

**For Immediate Release****Successful Population Growth and Retention Efforts Across Northern Ontario**

**May 23, 2023** – Since February 2020, decision-makers in Ontario's northern regions have met annually to exchange ideas on Northern Ontario's population growth and retention initiatives. Throughout the last three years, it has become clear that an abundance of work is being done to combat racism, further reconciliation, welcome newcomers, and retain the population across Northern Ontario. However, *connection, coordination, and communication* within and between communities and organizations is essential to maximizing the impacts of these efforts.

Approximately 200 individuals representing over 90 organizations attended the Magnetic North Conference in June 2022 to lay out a plan for reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, anti-racism, attraction, and retention in Ontario's Northern Regions. Participants came from all parts of Northern Ontario and attended virtually or in person in Sault Ste. Marie.

The Magnetic North 2022 Conference Report highlights the core themes emphasized during the conference. The persistent themes that arose can be summarized with these key points:

1. The Welcoming Portals have the potential to greatly help those looking to move to or are already residing in Ontario's Northern regions. They require dedicated resources to update and maintain;
2. Small communities are ready and willing to accept an influx of migrants. Still, local services must be in place to ensure successful attraction and retention;
3. Many population growth initiatives are ongoing in Northern Ontario communities. Yet, collaboration and communication within and amongst organizations throughout Ontario's Northern Regions must be prioritized, and
4. Reconciliation is a fundamental pillar underpinning population growth and prosperity in Northern Ontario. Therefore, any initiative and project affecting Indigenous peoples must involve their voice at the onset.

The actions above are meant to guide organizations looking to work collectively to create and maintain welcoming communities in Northern Ontario and are part of the four key themes that have defined the essence of the Magnetic North initiative since its beginning.

"Actors in Northern Ontario have been working to develop welcoming communities and close existing gaps to allow for sustainable population growth," states the Magnetic North Program Officer, Daphnée King. "The Magnetic North Conference allows us to highlight best practices and put in place action measures dedicated to ensuring the responsible and continuous growth of our regions," she says.

Northern Policy Institute, via the Magnetic North Program Officer, is committed to supporting partners in pursuing the priorities set out at the annual conferences. The next

progress report is due at the 2023 Magnetic North Conference set for June 12-14, 2023, in Sudbury. For details about the Magnetic North Initiative and the Magnetic North project partners, please visit <https://www.northernpolicy.ca/magnetic-north>.

To read the report, please visit: <https://www.northernpolicy.ca/magnetic-north-report-2022>

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**Media Interview:** Author and Senior Policy Analyst Mercedes Labelle is available for comment. To arrange an interview, please contact:

**Daphnée King**

Magnetic North Program Officer, NPI  
1-705-885-8956, e. 202  
[dking@northernpolicy.ca](mailto:dking@northernpolicy.ca)

**About the author:**

Mercedes Labelle was born in Bilbao, Spain, and lived in the United States before moving to North Bay, Ontario. Mercedes attended McGill University, earning her B.A. in Political Science and Urban Systems and graduating in 2020. Through her role at NPI, Mercedes has worked on various projects related to population growth, demographics, and migration. In her free time, Mercedes enjoys running, hiking, and listening to podcasts. Mercedes is a Senior Policy Analyst at NPI and is located in Sudbury, Ontario.

**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, 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.*

**About the Magnetic North Initiative:**

The purpose of the Magnetic North initiative is to encourage community coordination in pan-northern population growth and welcoming community strategy, including attraction, retention, and reconciliation. The initiative, via the Magnetic North Program

Officer, will implement the immediate action plan produced as part of the Magnetic North and Come North Conferences, and provide updates on the status.