

## For Immediate Release

### Fostering Population Growth, Advancing Anti-Racism, and Building Indigenous Reconciliation in Northern Ontario

**23 April 2024** – 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 130 individuals representing 70 different organizations partook in the 2023 Magnetic North Conference hosted online on June 12-13. Over the course of two days, participants were involved in conversations regarding reconciliation and anti-racism, attraction, the settlement of domestic and international immigrants, as well as the retention of existing populations.

The Magnetic North 2023 Conference Report highlights the core themes emphasized during the conference. The persistent themes that arose can be summarized with these key points:

1. While progress has been made in terms of reconciliation, Indigenous populations in the region continue to face worse economic outcomes when compared to non-Indigenous populations. There continues to be a high degree of misunderstanding regarding Indigenous culture in contemporary Canadian society.
2. In Northern Ontario there are a multitude of organizations whose work touches on or revolves around anti-racist initiatives. While significant progress has been made, there is still work to be done regarding the awareness of BIPOC peoples throughout the region.
3. Retention strategies are just as critical as attraction strategies in Northern Ontario. It will be paramount to build a sense of community throughout the region and show immigrants that there are stable and rewarding experiences available to them in the north.
4. There continues to be noticeable gaps in critical services in Northern Ontario when compared to other parts of the province which include but are not limited to health services, public transportation, and rural ICT coverage. The region will benefit from more tailored public policies that are unique to its specific needs moving forward.

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 hard to develop welcoming communities and close existing gaps to allow for sustainable population growth," states Charles Cirtwill, NPI's President & CEO. "The Magnetic North Conference allowed us to highlight best practices and identify collective actions necessary to ensuring the responsible and continuous growth of our regions."

Northern Policy Institute, via the Magnetic North Initiative, is committed to supporting partners in pursuing the priorities set out at the annual conferences. 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-2023>

-30-

**Media Interview:** NPI President & CEO Charles Cirtwill is available for comment. To arrange an interview, please contact:

**Abigail Ollila**

Communications Officer, NPI  
1-705-572-8956, e. 406  
[aollila@northernpolicy.ca](mailto:aollila@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 was a Senior Policy Analyst at NPI and has now returned to law school.

### **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 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.