

PLACES TO GROW

BETTER CHOICES. BRIGHTER FUTURE.

Proposed Growth Plan for

# NORTHERN ONTARIO

October 2009



Ministry of Energy  
and Infrastructure

Ministry of Northern  
Development, Mines and Forestry



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Figure 1: Northern Ontario Communities



# 1 Introduction

## Context

The international economy is experiencing rapid and far-reaching structural change. Across the globe, regions are striving to understand how to make better use of their existing competitive advantages to position themselves for success in the emerging economic environment. In North America, economic and community success is increasingly based on knowledge, creativity and innovation, where higher education and skills training are basic requirements.

Economic output world-wide has moderated as a result of financial market uncertainty and restructuring of economic sectors. As Ontario and most countries around the world face a time of economic uncertainty and fiscal pressure, planning will first need to focus on ways to use existing investments and assets much more effectively. To prepare for an evolving future, it will be critical to have a long-range plan for Northern Ontario – one that is both visionary and fiscally sustainable.

For Northern Ontario, a vast area of strong, diverse communities and unparalleled natural resources, there are tremendous opportunities in this global economic transformation. With great strengths and advantages in its people and natural environment, Northern Ontario is charting a course to a bright future. However, key sectors of the northern economy, including forestry, mining and tourism, face significant industry transformation and as a result, partners will need to be more collaborative and apply resources in a more innovative way.

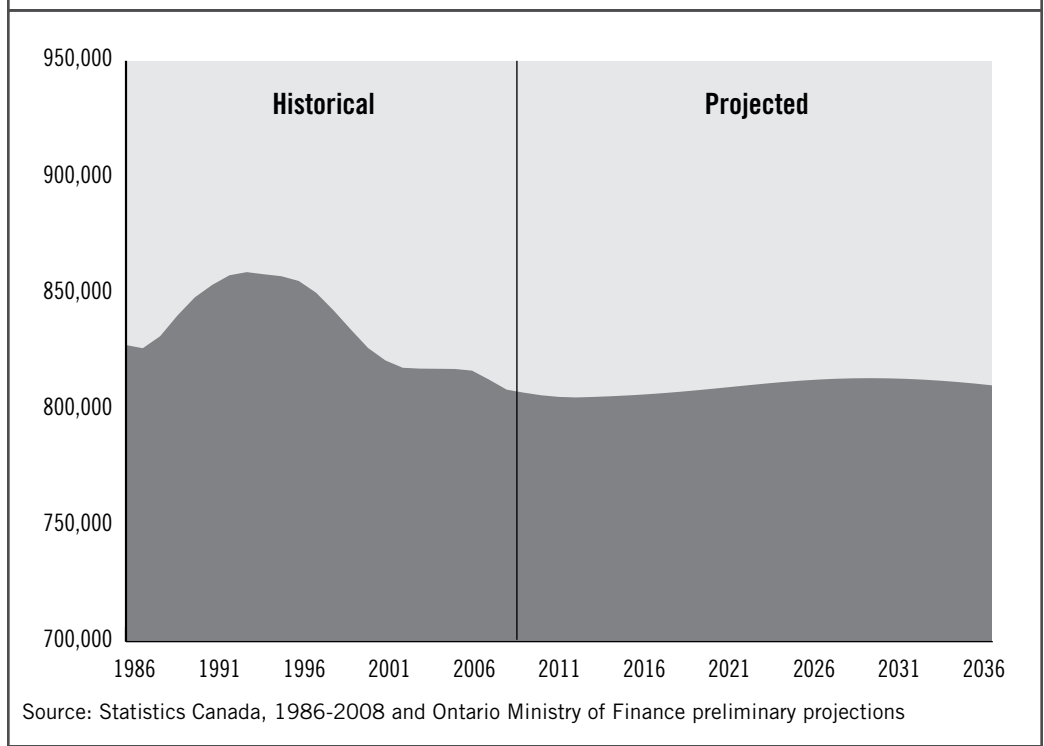
Northern Ontario covers a span of 800,000 square kilometres and contains 90 per cent of the province's land mass. It consists of 144 municipalities, 106 First Nations and Métis communities, more than 150 unincorporated communities, 46 Local Services Boards and 191 Local Roads Boards. It borders James Bay, Hudson Bay, Quebec, Manitoba, Minnesota and Michigan, and has significant Great Lakes shoreline. Northern Ontario is larger than most provinces in Canada.

Figure 2: International Context

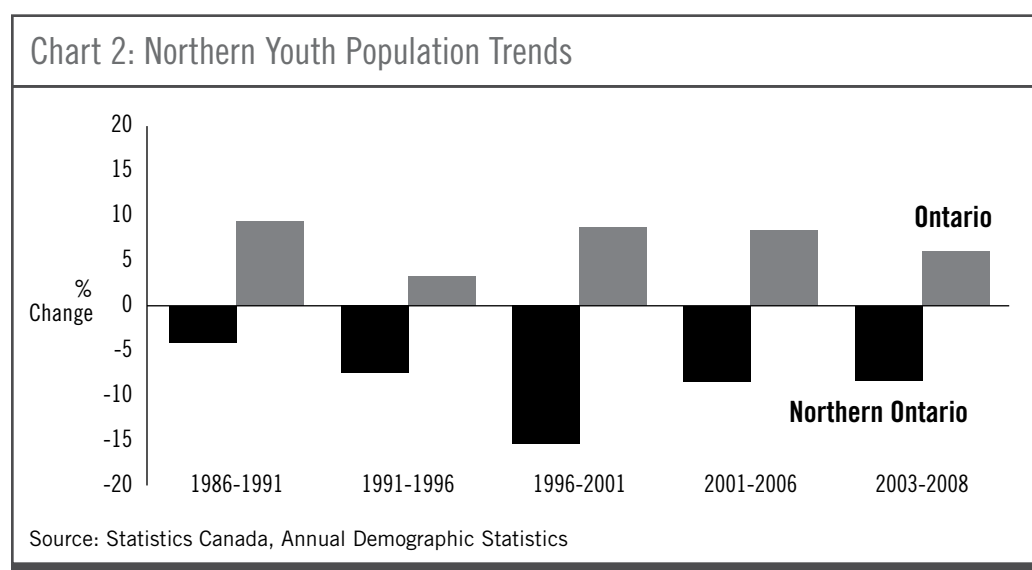


The region is diverse with five major urban centres acting as regional hubs, four smaller urban areas, a significant number of rural communities, and has tremendous natural wealth and social capital. In 2008, the population of the region counted 808,448, including significant portions of Ontario’s Aboriginal (40 per cent) and Francophone (26 per cent) population. After a significant rise and then decline of population between 1987 and 2001, Northern Ontario’s total population is stabilizing and is projected to show modest growth over the next 20 years, particularly in the urban centres of Greater Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, North Bay and Timmins. Strong population growth of Aboriginal communities and a dramatic decrease in the rate of people leaving the region over the last five years are key factors affecting the North’s population growth.

