

Commentary No. 5 | May 2015

From Laggard to Leader (Almost):

Northeast showing potential for growth

© 2015 Northern Policy Institute Published by Northern Policy Institute 874 Tungsten St. Thunder Bay, Ontario P7B 6T6

ISBN: 978-1-988472-61-4

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This report was made possible through the support of our partners Lakehead University, Laurentian University and Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation. NPI expresses great appreciation for their generous support but emphasizes the following:

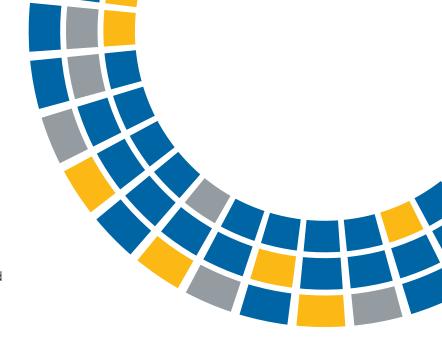
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 - » Economic, technological and social trends which affect Northern Ontario;
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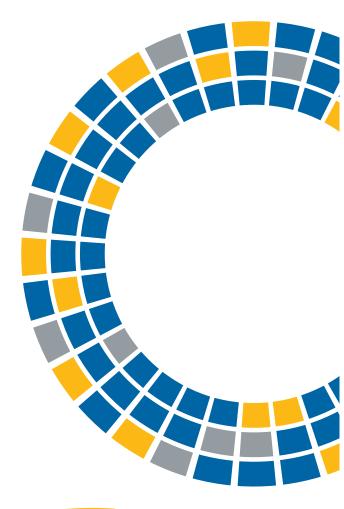
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About the Author James Cuddy

James Cuddy joined Northern Policy Institute as an analyst in 2014. He has over 5 years of experience in writing broadly on economic issues, with a focus on regional and urban economics and labour market concerns. As a skilled leader with a strong communications background, he currently assists in the coordination and delivery of the Institute's research agenda.

James is a graduate of Carleton University with a B.A. in Economics and is currently working towards his M.A. in Economics from the University of Ottawa.







Executive Summary

This report serves as a summary of the labour market in Northeastern Ontario. It provides an overview of some of the underlying trends and characteristics that are fundamental to understanding regional growth. The first section of the paper covers labour force characteristics including population, employment, participation, unemployment, and trends specific to the youth labour market. The second section covers the structure of the labour market, focussing on the distribution of employment among sectors and industries.

This paper makes several observations with respect to the Northeast labour market. First, it appears that the Northeast is more closely tied to the global economy than either Ontario or Canada is. Second, the Northeast faces a number of challenges, but there are promising signs of growth, particularly in attracting and retaining youth. Third, there is strong necessity for the Northeast to regularly track regional indicators addressed in this report in order to benchmark progress and make more informed decisions. Lastly, urban centres can lead the way to growth across the Northeast – strategies must be in place to leverage opportunities in these areas.

Some of the key findings from the report include:

- Changes in employment in the Northeast closely correspond with changes in national Gross Domestic Product, while the Northeast appears to be more vulnerable to global market adjustments than either the province or the country are.
- The Northeast faces a number of challenges including stagnant population growth, uncertain long-term employment growth, low participation rates, continued youth outmigration, and a lack of growth in goods-producing industries. However, there are some positive indicators that the region should continue to build on.
- The Northeast saw an increase of 3,100 jobs from 2013 to 2014. This increased the region's employment as proportion of total provincial employment. This is a good sign since employment in the Northeast (and Northern Ontario in general) has had a strong downward trendas a proportion of the province since the mid-90s. It means that employment growth in the Northeast in 2014 outpaced the province.
- The Northeast employment rate increased to 56 percent in 2014, while Ontario and Canada both declined to 61 percent. The gap is closing.

