

For Immediate Release

The Realities of Living in Northern Ontario: What Makes People Stay?

December 13, 2022 – In a recent series of reports titled *What Makes a Welcoming Community?*, Northern Policy Institute wanted to know *why* people moved to, remained in, or left Northern Ontario communities. In collaboration with organizations across Northern Ontario, the Institute launched a series of six surveys to assess the factors and experiences that contribute to the continuum of welcoming in our communities. Of those, two surveys – the Individual Experience and Exit surveys – look at the range of decisions involved in answering the question: **why are(n't) you here?**

Respondents were asked to consider socio-economic factors, such as their employment and housing satisfaction, opportunities present in the community, accessibility of services, and their sense of belonging, to provide greater insight on their decisions to stay or leave Northern Ontario.

Overall, the survey results revealed that both social and economic factors played a large role in the decision-making process when electing to leave a community. Socially, the majority of respondents indicated a strong sense of belonging to their previous community, though the most prevalent challenge expressed by the respondents is the lack of social interaction with other residents while living in their previous community.

Looking at economic factors, respondents indicated general satisfaction with their employment situation, although the most common reason noted for out-migration was still the presence of better job opportunities elsewhere.

"When it comes to Northern Ontario and data, there are some very real and important gaps that can hinder evidence-based decision-making," says Charles Cirtwill, President and CEO of Northern Policy Institute. "Working with partner organizations to promote consistent, comparable data efforts via surveys helps move the population growth yardstick that much further."

With the above noted, the reports make recommendations aimed at attracting people to, and retaining people in, Northern Ontario communities; some include:

1. Investment in labour market integration, diverse job opportunities, and welcoming community infrastructure for immigrants, Indigenous peoples, and the domestic population is an opportunity for the regions to better retain its residents.
2. Communities and organizations can work to promote socialization through virtual or in-person workshops, events, and activities to connect newcomers and those already living in the communities.
3. Ongoing monitoring and assessment of community-level trends and welcoming factors.

To read more about why people leave Northern Ontario communities (the Exit Survey reports) please visit: <https://www.northernpolicy.ca/exit-survey-reports-2022>

To read more about the experiences and satisfaction people have in and with their communities (the Individual Experience Survey reports), please visit: <https://www.northernpolicy.ca/individual-survey-reports-2022>

Media Interview: NPI President & CEO Charles Cirtwill and NPI Research Manager Rachel Rizzuto are available for comment. To arrange an interview, please contact:

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About the Authors:

Born and raised in Istanbul, Turkey, **Kerem Karabeyoğlu** graduated in 2021 from the University of Western Ontario with a B.A. in Political Science. During his studies, Kerem developed a keen interest in the areas of Canadian Arctic Sovereignty and Intergovernmental Cooperation. His academic focus was also directed towards International Peace-building and Transitional Justice studies. Immediately after graduating, Kerem returned to Turkey to intern as a Junior Consultant in the Turkish Parliament. Now, back in Canada, he is pursuing his professional interests in promoting long-term sustainable development. Having experienced Northern Ontario for the first-time tree-planting, he has been inspired to return to the natural beauty of the region ever since. An avid trail runner, soccer fan, and skier, Kerem is also passionate about producing music in his free time.

Karly Mabee is a former Policy Analyst at Northern Policy Institute. She graduated with her Master of Applied Politics after completing an Honours Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Leadership at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, ON. Karly's professional interests are primarily in data analysis, research, and preparing communications materials. In her free time Karly enjoys camping, hiking, and other outdoor activities.

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 offices are in Thunder Bay, Sudbury, and Kirkland Lake. We seek to enhance Northern Ontario's capacity to take the lead position on socioeconomic policy that impacts Northern Ontario, Ontario, and Canada as a whole.

Measurement Month:

These surveys are a part of the Measurement Month initiative launched by NPI in partnership with organizations across Northern Ontario. The project is an annual effort to leverage our individual resources to collect consistent, comparable data to inform decision-making at the local, regional, provincial, and national level.

About the Northwestern Ontario Local Immigration Partnership:

The Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) and Northern LIP are initiatives that are focused on improving access to, and the coordination of, effective services that facilitate immigration settlement and integration. The Northwestern Ontario Local Immigration Partnership serves Thunder Bay and 31 other communities in Northwestern Ontario.