Chart 1: Northern Ontario Population Forecast



The relative youth in Aboriginal communities is an important asset of the North. With a median age of 29, compared to 44 in the non-Aboriginal population, this younger population will represent a quarter of the North's labour force within the next generation. Ensuring that young people from Aboriginal communities will be able to participate in and contribute to the economic success of the North is critically important. In 2008, the unemployment rate for the Aboriginal population was 16 per cent, more than double the rate of the non-Aboriginal population. Reversing these trends, improving access to health care and expanding educational opportunities for Aboriginal youth are all preconditions for future success in the region.



Building innovation in the economy is also a critical precondition for success. The North's economy has strong roots in the resource-based sectors, particularly forestry, mining and agriculture, which collectively make up about 7.6 per cent of the regional economy - compared to 1.9 per cent of the provincial economy overall. These primary sectors have historically been subject to cyclical employment driven by changing commodity prices. To build more stability in the economy many resource-based regions, such as Northern Ontario, have begun pursuing innovative value-added business opportunities. As a result, research and technology-based start-ups are contributing to the emergence of new sectors in the North such as health, the bioeconomy and renewable energy. At the same time, public sector employment continues to be a significant component of the northern economy, capturing 31.1 per cent of overall employment compared to 23 per cent in the province overall.

Chart 3: Northern Ontario Employment by Sector

	Northern Ontario	Ontario
<b>Total Employed ('000)</b>	<b>364.5</b>	<b>6687.3</b>
<b>Goods-producing sector</b>	<b>23.4%</b>	<b>22.8%</b>
Agriculture	1.1%	1.3%
Forestry, fishing, mining, oil and gas	6.5%	0.6%
Utilities	0.8%	1.0%
Construction	6.4%	6.6%
Manufacturing	8.1%	13.5%
<b>Service-producing sector</b>	<b>76.6%</b>	<b>77.2%</b>
Trade	14.8%	15.3%
Transportation and warehousing	5.4%	4.9%
Finance, insurance, real estate and leasing	3.4%	7.1%
Professional, scientific and technical services	3.9%	7.5%
Business, building and other support services	4.0%	4.5%
Educational services	8.9%	7.2%
Health care and social assistance	15.6%	10.4%
Information, culture and recreation	3.8%	4.6%
Accommodation and food services	6.3%	5.9%
Other services	3.8%	4.2%
Public administration	6.6%	5.4%

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey, 2008. Totals may not add due to rounding.

Incorporating information technology is another critical precondition for economic success, particularly for small businesses. Key investments in broadband for the health, education and research sectors have already stimulated new economic growth for knowledge-based activities and are helping to improve service delivery for northerners. Building on these advancements in a more holistic manner will help to establish a network that connects the North to the world.

### Purpose of the Plan

In riding the upswings and downturns of resource industries in the past, northerners have demonstrated resiliency and determination. This determination and confidence must now be applied to achieving a shared long-term future in a rapidly changing world.



Positioning the northern economy to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century requires that all partners and participants – governments, industry, communities, Aboriginal communities – work together to put the building blocks in place. The Proposed Growth Plan for Northern Ontario sets out a framework for those building blocks.

First, while the wealth of the region’s natural resources represents a huge potential, it is critical that innovation and emerging research be applied to the core sectors of forestry, mining, and agriculture to expand economic opportunity in the bioeconomy and green energy fields. Similarly, innovation and increased technology use must occur in tourism, health and education to promote new product development and grow expertise.

Secondly, improving the health status and educational attainment of northerners and recognizing the additional challenges of accessibility barriers faced by Aboriginal communities are also critical priorities outlined in this Proposed Plan. Developing a well-skilled, healthy workforce and a culture of innovation, collaboration and entrepreneurship will ready the North to take advantage of new economic opportunities.

Third, building new relationships with Aboriginal communities will be an important and underlying focus of all areas of the Proposed Plan. Efforts to build capacity for increased participation in economic opportunities will need to focus on increased educational opportunities and improved health status.

Fourth, promoting the region as a whole – connected by strong communities and supported by comprehensive networks of transportation, broadband and energy infrastructure – is a critical component in the ability to attract and to retain opportunities. Partnerships and collaboration will be necessary to maximize the investment framework to meet the needs of the region’s people and the future economy.

Finally, ensuring a clean and healthy natural environment is a fundamental underpinning for the region’s future.

The greatest risk would be to not take calculated risks. This Proposed Plan sets a new course for bold action. It reflects global trends such as rapid technological change, shifting patterns of trade, a growing focus on the knowledge economy and intensified competition for investment and skilled workers. And, most importantly, it builds on the strengths of the North.

## Vision For Northern Ontario

It is the year 2036 and there's a new Northern Ontario.

Northern Ontario has a skilled, educated and healthy population that is supported by world-class resources, leading edge technology and modern infrastructure. Companies scan the world for opportunities to create jobs, attract investment and serve global markets.

Communities are connected to each other and the world, offering dynamic and welcoming environments that are attractive to newcomers. Municipalities, Aboriginal communities, governments and industry work together to achieve shared economic, environmental and community goals.

## Guiding Principles

Delivering this vision will involve the combined effort of governments and diverse partners across Northern Ontario, focused on six key principles:

1. Creating a highly productive region, with a diverse, globally competitive economy that offers a range of career opportunities for all residents.
2. Developing a highly educated and skilled workforce to support an evolving knowledge-based economy and excellence in the trades.
3. Partnering with Aboriginal peoples to increase educational and employment opportunities.
4. Delivering a complete network of transportation, energy, communications, social and learning infrastructure, to support strong, vibrant communities.
5. Demonstrating leadership in sustainable growth and environmental management.
6. Establishing innovative partnerships to maximize resources and ensure the Growth Plan achieves its ambitious vision and is fiscally sustainable.

