



For Immediate Release

Urban solutions will not work for rural Rainy River

New Report recommends a renewed focus on increased skills training and education levels to meet current workforce needs

January 31, 2017 – The latest report to emerge from the *Northern Projections Human Capital Series* by Dr. Bahktiar Moazzami and James Cuddy offers several recommendations for Rainy River – a district already experiencing major demographic and labour market shifts.

“This new report, a partnership between the Northern Ontario Workforce Planning Boards and Northern Policy Institute certainly identifies several challenges in the Rainy River District.” Says Charles Cirtwill, President and CEO of Northern Policy Institute. “More importantly however, by examining past and present characteristics and trends unique to the district's economy, the community is now better equipped to identify and build upon opportunities that will work for the people of Rainy River.”

The structure of Rainy River district's workforce has been changing due to a population that is simultaneously declining and aging. The total population is expected to decline from 20,166 in 2013 to 17,362 in 2041. The share of *working-age* people (ages 20 to 64) is projected to decline from 57.4 percent in 2013 to 45.5 percent in 2041.

The size and industrial makeup of the employed workforce has also changed over the past three decades, revealed by a continuous shift away from the goods-producing sector dominated by private businesses to the largely publicly funded service-producing sector.

The report also found that the education and skill levels of the prime-working-age population in Rainy River district are lagging behind the current estimated skill requirements. To drill down even further, labour force participation rates among the Indigenous population in Rainy River were generally lower and unemployment rates higher than the rest of the population.

Therefore, one potential solution to Rainy River's declining workforce size and productivity is to promote higher education through increased access to services, especially for the Indigenous population who are experiencing lower levels of education.

Furthermore, the report highlights the fact that all of Rainy River district's population live in rural areas as defined by Statistics Canada. Only 3 percent live in areas with a moderate link to an urban centre, while 86 percent live in areas with a weak link to an urban centre, and 11 percent live in remote regions.

Given the geography and distances involved, the report also proposes that economic investment and immigrant attraction efforts should continue to focus on industries that flourish in this environment: agriculture, forestry and mining.

Based on these trends, the report offers three key recommendations to promote the long-term sustainability of the district:



1. *Enhanced access to remote and on the job educational opportunities* - one potential solution to Rainy River's declining workforce size and productivity is to promote higher education through increased access to services, especially for the Indigenous population who experience lower levels of educational achievement.
2. *Continue to invest in the Indigenous population* - labour force participation rates among the Indigenous population in Rainy River was generally lower and unemployment rates higher than the rest of the population. To the extent that desire to engage in the broader economy exists, continued investments in supporting that engagement through education and skills enhancement should be made.
3. *Urban solutions will not work for Rainy River* - essentially all of Rainy River district's population live in rural areas as defined by Statistics Canada. Given the geography and distances involved, economic investment and immigrant attraction efforts should continue to focus on industries that flourish in this environment.

The full report, *Northern Projections: Human Capital Series – Rainy River District*, is available on our websites:

Northern Policy Institute www.northernpolicy.ca

Algoma Workforce Investment Corporation www.awic.ca

Far Northeast Training Board www.fnetb.com

The Labour Market Group – Nipissing Parry Sound www.thelabourmarketgroup.ca

Northwest Training and Adjustment Board www.ntab.on.ca

North Superior Workforce Planning Board www.nswpb.ca

Workforce Planning for Sudbury & Manitoulin www.planningourworkforce.ca

Northern Projections: Human Capital Series highlights all of the 11 districts in Northern Ontario, and is part of an ongoing, collaborative effort between the *Northern Policy Institute* and *Northern Ontario Workforce Planning Board* to provide evidence-based analysis for effective decision making in the region.

Reports examine past and present characteristics and trends in each district's economy in order to forecast future challenges and opportunities.

Media Interviews: Northern Policy Institute President and CEO, Charles Cirtwill is 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 Kenora, 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 Northern Ontario Workforce Planning:

Workforce Planning Ontario is a network of 26 Workforce Planning Boards covering four regions across the province. Workforce Planning Boards gather intelligence about the supply and demand side of the local labour market and work in partnership with employers, employment services, educators, researchers, economic development, government and other stakeholders to identify, understand and address labour market issues. This includes supporting and coordinating local responses to meet current and emerging workforce needs. Given the unique geography and labour market issues that impact Northern Ontario, all 6 planning boards in the north have collaborated to form Northern Ontario Workforce Planning. They include: Algoma Workforce Investment Corporation (AWIC); Far Northeast Training Board (FNETB); The Labour Market Group (LMG); Northwest Training and Adjustment Board (NTAB); North Superior Workforce Planning Board (NSWPB); and Workforce Planning for Sudbury & Manitoulin (WPSM). FNETB and NSWPB are currently pilot sites for Local Employment Planning Councils (LEPC).