

For Immediate Release

Provincial Wetland Policy Dries up Northern Economic Opportunities

October 12, 2023 – Wetlands play an essential role in water filtering, flood prevention, and serve as a habitat for many species. Currently, provincial policies are in place to preserve wetlands, but at what cost? In Northern Policy Institute's latest report, authors Don McConnell and his daughter Laura set out to examine if the current province-wide rules protecting wetlands disproportionately affect Northern Ontario's economic growth.

The report, titled *Provincial Wetland Policy Dries up Northern Economic Opportunities*, argues that the provincial government's rules for protecting wetlands in Northern Ontario are stopping the various Northern regions from growing economically. Though wetlands play an essential role in the environment, the PPS understates their importance to the local economy in terms of growth and development.

"The existing policies on wetland development are unsuited to Northern Ontario," states author Laura McConnell, "A policy that empowers municipalities and approval authorities to make their own decisions on wetland development will allow communities to balance the environment with economic growth."

The Provincial Policy Statement states that all wetlands are important to preserve unless proven otherwise, which makes it difficult for businesses to get permission to undertake new infrastructure projects. This problem is especially prevalent in Northern Ontario where there are lots of wetlands, but not as much demand for new development. This means that the provincial government, through the PPS, is prioritizing environmental protection over community economic growth.

For Northern Ontario to flourish both environmentally and economically, the report suggests that local communities should be given more decision-making power in identifying wetlands that are important to protect, so that economic growth and development can happen *alongside* environmental protection.

Want to learn more? Read the report [here](#).

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To arrange an interview, please contact:

Charles Cirtwill
President and CEO
807-343-8956 ext. 501
ccirtwill@northernpolicy.ca

About the Authors:

Don McConnell recently retired as the Director of Planning and Enterprise Services for the City of Sault Ste. Marie, with over 40 years experience working as a planner in Northern Ontario. He has served as a Council Member on the Ontario Professional Planners Institute's Board, and has appeared on numerous occasions before the Ontario Land Tribunal (formerly Ontario Municipal Board) as an expert witness on planning matters.

His daughter, **Laura McConnell**, brings knowledge and passion for research and writing about policy issues, with an undergraduate degree in International Relations and Urban Studies from the University of Toronto and a Juris Doctor from the University of Windsor, Faculty of Law.

About Northern Policy Institute:

Northern Policy Institute is Northern Ontario's independent, evidence-driven think tank. We perform research, analyze data, and disseminate ideas. Our mission is to enhance Northern Ontario's capacity to take the lead position on socio-economic policy that impacts our communities, our province, our country, and our world.

We believe in partnership, reconciliation, collaboration, communication, and cooperation. Our team seeks to do inclusive research that involves broad engagement and delivers recommendations for specific, measurable action. Our success depends on our partnerships with other entities present in or passionate about Northern Ontario.

Based in Thunder Bay, Sudbury, and Kirkland Lake, NPI is active in every region of Northern Ontario. During the summer months, we have satellite offices in communities across Northern Ontario staffed by teams of Experience North placements. These placements are university and college students working in your community on issues important to you and your neighbours.