



**NORTHERN**  
POLICY INSTITUTE

INSTITUT DES POLITIQUES  
**DU NORD**

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## **Diversify, Innovate, Invest, and Grow**

Population Change by  
Northern Ontario District  
2001-2013

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The views expressed in this commentary are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Institute, its Board of Directors or its supporters. Quotation with appropriate credit is permissible.

# Contents

About Northern Policy Institute \_\_\_\_\_ 4

About the Author \_\_\_\_\_ 6

Purpose \_\_\_\_\_ 7

Introduction \_\_\_\_\_ 8

2001-2004 \_\_\_\_\_ 8

2005-2009 \_\_\_\_\_ 9

2010-2013 \_\_\_\_\_ 10

Cumulative Change Overall \_\_\_\_\_ 11

Who We Are \_\_\_\_\_ 13

# 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.

## Vision

A growing, sustainable, and self-sufficient Northern Ontario. One with the ability to not only identify opportunities but to pursue them, either on its own or through intelligent partnerships. A Northern Ontario that contributes both to its own success and to the success of others.

## Mission

Northern Policy Institute is an independent policy institute. We exist for the purposes of:

- The development and promotion of proactive, evidence based and purpose driven policy options that deepen understanding about the unique challenges of Northern Ontario and ensure the sustainable development and long-term economic prosperity of Northern Ontario;
- The research and analysis of:
  - » Existing and emerging policies relevant to Northern Ontario;
  - » Economic, technological and social trends which affect Northern Ontario;
- The formulation and advocacy of policies that benefit all Northern Ontario communities that include Aboriginal, Francophone, remote/rural communities, and urban centres; and,
- Other complementary purposes not inconsistent with these objectives.

## Values

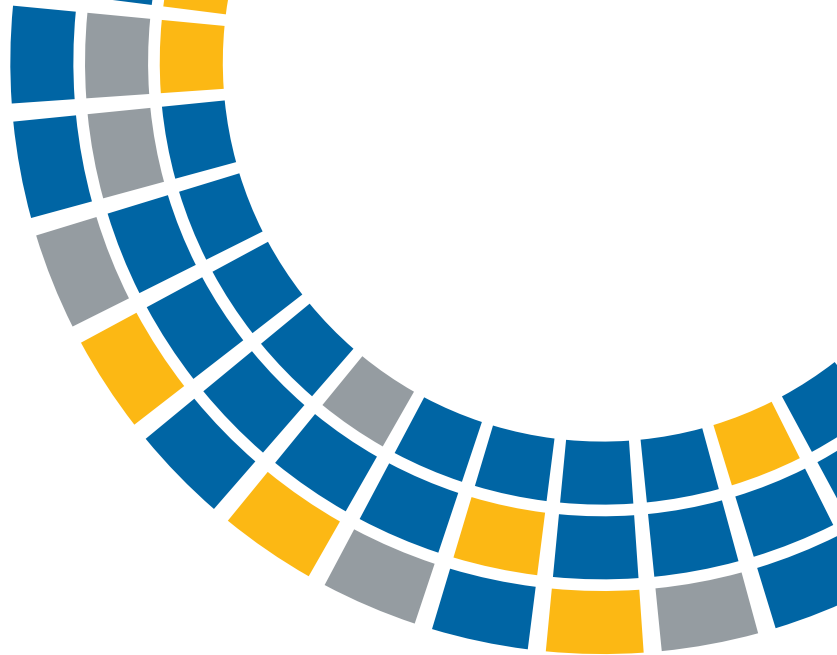
**Objectivity:** Northern Policy Institute is a non-partisan, not-for-profit incorporated body providing fair, balanced and objective assessments of policy issues in a pan-Northern Ontario context;

**Relevance:** Northern Policy Institute will support practical and applied research on current or emerging issues and implications relevant to Northern Ontario now and in the future in keeping with the themes and objectives of the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario, 2011;

**Collaboration:** Northern Policy Institute recognizes the value of multi-stakeholder, multi-disciplinary, and multicultural contributions to the collective advancement of Northern Ontario and works in a collaborative and inclusive approach to provide a full range of policy options for decision makers;

**Coordination:** Northern Policy Institute will complement the existing research efforts of Northern Ontario's post-secondary institutions and non government organizations and explore opportunities for coordinated efforts that contribute to the mandate of Northern Policy Institute; and

**Accessibility:** The work of Northern Policy Institute will be publicly accessible to stimulate public engagement and dialogue, promoting view points on the interests of Northern Ontario and its people.



