



For Immediate Release

COVID-19: Working from home

April 16, 2020 – On the 11th of March the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 as a pandemic. Shortly after the Federal and Provincial governments across the country urged Canadians to take up physical distancing to slow the spread of the virus. Students, employers and other leaders were encouraged to study and work from home. What do these measures mean for people living in different situations?

“For Canadians who can work from home and have strong broadband or fibre optic internet connections at home, one of the biggest challenges is abstaining from snacks,” said author Sean Rosairo, data analyst at Northern Policy Institute. “For other Canadians, especially for those in rural and northern communities, the internet infrastructure can be lacking and working from home can become frustrating or impossible depending on two factors: access to internet, and types of work that can be done remotely.”

The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) states a target bandwidth of 50 Mbps (megabits per second) download speeds and 10 Mbps upload speeds to participate smoothly in digital activities.

The data in this briefing note shows that in Northern Ontario, there is a significant lack of access to the 50/10 Mbps target speed. In fact, 15.5 per cent of the population, or 120,932 people, still have bandwidth speeds below the target speed.

As for the occupations that cannot be done remotely, the author finds that the top three occupations for Northern Ontario are also listed on the Ontario government's essential businesses list: service support and other service occupations; maintenance and equipment operation trades; and industrial, electrical, and construction trades. These occupations make up 17 per cent of the total employed labour force.

The call to work from home has exposed the vulnerabilities of our economy, infrastructure and certain occupations. Physical distancing may be the stress test needed to help continue highlighting the need to improve digital infrastructure in Northern Ontario.

To read more about *Long Distance Physical Distancing: Working from Home during COVID-19*, go read the briefing note here: <https://www.northernpolicy.ca/covid-19-work-from-home>

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Media Interviews: Author Sean Rosairo and NPI President & CEO Charles Cirtwill are 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.

About the author:

Sean Rosairo was born in Thailand to Sri Lankan parents and then did most of his growing up in the Toronto suburb of Mississauga with lots of street hockey being played. Sean recently graduated from Laurentian University with a B.A. specialization in Economics. In this program he gained insight into the importance of Northern Ontario communities, and how they operate within the framework of the Canadian economy. Sean hopes to take these statistics and relate it to real people to make Northern Ontario even better. In his free time Sean enjoys hiking or mountain biking and using photography and videography to capture the beauty of landscapes.