



16 November, 2016

Iain Angus
Chair
Northern Ontario Service Delivers Association
c/o Manitoulin-Sudbury District Services Board
210 Mead Blvd
Espanola, ON P5E 1R9

Dear Mr. Angus,

Re: Taking Ownership of the Future

Thank you for your letter of 24 October in regards to the recently published paper, **Taking Ownership of the Future**, by Mr. David MacKinnon. We would note, however, that the paper's topic is governance, not service delivery or administration. The examples cited by the author focus on three key characteristics: the shift of policy making authority to local communities, the sharing of that authority between communities (including indigenous communities), and the final step of blending expanded local authority into regional structures.

The organizations you cite provide highly valuable and impactful delivery of services but have limited policy independence, taxing authority, or other governance type roles. They are tasked with administering programs and distributing funding according to rules that are, with few exceptions, highly controlled from Queen's Park. Their accountability and reporting structures are largely oriented to provincial funding agencies, not local communities (although they do very good and valuable work in local and regional consultation).

The paper in question was reviewed both internally and externally (through a double-blind peer review process) and the conclusion of the author about the absence of independent regional level governance structures in Northern Ontario was not questioned. It was, in the view of the peer reviewers, factually accurate. That said, we must admit that we gave little credence to the possibility that readers may be confused between governance and service delivery. To clarify that item we will add the following editor's note to the paper:



"Editor's Note: It should be mentioned that there are several regional service delivery organizations present in Northern Ontario. These include District Social Service Administration Boards, District Service Boards, Local Health Integration Networks and Boards of Health. While, at present, these entities are largely constrained to local service delivery and administration, they demonstrate the value of regional coordination. They could, in theory, form the basis for truly independent regional governance. This would require, however, significant changes in their legislated authority and accountability structures and should, as outlined in this paper, include structural linkages and shared authority with indigenous peoples and communities in the North."

We appreciate you bringing this potential for confusion between governance and administration to our attention.

Thank you as well for your offer of referring us to expertise in reviewing documents. As you can appreciate, the selection of authors and peer reviewers must be done very carefully, so as to avoid the perception of bias. Having, for example, a representative of an organization that would directly benefit from a policy change or subsidy act as an author or reader on a paper about that subject would, no matter how well intentioned the individual might be, immediately move the piece from evidence driven analysis to lobby and advocacy. We will, nevertheless, keep your offer in mind as retired individuals or individuals working in similar organizations in different locations can often make use of their expertise while limiting the perceived bias.

Kind Regards,

Charles Cirtwill
President & CEO, Northern Policy Institute