## How the Plan Works

This document is a Proposed Growth Plan under the Places to Grow Act, 2005 and applies to the Northern Ontario Growth Plan Area defined by Ontario Regulation 416/05, as amended.

The Places to Grow Act received royal assent on June 13, 2005 and sets out the following purposes:

- a) to enable decisions about growth to be made in ways that sustain a robust economy, build strong communities and promote a healthy environment and a culture of conservation;
- b) to promote a rational and balanced approach to decisions about growth that builds on community priorities, strengths and opportunities and makes efficient use of infrastructure;
- c) to enable planning for growth in a manner that reflects a broad geographical perspective and is integrated across natural and municipal boundaries;
- d) to ensure that a long-term vision and long-term goals guide decision-making about growth and provide for the co-ordination of growth policies among all levels of government.

This Proposed Growth Plan for Northern Ontario establishes a strategic framework and sets out policies and actions for how the Ontario government will engage, support and work with northern communities, businesses, Aboriginal communities and public sector partners over the next 25 years.

The framework is structured in five theme areas: Building Towards a New Economy, Investing in People and Progress, Forging a New Relationship with Aboriginal Peoples, Connecting and Strengthening Northern Communities, and Promoting Environmental Stewardship.

Within each theme, the document proposes a set of actions that the Province, along with its partners, will undertake to achieve the vision of more prosperous, innovative and engaged communities across Northern Ontario.

The result is an overall blueprint for the region's economic future, which provides a platform for co-ordinated decision-making and investment.

This Proposed Growth Plan for Northern Ontario builds on wide-ranging dialogues which have taken place across Northern Ontario over the past three years to plan for the future of the region's communities and economy. More than 2,500 northerners have provided input in over 80 events across the North, including 13 regional forums, 13 technical tables, a *Think North* Summit, 20 meetings with Aboriginal communities and organizations and workshops engaging more than 200 youth. This Proposed Plan has also benefited from numerous meetings with northern associations and elected representatives and many submissions provided in writing and electronically through [www.placestogrow.ca](http://www.placestogrow.ca).

Achievement of the Growth Plan strategies will require collective and collaborative action. It will require flexibility, resourcefulness, new relationships and new mechanisms for working together. Creating a dynamic system of networked communities, industries and institutions will fuel community and economic development in the North.

### **Tell us what you think**

We welcome your comments on this document. Through your feedback, the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario can be made better.

The Growth Plan for Northern Ontario is a joint initiative between the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure and the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry. Feedback on this document can be sent to:

Proposed Growth Plan for Northern Ontario  
Ministry of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry  
159 Cedar Street, Suite 601, Sudbury, ON P3E 6A5

Fax – 1-877-465-4411

E-mail – [northerngrowthplan@ontario.ca](mailto:northerngrowthplan@ontario.ca)

You can complete an online feedback form at [www.placestogrow.ca](http://www.placestogrow.ca)

For more information please call – 1-866-479-9781

We would appreciate your feedback by February 1, 2010.

## 2 Building Towards a New Economy

“As the competitive pressures build among nations, ensuring that each citizen can be as productive as possible is not only an issue of personal benefit to the individual, but part of a larger issue of national benefit.”

*Michael Gallis, presenter,  
Think North Summit*

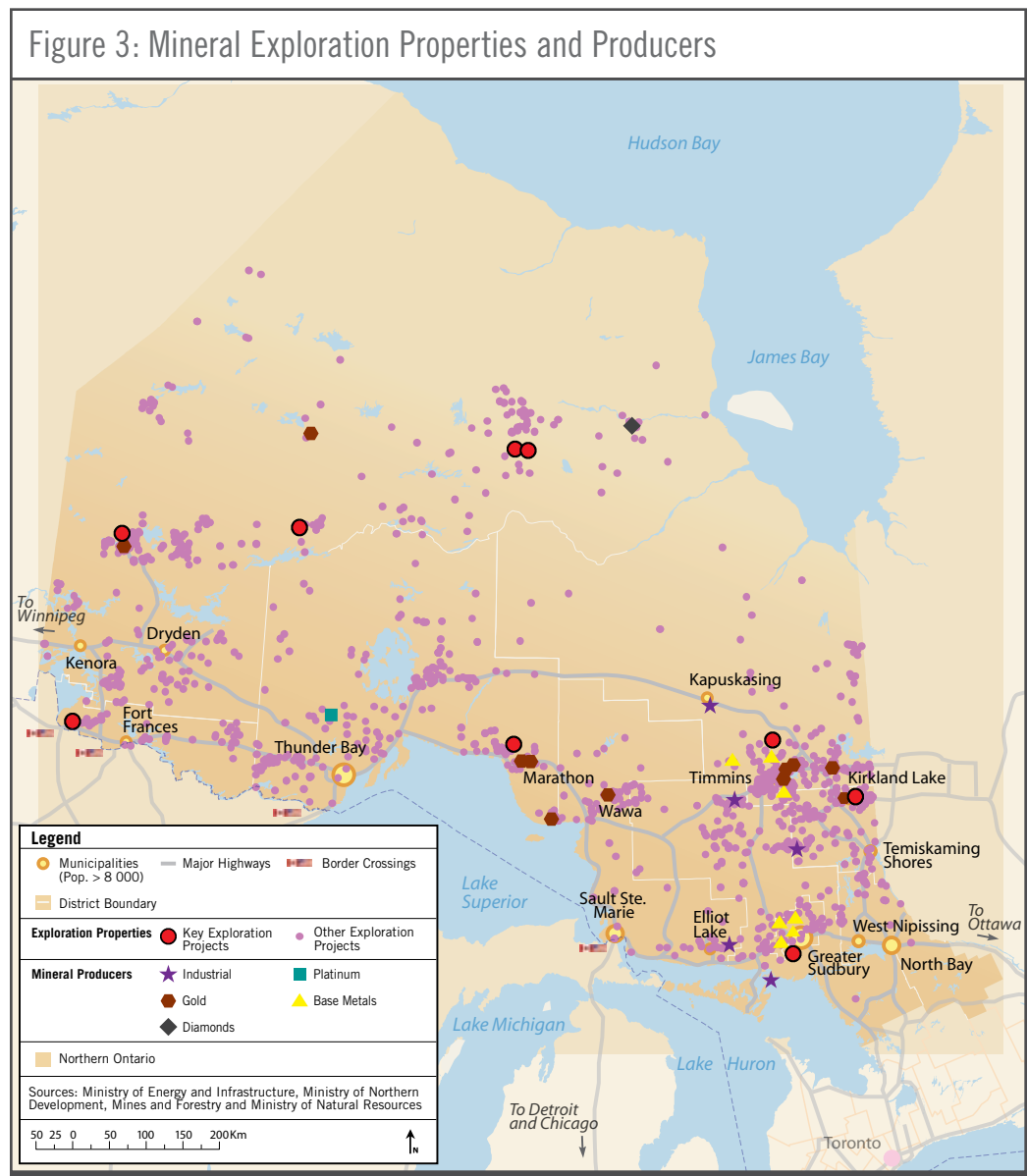
Over the next 25 years, Northern Ontario is positioned to become a knowledge-based economy, building on its traditional strengths and expanding in areas of innovation and collaboration. In mining and forestry, there will be greater emphasis on new technologies, value-added products and services, and sustainable resource management practices. Agriculture and aquaculture offer expanded local and niche market opportunities as well as potential for research and innovation in bioproducts. In tourism, new products and services will appeal to domestic and international visitors. Emerging sectors in health care, energy, digital media and the bioeconomy will play a greater role.