- The proportion of employees that are working full-time jobs in the Northeast has historically been lower than provincial and national levels, however in recent years the Northeast is closing that gap too. This is something to keep a close eye on in 2015.
- Unlike the total labour market, the labour market for youth ages 15 to 29 does not have lower participation and employment rates than Ontario and Canada. In fact, in recent years, youth employment and participation rates have been higher than provincial and national levels in the Northeast.
- Youth out-migration is an extremely important indicator to look at in the Northeast. There is still a lot to be done but there are hopeful signs of change. Since 2001 the number of youth leaving the region has slowed. In fact, the last two years (from 2012 to 2013 and from 2013 to 2014) have been the best years since 2001. Roughly 500 youth left in each of the last two years compared with over 2,500 in 2001. The region needs to continue to focus on how to attract and retain youth.
- As expected, the most urbanized jurisdiction, Greater Sudbury, has been pivotal for retaining youth in the Northeast in recent years. Since 2010-2011, Greater Sudbury has experienced youth in-migration of roughly 200-300 individuals per year. On the other hand, the Algoma, Cochrane and Parry Sound districts have been contributing the most to outmigration of youth in recent years.

Part One Labour Force Characteristics

Population

In 1871 the population of Northern Ontario was 9,390, steadily increasing thereafter until it peaked in 1991 at 822,450 residents. Population in the following two decades experienced a decline, in both the Northeast and Northwest regions, bringing the total population in Northern Ontario to 775,178 in 2011. However, it was 40 years earlier, in 1951, when Northern Ontario's population stopped outpacing the population growth in the rest of the Ontario. The region has never been able to recover from this trend.

The Ministry of Finance (2013) projects Northern Ontario's population to increase to 807,100 by 2036, which is a 0.5 percent increase from 2012. The Northwest's population is expected to increase by 3.9 percent, which will be partially offset by a 1 percent decrease in the Northeast. The modest increase in Northern Ontario's population will not be enough to keep pace with population growth of Ontario, therefore exacerbating the downward trend in the region's share of provincial population. In 2011, the region made up roughly 6 percent of the provincial population, which will decline to approximately 4.6 percent by 2036. These projections maintain Southcott's (2007a) earlier findings that Northern Ontario's population growth is stagnant in absolute terms, while continuing to shrink as a percentage of Ontario's total population.

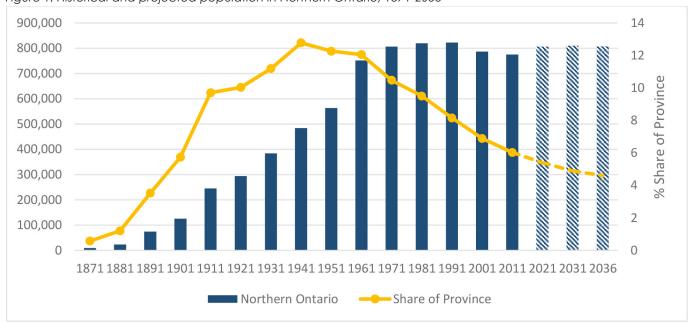


Figure 1. Historical and projected population in Northern Ontario, 1871-2036

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Canada, 1871 to 2011; Ontario Ministry of Finance projections, 2013

¹ See Chapter 2 in Southcott (2006) for a more detailed history of population in Northern Ontario.

Employment

From 1987 to 2013, the number of people employed in the region has regularly experienced spurts of growth followed by bouts of decline. In 1992 the region reached a low of 230,700 people employed, but began to show some sign of strength moving into the 21st century where it peaked in 2008 at over 265,000 people employed. However, as a proportion of the province, employment in the region has been declining since the mid-1990s. In 1995, employment in the Northeast made up 4.8 percent of total provincial employment, which decreased to 3.7 percent by 2013.

