

Census shows northern towns and cities continue to shrink

Most communities saw their population decline or stay put over last five years

[CBC News](#) Posted: Feb 09, 2017 8:07 AM ET Last Updated: Feb 09, 2017 8:07 AM ET



According to the latest census, the population of North Bay is now 51,553. (Google Maps)

Related Stories

- [Census shows population bumps for small towns surrounding Sudbury](#)
- [Sudbury sees small population increase, while other northern cities shrink](#)
- [Census 2016: Ontario growth still slowing, but experts see a change in fortunes](#)

The first figures from the 2016 census show that the population of northeastern Ontario continues to thin out, with about 2,600 fewer people in the region than there were five years ago.

Charles Cirtwill, the president of Northern Policy institute says after getting similar numbers from Statistics Canada for years, northern leaders shouldn't be surprised.

"We've known we've had this problem for a while. It's getting acutely worse. And it's time to start getting aggressive in our response," says Cirtwill.

Shrinking cities and towns

- North Bay, down 2,089 to 51,553
- Sault Ste. Marie, down 1,773 to 73,368
- Timmins, down 1,377 to 41,788
- Elliot Lake, down 607 to 10,741
- Temiskaming Shores, down 480 to 9,920
- Kirkland Lake, down 152 to 7,981
- Espanola, down 368 to 4,996

Sault Ste. Marie Mayor Christian Provenzano says he certainly wasn't surprised to see his city lost 1,700 citizens, considering the slump in the local steel industry.

He believes the north needs to do more to attract people here, other than just promoting the outdoors and laid back lifestyle.

"People go where there's apparent opportunity. And I think we have to work harder to make the case there's opportunity in this region," says Provenzano.

North Bay's Al McDonald was surprised to see he is a mayor of a city that has 2,089 fewer people than it did in 2011.

He says there are contrary figures he's receiving about new homes and businesses being built in his city.

But McDonald says population decline does send a bad signal about his city and the region as a whole.

"You're always concerned about confidence from investors or builders or people who want to come to your community," he says.

McDonald hopes the latest census will convince the federal and provincial governments to invest in the north... and stop worrying about how to pay for the out of control growth in the Toronto area.