

For Immediate Release

Northern Ontario has a lot to learn from the world's other northern regions, report finds

April 16, 2015, Thunder Bay, ON – According to a new report released by Northern Policy Institute, Northern Ontario should be looking to other northern regions around the world to learn how to move the region toward a brighter and more successful future. The report, ***A New Northern Lens: Looking out is as important as looking in***, was researched and written by David MacKinnon, Fellow in Comparative Growth with Northern Policy Institute, and examines Northern Ontario alongside other northern regions, including Nunavut, Alaska, Siberia, Scandinavia, and Iceland.

Northern Ontario is the second largest Northern region in the world in terms of population and has a significant national and global role to play. MacKinnon argues that Northern Ontario is only viewed in relation to Southern Ontario. This has left the people of Northern Ontario feeling alienated, with a recent poll suggesting that 56 percent of people in Northern Ontario feel that the provincial government is not doing enough to manage Northern issues.

“Unfortunately, the relationship between the north and south has been the only lens through which many northern problems and issues have been viewed,” MacKinnon writes. “This paper proposes that another lens – the experiences of northern regions elsewhere in Canada and in other countries – is needed and can shed new insight into the economic prospects of the north and help manage the relationship between Northern and Southern Ontario.”

Using this comparative analysis, MacKinnon outlines 10 recommendations for moving the region toward a brighter future of economic success, social stability, and innovative resource management.

Some of the recommendations include:

- The slow growth in the region cannot be blamed solely on the mining and forestry sectors. All factors affecting the economy must be brought into consideration in order to successfully address them.
- Northern Ontario has more in common with other northern jurisdictions in Canada and around the world than it does with Southern Ontario. Benchmarking and comparisons should reflect this.
- Primary industries account for only 6.5 percent of total employment in the region. Economic strategy should not be based exclusively on primary industries.
- The province should establish stronger linkages with other northern regions in other countries and devote more attention to the Arctic Council and similar organizations.
- More innovation is needed with the natural resources in the region.

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“Looking out should be as important as looking in,” MacKinnon writes. “Competing more effectively with other northern regions and playing a role in Ontario, Canada, and the world that corresponds to the size of Northern Ontario on the national and global stages should be the goals, [. . .] It is time for a major course change in Northern Ontario. The experiences of other northern regions can help illuminate the path forward.”

A New Northern Lens: Looking out is as important as looking in, can be found on the Northern Policy Institute website at www.northernpolicy.ca.

Media Interviews: Author, David MacKinnon and Northern Policy Institute president and CEO, Charles Cirtwill, 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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