These shifts are already occurring – the percentage of employment in professional, scientific and technical services has doubled in the North since 1987. In a rapidly changing global economy, however, the North must plan now to retain and strengthen its competitive edge.

# MINING

Northern Ontario is one of the world's top mining regions, generating 75 per cent of the province's \$9.6 billion mine production in 2008, and most of the record-setting \$660 million in exploration expenditures. All of Ontario's 28 metal mines are in the North, and some 800 exploration projects are underway in the region.

Minerals and metals are used in virtually every aspect of daily living – from rail cars to pacemakers. Mining is a cornerstone of the North's economy, supporting export-oriented companies with markets world-wide.



Continued discovery of new mineral reserves supported by exploration incentives and a strengthened regulatory environment will build competitiveness and attract investment.

Northern Ontario's mineral industry is broad-based, with large smelters and processing operations, a prospering supply and equipment industry and a network of researchers, educational institutions and suppliers. Collaboration can build long-term competitiveness. Building linkages with educational institutions will help ensure a skilled workforce, and enhance opportunities for Aboriginal peoples and youth that will help to sustain communities as well as support industry labour needs.

Northern Ontario's dynamic mining supply and services sector of more than 400 companies engages in a range of activities such as fabricated metal production, specialized exploration and environmental technologies. Northern firms are also closely networked with Toronto, which is the world's mine-financing capital, the headquarters of many mining companies and home to the newly created Diamond Bourse of Canada, the wholesale trade exchange for diamonds. Northern Ontario's mineral industry cluster is positioned to expand as the global economy recovers and new markets for products and services grow.

The opening or expansion of mines drives regional and infrastructure development, including roads, telecommunications, energy supply and community infrastructure, and has traditionally benefited not only the adjacent community but others as well that provide supply, services and human resources. Aligning regional infrastructure planning with future mineral sector development can help to optimize resources and support sustainable regional and community growth.

Ontario's Mineral Development Strategy supports a sustainable, globally competitive mineral sector, encouraging safe, environmentally-sound practices. Today's mine operations are also leaving a smaller footprint, and multiple uses for reclaimed land are being explored. The North can take the lead on breakthrough advancements in exploration and environmental technologies.

Northern Ontario is positioned to sustain its global mineral industry leadership position and become more competitive through continued innovation, expansion into more value-added activities, new product development and adoption of leading edge technologies.

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"Innovation and commercialization are key. Now is the time to develop new products and technologies in preparation for the next boom."  
*Jon Baird, Canadian Association of Mining Equipment and Services for Export*

## Plan of Action

1. Through the Ontario Mineral Industry Cluster Council and other opportunities, strengthen Ontario's position as a leading global mining jurisdiction, maintain the competitive edge in Ontario operations and grow the northern mining cluster.
2. Invest in research and innovation (e.g., deep mining techniques, exploration and environmental technologies, mine closure and rehabilitation processes) to improve efficiency of Ontario operations. Implement "green" mining initiatives to improve energy efficiency and tailings management.
3. Link potential mine development with regional infrastructure planning.
4. Continue incentives to stimulate exploration investment in Ontario.
5. Undertake and maintain an inventory of mining supply and service companies in the North and implement an export strategy to expand into new domestic and international markets.
6. Amendments to the Ontario Mining Act will ensure environmentally sustainable mineral development stewardship, support Aboriginal participation in the mineral sector and increase timeliness and clarity in the regulatory processes (e.g., permitting), supported by a "one-window" approach for approvals.
7. Increase geoscience mapping to speed discovery of new mineral deposits.
8. Develop initiatives that increase public understanding of current exploration and mining practices, environmental impacts and the importance of minerals and metals to daily lives.



## FORESTRY

Northern Ontario contains 690,000 square kilometres of Crown forests – an area of vast natural wealth and biodiversity. For generations, the forest industry has been an important driving force of provincial and local economies, but today it faces a major transformation in both markets and products. Northern operations – primarily in lumber and pulp and paper – have experienced a structural change in demand as digital media has replaced newsprint and engineered wood replaces dimensional lumber. Meanwhile, other jurisdictions with fast growing species of wood have gained global market share. Despite these fundamental shifts, forestry continues to be a significant contributor to Ontario’s economy, generating about \$15 billion a year. Northern Ontario forestry operations employ 14,000 people in 26 communities.

While the traditional industry is changing, new areas for market growth are expanding in fields such as bio-composites and nanotechnology, biofuels from wood pellets, environmentally sustainable products and green building components. In addition, Northern Ontario supply and service firms in the forestry sector possess expertise that can be exported to forestry operations nationally and internationally. The Government of Ontario is reforming its forest tenure and pricing system to allow for broader access to fibre and to support a more diversified forest sector that is responsive to changing economic needs. This too will stimulate investment, innovation and employment.

