

For Immediate Release

How Affordable is the North?

May 2, 2023 – The cost of living varies between different communities in Northern Ontario, and small, rural, and remote communities are not, as a rule, more or less expensive than urban centres. Nevertheless, most communities in Northern Ontario, big and small, are more affordable than the urban centres of Southern Ontario.

Northern Policy Institute's latest publication, *How Affordable is the North?*, compares the cost of living between urban centres in Southern Ontario, urban centres in Northern Ontario, and smaller and remote communities in Northern Ontario.

Living costs are measured by analyzing a fixed basket of goods and services that either satisfy basic human needs (e.g., food and shelter) or are frequently purchased by the majority (e.g., recreation, gasoline, and entertainment). Different products are most affordable in different communities. The cheapest gas is found in Southern Ontario, while housing is least expensive in some of Northern Ontario's smaller and more remote communities.

To get a true sense of cost of living differences, communities were compared on the combined cost of multiple goods and services. Comparing a basket of household essentials, most Northern Ontario communities are more affordable than Southern Ontario's urban centres. Within Northern Ontario, smaller and more remote communities are among both the most and least expensive.

"The importance of maintaining a relatively low cost of living in the North cannot be understated as a significant factor that influences settlement and immigration trends," says Holly Parsons, author and Policy Analyst at Northern Policy Institute. "Northern Ontario needs innovative and community-led strategies to approach the issue from a different perspective."

These strategies should focus on unique, local cost of living challenges faced in Northern Ontario's various regions. For example, advancing airship technology to forego the traditional cargo planes for the delivery of goods to the Far North could lower the price of food and other products transported to these communities. In other communities, "eco-villages" may reduce the cost of housing and other goods and services.

Follow the link to read more: <https://www.northernpolicy.ca/how-affordable-is-the-north>

Media Interviews: NPI President & CEO Charles Cirtwill and NPI Policy Analyst Holly Parsons are available for comment. To arrange an interview, please contact:

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About the Authors:

Holly Parsons moved to Australia to pursue her undergraduate degree and graduated with a B.A. in Politics & Policy Studies and International Relations from Deakin University in Melbourne. Holly gained experience in research, policy analysis, and advocacy while working at grassroots NGOs in Australia and Indonesia. Once moving back to Canada, Holly joined Northern Policy Institute as a Policy Analyst and has worked on various research projects related to population growth, northern governance, homelessness, addiction and mental health, and others. Holly is also currently pursuing a master's degree in Human Security and Peacebuilding from Royal Roads University. In her spare time, Holly loves to travel, ski, read, cook vegan recipes, and be outdoors.

William Dunstan holds a Bachelor of Public Affairs and Policy Management from Carleton University. During his studies, William learned about the wide world of public policy and developed a particular research interest in economic policy and regional development. Professionally, he has worked in several policy-related roles both in the think tank sphere and with the federal government. Originally from Ottawa, William developed a love for Northeastern (or Central) Ontario and the region's high quality of living during his time as an Experience North intern in 2021.

About Northern Policy Institute:

Northern Policy Institute is Northern Ontario's independent, evidence-driven think tank. We perform research, analyze data, and disseminate ideas. Our mission is to enhance Northern Ontario's capacity to take the lead position on socio-economic policy that impacts our communities, our province, our country, and our world.

We believe in partnership, reconciliation, collaboration, communication, and cooperation. Our team seeks to do inclusive research that involves broad engagement and delivers recommendations for specific, measurable action. Our success depends on our partnerships with other entities present in or passionate about Northern Ontario.

Based in Thunder Bay, Sudbury, and Kirkland Lake, NPI is active in every region of Northern Ontario. During the summer months, we have satellite offices in communities across Northern Ontario staffed by teams of Experience North placements. These placements are university and college students working in your community on issues important to you and your neighbours.