



For Immediate Release

New Research Reveals Demographics and Gold Prices play a role in Thunder Bay Air Traffic

January 30, 2018 – As Thunder Bay's International Airport (TBIA) reports on record passenger numbers in 2017, Northern Policy Institute's latest commentary, *"Taking Off: Factors Impacting Thunder Bay's Air Traffic"*, reveals several indicators that correlate with flight demand in recent years.

Author Curtis McKnight examined three main factors, including the price of gold, demographics and post-secondary enrolment.

McKnight discovers that as gold prices increase, air traffic does as well. A possible explanation is that as gold prices rise, there are more employment opportunities in the mining sector throughout Thunder Bay, prompting workers to travel from different areas.

The report also revealed that an increase in Thunder Bay's overall population has not meant more air traffic, but research does suggest that as Thunder Bay's population ages, total air traffic increases.

McKnight explains, "for the Thunder Bay population ages 40 to 69, there appears to be a positive relationship with total Thunder Bay air traffic since 1996. People in this demographic have generally developed careers. Therefore, increased work travel opportunities and more disposable income are a few reasons why people in this age range would be positively correlated with air traffic."

Lastly, it was found that as enrolment at Lakehead University increases especially from students living outside of Northwestern Ontario, so do the amount of flights arriving to and departing from the TBIA.

"As communities in Northern Ontario experience economic, social and demographic shifts, airports like the TBIA also experience shifts in air traffic patterns," stated NPI President & CEO Charles Cirtwill. "NPI was happy to present these findings to the Thunder Bay International Airport Authority Board of Directors, as they continue to plan for the future growth of the TBIA."

Below is a summary of findings found within the commentary. To read the full paper, visit www.northernpolicy.ca

- High international gold prices and a growing Northern Ontario gold mining sector tend to increase total Thunder Bay air traffic.



- Growth in Thunder Bay's middle aged population appears to increase flight demand at TBIA.
- Students enrolled at Lakehead University who come from other parts of Ontario tend to positively relate with total Thunder Bay air traffic.
- The share of the population ages 20 to 29 does not correlate with total Thunder Bay air traffic.

Media Interviews: Author Curtis McKnight 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:

Curtis McKnight was born and raised in Sherwood Park, Alberta. He has recently graduated from Queen's University with a BAH, majoring in applied economics and minoring in political studies. During his time at NPI as a Research Analyst, Curtis was able to apply qualitative and quantitative techniques of analysis to make a positive impact on the unique policy environment of Northern Ontario. Some research interests of his include policy implications of business cycle dynamics, and the importance of natural resource development as it relates to economic growth. Currently, Curtis works as a financial advisor with Scotiabank.