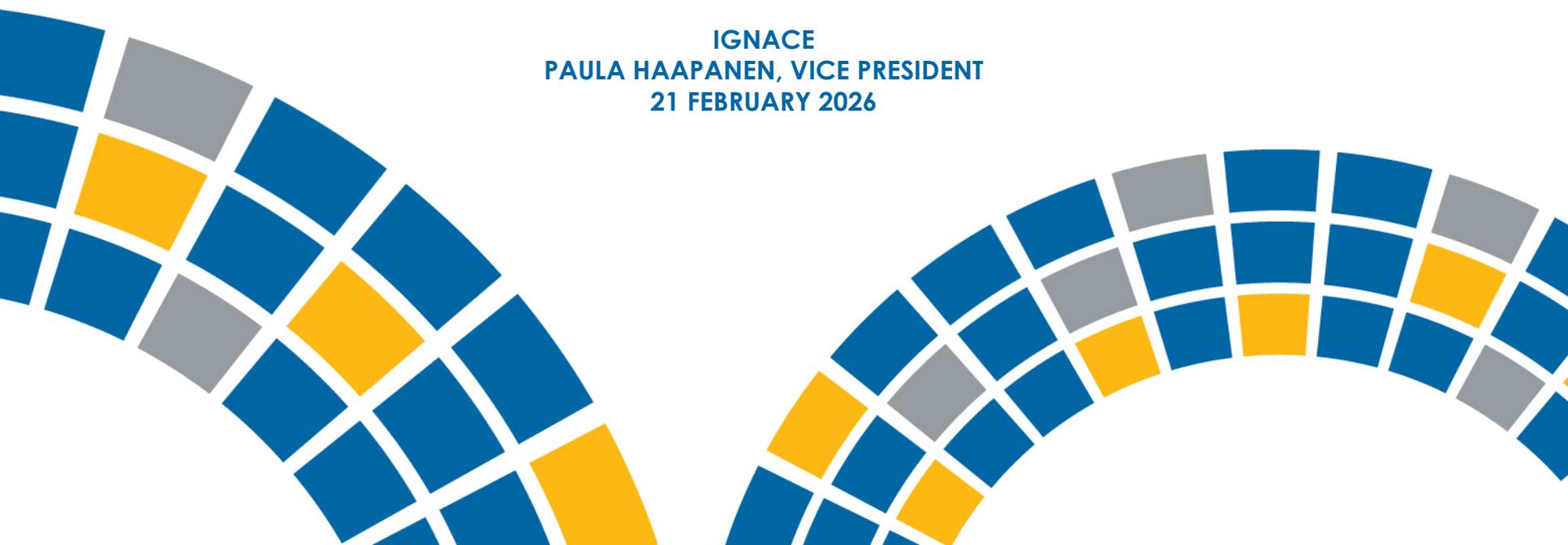


# GETTING PEOPLE AND PLACES NATION BUILDING PRIORITIES IN NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO

KENORA DISTRICT MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION

IGNACE  
PAULA HAAPANEN, VICE PRESIDENT  