Northern forests also play an increasing global role in carbon sequestration and climate change mitigation. The sustainability and health of forests will require innovative science to combat climate change and invasive species. By investing in research in this area, Northern Ontario can become a world leader in mitigating climate change.

In planning for the future, the forestry sector requires a workforce with technical expertise in forest management and regeneration, engineering and chemistry, and environmental science. Collaboration and leadership among industry, communities, Aboriginal organizations, educational institutions, researchers, and government will be key to move the sector in new, more sustainable directions.

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Norfab is an international player in value-added wood products including roof trusses, pre-fabricated garden sheds, gazebos and picnic tables for national building supply chains.

## Plan of Action

1. Introduce a proposed new forest tenure and pricing system to provide more equitable access to forest resources for innovation and growth in forestry, bioeconomy and other forest-based industries. Examine opportunities to reduce regulatory burden and increase the availability of forest resource information.

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2. Create a Forestry Cluster Council to support collaboration among industry, labour, communities, Aboriginal peoples, researchers, the education sector, other forestry organizations and government to contribute to strengthening and diversifying the industry.

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3. Focus business supports on knowledge-intensive, value-added products and new markets, including forestry equipment, and supply and services. Increase use of innovative technologies to improve efficiency and product quality.

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4. Pursue innovations to advance forest health, regeneration and new products.
  - a) Advance research and commercialization expertise in forest health; properties, use and regeneration of Ontario tree species; and climate change adaptation.
  - b) Work with industry to advance innovative uses of forestry biomass for bioeconomy markets.
  - c) Adopt innovations in the replanting and regeneration of Ontario's forests as part of a Crown forest renewal strategy.

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5. Recognize wood as a renewable resource and increase its use in construction.
  - a) Showcase the use of wood in public building projects.
  - b) Market Ontario's high quality of wood and sustainable forest management practices through a "green" branding strategy and export initiatives linked to national and provincial trade initiatives.
  - c) Amend building codes and construction standards to allow for the use of wood in mid-rise construction.

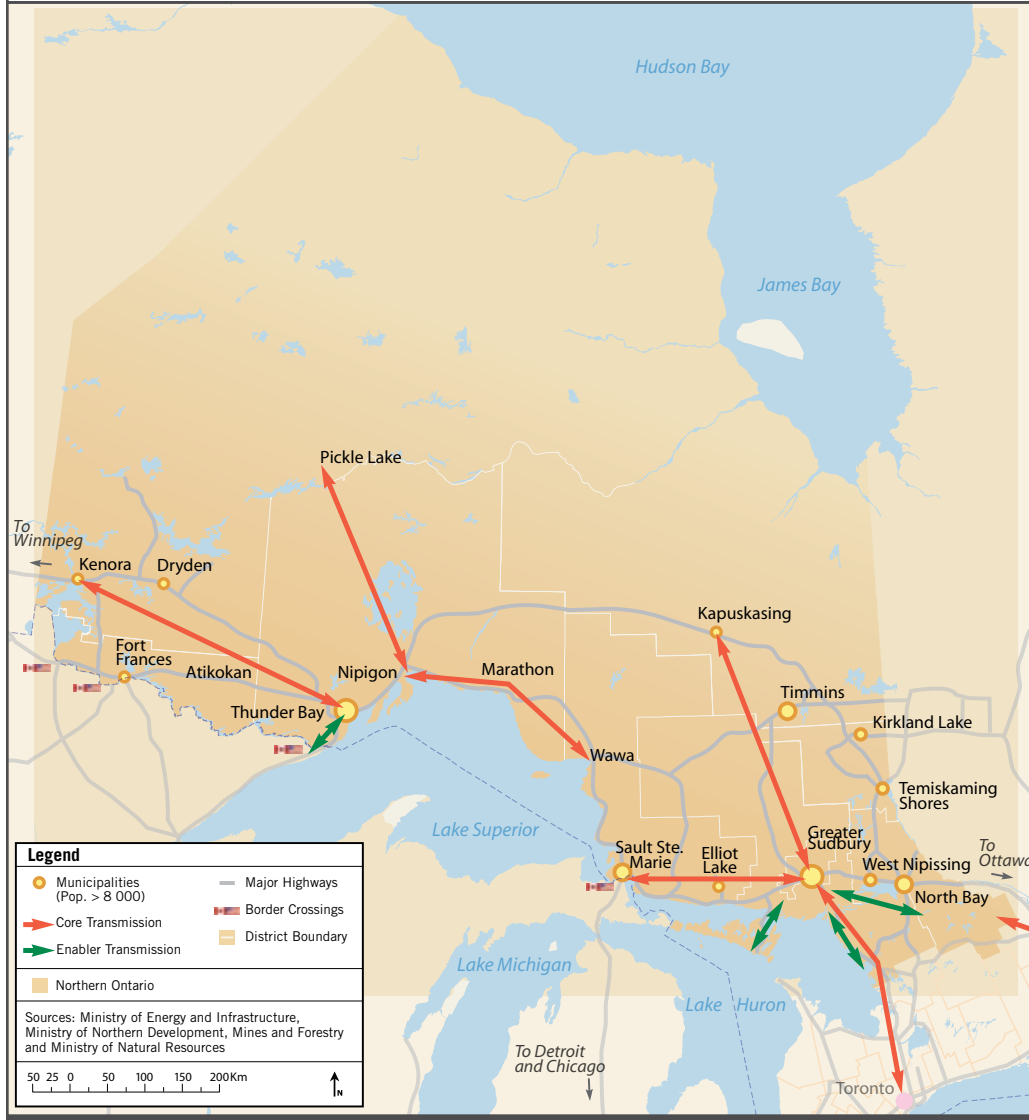
# GREEN ENERGY

In the long-term, the planned expansion of transmission capacity in Northern Ontario will enable increased energy generation that can support both future industrial growth and create more northern jobs, while supplementing the supply to other parts of the province.

