



For Immediate Release

## **New Commentary explores how passenger rail service in Northern Ontario could enhance intercommunity connectivity and quality of life**

**September 11, 2018** – In response to Ontario’s [Draft 2041 Northern Ontario Multimodal Transportation Strategy](#), Northern Policy Institute (NPI) has published a series of commentaries outlining action items for the government and private sector to consider. Recommendations found within the commentaries, *Actions to move Northern Ontario forward*, relate directly to goals outlined in the draft document.

“NPI recognizes the importance of an innovative, diverse transportation strategy that takes all communities into account,” said NPI President and CEO Charles Cirtwill. “As part of our role to propose evidence based, practical solutions that support the sustainable development of Ontario’s northern regions, we’ve put forward this series of action items that outline concrete next steps that the public and private sectors can use to inform the implementation and management of transportation policies over the coming decades.”

The fourth commentary of the series, *Actions to move Northern Ontario forward: Passenger Rail*, by authors Lucille Frith, Dr. Linda Savory Gordon and Howie Wilcox, examines how Northern Ontario could benefit from a well-functioning passenger rail system.

“Northern Ontario, which accounts for approximately 90 per cent of Ontario’s geographic landmass, could benefit economically from a well-functioning passenger rail system with employment growth expected in transportation itself, and tourism in particular,” states the commentary. The authors also highlight how access to passenger rail might play a part in mitigating climate change, as well as enhancing the economic sustainability and connectivity of municipalities and First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities. Additionally, passenger rail could provide a safe and affordable transportation method for groups such as newcomers, seniors, students, and individuals with disabilities.

Below is a summary of recommendations found within the commentary. To read the full paper, visit [www.northernpolicy.ca/passengerrail](http://www.northernpolicy.ca/passengerrail)

MNDM and MTO should:

1. Conduct a concept development study of restored, reinvigorated passenger rail service.
2. Conduct a socioeconomic impact study of restored, reinvigorated passenger rail service.
3. Develop an operational plan for a restored, reinvigorated passenger rail service.
4. Consider, based on the aforementioned studies and plan, a proposal to provide passenger train service between Toronto and Cochrane, and between Sault Ste. Marie and Hearst, while preparing for resumption of service from Sault Ste. Marie to North Bay and from Cochrane to Hearst on railbeds that require improvements to enable passenger service.

Other commentaries in this series have focused on Winter Roads in the Far North, Airships, and Marine Tourism.



**Media Interviews:** Authors Lucille Frith, Dr. Linda Savory Gordon and Howie Wilcox are available for comment. President of Northern Policy Institute, Charles Cirtwill, is also 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 authors:**

**Lucille Frith**, retired Registered Nurse, retired Sales Manager, resides in Huntsville, Ontario. She is President of the Huntsville Train Station Society, Spokesperson for Committee Promoting Muskoka Rail Travel (CPMRT) and co-chair of Northeastern Ontario Rail Network (NEORN).

**Dr. Linda Savory Gordon** is a retired Algoma University professor. She is currently Professor Emerita and volunteer Research Associate with NORDIK Institute, Algoma University, where she focuses on community-based research and development on rail issues in collaboration with the Coalition for Algoma Passenger Trains (CAPT) and the Northeastern Ontario Rail Network. Her PhD in Policy Studies is from University of Bristol, UK.

**Howie Wilcox, CMILT** is an independent transportation professional (rail, marine, trucking) and member of the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transportation. He was previously employed by the Ontario Ministry of Northern Development and Mines and the Ministry of Transportation Ontario. He is co-chair of the Coalition for Algoma Passenger Trains and co-chair of Northeastern Ontario Rail Network.