21 FEBRUARY 2026



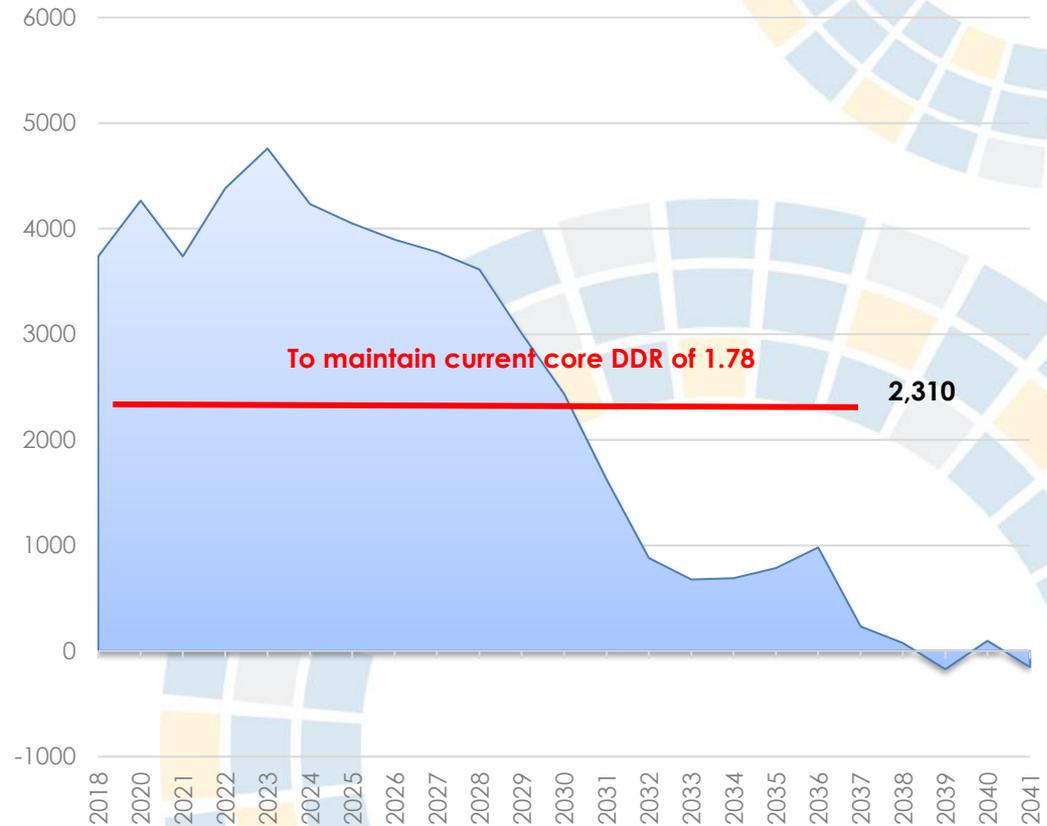
# Priority One – Getting People

## Even FULL employment– still too few workers

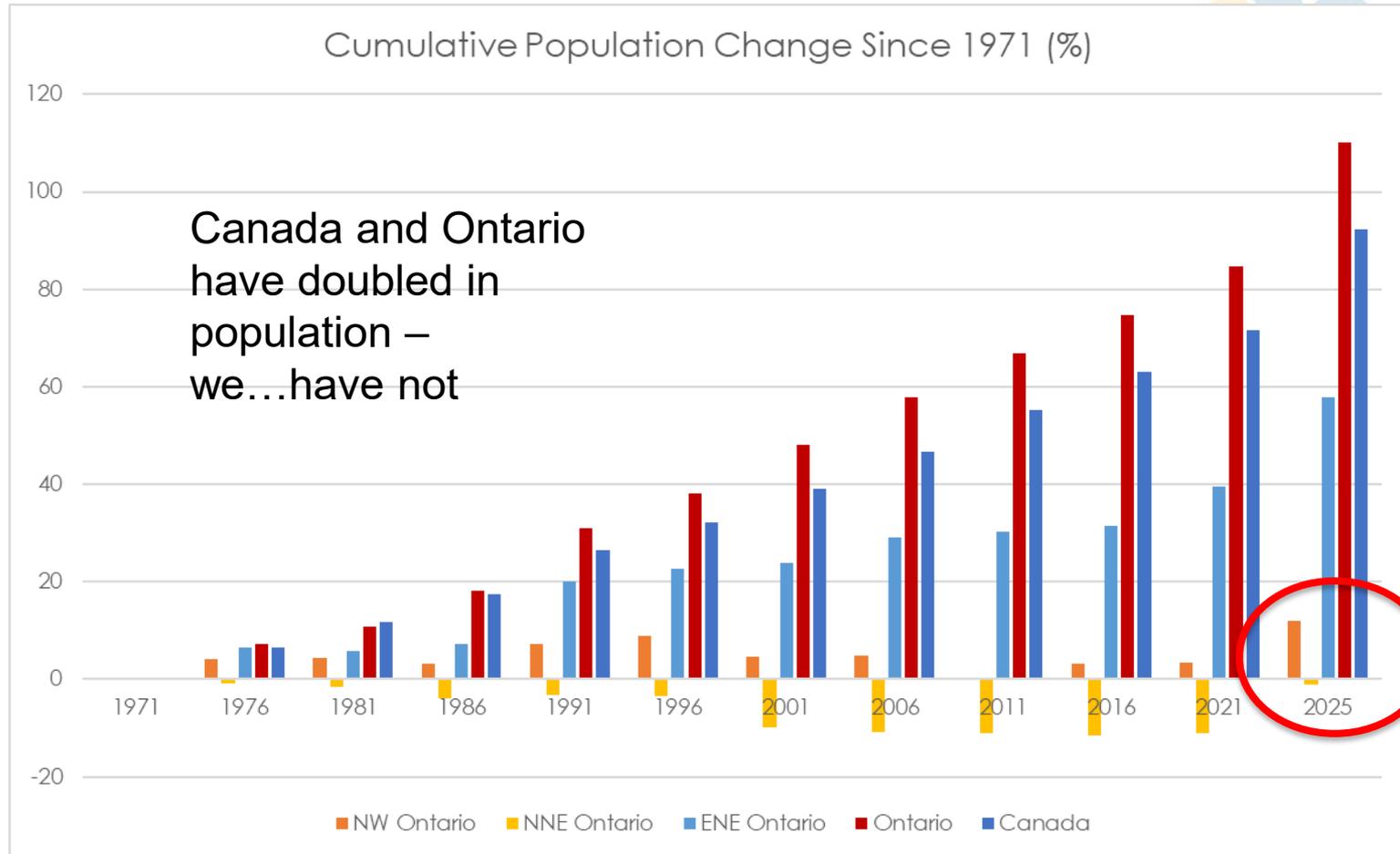
- DDR is the ratio of working people to dependents. An “ideal” ratio would be 2.0 – 2 workers (a person aged 16-64) for every 1 dependent (a person under 15 or over 65)
- **This graph assumes FULL EMPLOYMENT of the FNMI Population**
  - economic inclusion and immigration are not “either/or” ideas – we need them both.