## Who We Are

Internally, Northern Policy Institute seeks to be as “flat” as possible with much of the work contracted out to experts in the fields under consideration. This approach avoids the risks associated with large bureaucratic organizations. It also allows Northern Policy Institute to flexibly respond across a wide range of issues while also building up in house and regional expertise by matching bright young minds on temporary placements and project specific work with talented experts who can supply guidance and coaching.

**Some of the key players in this model, and their roles, are as follows:**

**Board:** The Board of Directors sets strategic direction for Northern Policy Institute. Directors serve on operational committees dealing with finance, fundraising and governance, and collectively the Board holds the CEO accountable for achieving our Strategic Plan goals. The Board's principal responsibility is to protect and promote the interests, reputation, and stature of Northern Policy Institute.

**CEO:** Recommends strategic direction, develops plans and processes, and secures and allocates resources to achieve it.

**Advisory Council:** A group of committed individuals interested in supporting, but not directing, the work of Northern Policy Institute. Leaders in their fields, they provide advice on potential researchers or points of contact in the wider community.

**Research Advisory Board:** A group of academic researchers who provide guidance and input on potential research directions, potential authors, and draft studies and commentaries. They are Northern Policy Institute's formal link to the academic community.

**Peer Reviewers:** Ensure specific papers are factual, relevant and publishable.

**Authors and Research Fellows:** Provide independent expertise on specific policy areas as and when needed.

**Standing engagement tools (general public, government stakeholders, community stakeholders):** Ensure Northern Policy Institute remains responsive to the community and reflects THEIR priorities and concerns in project selection.

To stay connected or get involved, please contact us at:

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## About the Author

### **Julien Bonin**

Julien Bonin was born and raised in Sudbury, studied at Laurentian University where he received a B.Sc. in Mathematics and a Bachelor's Degree in Geography. He also graduated from McMaster University with a Master's in Geography and a Graduate Certificate in Geographic Information Systems (GIS). Julien is currently performing a spatial analysis of retail activity in Sudbury, in addition to studying transportation modelling and travel behaviour for commercial activities.

## Purpose

The following commentary accompanies a [video podcast](#) describing population change in Northern Ontario from 2001 to 2013, by the 11 census districts. Population change is shown as a cumulative year-over-year change using 2001 as the reference period. The change in any period represents the sum of annual changes since 2001.



*The population estimates were obtained from Statistics Canada and are based on the 2011 Census Standard Geographical Classification. The variances in populatoin are calculated on a yearly basis, and are then summed to the previous year in order to show population trends during this time period.*

## Introduction

Historically, Northern Ontario's population peaked in 1993 at approximately 859,200, but has been gradually declining ever since. The following time-series captures this decline from 2001 to 2013. Overall, Northern Ontario's population decreased by over two percent (Table 1), with the central districts of Sudbury, Rainy River, Cochrane, Timiskaming, Algoma, and Thunder declining the most. There are however, some pockets of growth, particularly in the Kenora district, as well as in the Southern most districts of Greater Sudbury, Manitoulin, Parry Sound, and Nipissing.

## 2001-2004

From 2001 to 2002, the severity of the decline was evident when seven of the 11 districts experienced a population loss. Districts largely dependent on natural resources, such as Algoma, Cochrane, Rainy River, Sudbury and Timiskaming experienced a decline. In the Algoma District, for example, the Algoma Ore Division mine in Wawa closed.

