



For Immediate Release

## Northern Ontario: What should we do?

**September 30, 2019** – What are the opportunities and challenges that face Northern Ontario communities today, and in the next 10, 15, 20 years? Charles Cirtwill, President and CEO of Northern Policy Institute (NPI), answered this question at this year's annual State of the North event.

Each year, NPI provides an update on the state of Ontario's northern regions by reporting on a set of environmental, social and economic indicators.

This year's highlights included:

**Environment:** Northern Ontario is making progress on emission outputs by reducing emissions in the last decade. Many drinking water advisories in the north have been lifted since 2015, but there is still a significant amount remaining.

**Social:** Crime rates are going down in all districts. Educational attainment is going up. There is an increase in college and university attainment, and a decrease in individuals with no certificate or degree.

**Demographics:** A big challenge, with lots of opportunities. The overall population is aging and the working age population is declining. The good news is that the Indigenous population continues to grow and get younger. Today's indigenous youth will form a larger proportion of the future labour force. As Cirtwill stated however, "even if we had 100 percent labour force participation, Northern Ontario would still not have enough people to keep the communities alive. We have to eradicate the barriers facing indigenous youth: racism, economic exclusion, social and community challenges, and we need to attract more immigrants. Doing one without the other is simply not going to be enough."

**Employment:** Unemployment rates are going down and we see a growth in full time job availabilities. There is higher youth employment in the Northeast and the Northwest, and it has been continuously increasing (and outperforming the province) since 2011.

**Economic:** Northern Ontario's economy is far more diverse than people think. We have natural resources, but also public administration, health care, transportation and many more industries. This is good because it means we are "in tune with global trends" according to Cirtwill.

**Income:** Many northern districts outperform the province from the perspective of median income. This includes Francophone, immigrant and Indigenous incomes.

If you wish to view full presentation visit: <https://www.northernpolicy.ca/presentations>



**Media Interviews:** NPI President & 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 Thunder Bay 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.