

For Immediate Release

The Ring of Fire is more than a mining development

October 9, 2015, Thunder Bay, ON – Is the Ring of Fire still Northern Ontario’s next big mining project? A new commentary published by Northern Policy Institute argues that it still has potential and that that potential could benefit the entire region. The commentary, **Roads, Rail, and the Ring of Fire**, was written by Rick Millette and Mike Commito and is based on a presentation given by Millette during the Ontario Good Roads/Rural Ontario Municipal Association Combined Conference in February 2015.

The commentary looks at what is needed to unlock the potential of the Ring of Fire, which includes overcoming the difficult terrain and establishing the needed infrastructure required to make the project a reality.

“While the landscape presents some considerable, logistical hurdles, there are a number of different ideas that are currently up for discussion, such as the implementation of new public infrastructure, which will be of significant benefit to First Nations communities,” the commentary states.

Some of the ideas currently being discussed include the North-South Road and Rail network, which would provide all-season access from Nakina to the Ring of Fire; the East-West Road, a 231-kilometer corridor extending from the Ring of Fire to Pickle Lake; and the Aboriginal-led proposal to create a rail, sea port, fiber optic, and energy transportation corridor from the Ring of Fire to a seasonal sea port on James Bay.

“An east-west road looks to be the most likely,” says Millette and Commito. “If built, it would have several positive economic impacts for both the mining industry and First Nations communities. Aside from making it more economical to bring materials in and ore out, it would also be less costly to install electricity and broadband internet. But more importantly, it would create the potential to attract a return of exploration companies and send a positive message to the mining industry that the Ring of Fire is open for business.”

It’s not only about mining, the authors conclude, arguing that new infrastructure projects to the Ring of Fire will carry important social benefits as well.

“Infrastructure development in the Ring of Fire should not be limited solely to increasing industrial capacity, it should be implemented as part of a larger socioeconomic project to benefit far northern First Nations communities.”

The commentary, **Roads, Rail, and the Ring of Fire**, can be found on our website at www.northernpolicy.ca.

Media Interviews: Authors Rick Millette and Mike Commito are 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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