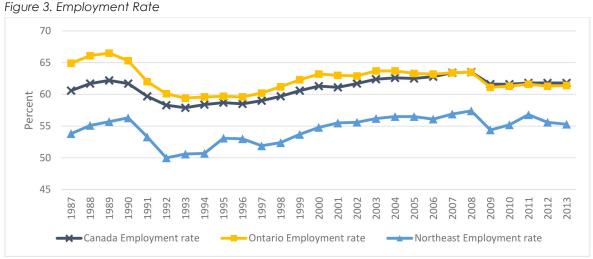
270 (%) 5 260 Employment (x1,000) Proportion of Ontario 250 3 240 2 230 220 1 210 200 Proportion of Ontario Northeast

Figure 2. Total Employment

Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM Table 282-0061, Labour Force Survey estimates (LFS)

As of 2013, the employment rate – the number of persons employed as a percentage of the population 15 years of age and over – in Northeastern Ontario was 55.3 percent, while Ontario was at 61.4 percent and Canada was at 61.8 percent (Figure 3). Historically, the Northeast's employment rates have remained relatively constant, fluctuating around 55 percent, which is roughly 5 to 10 percent lower than historical employment rates in Ontario and Canada.

The employment rate in Northeastern Ontario has historically maintained a similar trend line to that of Ontario and Canada, but has consistently been about 5 to 10 percent lower.



Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM Table 282-0055, Labour Force Survey estimates (LFS)

Employment in the Northeast appears to correspond to GDP boom and bust cycles in Canada. During nearly every economic downtown since 1987 – except for the collapse of the tech bubble from 2000-2001 – there was a corresponding decline in employment in Northeastern Ontario (Figure 4). There is a noticeable lag in this relationship in some years where there is a decrease in regional employment the year prior to a decline in national GDP.

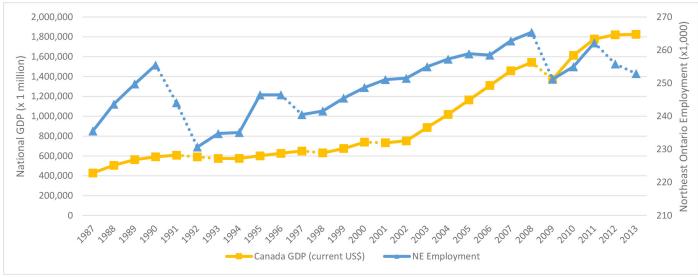


Figure 4. Northeast Employment vs. National GDP

Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM Table 282-0055, Labour Force Survey estimates (LFS); World Bank, World Development Indicators.

When comparing year-over-year percentage changes in employment in Canada, Ontario and Northeastern Ontario it is evident that fluctuations – especially during economic downturns – are considerably more pronounced in the Northeast (Figure 5). Such volatility suggests that employment in the Northeast is much more vulnerable to the adverse employment effects induced by periods of economic decline.

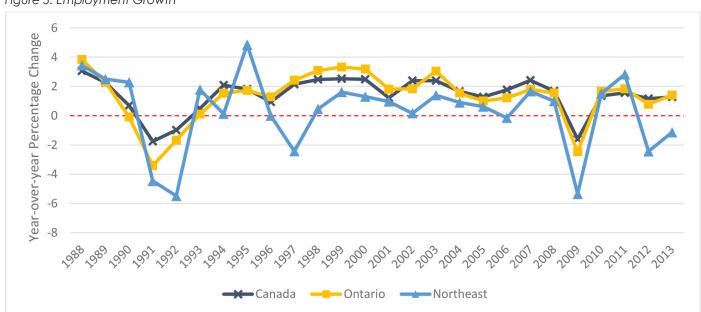


Figure 5. Employment Growth

Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM Table 282-0055, Labour Force Survey estimates (LFS)

Since 1987, full-time employment as a percentage of total employment in the Northeast has been lower than Ontario and Canada, except in recent years when full-time employment has reached provincial and national levels.

Full-Time Employment

Simply looking at the number of people who are with or without a job neglects to tell the whole story in a labour market. There are many additional factors that should be considered in order to understand the health of the labour market, one of which includes full-time employment.