The availability of renewable resources places the North at a significant competitive advantage when it comes to expanding Ontario’s renewable energy sources. The Albany, Abitibi and Mattagami Rivers hold significant hydro-electric potential that could provide reliable, clean, green power

Six core transmission network upgrades are moving forward, including north-south lines from Sudbury to Barrie and an east-west line from Nipigon to Wawa.

Figure 4: Energy Transmission Expansion Plans



for years to come. Since the majority of this potential is located within Treaty Areas, this resource also presents substantial economic partnership opportunities for Aboriginal communities.

Some of the best wind regimes in Canada are located along the northern shores of Lake Huron and the eastern shores of Lake Superior and investors will continue to capitalize on this opportunity. Northern Ontario's forests and agricultural lands hold a wealth of potential biofuels that could support the transformation of these resource-based sectors.

With the passage of Ontario's Green Energy Act, 2009, earlier this year, the time is right for communities, Aboriginal communities, industry and entrepreneurs to invest in and develop renewable energy projects. As well, planned investments in the North's transmission network over the next decade will increase the North's transmission capacity and ability to enable new renewable energy projects by up to 65 per cent from today's levels. Such an expansion would allow thousands of megawatts of clean, renewable energy potential to be harnessed.

The development of these projects will create and support thousands of jobs, including employment in construction, maintenance and other skilled trades, and will position the North to take a leadership role in a more sustainable provincial energy supply.

## Plan of Action

1. The Province, working with the Ontario Power Authority (OPA) and Hydro One, will invest substantially to upgrade the transmission network and increase capacity for the development of renewable energy projects across Northern Ontario. \$2.3 billion in province-wide investment is already committed over the next three years, nearly half of which will be spent on projects which are in Northern Ontario or which help better integrate the northern grid with the remainder of the provincial system.
  - a) Projects will include the development of an east-west tie and improved north-south flow capacity, which will help resolve the 'Orange and Yellow Zone' designations that currently restrict grid connection in some areas.
2. Continue to implement the Green Energy Act tools to stimulate increased investment in the development of renewable energy by businesses and communities.
  - a) A new provincial feed-in tariff pricing system to provide guaranteed prices for power produced from renewable sources and to encourage the participation of a wider range of generators, including Aboriginal communities, co-ops as well as commercial developers.
  - b) Accelerated timeline guarantees will apply to major approvals processes to help reduce start-up costs.
  - c) Establishment of a Renewable Energy Facilitation Office (REFO) to help guide potential proponents through the necessary approvals processes.
  - d) Providing municipal support for associated infrastructure costs through the Municipal Renewable Energy Program.
  - e) Providing financial support in the form of grants to community groups to assist with developmental costs through the Community Energy Partnerships Program.
  - f) The domestic content requirements that are part of the feed-in tariff program will help to stimulate manufacturing and jobs, ultimately helping to establish Ontario as a home base for renewable energy investment and manufacturing.

3. Provide opportunities for Aboriginal communities to become involved in renewable energy development through new provincial policies and programs designed to build business capacity and facilitate economic partnerships.
  - a) The \$250 million Aboriginal Loan Guarantee Program will support Aboriginal participation in new renewable energy and transmission projects by guaranteeing up to 75 per cent of an Aboriginal community's equity share in a project. This will help to secure financing and lower their borrowing costs.
  - b) The Aboriginal price adder under the feed-in tariff pricing system will increase the return on investment for renewable energy projects with Aboriginal participation.
  - c) The Aboriginal Energy Partnerships Program will help to maximize participation of Aboriginal partners in renewable energy projects and build capacity at the community level through three streams: community energy plans to identify local energy needs and opportunities; feasibility studies, business case development and other soft project costs; and an Aboriginal Renewable Energy Network to assist communities in sharing knowledge and best practices.

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4. Hydro One and the Ontario Power Authority will work together with remote off-grid communities and the Government of Canada to identify opportunities and assess the feasibility of alternative long-term solutions to diesel-generated power.

## BIOECONOMY

With its wealth of natural renewable resources, Northern Ontario also has the potential to become a focal point for Ontario's emerging bioeconomy. The bioeconomy is a natural extension of the North's forestry and agriculture sectors and already employs about 4,000 people. With the global market for renewables and bioproducts expected to grow to \$125 billion, the job creation potential of this sector is substantial.

Areas of potential economic growth include the production of bio-plastics, composites and chemicals as well as using waste wood, grasses, trees and algae as renewable energy sources.

A new Centre for Research and Innovation in the Bioeconomy (CRIBE) in Thunder Bay is leading the development of an innovative and sustainable bioeconomy, in collaboration with regional research facilities and industry. Additional growth will be spurred by further collaboration across sectors to increase the use of wood fibres in manufacturing and by exploring additional related manufacturing opportunities (e.g., pelletizers, residential and commercial boilers for biomass).

Countries around the world are aggressively developing their bioeconomy industries. To plan for the future, the North needs research, development and commercialization strategies, entrepreneurship support and investment attraction to speed innovation, stimulate business start-ups and encourage expansions. These actions would help give the North a solid foothold in this rapidly maturing market.

### Plan of Action

1. Through the Centre for Research and Innovation in the Bioeconomy, develop and implement a Northern Ontario Bioeconomy Plan aligned with Provincial bioeconomy initiatives and a bioproduct market analysis and development strategy including related manufacturing activities.

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"The bioeconomy will lead to the renewal of forest and agriculture-based industries and revitalized rural communities."

*Dr. Jim Dangerfield,  
Executive Vice-President,  
FP Innovations*

## AGRICULTURE AND AQUACULTURE

With more than 2,800 farms and 10 per cent of Ontario's largest farm operations, Northern Ontario has the potential to expand food production to meet market demands. In addition to food production, opportunities also lie in pursuing new markets in biofuels and the bioeconomy as noted in the previous section.

Fertile agricultural land in the North already generates more than \$200 million a year in crops and livestock. Vibrant agriculture regions in Rainy River, Thunder Bay, Algoma, Manitoulin, Sudbury, Nipissing and Timiskaming districts employ more than 6,000 people in operations that include dairy, beef, poultry, grains and oilseeds, market gardening, maple syrup and sod.

To reach its food production potential, Northern Ontario requires increased agricultural research, education and training that focuses on crops and agricultural practices tailored to the region's soil and climate. Incentives are needed to encourage early adoption of innovative technologies and practices. Improvements to storage and processing facilities as well as new marketing approaches can increase availability of locally grown produce in northern communities.

