



February 5, 2026

Don Avison, KC
Independent Reviewer – Post-Secondary Sustainability

Dear Mr. Avison:

RE: Northern Lights College Post-Secondary Sustainability Review Submission

This submission is presented jointly by Northern Lights College (NLC) and the bargaining units of BCGEU Local 710, representing NLC faculty and support staff, in response to BC's Independent Post-Secondary Sector Sustainability Review.

Our joint submission reflects a shared understanding that the long-term sustainability of BC's public post-secondary system is inseparable from responsible financial stewardship, the strength of its programming, the stability of its enrolment, meaningful progress in Truth and Reconciliation, and constructive, respectful labour relations between institutions and the employees who deliver education and services every day.

This submission focuses on six interconnected areas that we believe have been essential to a sustainable future for NLC:

- Financial sustainability and responsible resource allocation
- Domestic enrolment growth and student access across rural and northern communities
- The critical role of strong, collaborative labour relations in institutional resilience
- Addressing the structural challenges and risks associated with international education
- Programming that is responsive to community, industry, and regional economic needs
- Advancing Truth and Reconciliation in tangible, operational ways

We offer this submission not only as an institutional perspective, but as a shared voice between employer and union, grounded in our shared experience of operating a rural and northern college in a rapidly changing environment.

1. Financial Sustainability

NLC has taken a disciplined and strategic approach to ensure long-term financial sustainability while continuing to support institutional growth and student success. Although the reduction in international tuition revenue has been significant, the college has responded quickly and responsibly through cost reductions and operational efficiencies that protect core services and maintain the delivery of high-quality programming across the region.

Recognizing this as a temporary disruption rather than a permanent shift, NLC has been careful to avoid deeper, long-term cuts until enrolment trends can be fully assessed and the impact of current measures confirmed over the next couple of cycles. NLC has demonstrated its ability to adjust staffing levels and programming to manage financial pressures, most notably during COVID-19 and again in response to recent federal immigration policy changes. In slightly exceeding revenue targets in 2025/26 and with international enrolment beginning to

stabilize, despite overall head count remaining below previous levels, NLC will have a balanced budget projected for 2026/27.

2. Enrollment Growth and Access

Since the launch of Northern Lights College's Strategic Plan 2023–2028, the College has experienced significant growth in domestic student enrolment. As a result of institution-wide efforts to improve recruitment strategies and streamline admissions processes, NLC saw a 32% increase in domestic student enrolment from Fall 2023 to Fall 2025. In parallel, a strengthened focus on building meaningful relationships with local Indigenous communities contributed to a 42% increase in Indigenous enrolment over the same period. This growth has been realized across the College's Trades, Health, Academic, and Adult Upgrading programs.

3. Labour Relations

NLC continues to prioritize a collaborative and transparent approach to workforce planning and labour relations. Earlier this winter, the President and the Vice President responsible for human resources and labour relations met with bargaining chairs from both union groups to discuss upcoming workforce adjustments, share budget realities, and seek input on potential mitigation strategies. At the suggestion of BCGEU leadership, NLC and the union co-authored a joint communication that reinforced a shared commitment to exploring every possible option to minimize job impacts and protect existing positions.

Over the past year, NLC has taken a measured and collaborative approach to workforce planning. This builds on strategies applied during the 2025/26 budget cycle, when the College faced revenue losses related to federal immigration policy changes. With early retirements, voluntary separations, vacancy management, and close collaboration with union partners, the college has been able to keep layoffs to a minimum. At the same time, NLC continues to grow. Through close collaboration between members of the bargaining units and administration, NLC has seen the introduction of new programs, with several initiatives being delivered this year to expand opportunities for students and strengthen the college's regional offerings.

4. International Education

Over the past two years, NLC has also responded proactively to substantial changes in Canada's international education policies. This approach was taken deliberately, recognizing that international students and graduates play a vital role in the local labour markets of the rural and northern communities served by the college. NLC's mitigation strategy included the development of new PGWP-eligible programs, the launch of a new marketing campaign, and a successful bid to bring the federal Rural Community Immigration Pilot to Northeast BC. As a result of these efforts, NLC has not experienced the steep decline in international enrolment seen at many other BC institutions, nor the more significant budget impacts faced elsewhere in the province.

5. Programming Alignment Meets the Needs of Northeast British Columbia

NLC is working strategically to steward our resources through ongoing program reviews that examine both quality assurance and strategic enrollment management. The examples below are not intended to be an exhaustive list of activity, but rather a selection of highlights that reflect the significant work of NLC faculty and staff to align programming with regional needs, support student success, and steward institutional resources responsibly.