**We need 2,000 people – every year, for the next 20 years - to move to NW Ontario**

Required Annual Net Migration – Northwest  
Migration nette annuelle requise - Nord-Ouest



# 2021 was an Inflection Point – Which way will we go from here?



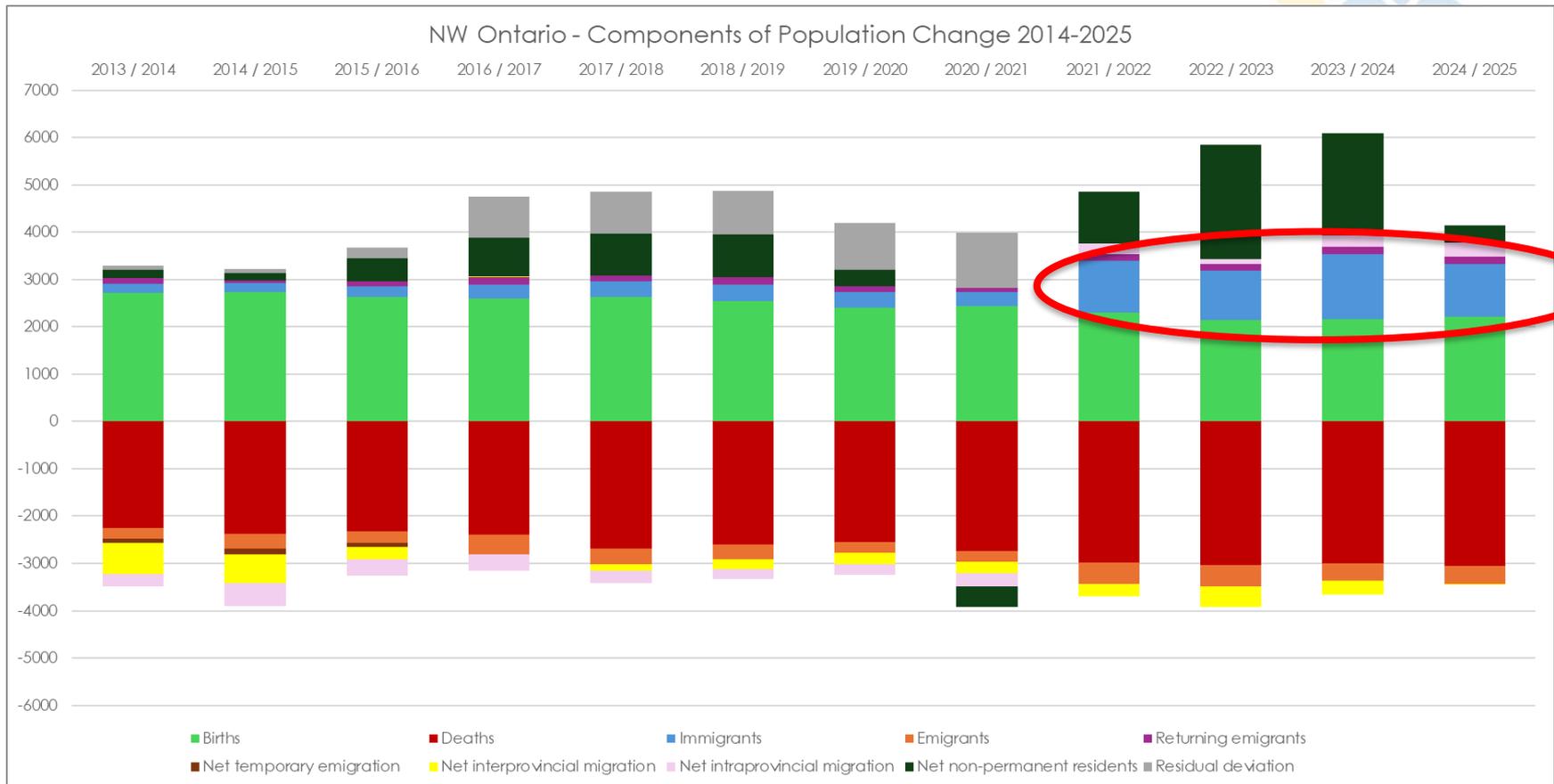
# Population Peaks are in our Past

	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011	2021	2025
<b>Canada</b>	<b>21,568,310</b>	<b>24,083,495</b>	<b>27,296,860</b>	<b>30,007,095</b>	<b>33,476,688</b>	<b>36,991,981</b>	<b>41,494,132</b>
<b>Ontario</b>	<b>7,703,106</b>	<b>8,534,260</b>	<b>10,084,885</b>	<b>11,410,050</b>	<b>12,851,821</b>	<b>14,223,942</b>	<b>16,192,682</b>
Kenora	53,230	59,030	58,750	61,899	57,607	66,000	73,541
Rainy River	25,750	22,615	22,995	22,110	20,370	19,437	19,964
Thunder Bay	145,390	152,355	158,810	150,860	146,057	146,862	157,640
<b>NW Ontario</b>	<b>224,370</b>	<b>234,000</b>	<b>240,555</b>	<b>234,869</b>	<b>224,034</b>	<b>232,299</b>	<b>251,145</b>

NOTE: Kenora current population growth driven by two factors:

- 1) Birthrate among FNMI population is considerably higher than total population average.
- 2) Largest driver of changes in population figures has been improved relations between Statistics Canada and FN communities resulting in more accurate census counts and higher reporting.