Since 1987, full-time employment as a percentage of total employment in the Northeast has been lower than Ontario and Canada, except in recent years when full-time employment has reached provincial and national levels (Figure 6). As of 2013, Canada, Ontario and Northeastern Ontario all recorded 81 percent of jobs as full-time positions.

The rising proportion of full-time positions is a positive sign for the Northeast labour market, but must be put into context with other underlying trends and characteristics as outlined in the summary.

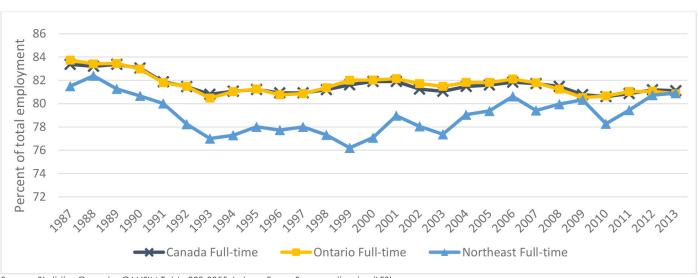


Figure 6. Full-time Employment

Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM Table 282-0055, Labour Force Survey estimates (LFS)

Participation and Unemployment

The participation rate is the number of labour force participants – employed plus unemployed – expressed as a percentage of the population 15 years of age and over (Figure 7). Participation rates follow the same trends as employment – typically they are low when employment is falling, and vice-versa. Historically, the Northeast's participation rates have remained relatively constant at about 60 percent, which is roughly 5 to 10 percent lower than historical participation rates in Ontario and Canada. As of 2013, the participation rate in Northeastern Ontario was 60 percent, which was over 6 percent lower than both Ontario and Canada.

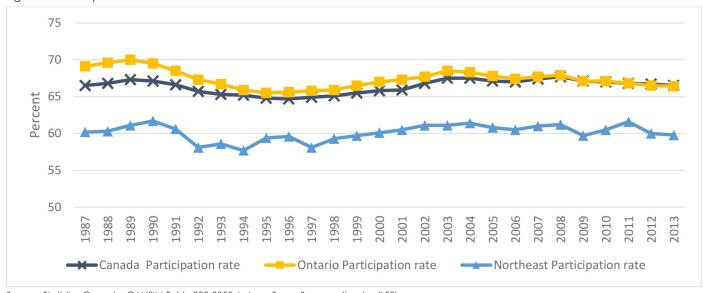


Figure 7. Participation Rate

Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM Table 282-0055, Labour Force Survey estimates (LFS)

Since the late-2000's, the Northeast's unemployment rate has been roughly similar to that of Ontario and Canada. As of 2013, the unemployment rate in Canada was 7.1 percent, while Ontario and Northeastern Ontario were both at 7.5 percent.

The unemployment rate is another commonly used indicator to determine the health of the labour market. However, solely relying on this indicator can be misleading because "a laid off manufacturing worker who has given up hope of ever finding another job is not counted in the unemployment statistics, so an economy with a high number of discouraged workers could have a misleadingly low unemployment rate. Conversely, an economy where people are optimistic they can find work could have a deceptively high rate of unemployment," (Moffatt, 2014).