Some districts, however, are fighting against the trend. While Greater Sudbury is in a state of decline in 2002, the creation of the Sudbury Regional Network, the expansion of the telecommunications sector, the arrival of several retail box-stores and the upcoming boom in the mining sector, has halted significant population loss. During this year, the districts of Kenora, Manitoulin,

Table 1 - Population Change in Northern Districts, 2001-2013

	Population		Population Change	
	2001	2013	Difference	Percent
<b>Manitoulin</b>	12,713	13,538	825	6.5
<b>Kenora</b>	66,526	70,002	3,476	5.2
<b>Parry Sound</b>	41,201	43,077	1,876	4.6
<b>Greater Sudbury</b>	161,146	165,087	3,941	2.4
<b>Nipissing</b>	86,313	87,362	1,049	1.2
<b>Thunder Bay</b>	157,034	149,604	-7,430	-4.7
<b>Algoma</b>	123,763	117,600	-6,163	-5.0
<b>Timiskaming</b>	35,700	33,509	-2,191	-6.1
<b>Cochrane</b>	89,509	82,289	-7,220	-8.1
<b>Rainy River</b>	22,943	20,166	-2,777	-12.1
<b>Sudbury</b>	24,202	21,086	-3,116	-12.9
<b>Northern Ontario</b>	823,051	805,333	-17,718	-2.2

Nipissing and Parry Sound had all experienced a population increase.

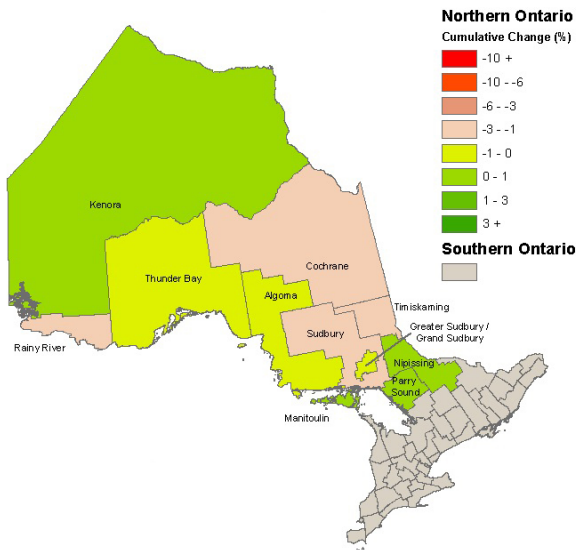
In 2003, six districts saw an increase in population most likely due to the upswing in mining production and core mining prices. Greater Sudbury, Parry Sound and Kenora are doing very well, seeing an increase of over one percent.

Still, other districts continue to struggle.

From 2002 to 2003, population in Sudbury and Timiskaming decreased by over one percent, while Nipissing experienced a slower growth rate from the years before, which could be the result of Weyerhaeuser closing the Sturgeon Falls mill in October 2002.

In 2004, districts of Greater Sudbury, Kenora, Manitoulin, Parry Sound, Nipissing and Timiskaming all experienced slight annual increases. Only the District of Sudbury continues to report a decline over one percent.

Figure 1. Cumulative Population Change, 2001-2002



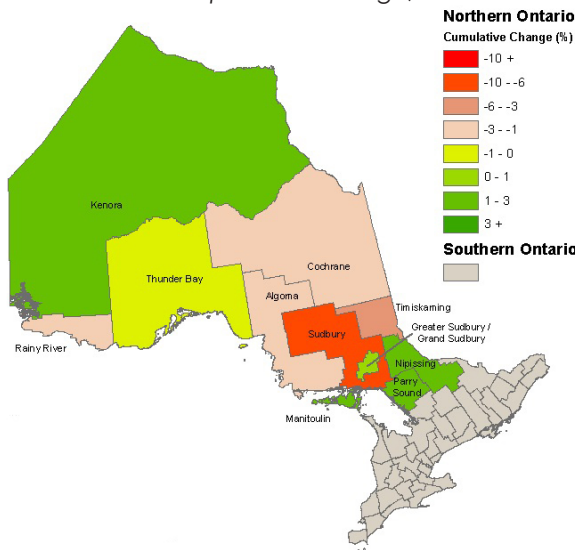
Source: Statistics Canada. Table 051-0062 Estimates of population by census division, sex, age group for July 1, based on the Standard Geographical Classification (SGC) 2011, annual (persons).