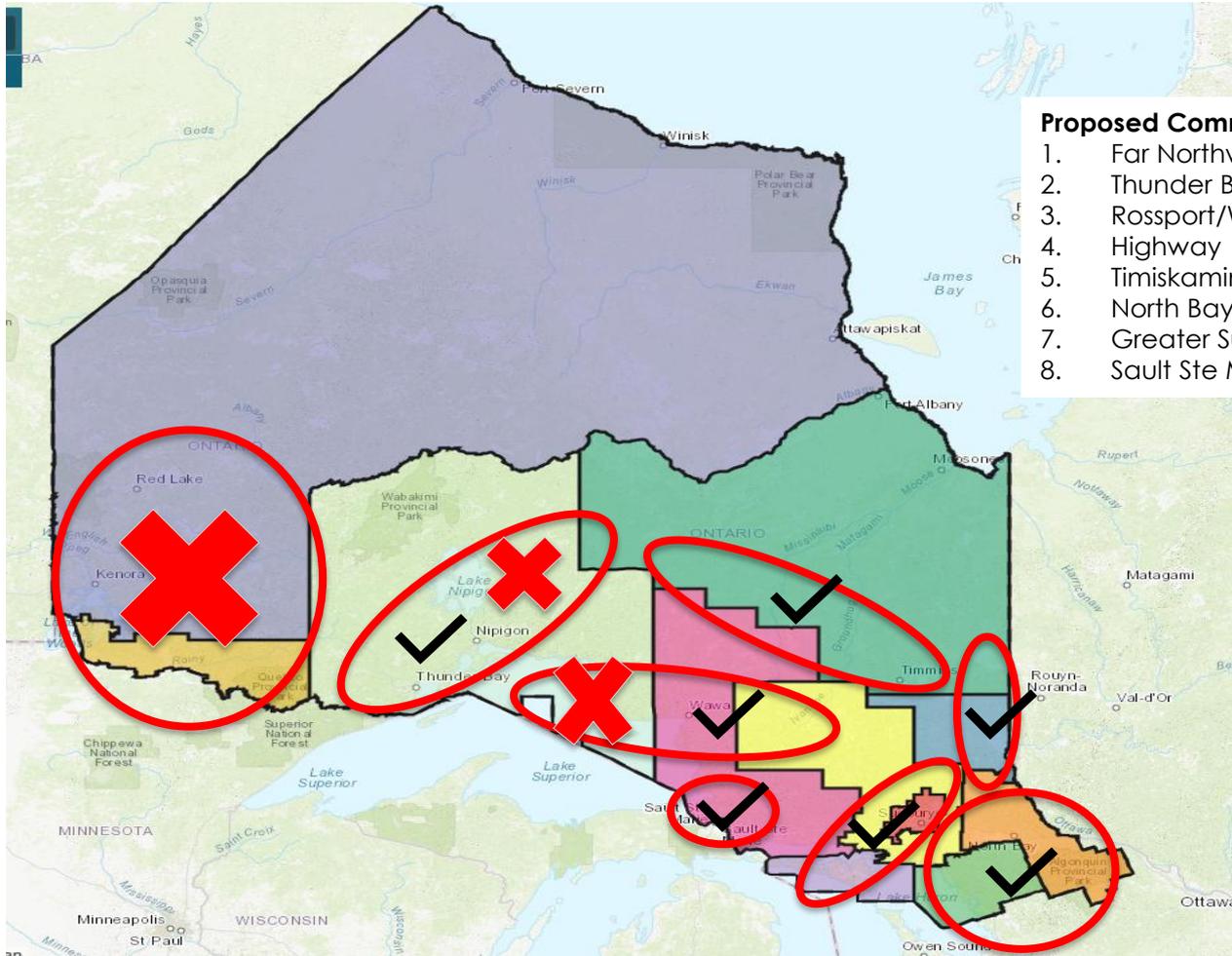
# The Last Five Years – HOPE Immigration Made an Impact



# 2025 – Retreat From Hope

## Regions Not Covered by Immigration Pilots

(not including the Far North)



Provincial REDI Pilot, which covered the entire Thunder Bay District, ended on 31 December 2025

