



For Immediate Release

Northern Policy Institute commentary suggests solutions to food insecurity in Ontario's northern regions

December 11, 2018 – The high cost of healthy eating is an ongoing concern for many families and individuals in Ontario's northern communities. It often leads to food insecurity, a situation in which people are unable to obtain a nutritious and culturally appropriate diet due to financial restrictions and other barriers. In Ontario's northern communities, the relatively higher cost of food is a major contributor to food insecurity in northern communities compared to those in the South.

Northern Policy Institute's latest commentary, *Setting the Table: Food Insecurity and Costs in Ontario's North*, by Eric Melillo, explores the causes of higher food prices in the North, as well as other underlying social concerns that contribute to food insecurity. In the commentary, Melillo proposes potential solutions to address this issue that could lead to lower food costs in the North.

The commentary illustrates that there is a positive relationship between community remoteness and the cost of healthy eating, and in general, the further north one goes, the cost of healthy food increases. For example, it costs over \$1,900 more per year to buy healthy food for a family in the Rainy River and Kenora Districts than it would cost for a family in Toronto. In northern communities, there are several factors that can account for higher food prices, including increased travel costs, a lack of market competition, and inadequate road and transport infrastructure.

Food security is also impacted by inadequate income and social assistance. Currently, both federal and provincial levels of government have established plans in place to combat the high cost of healthy eating in the north and food insecurity more broadly. Data would suggest however, that these programs have not adequately addressed the situation to ensure that such food is accessible and affordable for every Canadian.

Melillo proposes different solutions that have the potential to alleviate food insecurity in northern communities either by lowering the cost of nutritious food and/or increasing the income of those currently struggling. Potential solutions include:

- Continued development of the northern economy, including the construction of roads to isolated communities;
- Implementing a drone pilot project that would identify the value of drone and airship technology as a solution to food insecurity;
- Encouraging cooperative business models as opposed to for-profit grocery stores;
- Reconsider implementing a basic income guarantee, which could lead to increased income and purchasing power for those currently struggling with food insecurity.

To read the full commentary, visit: www.northernpolicy.ca/foodinsecurity



Media Interviews: Author Eric Melillo, and NPI's President and CEO, Charles Cirtwill, are both 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:

Eric Melillo is a former Summer Policy Placement for Northern Policy Institute. He is currently completing a BA in Economics at Lakehead University.