.09% | 4.48% | 2.86% | 4.40% | 2.44% | 1.92% |
| NWT Inflation Rate | 1.70% | 1.60% | 3.00% | 2.30% | 1.50% | 2.30% | 1.40% | 2.90% | 4.00% | 0.60% | 1.70% | 3.10% | 2.20% | 1.50% | 1.70% | 1.60% | 1.20% |
| Bargained Wage Increases | | 3.03% | 3.50% | 3.52% | 3.53% | 3.47% | 3.42% | 3.54% | 2.85% | 2.11% | 2.88% | 3.17% | 1.13% | 1.67% | 2.84% | 3.73% | 0.00% |



Online Sources:

- <http://www.assembly.gov.nt.ca/taled-documents/aurora-college-annual-report-2007-2008>
- <http://www.assembly.gov.nt.ca/taled-documents/aurora-college-2008-2009-annual-report>
- <http://www.assembly.gov.nt.ca/sites/default/files/10-11-03td119-165.pdf>
- <http://www.assembly.gov.nt.ca/sites/default/files/11-12-12td7-171.pdf>
- http://www.fin.gov.nt.ca/sites/default/files/documents/annual_report_11-12_0.pdf
- <http://www.assembly.gov.nt.ca/sites/default/files/td75-175.pdf>
- http://www.auroracollege.nt.ca/live/documents/content/Annual_Report_13-14.pdf
- <http://www.assembly.gov.nt.ca/taled-documents/aurora-college-annual-report-2014-2015>
- http://www.assembly.gov.nt.ca/sites/default/files/td_262-182.pdf
- <http://www.hr.gov.nt.ca/fr/unw-collective-agreement/archived-collective-agreements>

Physical Sources:

- Aurora College Annual Report 2000-2001
- Aurora College Annual Report 2001-2002
- Aurora College Annual Report 2002-2003
- Aurora College Annual Report 2003-2004
- Aurora College Annual Report 2004-2005
- Aurora College Annual Report 2005-2006