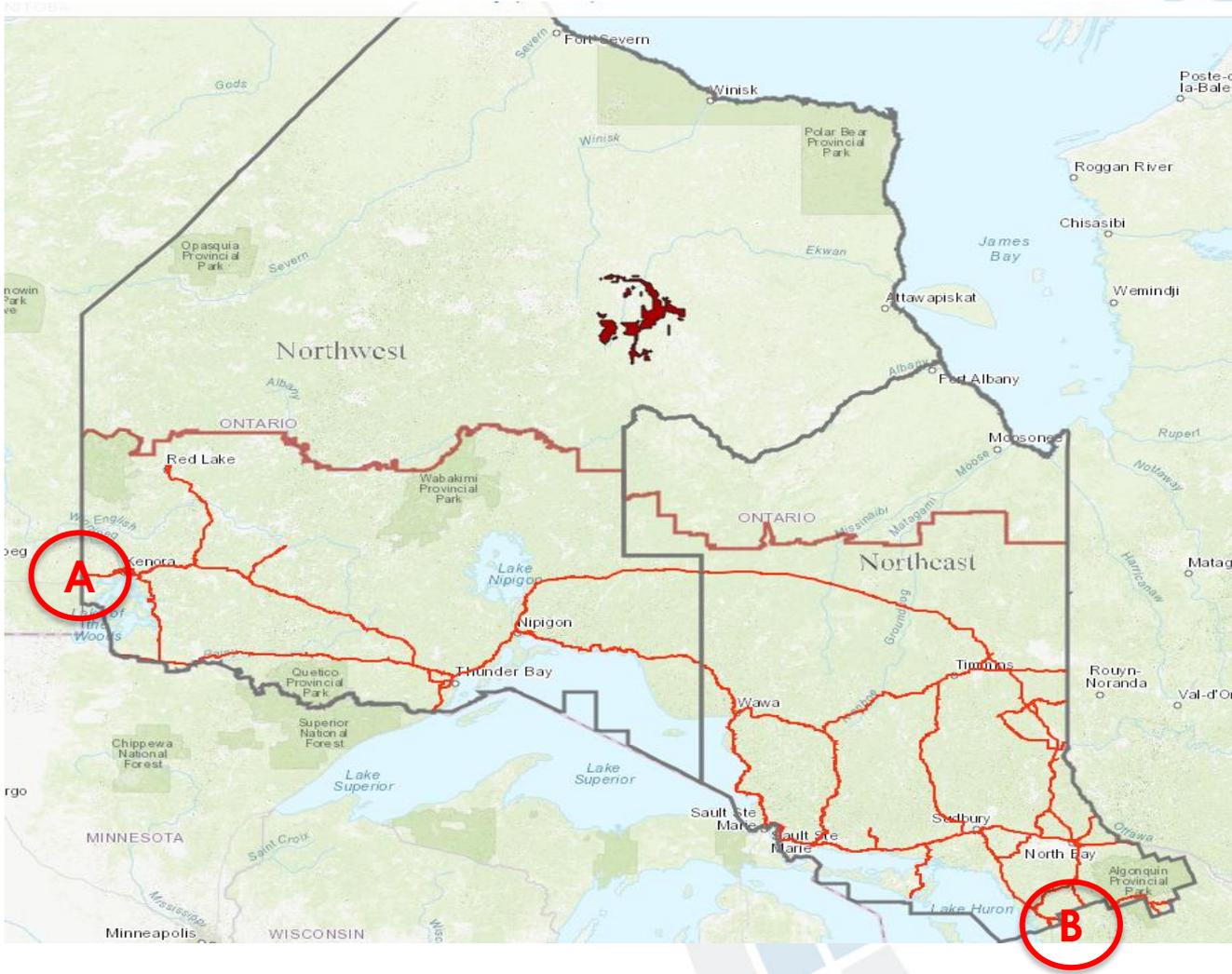
# RECOMMENDATION? Don't Stop Now!

1. **PRIORITIZE** growing permanent immigration AND stabilizing temporary resident numbers in rural and northern regions.
2. **ENSURE** that every region of Northern Ontario has **permanent** access to a community driven, local labour market-focused immigration program.
3. **REBUILD** international student numbers in rural and northern regions to pre-2025 levels.
4. **ALIGN** post graduate work permits with local labour market needs.
5. **SHIFT** Temporary Workers to permanent streams wherever possible.



# Priority Two – Getting Places

Point A to Point B - 18 hours -1800 kms (give or take)