## 2005-2009

This positive trend continues into 2005. The cumulative population change displays growth for Greater Sudbury, Nipissing, Parry Sound, Manitoulin and Kenora. In September of this year, Northern Ontario School of Medicine opens campuses in Greater Sudbury and Thunder Bay. In Kenora, the population continues to grow, even with the weakened forest industry and the closure of an Abitibi Consolidated mill which resulted in the loss of nearly 400 jobs.

Figure 2. Cumulative Population Change, 2001-2005



Source: Statistics Canada. Table 051-0062 Estimates of population by census division, sex, age group for July 1, based on the Standard Geographical Classification (SGC) 2011, annual (persons).

On the other hand, the population of Sudbury, Temiskaming, Cochrane, Algoma and Rainy River districts continue on a downward trajectory.

During 2006, the population continues to increase in Greater Sudbury, Parry Sound, Nipissing, Manitoulin and Kenora. With the mining sector in full swing, Greater Sudbury experiences a 0.73 percent increase from the year before. This is the largest annual increase for the district during 2001 and 2013.

Unfortunately, the forestry sector continues to falter and consequently Algoma, Cochrane and Thunder Bay experience further population loss. In Timmins, the closure of the Grant Forest Products strand board mill results in the loss of nearly 400 jobs.

As forestry communities continue to struggle due to production decreases and mill closures, populations throughout eight districts experience a decline in 2007 from the year before. In the Algoma district, the Weyerhaeuser oriented strand board mill closes in Wawa, while Domtar closes a sawmill in White River. Even Kenora experienced a population loss, which is

the only year it does between 2001 and 2013.

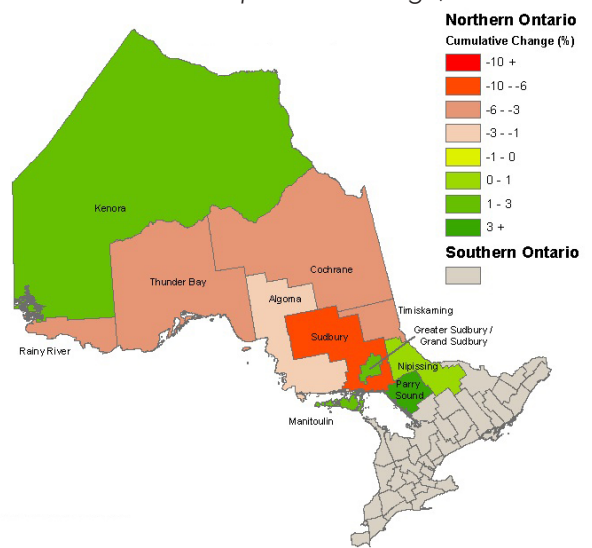
During 2007, Greater Sudbury, Manitoulin and Parry Sound were the only districts who experienced any kind of growth.

Despite their struggles during 2007, in cumulative terms, the northern most district of Kenora and the southern most districts of Parry Sound, Nipissing, Manitoulin and Greater Sudbury are still reporting positive growth. The central districts are all reporting a cumulative decline.

When the recession begins in 2008, the once strong mining sector starts to decline and the forestry sector continues to struggle. Once again, numerous sawmills close their doors, notably in the Algoma District in Dubreuilville. Again, however, Kenora appears to be immune to these bouts of decline reporting another annual increase.

