



For Immediate Release

Connecting the Dots: Lessons from the International & Community Matchmaker Northwest Pilot

April 29, 2021 – International students, temporary visa holders, francophones, rural communities, and those residing outside of Canada are a huge pool of potential new residents but are underserved by existing programs. This is the key finding of Northern Policy Institute's recently completed Northwestern Ontario International and Community Matchmaker project (ICM).

The summative evaluation of the project, *Connecting the Dots: Lessons from the International & Community Matchmaker Northwest Pilot* by Anthony Noga, examines the success and challenges of the 2018-2020 ICM project in Northwestern Ontario.

Noga identifies that the ICM project made notable progress during the pilot period:

1. Discovering a significant francophone demand from both jobseekers and employers.
2. Connecting over 40 job seekers with positions.
3. Building partnerships with other service providers and community actors.
4. Filling a communication gap for both jobseekers and employers.

The project was launched following a Canadian Chamber of Commerce initiative focused on identifying key local issues and how to address them. The Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce hosted a roundtable of community leaders that highlighted perceived gaps in the attraction, settlement, and retention of migrants to the region. The ICM project was launched as an applied research project for two years to confirm whether this perception was reality.

The project confirmed that there was indeed significant unmet demand. The Matchmakers met a wave of interest for assistance in navigating existing services and getting around service and information gaps. This was particularly true among rural communities and within francophone populations especially. Those holding temporary visas and those not in Canada were also a major source of clients for the two Matchmakers.

“Both the provincial and federal governments do not fund job search and other settlement and retention services for temporary visa holders (like international students) and people not currently present in the country (even if they already have their permanent residence status),” says Charles Cirtwill, President and CEO of NPI. “This project was intended to test whether, in the context of Northwestern Ontario, that needs to change. The answer is an unequivocal yes.”

To deliver the program in the Northwest, Northern Policy Institute (NPI) partnered with La Société Économique de l'Ontario (SÉO), the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce (TBCoC), Thunder Bay Community Economic Development Commission (TBCEDC), the North Superior Workforce Planning Board (NSWPB), and FedNor.

Want to learn more, read the report here: <https://www.northernpolicy.ca/connecting-the-dots>



Media Interviews: NPI President & CEO Charles Cirtwill is available for comment. To arrange an interview, please contact:

Evelynn Hoffman
Outreach and Development Officer
ehoffman@northernpolicy.ca
807-632-0071

About the Author:

Anthony Noga

Anthony Noga is a former Policy Analyst for Northern Policy Institute. He was born in Thunder Bay and grew up in the city's rural outskirts. After graduating from Lakehead University with an HBA in History and Political Science, he spent time volunteering with an economic development agency in Israel before getting his Master of Arts in Political Science from the University of Waterloo. This paper was completed prior to Anthony joining the public service. Any views expressed in the paper are his own and are not reflective of his current employer.

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.

Partners

North Superior Workforce Planning Board

The North Superior Workforce Planning Board (NSWPB) is one of twenty-six Workforce Planning zones across Ontario, mandated through the Ministry of Labour, Training, and Skills Development to identify, assess and prioritize the skills and knowledge needs of community, employers and individual participants/learners in the local labour market through a collaborative, local labour market planning process.

Société Économique de l'Ontario (SÉO)

The Société Économique de l'Ontario (SÉO), established in 2001, is a provincial network with a professional team that takes an innovative approach to economic development, entrepreneurship, employability and immigration. SÉO engages all of the Francophone and bilingual community's stakeholders in fostering the prosperity of Ontario and Canada.

Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce

The Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce is a voluntary, member-driven organization of individuals and businesses working together to advance the commercial, financial, and civic



interests of the Thunder Bay community. They pool resources to offer member learning opportunities, address policy issues, facilitate connections between members, and aim to bring businesses together to work towards common goals.

Thunder Bay Community Economic Development Commission (CEDC)

The Thunder Bay Community Economic Development Commission (CEDC) is responsible for business development, business retention and expansion, entrepreneurial support, opportunity promotion, and collection and assessment of key business data. They can help with community information and statistics, networking and referrals, assistance in site selection, and labour market data.

FedNor

FedNor is the Government of Canada's economic development organization for Northern Ontario. Through its programs and services, and through its financial support of projects that lead to job creation and economic growth, FedNor works with businesses and community partners to build a stronger Northern Ontario.