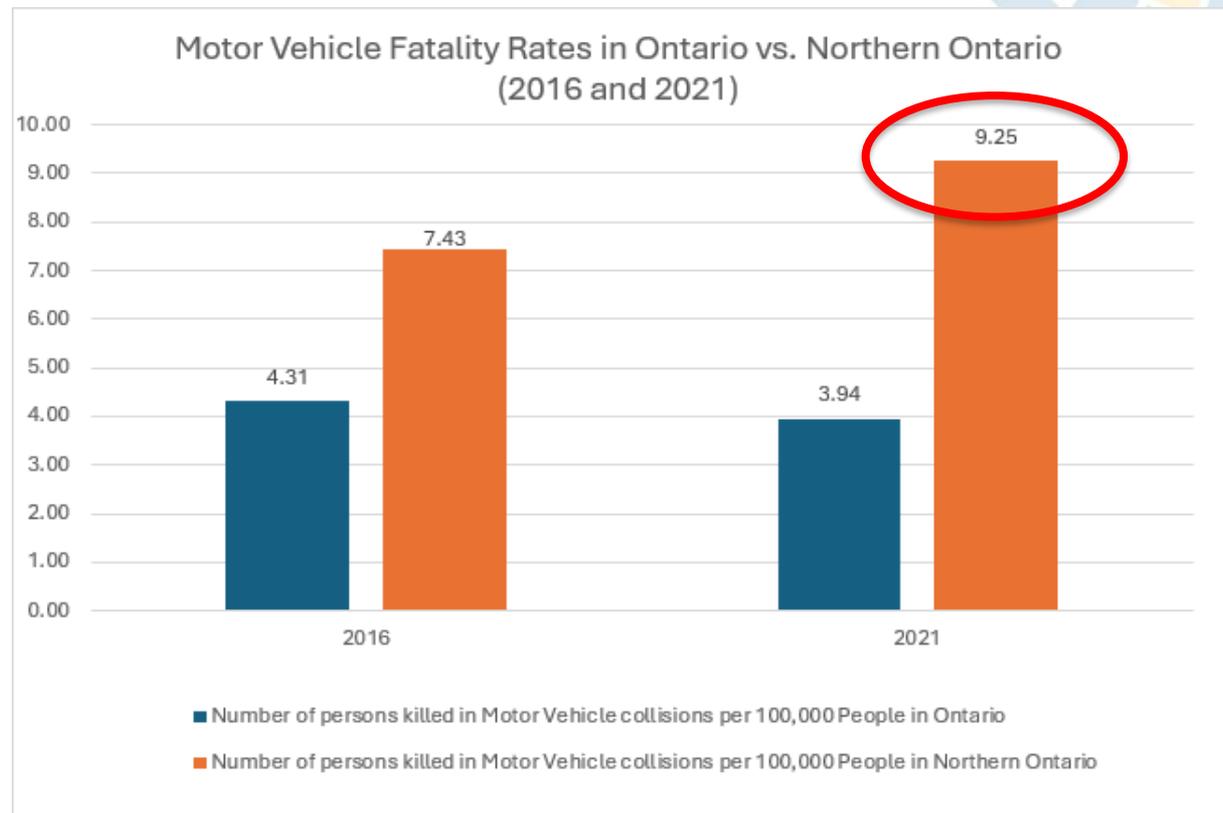
# Northern Ontario Highways are Fatal

February 6, 2026 - CBC

'It's heavy' says OPP constable as northern Ontario sees **8 highway deaths in 10 days**

Latest incident reported Thursday night on Highway 11-17

Almost 3 times  
more deaths per  
100,000 in  
population –  
**AND RISING**



# Our Highways are **CLOSED... A LOT**

- Hansard Debates
  - 2025-10-30 – John Vanthof – Highway 11 - North Bay to Cochrane
    - 2020 – **107 closures**
    - 2025 first nine months – **213 closures**
  - 2025-11-06 – Lise Vaugeois – **Northwestern Highways**
    - **2025** – first nine months - **559 closures**
  - 2025-12-01 – Guy Bourgouin – Highway 11
    - **56-hour closure** between Nov 30 and Dec 1, 2025
- Accident Reports – (just a very small sample)
  - 2025-07-15 – Dryden – Highway 17 - **3-hour closure**
  - 2024-11-25 – Kenora – Highway 17 – **16-hour closure**
  - 2024-09-18 – Thunder Bay – Highway 11/17 – **12-Hour closure**

