



For Immediate Release

Eleven Unique Northern Regions are key to Community-based Growth in Northern Ontario

April 13, 2017 – New research from Northern Policy Institute suggests that Northern Ontario is made up of eleven distinct economic zones. To be truly effective, local governance, economic development planning, and government investment activities must recognize and allow for this diversity of communities.

The new report, *Economic Zones of Northern Ontario: City-Regions and Industrial Corridors* by Charles Conteh, identifies and describes 11 economic zones in Northern Ontario, broken down into two types: “city-regions” and “industrial corridors.” The six “city-regions” — Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, Timmins, North Bay, and Kenora — are centred around major urban areas; and the five “industrial corridors” — Temiskaming Shores, Greenstone-Marathon, Fort Frances, Parry Sound, and Manitoulin Island — are centred around a collection of relatively smaller, but geographically proximate, communities sharing similar sectors, assets, and needs.

The author actually identifies a twelfth region, the Far North. But that region (or possibly “regions”) is so different that it is excluded from the current analysis. According to the Conteh, “The Far North is a unique region with special needs based on issues of access, distance, and density. The deliberations about strategic investment in the Far North, however, should not be restricted to thinking simply about road access. It should be a larger framework of community capacity building through the provision of basic necessities that most Canadians take for granted: safe drinking water, electricity, and broadband.”

According to the report, economic development does not need rigid governance structures, but fluid platforms to address specific needs and explore shared opportunities. Conteh argues that current models which see the North as one region, or two, or as five urban centred regions do not reflect the reality of northern diversity. Even approaches based on census districts do not allow for strategic thinking at the local level reflective of economic, demographic and geographic realities.

“Due to the significant diversity between communities in Northern Ontario, policies and planning aimed at addressing specific economic challenges are more valuable than one-size-fits-all, top-down programs,” states author Charles Conteh. “Economic zones offer an opportunity for upper levels of government to frame a new kind of partnership guided by the priorities of communities.”

The study relied on in-depth interviews with key actors across Northern Ontario to confirm the existence, strength, and breadth of particular economic sectors within their communities. These interviews were then supplemented with content analysis of economic sector drivers identified in



the strategic economic growth plans of the various communities, and population estimates from census data.

The complete report is available on our website at www.northernpolicy.ca

Media Interviews: Author Charles Conteh, and NPI President & CEO Charles Cirtwill are available for comment.

To arrange an interview, please contact:

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About Northern Policy Institute:

Northern Policy Institute is Northern Ontario's independent think tank. We perform research, collect and disseminate evidence, and identify policy opportunities to support the growth of sustainable Northern communities. Our operations are located in Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, and Sudbury. We seek to enhance Northern Ontario's capacity to take the lead position on socio-economic policy that impacts Northern Ontario, Ontario, and Canada as a whole.

About the Author:

Charles Conteh is Research Director and Associate Professor of Public Policy and Management in the Department of Political Science at Brock University. From 2007 to 2009, he served as Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science at Lakehead University. Over the past ten years, he has focused his research on public policy responses to the economic challenges of various regions, including Northern Ontario. His broader research interests are in the areas of Canadian and comparative public policy, public management, political economy and governance