

For Immediate Release

## **Northern Catholic Districts doing well, but access still key to education in the North**

**December 3, 2015** – Over 50 years ago, classrooms arrived on rails to children in remote Northern Ontario communities. While a lot has changed since the time of school trains, access to education remains a major barrier especially in rural and remote communities throughout the region.

This is one of the key findings in a new commentary released by Northern Policy Institute. **Making the Grade? Education Trends in Northern Ontario**, written by policy analyst, Mike Commito, examines the trends in publicly available information about educational attainment and employment in Northern Ontario.

The commentary found that English and French Catholic secondary schools are in line with and often exceed the provincial average graduation rates for both four and five year completions.

A gap exists though between Northern Ontario and the rest of the province when it comes to overall education attainment levels, graduation rates, and Aboriginal education.

“As the population of Northern Ontario declines, addressing some of the issues in the education system will be important if the region hopes to improve employment opportunities, maintain and improve youth retention numbers, and improve the health of Aboriginal communities,” Commito writes.

Some of the key findings of the report include:

- Formal overall education attainment levels in Northern Ontario are lower than the provincial average. Most notably, less people in the region have secondary and postsecondary education.
- The average graduation rate within English public secondary schools in Northern Ontario is well below the provincial average.
- Aboriginal education is still an area of primary concern for the province at large.

According to Commito, the education system in Northern Ontario may have come full circle, with mobile training centres helping to alleviate the logistical issues of bringing education to remote communities throughout the region. He also highlights the benefit of ongoing experiments with digital and remote learning.

“One of the most pressing issues in Northern Ontario remains that of infrastructure,” Commito writes. “Bringing higher education to northern communities through brick and mortar is one possibility but increasing accessibility

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to postsecondary opportunities throughout the region will require continued focus on infrastructure investment and development. Aside from taking an “if you build it, they will come” approach, there still needs to be an emphasis on investing into current infrastructure, particularly connectivity in more northern areas.”

You can read the full commentary, **Making the Grade? Education Trends in Northern Ontario**, on our website at [www.northernpolicy.ca](http://www.northernpolicy.ca).

**Media Interviews:** Author, Mike Commito, is 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.*

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