



## OPINION EDITORIAL

### Sudbury PoV: Northern mentality holds region back

By [Sudbury Star Staff](#)

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Mike Commito, a policy analyst with the Northern Policy Institute, questions whether Sudbury -- or any of Northern Ontario's major cities -- can be considered a 'northern' city anymore.

In a report released last week ("True North: How 'Northern' is Northern Ontario?"), Commito doesn't take issue with the fact Northern Ontario is located, well, in the north.

But he goes on to suggest geography isn't the only factor in determining whether Sudbury and its sister communities can be considered a nordicity; that is, a northern city.

Researchers have developed a model to test for nordicity, which looks at 10 physical and socio-economic variables, including latitude, annual temperature and proximity to industry and infrastructure. Commito tested the concept of nordicity on Timmins, Kenora, Sault Ste. Marie, Red Lake and Moosonee. Of the locations Commito studied, he found all have become less "northern" in just under 40 years.

In fact, he said, only Moosonee would still be considered a northern city. As a result, the region's five largest cities - Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, Timmins and North Bay - are no longer northern cities using the nordicity model.

Commito may be a policy wonk and the Northern Policy Institute a think-tank, but he says the findings suggest governments and policy makers would be well served to remember that Northern Ontario is a changing and "dynamic location."

Fair enough. At the same time, Northern Ontario has deeply entrenched challenges unique to a northern region. Northern Ontario contains 90 per cent of Ontario's landmass, but has a population of 800,000 (less than 10 per cent of the province's population) that tends to be scattered and isolated. Northern Ontario is also bleeding jobs and people.

Worse still, Northern Ontario has a "northern mentality," caused by its colonial relationship with Queen's Park, as outlined by Laurentian University professor David Robinson in another Northern Policy Institute paper released earlier this year.

Northern Ontario's present and future has, and will be, shaped by southern Ontario. Even worse, Northern Ontario's political class seems content with the way things are, and too often fight with each other for scraps from Queen's Park instead of pushing for meaningful development.

If Northern Ontario wants to truly develop, it must gain control of its political and economic destiny. It may not need to separate, as the new Northern Ontario Party argues. Instead, the de-evolution of powers, from the south to the north, is a far more practical approach, as Robinson proposes.

First, however, as Commito suggests, Northern Ontario must think of itself as a dynamic, changing region instead of victims of circumstance.

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