



For Immediate Release

## **New commentary suggests a prosperous future for Northern Ontario rests on how we are governed**

**September 27, 2016** – A new commentary released by Northern Policy Institute suggests that many of Northern Ontario's economic and social problems are linked to how the region is governed.

In the last thirty years, Northern Ontario's economy has not performed as well as the province as a whole - or than the economies of northern parts of other provinces. Beyond economic issues, Northern Ontario is also underperforming in education and general conditions of its population, particularly Indigenous peoples.

*Governance in Northern Ontario: Taking Ownership of the Future*, by David MacKinnon, uses evidence to propose that Northern Ontario should pursue a regional governance model – people in a region determining their collective ends, means, and values - as a major step forward for the region.

"There is consensus that good governance leads to better social and economic conditions," states author David MacKinnon. "What Northern Ontario needs is a willingness to make major changes by working within existing political structures, to develop a stronger regional identity, and to take more responsibility for its own future."

MacKinnon looks to the experience of other northern jurisdictions, including Greenland, Åland (Sweden and Finland), Saskatchewan and Quebec. Overall, the available evidence strongly suggests that regional governance could be positive for Northern Ontario, but the structures that are most appropriate would likely vary depending on their location and size.

The commentary also raises the issue of Indigenous governance, a key concern given the importance of First Nations peoples in Northern Ontario's population. "Progress here is vital, not only for the Indigenous population, but also for Northern Ontario in general," states Northern Policy Institute President, Charles Cirtwill.

Based on his findings, MacKinnon leaves readers with several recommendations to consider:

1. The Ontario and federal governments should treat Northern Ontario as though it were a separate province for the purposes of economic and statistical analysis.
2. The Ontario government should propose, in cooperation with other provinces, that the Northern Development Ministers Forum be significantly upgraded and its infrastructure strengthened.
3. Northern leaders, especially Indigenous leaders, should begin the arduous process of shifting efforts to encourage economic development away from initiatives that depend on government, to those that can be done in collaboration with the private sector.



4. Indigenous communities should consider substantially different governance arrangements to help them converge toward income levels found elsewhere.

The full commentary, "Governance in Northern Ontario: Taking Ownership of the Future of Northern Ontario", is available on our website at [www.northernpolicy.ca](http://www.northernpolicy.ca)

**Media Interviews:** Author David MacKinnon 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 Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury, and Kenora. 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 Author David MacKinnon:**

David MacKinnon is a frequent commentator on Canadian fiscal issues. He has spoken to audiences across Ontario and his work has appeared in the Globe and Mail, the Toronto Star, the National Post and many local newspapers across Canada. He is a native of Prince Edward Island, where he was awarded a Bachelor of Arts degree (honours economics) from Dalhousie University and an MBA from York University. He was also awarded a Centennial Fellowship by the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce and York University to study at York, Harvard and Oxford Universities, as well as the European Institute of Business Studies.

Mr. MacKinnon served as Director, Planning and Economics and Executive Director, Development Strategy in the Nova Scotia Department of Development from 1977-1981. He later served in several senior capacities in the Ontario Ministry of Finance, the Bank of Montreal and as CEO of the Ontario Hospital Association from 1996-2003. He was also CEO of the Ontario development Corporation, Ontario's major economic development agency, from 1986 – 1993.