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Thornloe Cheese produces world renowned cheese, is a popular tourist attraction and serves as an outlet for local dairy producers shipping their products to a Northern Ontario location.

Northern Ontario's freshwater cage aquaculture industry is the largest in Canada and has opportunity to expand production while ensuring environmental stewardship. A focused research facility could advance environmental practices and also the development of land-based operations.

Increased access to local fresh food – particularly for remote communities – has health and economic benefits. Local food and energy production can help communities become more self-reliant and resilient to external market forces. There are also growing markets around the world for food products from operations that combine social and environmental responsibility – a competitive advantage for northern operations focused on sustainable agriculture practices.



## Plan of Action

1. Increase farm production, freshwater aquaculture and value-added processing in Northern Ontario to respond to markets through initiatives for new farmers, export strategies for niche products and more flexible capital support. Increase participation of northern operations in business support programs such as the Canada-Ontario Growing Forward program.
2. Create district agricultural development plans identifying land improvement needs, regional storage and processing infrastructure, new markets, and research and training priorities with intergovernmental funding to support implementation. Collaborate with governments, communities and industry to increase access to competitive technologies and infrastructure.
3. Increase local markets through buy-local initiatives and public procurement.
4. Streamline regulations to facilitate farm start-ups while maintaining high food safety standards.
5. Work with industry and the federal government to expand agriculture and aquaculture research in the North to focus on sustainable food production and processing tailored to the region's environment and climate. Strengthen research, education and industry networks to speed adoption of innovative science and technology.

## TOURISM AND CULTURAL INDUSTRIES

Northern Ontario's tourism options vary from outdoor pursuits such as fishing, hunting, hiking, paddling, and visiting parks, to the attractions, cultural amenities and festivals of northern cities and towns. In 2007, the North attracted 7.7 million visitors, generating \$1.4 billion and employing 13,000 people. Opportunities abound to increase nature-based tourism, experiential tourism, Great Lakes tourism and other destinations celebrating the North's rich cultural mosaic of First Nations, Métis and Francophone peoples.

Consumer trends within the tourism industry are rapidly changing. The age and income profile of travellers is changing world-wide. As travel decisions are increasingly made online, businesses without high-speed internet are at a significant disadvantage. Northern tourism operators need to embrace new technologies, upgrade facilities, enhance skills and adapt to changing consumer expectations to maintain markets.

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Sudbury Cinefest is Canada's fourth largest international film festival and attracts more than 30,000 people every year.

Recent reports, including *Discovering Ontario: A Report on the Future of Tourism*, chaired by Greg Sorbara (February 2009), and *Northwestern Ontario: Preparing for Change*, the Report of the Northwestern Ontario Economic Facilitator (February 2008), propose new approaches that focus on collaboration through regional tourism structures, new marketing models, enhanced infrastructure and improved product to provide a comfortable, positive tourism experience for visitors. In addition, access to capital for tourism and cultural businesses is also a key issue, as is the need for improved service levels and staff training in the hospitality industry.

## Plan of Action

1. Establish a regional tourism approach in the North and work with the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation to implement a comprehensive northern tourism development strategy focused on high growth areas and linked to provincial and national marketing campaigns. Promote northern tourism strengths such as nature-tourism and Aboriginal tourism as part of provincial tourism efforts.

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2. Facilitate partnerships that strengthen Northern Ontario's tourism experience by focusing on meeting consumer expectations on a global basis.
  - a) Create new, flexible and high quality products for domestic and international visitors (e.g., all-inclusive, inbound charter vacations).
  - b) Increase tourism research and information available to industry and communities for product development and investment attraction.
  - c) Strengthen collaboration with the postsecondary sector to deliver skills development in e-business, marketing, customer service and hospitality.

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3. Invest in strategic public infrastructure to improve the competitiveness of the tourism industry and enhance the visitor experience.

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4. Accelerate partnerships among digital media/cultural industries and post secondary sectors to develop a skilled workforce and attract investment in digital media and film/television productions.

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5. Encourage regions and communities to undertake cultural planning linked to tourism, economic development and land use planning.

## ATTRACTING INVESTMENT AND BUSINESS GROWTH

With the potential for new market developments in mining, forestry, the bioeconomy, agriculture, energy and tourism, the North will need to attract new investments and build a stronger culture of entrepreneurship.

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“If Northern Ontario is to be a value-added producer the region must eventually produce its own designers, engineers and architects. To succeed in high-end markets, the region must develop a reputation for distinctive products and distinctive styles.”

*Dr. David Robinson and Ivan Fillion, Laurentian University*

Northern Ontario will face unprecedented challenges to capture investment from foreign markets. The transformation of the global economy is reshaping traditional trade and investment patterns. As new economies in Asia expand and the next economic upturn takes hold, competition for capital will increase. To compete, the North will need a dynamic, coordinated response supported by government-led policies and strategies and benchmarked against aggressive investment attraction efforts of other jurisdictions.

A northern investment strategy needs to be developed and northern investment teams need to build networks, engage investors early and act quickly with responses tailored to particular investment opportunities. Investment attraction programs should be refocused to build on the North’s competitive advantages. The advice and involvement of business, scientific and community leadership will be instrumental in shaping investment and sector strategies.

To strengthen a culture of entrepreneurship, a supportive climate will require more effective business networks, access to capital and skilled workers, education, innovation and research, as well as a streamlined regulatory environment. Attracting angel investors to high-potential, high-risk opportunities will be a priority.

In addition, it is critical to focus on nurturing small businesses. These businesses account for about 60 per cent of all job creation in Canada and an estimated 24 per cent of Ontario’s GDP. Mentoring, succession planning and a range of training from developing business plans to intellectual patents will build management capacity of small businesses.

Supporting their growth and entrepreneurial activity will be vital to attract and retain young people and bring new investment into the region.

