



For Immediate Release

## Two solitudes in Thunder Bay District? Urban or extremely rural

**September 15, 2016** – Northern Policy Institute, in partnership with the Northern Ontario Workforce Planning Boards, has released the third report of their joint effort; *Northern Projections: Human Capital Series*. The report, authored by James Cuddy and Bakhtiar Moazzami, focuses on the Thunder Bay District, highlighting the contrasts that exist between urban and rural population and workforce trends.

From 2001 to 2011, Thunder Bay district's population declined by roughly 3 percent. During the same period the urban population increased, while the rural population declined.

Of the district's Indigenous population, 68.2 percent live in urban areas, mostly off-reserve, while 31.8 percent live in rural areas. Among the rural Indigenous population, 58.2 percent live in relatively remote areas with a weak link to an urban centre, and 26.8 percent live in very remote regions with absolutely no link to an urban centre.

But our rural Indigenous population is not the only one far from urban services. Of the francophone population in the district, 53.9 percent live in urban centres, but of those who live in rural areas, 83.9 percent live in relatively remote areas with only a weak link to an urban centre.

Simultaneously, the skill level of the workforce in Thunder Bay district is below the estimated requirement needed for emerging occupations, such as finance, health, and administration. The report therefore predicts the region will face a situation of workers with qualifications that do not match the existing jobs and of jobs that cannot find qualified workers.

"Meaningful engagement of our Indigenous population is our number one priority in the region," stated Madge Richardson, Executive Director of the North Superior Workforce Planning Board and Local Employment Planning Council. "Expanded access to services and educational opportunities are key to increasing and realizing their full share of the labour force."

The report also sheds light on several areas of strength that the district can build upon. Education levels are relatively high in urban centres in and around the city of Thunder Bay.

Female employment levels are also high – and rising in the region. Labour force participation and employment rates declined among men for the region as a whole, but rose among women from 2001 to 2011.

"The female population, whom have historically participated less in the labour force than males, are a key source of increasing workforce participation in the Thunder Bay district," cited Northern Policy Institute President, Charles Cirtwill. "This is true for Indigenous, anglophone, francophone and immigrant women."



Based on these findings, the authors make several recommendations to promote the long-term sustainability of the district:

1. *Market the city of Thunder Bay as the economic engine of the Northwest* - While the population in Thunder Bay district has declined, the urban population has increased, reflecting the movements of people from rural to urban areas. Additionally, within the Thunder Bay Census Metropolitan Area, the skill level among the Indigenous population is above provincial levels for both men and women. The urban core of Thunder Bay district has shown some promising signs of growth that should be marketed outside of the region.
2. *Continue to foster female participation in the labour force* - Labour force participation and employment rates declined among men, but rose among women from 2001 to 2011.
3. *Make Indigenous education the number one priority in the region* - The Indigenous population is expected to grow by nearly 42 percent from 2013 to 2041. The population of working age Indigenous peoples will grow by 38 percent, increasing their share of the labour force from 11 percent in 2013 to 18 percent in 2041. There is a strong evidence showing that higher skill levels increase the likelihood of participation in the workforce and reduce unemployment rates in Thunder Bay district.

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

Northern Policy Institute [www.northernpolicy.ca](http://www.northernpolicy.ca)

Algoma Workforce Investment Corporation [www.awic.ca](http://www.awic.ca)

Far Northeast Training Board [www.fnetb.com](http://www.fnetb.com)

The Labour Market Group – Nipissing Parry Sound [www.thelabourmarketgroup.ca](http://www.thelabourmarketgroup.ca)

Northwest Training and Adjustment Board [www.ntab.on.ca](http://www.ntab.on.ca)

North Superior Workforce Planning Board [www.nswpb.ca](http://www.nswpb.ca)

Sudbury and Manitoulin Workforce Planning Board [www.planningourworkforce.ca](http://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 evidenced based advice for effective decision making in the region.

Reports will 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 & CEO, Charles Cirtwill and North Superior Workforce Planning Board and Local Employment Planning Council Executive Director, Madge Richardson, are both available for comment.



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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 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).*