# Delays Cost Money

## Lost Time

**30-minutes = \$62,764.00**

or just **minimum wage = \$29,568.00**

c

## Increased (if paid)/Lost (if not paid) Wages

**30-minute delay = \$15,600.00**

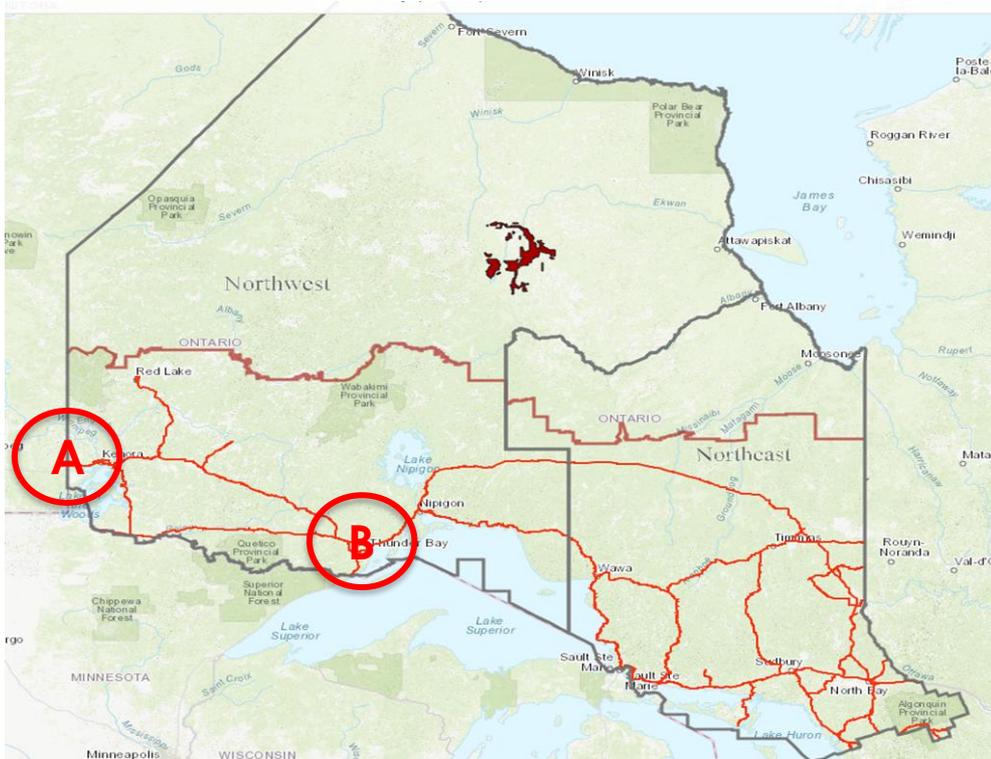
**4 hours? = \$124,800.00**

What about longer? Add in meals, hotel, extra fuel.

# Recommendation?

## Close the Gap - Our “Northlander”

- 542 KM from Manitoba border to Thunder Bay
- Estimated cost of 2 plus 1 = \$1 million per KM
- Total cost to upgrade this stretch of highway = **\$542 million**
- Traffic levels – up to **10,000 vehicles per day**



NORTHERN POLICY INSTITUTE | INSTITUT DES POLITIQUES DU NORD

Closing the Gap: How 2+1 Roads Can Save Time, Lives, and Taxpayer Dollars

By: William Dunstan, Bryanne de Castro Rocha, Dr. Marlin Lefebvre



- Total budget for “Northlander” **\$305 million**
- Total distance added from Barrie – 621km
- Investment - \$500,000 per KM
- Projected **annual ridership 40-60k** by 2041

# It Does NOT Need to Take “Forever”

- **Twinning Highway 11/17 Thunder Bay to Nipigon**
  - Total Distance – over **100km**
  - Projected time to complete – **17 years** (2010-2027)
- **2 plus 1 pilot – North Bay/Temagami Area**
  - Total Distance – **about 30km**
  - Projected time to complete – **6 years** (2023-2029)
- **Route 2 New Brunswick**
  - Total Distance – **over 500km**
  - Projected time to complete – 17 years (1997-2014)
- **Australia – NSW and Victoria**
  - Total Distance – over 1000km
  - Time for completion – 5 years
- **Norrortsleden (Stockholm County, Sweden)**
  - Total Distance – 5 km
  - Time for completion – 2 years (2006-2008)

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Institu dPolitik di Nor  
Aen vawnd nor Lee Iway La koonpayeen

Thank you. Marsee. Ραά^ndΓN³  
Merci. Miigwech.

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