With the recession hitting full force in 2009, population decreases are dominant throughout the region. Even the mining sector cannot save the region with the recession causing the price and demand for metals to drop. Only Kenora experiences a noticeable annual growth at 0.84 per cent while Manitoulin and Greater Sudbury remain stable with minimal growth. In Greater Sudbury, Vale employees begin the longest strike in Inco/Vale history. During this stagnation Xstrata closes Craig Mine and Thayer Lindsey Mine and Marathon loses its Tembec sawmill.

Figure 3. Cumulative Population Change, 2001-2007



Source: Statistics Canada. Table 051-0062 Estimates of population by census division, sex, age group for July 1, based on the Standard Geographical Classification (SGC) 2011, annual (persons).

## 2010-2013

As the strike at Vale continues into 2010, Greater Sudbury experiences a population loss during this year. Despite the loss the district still experiences a cumulative population growth since 2001. In the Cochrane district, the drop in population can still be linked to the ongoing struggle in the forestry sector in such communities as Kapuskasing and Iroquois Falls. In Timmins, Xstrata closed its Kidd Creek copper smelter and moved the operation to Rouyn-Noranda, Quebec. These setbacks push Cochrane's cumulative population loss over 6 percent.

During this period, the telecommunications industry also weakens. In North Bay, Teletech closes its operation putting roughly 200 employees out of work. Even with the closure in North Bay, the Nipissing district's cumulative growth remains over one percent.

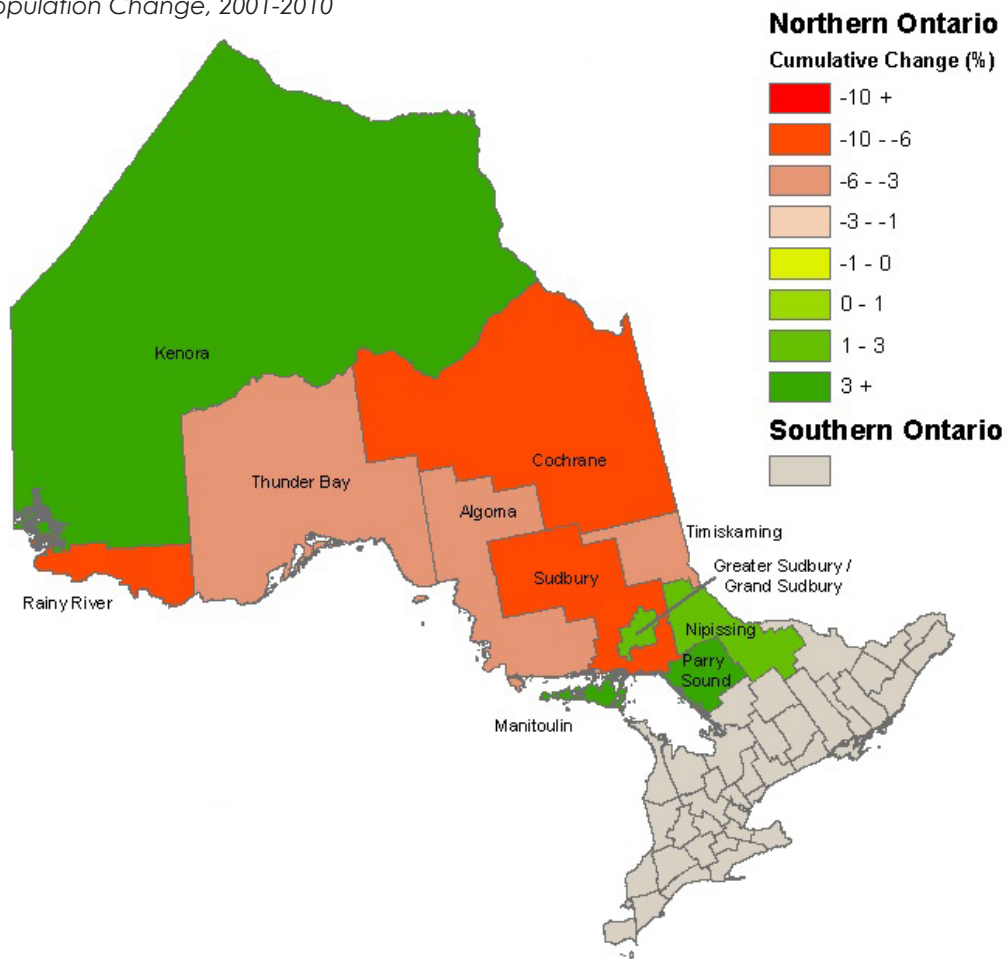
In 2011, Greater Sudbury population rebounds after undergoing a loss the previous year. The trend of growth in Greater Sudbury, Kenora, Manitoulin, Parry

