



February 13, 2023

KATRINA NOKLEBY
MLA, GREAT SLAVE**Oral Question #1274-19(2) Aurora College University Campus Accessibility**

This letter is in follow-up to the Oral Question you raised on November 01, 2022 regarding Aurora College university campus accessibility.

The successful transformation of Aurora College (College) into a polytechnic university requires that their campuses meet the needs of current and future post-secondary students, creating an environment in which they can thrive. This includes a new campus in Yellowknife as the current facilities no longer meet student needs.

The College, Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) and the City of Yellowknife (City) entered a Memorandum of Understanding in June 2022 that confirmed an interest in transferring ownership of Tin Can Hill to establish it as the future Yellowknife-North Slave campus. There are many steps involved in the land transfer and rezoning process, and each step is contingent on the successful completion of the one prior. These steps include: environmental site assessments, geotechnical studies, an application for land transfer, an application for rezoning, engagement elements and more.

Environmental and geotechnical assessments are a normal step in the land transfer process. The College and GNWT will not apply for the transfer of land until the environmental and geotechnical assessments are complete. Phase 1 of the Environmental Site Assessment is underway. Environmental Site Assessment-2 and a desktop geotechnical study are expected to occur in the Summer 2023, with results received by Fall 2023.

Engagement and public information sharing with NWT residents, Indigenous governments, and stakeholders will occur as part of the rezoning process to demonstrate that the GNWT will preserve the area and maintain community access to the greatest extent possible.

The Polytechnic University Facilities Master Plan released in September 2022, presents a concept diagram for an approximate campus footprint on Tin Can Hill and shows how the campus will be accessed by road. The total area of the Tin Can Hill site is approximately 325,000 m² (32 hectares). If the College and GNWT proceed with an application for the disposal of land and rezoning with the City, a small portion of the land will be retained by the City and it is anticipated that the proposed Yellowknife-North Slave campus buildings will occupy approximately 20,000m².

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This leaves approximately 300,000 m² of green space with the potential of additional development for the campus. The Facilities Master Plan anticipates that a 20,000m² campus will meet the College's needs for the next 20 years.

The campus diagram in the Facilities Master Plan is for planning purposes. The configuration of the campus and access roads will be determined as more details become available pending completion of the environmental and geotechnical assessments. Concerns regarding traffic flow will also be addressed during this process.

The College and GNWT continue to actively engage with the City to determine necessary steps and approximate timelines. It is expected that the land transfer and rezoning process will be complete during the life of the 20th Legislative Assembly.

Enhancing Community Learning Centres is another area that the College and GNWT are exploring as part of transformation. The Facilities Master Plan includes preliminary information on a proposed approach for Community Learning Centres, but more work is required in this area. Recently, the College and GNWT secured a contractor who will lead an engagement process that will inform the development of a Facilities Master Plan for Community Learning Centres. This work is expected to extend into the 20th Legislative Assembly.

As more information becomes available on the progress of transformation, I will continue to share it with Members of the Legislative Assembly and Standing Committee. Information can also be found on the Aurora College Transformation website ([Aurora College Transformation](#)).

Thank you for your questions and interest in this matter.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R.J. Simpson', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

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

- c. Clerk of the Legislative Assembly
Deputy Minister, Education, Culture and Employment
Legislative Coordinator, Executive and Indigenous Affairs