



For Immediate Release

New series from Northern Policy Institute analyzes Northern Ontario's population trends, suggests that Northern Ontario is in need of a Newcomers Strategy

October 9, 2018 - Northern Ontario is experiencing a demographic shift and a population decline. Fueled by natural aging, low fertility rates, a rising life expectancy and an increase of out-migration, the 11 northern districts require a comprehensive, coordinated and inclusive newcomer attraction and retention strategy.

Northern Policy Institute (NPI) has published the first commentary in the *Northern Attraction* series, by author Christina Zefi. NPI is finalizing a Northern Newcomer Strategy, which will be the culmination of a series of commentaries that touch upon the operating environment of newcomer attraction and settlement services in Northern Ontario.

"The first commentary in this series demonstrates the need for a Northern Newcomer Strategy," states Charles Cirtwill, President of NPI. "In Northern Ontario, our overall population is falling and our total population is aging. Population and migration trends suggest that our Northern regions need 50,000 newcomers by 2041 just to sustain current population levels."

Since 1996, 8 out of 11 Northern Ontario districts have experienced a population decline. This is exemplified in Rainy River and Cochrane which have dropped by 13.2 and 14.5 per cent, respectively. This decline is projected to continue into 2041 based on estimates prepared by the Ontario Ministry of Finance. For reference, Ontario as a whole has grown by 25.1 per cent.

"A Northern Newcomer Strategy could include proactive policies and programs to attract young migrants. Indeed, while attracting newcomers is a short- to medium-term solution, it could have significant socio-economic benefits for Ontario's northern regions," writes author Christina Zefi. "Migrants will benefit the workforce in terms of supporting high-skilled innovation as well as low-skilled, consistently vacant employment positions."

The commentary concludes that Northern Ontario needs to attract and retain migrants who are ready and willing to work while simultaneously integrating the existing Indigenous and non-Indigenous population into the workforce, and increase fertility rates.

Other commentaries in the *Northern Attraction* series will be published in the coming months. These commentaries will explore the strengths and weaknesses of newcomer attraction and retention in Northern Ontario, other immigration programs that could be implemented, and how our communities can attract newcomers.

Read the full commentary, "*Exploring the Need for a Northern Newcomer Strategy*" at www.northernpolicy.ca/northernattraction1



Media Interviews: Author Christina Zefi 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:

Christina Zefi is a Research Analyst at Northern Policy Institute and has a Graduate Certificate in Public Administration from Humber College. Her research interests include immigration reform and policy related to Indigenous Affairs, the environment, and mental health. Prior to her role at NPI, Christina worked at TD Canada Trust as a Financial Advisor.