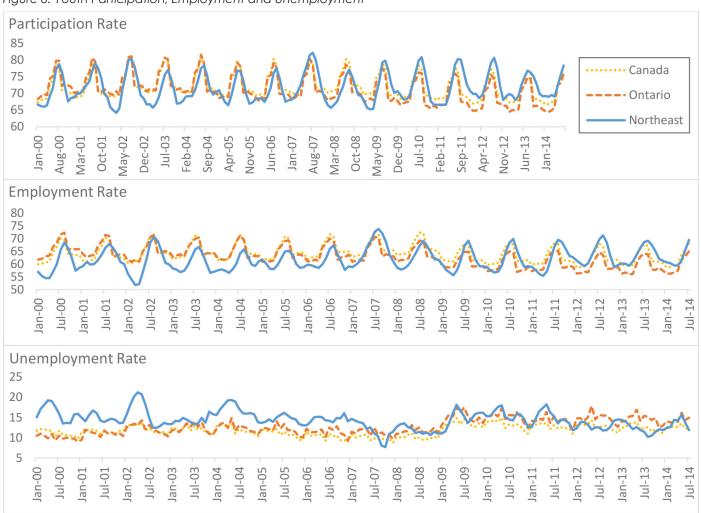
Since the late-2000's, the Northeast's unemployment rate has been roughly similar to that of Ontario and Canada. As of 2013, the unemployment rate in Canada was 7.1 percent, while Ontario and Northeastern Ontario were both at 7.5 percent.

Given that employment levels in the Northeast are consistently 5-10 percent lower than in Ontario and Canada (Figure3), one would expect unemployment to be consistently higher than the province and nation – i.e., employment and unemployment should be moving in the opposite direction; when employment is low, unemployment is high. This, however; is not the case due to the regions lower relative participation rate (Figure 7). The number of individuals participating in the Northeast's workforce has been consistently lower than Ontario and Canada, which explains why the unemployment rate is roughly the same. Given these characteristics of the regional labour market, solely using unemployment rates to determine the health of the labour market can be misleading.

Youth Labour Market

In Figure 8, monthly labour force characteristics for youth² in the Northeast are compared to Ontario and Canada from 2000 to 2014. Participation, employment and unemployment rates among youth in the Northeast are very similar to provincial and national levels. While the Northeast labour market in general faces persistently lower participation and employment rates compared to Ontario and Canada, this does not appear to be a problem among the youth cohort. In fact, in recent years, participation and employment rates in the Northeast have been higher than provincial and national levels.

Figure 8. Youth Participation, Employment and Unemployment



Sources: Statistics Canada, CANSIM Table 282-0001, Labour Force Survey estimates (LFS); Statistics Canada, Custom Tabulation

The youth labour market in Northern Ontario has historically suffered from youth out-migration (Southcott, 2007b). In the Northeast, this continues to be the case. In Figure 9, regional net migration is calculated by taking the sum of international, inter-provincial (between provinces) and intra-provincial (between regions) migration. Since 2001, 15 to 29 year olds have faced negative net migration (i.e., out-migration) levels in the Northeast, while 20 to 24 year olds are contributing most to the decline.

However, there is some indication that this trend is reversing. Youth out-migration from 2012-2013 and from 2013-2014³ were at their lowest levels since 2001 (Figure 9a). When breaking down youth migration by Census Division for the last two years (Figure 9b) it is evident that only the most urbanized jurisdictions (i.e., Greater Sudbury and Nipissing) are experiencing youth in-migration. On the other hand, Algoma, Cochrane and Parry Sound districts are contributing most to the region's out-migration levels.

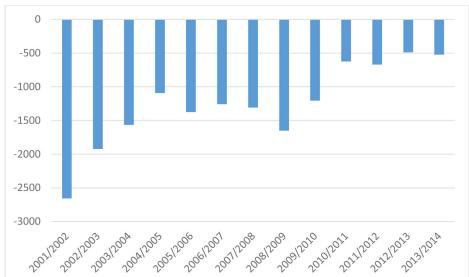


Figure 9a. Youth Net Migration (15-29 years old) in Northeastern Ontario

Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM Table 051-0063, based on the Standard Geographical Classification 2011. Author's calculations are based on preliminary figures for 2013/2014 and therefore may be subject to revisions.