Allied Health Programming

In June 2025, to address ongoing critical healthcare shortages and support the opening of the new Dawson Creek Hospital scheduled for Fall 2027, NLC submitted a proposal and received a \$450,000 Grant-In-Aid from the Peace River Regional District to launch the NLC Cares Allied Health initiative. The deliverable was to diversify our health programming and offer 2-3 new Allied Health programs at the certificate or diploma level by 2026-2027. We also developed a Healthcare Sample as a dual credit offering and pathway into healthcare fields. A proposal for these programs was submitted by NLC and Northern Health to the Ministry of Post Secondary Education and Future Skills. Pharmacy Technician Diploma has now been approved and will be delivered in partnership with Selkirk College.

Energy and Environment Programming

In November 2025, NLC launched the Centre for Applied Energy and Environmental Sustainability (CAEES) to extend its training in oil and gas across the energy spectrum and help BC transition to a cleaner energy economy. NLC's reputation for providing technical trades and oil and gas training led to a significant industry project. NLC teamed up with Tourmaline Oil, Canada's largest natural gas producer to solve a shared challenge – a shortage of skilled field technicians. In just two years, we co-designed and delivered The Field Operators Specialist – Hydrocarbon Resources (FOS-HR), a new 16-week training program that combines classroom learning with real on-site experience. Outcomes include high completion and employment rates, reduced onboarding time, and strong learner confidence.

Programming development through CAEES includes Water Management for Oil and Gas, Asset Integrity, and Corrosion Control, all programs serving the oil and gas sector and the maintenance and development of pipelines and other assets critical to the natural resources industry. Further program development includes work placements to train learners in the intersection of energy and environment. Environmental Site Assessment Technician Certificate (ESAT) has been recently implemented to address the need for skilled technicians in land reclamation and environmental remediation. An exclusive ESAT cohort is underway in partnership with Blueberry River First Nation.

Trades Training

NLC is highly regarded for its trades programming and in 2024-25 had a 107% utilisation rate of its Skilled TradesBC programs. To meet the critical demand for construction trades, NLC doubled its Electrical Apprenticeship and Heavy-Duty Mechanical. Steamfitter/Pipefitter (SFPF) is a new program to NLC for fall 2026 with significant regional training need: data provided by Skilled TradesBC shows over 200 registered apprentices needing level 1 training in the north. Crane Operator training was identified as the top training priority to assist BC to meet goals articulated in Look West: Jobs and Prosperity for a Stronger BC. This programming is planned for our Chetwynd campus as part of ongoing sustainable small campus planning.

NLC offers 4 cohorts annually of Youth Explore Trades Sampler (YETS), which provides dual credit students with the opportunity to experience carpentry, welding, plumbing, electrical, and cook training – all programs offered at NLC. This experience leads directly to enhanced student engagement in trades training and meeting labour needs in the Northeast.

Workforce Training and Continuing Education

In conjunction with NLC's credential programming, Workforce Training and Continuing Education (WTCE) contributes to a well-rounded suite of learning opportunities that serve



communities across the region. Through the Province’s Future Skills Grant and programming developed in partnership with community organizations, NLC delivers innovative, non-credit, and rapid-response training for individuals who are unemployed, underemployed, or seeking to enhance their career skills. WTCE has once again become an important revenue generator for the college and holds significant potential for continued growth and impact.

6. Advancing Truth and Reconciliation

Truth and Reconciliation has been a top priority for NLC in recent years and is identified as one of five Strategic Pillars in the Strategic Plan 2023–2028. In 2024, NLC launched the Council for Innovation in Indigenous Education, an advisory body with representation from all ten Indigenous Nations within the college’s service region. Partnerships with First Nations have enabled NLC to deliver education and training directly within communities, including the delivery of Adult Upgrading programs in Doig River First Nation and Halfway River First Nation. The college has also emphasized increasing the presence of Indigenous culture and knowledge across its campuses, including the establishment of an Elder-in-Residence program in 2022 and the construction of a Cultural Arbour, on the Dawson Creek campus, scheduled to open Fall 2026. The college continues to plan for ongoing progress in Indigenization of our curriculum and procedures, in line with the goals expressed in Province’s Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act.

Sincerely,



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President and CEO
Northern Lights College

Sincerely,



Jamie Bond
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Sincerely,



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