



For Immediate Release

FedNor, infrastructure, and transfer payments top of mind in Northeastern Ontario for Federal Economic Agenda for Ontario

January 22, 2015, Thunder Bay, ON – The people of Northeastern Ontario say the region is being held back by a lack of federal transfer payments, innovation, workforce development, and poor engagement from FedNor. Throughout December and January, Northern Policy Institute has been collecting feedback across Northern Ontario to help build the Federal Economic Agenda for Ontario. Northern Policy Institute president and CEO, Charles Cirtwill, said that this process provides an important opportunity to shed light on the unique challenges and opportunities faced by Northern Ontario.

Northeastern Ontarians have seized that opportunity and Northern Policy Institute has received feedback from across the region, including Sudbury, Manitowaning, Magnetawan, North Bay, and Huntsville.

All feedback collected so far has listed federal transfer payments as having a significant impact on communities in the region. Respondents claim that a lack of federal transfers are inhibiting communities from developing infrastructure and holding them back in terms of innovation and education. Additionally, communities are calling for a review of FedNor in order to better align the program with the issues and priorities of Northern Ontario. There appears to be a lack of engagement from FedNor in Northeastern communities and some respondents want FedNor to take a stronger leadership role in the region.

Aboriginal education and training was also a key issue for many respondents. In Sudbury, there is a call for a stronger Aboriginal voice that can only be achieved through government dialogue. Other regions want to see more workforce development and the Aboriginal population included in the workforce through more training and education opportunities.

“It is clear that there are a lot of issues on the minds of people in Northeastern Ontario,” says Cirtwill. “We are pleased to see so many people speaking up and wanting a Northern voice included in the Federal Economic Agenda for Ontario. With many respondents seeing FedNor and federal transfers as a major issue impacting the region, it is key that these issues are included in this agenda because they are directly impacted by federal policy-makers.”

This is just a small selection of the feedback received so far. Consultations will be ongoing until January 31, 2015. The people of Northeastern Ontario are still encouraged to have their say. The discussion paper, *A Federal Economic Agenda for Ontario*, and the online comment form are available on the Northern Policy Institute website at www.northernpolicy.ca.

Background: The Federal Economic Agenda for Ontario is a collaborative effort between The Mowat Centre, The Institute for Competiveness and Prosperity, and Northern Policy Institute. In October, 2014, The Mowat Centre released its discussion paper, *A Federal Economic Agenda for Ontario* during the 2014 Ontario Economic Summit.

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According to the discussion paper, the purpose of the Federal Economic Agenda for Ontario is to: “define clearly the challenges and opportunities facing Ontario, develop a common vision and agenda on key economic issues, inform public dialogue, outline policy options that could be pursued by the federal government, and inform platform development by political parties in the lead up to the federal election.”

The feedback that is collected will be used to complete the Federal Economic Agenda for Ontario with an intended release in the spring of 2015.

Media Interviews: Northern Policy Institute President and CEO, Charles Cirtwill, is 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 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 Mowat Centre:

The Mowat Centre is an independent public policy think tank located at the School of Public Policy & Governance at the University of Toronto and Ontario’s non-partisan, evidence-based voice on public policy.

We undertake collaborative applied policy research, propose innovative research-driven recommendations, and engage in public dialogue on Canada’s most important national issues.

Our policy areas of expertise are intergovernmental economic and social policy, state transformation, energy policy and not-for-profit policy.

About The Institute for Competitiveness and Prosperity:

The Institute for Competitiveness and Prosperity is an independent, not-for-profit organization that deepens public understanding of macro and microeconomic factors behind Ontario’s economic progress. We are funded by the Government of Ontario and are mandated to share our research findings directly with the public. The Institute serves as the research arm of the Task Force on Competitiveness, Productivity and Economic Progress.

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