



For Immediate Release

**Is it working? Evaluating the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot Project**

**July 29, 2021** – Trying something new is never a smooth road. There are bumps, rough patches and issues with navigation. The Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot Project (RNIP) is no different. In order to study the impacts and areas for improvement, Northern Policy Institute has released the first in a series of reports evaluating the RNIP program.

*Just the Tip of the Iceberg: The First Few Months of the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot* by Hilary Hagar outlines how the RNIP initially unfolded in the five northern communities.

Launched in 2019, the RNIP program was a tool to help population growth in rural and northern communities. Reflecting considerable preparatory work in many regions of Northern Ontario, 5 of the 11 communities chosen nationally are located here. NPI is partnering with FedNor to evaluate the program annually.

“Too often we wait to study these pilots until well after they are over.” Says Charles Cirtwill, President & CEO of NPI. “By doing that we miss a real opportunity to keep the public onside and to make adjustments while the funding is still in play. To enhance impacts and promote program continuation.”

This first report found that as the RNIP unfolded in Northern Ontario, it was clear that there was immense value in communities taking charge of their immigration future. Like any pilot project, however, challenges developed that will need to be addressed as the pilot continues.

Some recommendations for both the current pilot and future immigration pilots:

1. A standard toolkit for municipalities to help curb the initial learning curve on Canadian immigration processes.
2. Dedicated resources for engagement with employers, community organizations, and the general public. It takes a whole community to run a successful pilot.
3. Dedicated resources for welcoming efforts.
4. Clear roles and expectations at the start with partners – government or otherwise – can mitigate confusion down the road.

The report shows that RNIP has successes to celebrate and that this type of program has great potential for increasing diversity and immigration in rural areas throughout Northern Ontario.

Want to learn more, read the report here: <https://www.northernpolicy.ca/just-the-tip-of-the-iceberg>





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Media Interviews: 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 Author:**

*Hilary Hagar is originally from Hamilton, ON. A recent graduate from the University of Guelph with a B.A. (Hons) in International Development, Hilary values interdisciplinary approaches and is passionate about community economic development and poverty alleviation. During her undergraduate degree, Hilary completed participatory research in both Cuba and Bolivia. Closer to home, Hilary has also contributed to policy debates on issues ranging from greenhouse gas emissions in Ontario agriculture to Inuit nutrition and health.*

**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.*