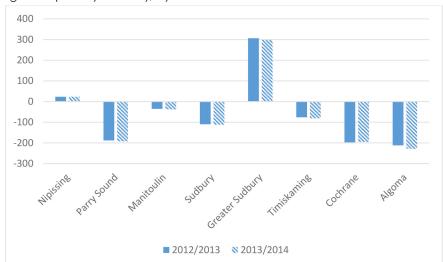


Figure 9b. Youth Net Migration (15-29 years old), by Northeast Census Division

Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM Table 051-0063, based on the Standard Geographical Classification 2011. Author's calculations are based on preliminary figures for 2013/2014 and therefore may be subject to revisions.

³ It is recommended that these statistics be used cautiously given that Statistics defines 2013/2014 figures as "preliminary" and therefore they may be subject to revisions.

Part Two

Labour Market Structure

Goods-producing Sector

Starting in the 1870's employment in Northern Ontario consisted in large part of blue-collar jobs in the resource-based, goods-producing industries – railways, forestry and mining. Northern Ontario's development over time, however; was very unique from other regions that sought growth in agricultural development and "competitive" capitalism (Southcott, 2013). Instead, "almost all of northern Ontario's communities were created by large resource- or transportbased corporations, often in partnership with the provincial government to extract natural resources for use elsewhere," (p. 16). This system of twentieth-century industrialism is so engrained in Northern Ontario's labour market that any diversification or transition into other economic systems is a difficult process.

In the late 1980s, Southcott explains that the primary forestry and mining industries "were concentrating on laboursaving technologies to lower production costs in attempting to compete in an increasingly globalized market place," (p. 17). This transition contributed in large part to declining employment levels in traditional blue-collar industries in both Ontario and Northeastern Ontario (as shown within the goods-producing sector in Figure 10).

While Ontario's employment in the goods-producing sector indicated some signs of recovery after 1993, the Northeast did not. From 1993 to 2013, the Northeast's employment has fluctuated around 20 percent lower than it was in the late 80s. However, as of 2013, the Northeast's cumulative percentage change in employment in the goods-producing sector was only slightly lower than the province, indicating that the lack of employment growth in the goods-producing sector has been more than a regional issue.

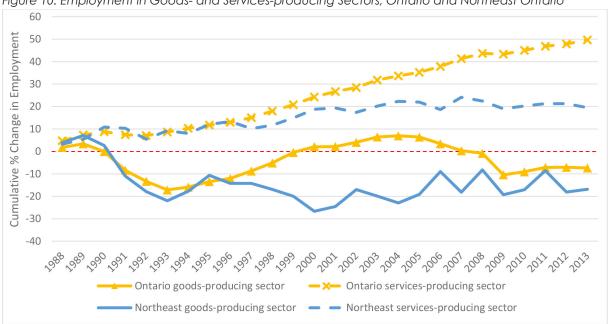
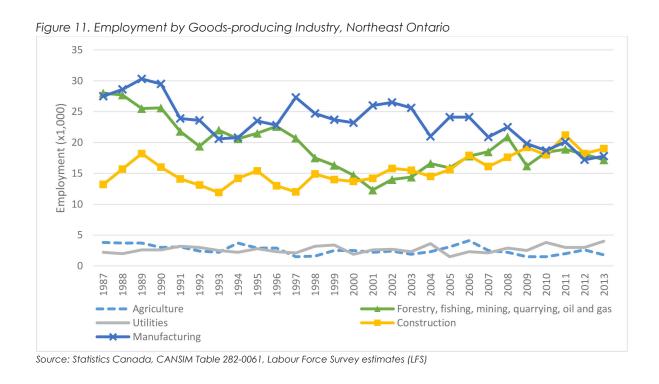


Figure 10. Employment in Goods- and Services-producing Sectors, Ontario and Northeast Ontario

Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM Table 282-0061, Labour Force Survey estimates (LFS)



There are some important trends to note when breaking down the Northeast's goods-producing sector by each industry (Figure 11). From 1987 to 2001, employment in the region's primary industries (categorized as forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas) declined by 56 percent, from 28,000 jobs to 12,300 jobs. During this period, the region's primary industries went from employing 12 percent of total employment to 5 percent. As noted, Southcott (2013) explains that the decline in employment during this period was part of the strategy used by primary industries to remain competitive by investing in labour-saving technologies to lower costs. Since reaching a low in 2001, employment in the primary industries

people, making up nearly 7 percent of the region's total employment.

