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Sudbury a magnet for newcomers: report

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Ramsey Lake Gino Donato/The Sudbury Star

Greater Sudbury should build on its role as a leader in education and skills enhancement, particularly for indigenous and newcomer populations, argues a new report.

Authors Bahktiar Moazzami and James Cuddy found the city is in a better position than any other census district in Northern Ontario to meet current and future skills requirements, while pointing to recent investments in post-secondary institutions as evidence of "a collective awareness of this opportunity," according to a release.

The report is the latest in a series titled Northern Projections: Human Capital, a partnership between Northern Policy Institute and Northern Ontario Workforce Planning Boards.

Sudbury also boasts the highest human capital index -- the ability to develop and utilize talent -- for indigenous and newcomer populations, not only in the region, but also provincially and nationally. At present, the city has the highest number of newcomers per capita compared to other census districts in Northern Ontario.

While these are viewed as positive signs, the city's total population is expected to remain largely static for the next couple of decades, with the labour force expected to decline by about 14 per cent during that same period, the report acknowledges.

"With significant numbers of unemployed and underemployed new Canadians in the Greater Toronto Area, there is a real opportunity for Greater Sudbury to address its population challenges by playing to its demonstrated strength in supporting newcomer success," states Reggie Caverson, executive director of Workforce Planning for Sudbury and Manitoulin, in a release.

As with new Canadians, there is a real opportunity for Greater Sudbury to be marketed as a destination for indigenous migration within Canada. The First Nations population in Northern Ontario is expected to increase to 134,727 by 2041, a growth rate of about 32.1 per cent. The indigenous labour force (20 to 64 years old) is expected to increase by about 23 per cent.

"The city has a track record of delivering better social and education outcomes to its indigenous population, compared to the rest of the province." said Charles Cirtwill, president and CEO of Northern Policy Institute. "Given the growth trends among this population across Northern Ontario, this is a real opportunity that Greater Sudbury should continue to pursue."

In terms of the economic health of Greater Sudbury, the report found that labour income and GDP grew more than any other northeastern Ontario census district from 2001 to 2011. In that time period, labour income in Greater Sudbury increased by 13.6 per cent from \$3.02 billion to \$3.43 billion, compared with a 6.7 per cent increase in Northeastern Ontario.

Based on these trends, the report offers three key recommendations to promote the long-term sustainability of the district:

- 1) market the City of Greater Sudbury as a desirable destination for secondary migration in Ontario;
- 2) Continue to build on indigenous partnerships and the opportunity for Greater Sudbury to be marketed as a destination for indigenous migration within Canada; and
- 3) market education as another high-quality product delivered by the city, over and above traditional strengths in mining and mining supply.

The full report, Northern Projections: Human Capital Series - Greater Sudbury, is available at the Northern Policy Institute website at www.northernpolicy.ca.

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