

December 9, 2025

The Honourable Caitlin Cleveland
Minister of Education, Culture and Employment
Government of the Northwest Territories
4570 48 Street
Yellowknife, Northwest Territories X1A 3A5
Canada

Delivered by email: Caitlin_Cleveland@gov.nt.ca

Subject: Support for Advancing the North Slave Campus Proposal

Dear Minister Cleveland,

On behalf of the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce, I am writing to express our strong support for advancing the proposed Aurora College campus at the Centre Square Mall site. This project stands to deliver several important benefits: contributing to the revitalization of the downtown core, strengthening the Territory's future workforce, enhancing research and innovation capacity, and advancing the development of a modern campus through substantial private-sector investment at a time of GNWT fiscal constraint. With no alternative development carrying funding, timelines, or executable plans, this remains the only viable and timely path to securing the capital assets needed for institutional transformation. *The opportunity is real and time-limited, requiring leadership to move from planning to execution.*

The economic implications of a downtown campus are substantial. Signing this lease would immediately trigger investment, catalyze demand for student housing, support redevelopment of nearby properties, and bring sustained daytime population into the city's core. The spillover effects on safety, livability, business stability, cultural vibrancy, and investor confidence would strengthen the entire community and support the growing tourism sector. The campus would serve not only as an educational asset but also as a cornerstone for downtown revitalization and a driver of long-term economic momentum.

This initiative represents a significant opportunity for Yellowknife and the Northwest Territories. It would create a centre of excellence that supports youth, enhances talent retention, strengthens research capacity, and demonstrates the Territory's readiness to advance its post-secondary system. This opportunity directly supports the priorities outlined in the Aurora College Mandate Agreement (2025-28), which notes that,

“aging facilities and inadequate infrastructure limit the capacity to deliver high-quality programming, particularly the North Slave Campus in Yellowknife,” and directs the College to, “build partnerships with all levels of government as well as private investors to secure funding for the development of student housing and a North Slave Campus.”



The NunaStar proposal does exactly this by offering a modern campus solution supported by private-sector investment. The private-sector investment is secured, the asset is available, and the next step is the political and board direction required to finalize the agreement and proceed to implementation.

We also recognize the distinct and complementary roles of the Territory's campuses: the Fort Smith campus continues to anchor trades and technical training, while the Yellowknife campus is positioned to support academic programming and areas such as health and professional studies. Together, these roles strengthen the post-secondary system.

The proposal has been before the GNWT for over 12 months, during which the private-sector proponent has borne the full cost of the acquisition. This reflects a significant commitment and underscores that the opportunity is time limited. *Without timely direction, there is a real risk that this investment and the benefits it enables will no longer be available.*

The Chamber is encouraged by what this project represents for our economy, the future of our youth, and the development of a skilled workforce that businesses need to grow. We respectfully urge timely direction at this critical moment to allow the proposal to move forward and to avoid losing the opportunity available today.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further and offer our support as this important initiative progresses.

Sincerely,



Mark Henry
President
Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce

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Members of the NWT Legislative Assembly for the Yellowknife constituencies

Kenny Ruptash, Chair, Aurora College

Dr. Angela James, President, Aurora Collège

Ben Hendriksen, Mayor, City of Yellowknife