Manufacturing in the Northeast has faced some difficulties. From 1989 to 1993 manufacturing employment declined, and subsequently began to show signs of recovery in 1997 and has since steadily decreased. From 1989 to 2013, employment in the Northeast's manufacturing industries declined by 41 percent, from 12

have gained some ground – as of 2013, the primary industries employed 17,200

percent of total employment (30,300 jobs) to 7 percent (17,800 jobs). As of June 2014, the number of jobs in manufacturing totaled 15,200, making up 6 percent of total employment in the region.

Construction has shown some modest growth after a short period of decline in the early 90s. From 1993 to 2013, employment in construction industries grew by 37 percent, up from 5 percent of total employment (11,900 jobs) to 7.5 percent (19,000 jobs). Between construction, manufacturing and primary industries, construction is the only industry that has a larger number of individuals employed in 2013 than it did in the late 1980's.

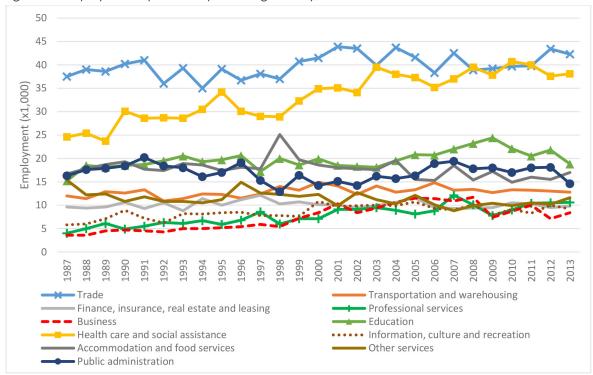


Figure 12. Employment by Services-producing Industry, Northeast Ontario

Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM Table 282-0061, Labour Force Survey estimates (LFS)

Services-producing Sector

Employment in the Northeast's services-producing sector has experienced modest growth, increasing by 20 percent from 1987 to 2013 (Figure 10). However, relative to the province as a whole, the Northeast's services-producing sector has grown considerably slower, especially in the last decade.

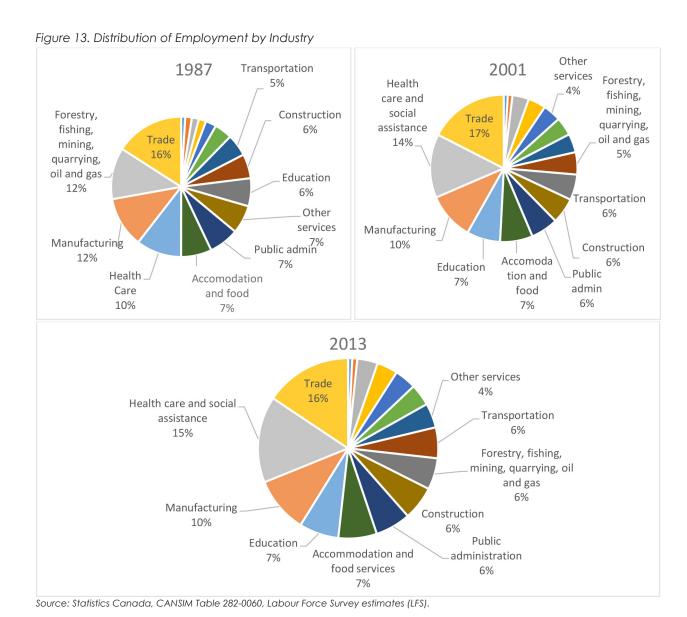
The industry breakdown in Figure 12 points to some notable trends and characteristics. First, expansion of employment in health care and social assistance appears to be driving much of the growth in the services-producing sector. From 1987 to 2013, employment increased by 55 percent from 24,600 to 38,100 jobs. Second, trade remains the largest industry employer in the Northeast, however; health care and social assistance is catching up while also growing at a faster rate, suggesting it will likely surpass trade as the leading industry employer in the near future. Third, there are also weak increasing trends in business, professional services and information, culture and recreation. These industries make up a smaller portion of employment but are indeed important drivers of economic growth in general. Lastly, industries such as education and public administration have had relatively constant employment levels.