Sound and Nipissing continues. The district of Sudbury, on the other hand, has incurred a population loss exceeding 10 percent since 2001.

The following year, in 2012, the telecommunications industry experienced more trouble, leading to further losses. Another Teletech location closes its doors, this time in Greater Sudbury, which had employed up to 700 people. Meanwhile, the forestry industry continues to struggle and Resolute Forest Products shuts down its pulp and paper mill in Fort Frances. Parry Sound begins to experience a population decline following the completion of the twinned highway construction in the area.

In 2013, there is a general trend of decline from the year before. Only Manitoulin experiences noticeable growth. In Greater Sudbury, the opening of the School of Architecture at Laurentian University brings some optimism. The new program enrolls 70 students for the first term and employs seven full time professors.

Figure 4. Cumulative Population Change, 2001-2010



Source: Statistics Canada. Table 051-0062 Estimates of population by census division, sex, age group for July 1, based on the Standard Geographical Classification (SGC) 2011, annual (persons).

## Cumulative Population Change Overall

Cumulative population change from 2001 to 2013 demonstrates that six of the 11 Northern Ontario districts experience a decline in population. These districts include Sudbury, Cochrane, Rainy River, Timiskaming, Algoma and Thunder Bay. Much of the decline in Northern Ontario can be connected to an over reliance on the primary sectors. The forestry sector experienced a drastic decline during this time period because of a heavy reliance on a single export trade partner of raw forest products. When the United States housing market crashed and the soft wood lumber tariff closely ensued, the forestry industry in Northern Ontario was hard-pressed to remain viable.

However, even after a series of setbacks there are small signs of rejuvenation occurring between Northern Ontario and its relationship with the forestry sector. In White River, the White River Forest Products Ltd. reopened its doors and operations restarted at the sawmill in 2013. The mill was redeveloped as a privately held corporation funded and co-owned by the communities of White River and the Pic Moberg First Nation with two other private shareholders. A second shift at the mill was scheduled to be added in 2014, and once fully operational the company will directly employ approximately 90 people.

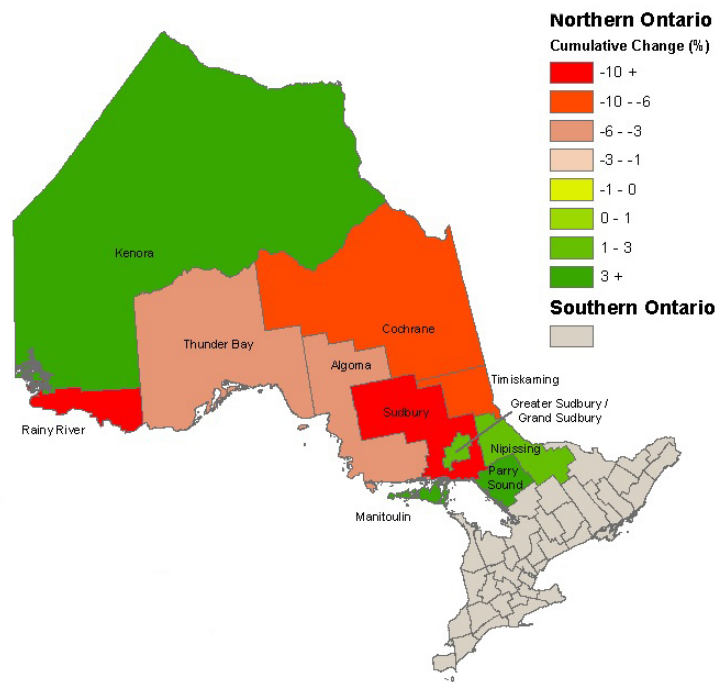
The other five districts – Greater Sudbury, Kenora, Manitoulin, Nipissing and Parry Sound – experience