Employment growth in the services-producing sector appears to be largely driven by the expansion of employment in health care and social assistance, which raises concerns about the sustainability of health care in the Northeast. Demand for employment in the health care industry is likely to continue growing given an aging population, declining fertility rates and increasing life expectancy. Simultaneously, Northern Ontario is facing a declining tax base due to youth and young-adult out-migration, putting further strain on the availability of resources to support growing costs.

Distribution of Employment

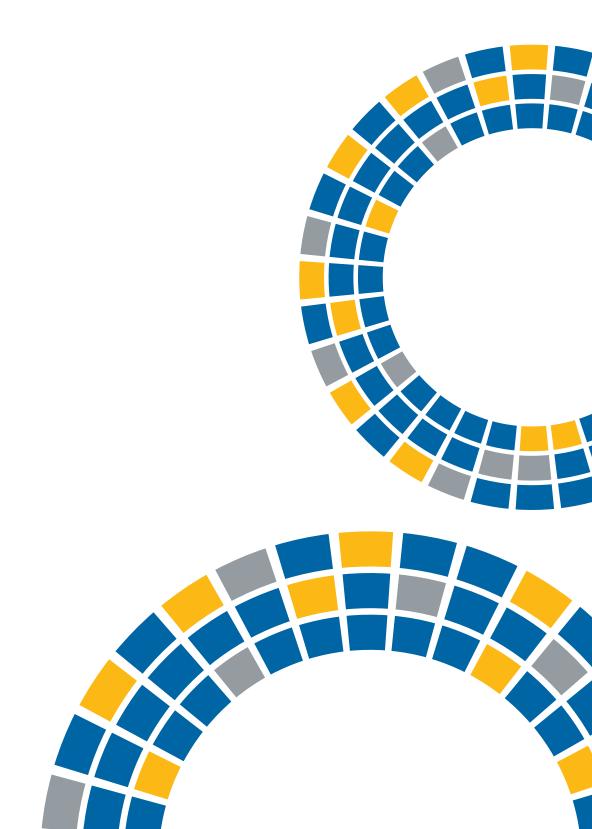
As a share of total employment in Northeast Ontario, the goods-producing sector employed 32 percent of workers in 1987, which dropped to 23.6 percent in 2013. As such, the services-producing sector has increased its employment share from 68 percent to roughly 76 percent during the same period.

Figure 13 illustrates the distribution of employment by industry in 1987, 2001 and 2013 to show the change in employment shares over time. Trade industries have remained the top employers since 1987, while health care and social assistance was the second largest employer in 2001 and 2013, growing from the fourth largest employer in 1987. The primary industries, forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas, were the second largest employer in 1987, but decreased to only 5 percent of total employment by 2001, and subsequently increasing its share of employment to 6 percent by 2013. Manufacturing has remained the third largest employer since 1987. With the decline in the primary industries, education has become the fourth largest employer in 2001 and 2013, resulting in two of the top four employment industries being in the public sector.



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Internally, Northern Policy Institute seeks to be as "flat" as possible with much of the work contracted out to experts in the fields under consideration. This approach avoids the risks associated with large bureaucratic organizations. It also allows Northern Policy Institute to flexibly respond across a wide range of issues while also building up in house and regional expertise by matching bright young minds on temporary placements and project specific work with talented experts who can supply guidance and coaching.

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