a cumulative population growth from 2001 to 2013. Nipissing and Greater Sudbury experience a small growth 1.2 percent and 2.4 percent respectively. This can be partly attributed to the diversity in the local economy. Parry Sound, meanwhile, experienced growth of nearly 5 percent, the result of the twinning of highway 69/400 in the area, which brought construction employment and increased accessibility. However, construction on the highway in the region ended in 2010 and since 2012, the Parry Sound district suffered a population loss. The districts of Nipissing, Parry Sound, Greater Sudbury and Manitoulin also benefits from its relative proximity to Southern Ontario.

The districts that experience the largest growth are Kenora and Manitoulin at 5.2 percent and 6.5 percent. Kenora is an exception, being that its primary industry is forestry while still managing to experience a population growth during this period. The increase in these two districts can be attributed to the high birthrates and overall growth in the Aboriginal population.

During this period, fluctuations in Northern Ontario's population can largely be associated with the boom and busts of the primary industry sectors such as forestry and mining. With reliance on these sectors significantly reduced future trends are harder to predict. It is clear that economic opportunity and population remain closely connected.

Figure 5. Cumulative Population Change, 2001-2013



Source: Statistics Canada. Table 051-0062 Estimates of population by census division, sex, age group for July 1, based on the Standard Geographical Classification (SGC) 2011, annual (persons).

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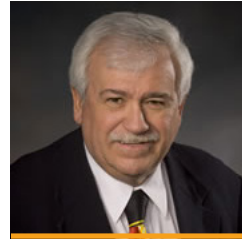
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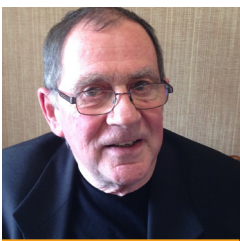
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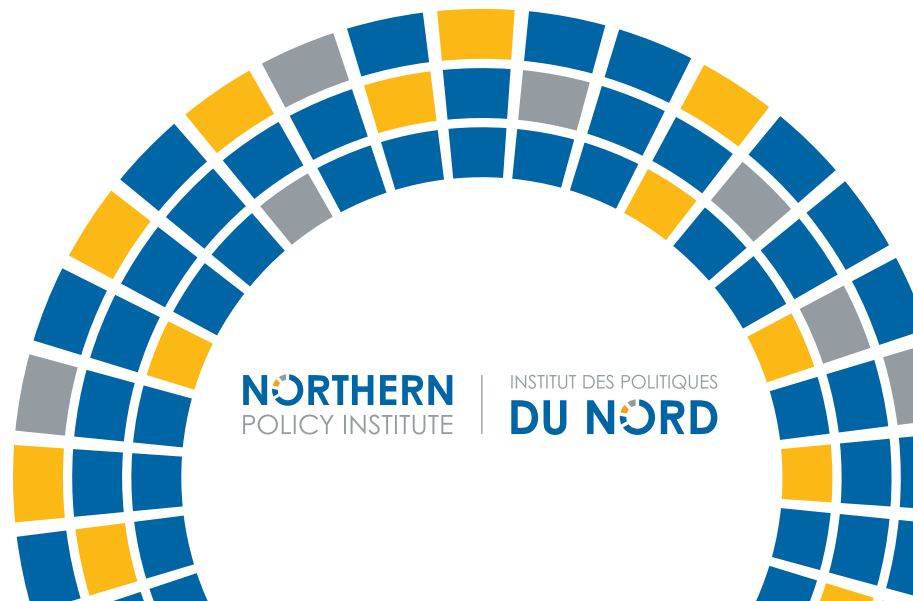
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