## Plan of Action

1. Develop and implement a Northern Investment Strategy with comprehensive competitive intelligence for each market region, new market action plans for key industries and marketing strategies for niche products and services. This will include an emphasis on early involvement and rapid response for investment decisions.
  - a) Align provincial investment programs with Growth Plan priorities.
  - b) Engage business, community, scientific and Aboriginal leadership in economic development strategies through existing and new industry clusters and by restructuring the Northern Development Councils as technical working groups.
  - c) Focus on existing industry issues, business retention and time-sensitive opportunities for key growth industries.
  - d) Create business development, export, and labour market strategies for emerging sectors with strong growth potential and competitive advantages. Support partnerships among municipalities, Aboriginal communities and businesses to advance these strategies.
  - e) Strengthen relationships in key markets. Expand inbound and outbound trade missions and showcase northern investment opportunities.
  - f) Work with industry, labour, professional associations and communities to identify strategies to attract highly skilled workers for labour shortages.

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2. Increase business support to sectors with significant competitive advantages and growth potential and to firms aggressively pursuing market expansion, research and development, and introduction of innovative technologies.

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3. Increase public procurement opportunities through local procurement approaches.

4. Expand the role of Small Business Enterprise Centres to increase training and mentoring in business management and entrepreneurship, and to strengthen their networks among industry, economic development organizations, Aboriginal enterprises, and the research and education sectors.

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5. Strengthen access to venture capital and angel investment through an expanded business angel network linked to northern research and innovation centres and with new mechanisms supporting co-investment and syndication.

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6. Increase flexibility of business support programs to meet sectoral needs (e.g., access to capital for tourism) and examine alternatives to equity positions for Aboriginal enterprises.

# 3 Investing in People and Progress

Northern Ontario's most important resource is its people. Accessible health care and education are important building blocks and will build capacity for an adaptive and knowledge-based economy.

- In the health sector, a greater focus on electronic delivery and local training programs will enhance accessibility and advance the North's ability to supply health care practitioners.
- Flexible and advanced learning environments will cultivate a diverse and highly skilled pool of talent to support the key economic sectors.
- Northern knowledge in resource management, the bioeconomy, and green energy is advancing and focus will be on helping ideas move to market through a collaborative system of support for northern research, innovative practices and technologies.

## HEALTH

Technology, infrastructure investments and new delivery models are changing the face of northern health care. Addressing the region's longstanding challenges of lower health rates, accessibility barriers for Francophone and Aboriginal communities, and a shortage of health professionals has required innovative solutions.

"The health care sector will be one of the region's fastest growing industries. Northern Ontario planners must ensure that we develop some niche markets in this sector."

*Dr. Bakhtiar Moazzami,  
Lakehead University*

While work is still needed, new health care models are focused on the type of care that is most relevant for the community. The Northeast and Northwest Local Health Integration Networks are working with local health providers to deliver co-ordinated and community-based care. Family Health Teams combining a number of health care providers and Nurse Practitioner Clinics are providing a wider scope of care across the North.

A chronic shortage of health professionals in the North continues to present a significant challenge. The establishment of the Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM) in 2005 is helping to reverse this condition. Similarly, the success of locally-based initiatives such as the Grow Your Own Nurse Practitioner Program (now with 62 northern positions), training people in their own communities and the Distributed Medical Education program, offering northern rural rotations, have played an important role.

Technology is an important tool in connecting more people to health care, through innovations such as electronic health records, a patient portal to track blood-pressure online and telemedicine, which reduced patient travel by more than 36 million kilometres in 2008.

The Northern Ontario School of Medicine is the North's first medical school and Canada's newest in over 30 years, with campuses in Thunder Bay and Sudbury.

Technology in the health care field is also playing a critical role in entrenching the North's leadership in research and innovation. Similarly, the Northern Ontario School of Medicine plays an important role in building the North's knowledge economy, producing world-class research and stimulating new investment activity.

Opportunities abound in improving the delivery of health care services to all of Northern Ontario's diverse communities, building on new technology and capitalizing on northern research.



## Plan of Action

1. Support initiatives to attract professionals to deliver services to populations who face accessibility barriers, including remote, Aboriginal and Francophone communities (e.g., Ontario's Underserved Area Program, Health Career Promotion Program to train French-speaking professionals - *Carrières en santé*).
2. Build and retain a highly skilled sector by promoting health as a career opportunity, through participation in local training programs (e.g., Grow Your Own Nurse Practitioner) and expanded roles for health professionals (e.g., Physician Assistant).
3. Retain health professionals through continued support of professional development opportunities, (e.g., Allied Health Professional Development Fund, Nursing Education Initiative and education programs for northern physicians).
4. Continue to foster partnerships among key players such as the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, the Local Health Integration Networks, Aboriginal organizations, research centres and local service providers in order to build a more collaborative approach to innovative service delivery.
5. Strengthen the capacity of the North's broadband infrastructure network and prioritize investments in systems that reduce travel needs for care (e.g., Ornge Transport System, Telemedicine, e-Prescribing).
6. Support the development of local entrepreneurial skills and expertise through increased procurement of emerging innovations, particularly electronic delivery systems (e.g., Picture Archival System, Digital Diagnostics, Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) initiative).

## EDUCATION

The North's education system has taken a similar path to that of health care delivery by turning to technology and collaboration to deliver quality education to students across the region. Contact North is an example of an online education platform that can transform the education experience for students across the North.

"The future of the North is about learning – to compete, to support, to develop, to overcome challenges and to improve the stewardship of the land."

*Maxim Jean-Louis, President and CEO of Contact North*

Recent efforts have also been focused on establishing stable sources of funding and using school facilities and technology more efficiently. Funding measures now ensure that small schools have the operating resources they need regardless of enrolment numbers. Capital investments are building high quality and more energy-efficient schools. School boards are cutting across boundaries to partner for shared goals, and finding ways for communities to use schools' assets.

A particular effort must also be made to increase accessibility and education success for Aboriginal youth who will represent a quarter of the North's labour force in the next generation.

## Plan of Action

1. Work collaboratively with postsecondary facilities and distance education providers to provide education programs tailored to northern industry and business needs.
  - a) Increase the accessibility of these programs through e-learning and distance education providers.
  - b) Explore ways to address specific Aboriginal and Francophone accessibility needs.

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2. Invest in infrastructure to support distributive education and e-learning and a greater level of collaboration among the region's education providers.

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3. Support the use of active and surplus school facilities for community programs and needs.

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4. Encourage northern communities and local school boards to work together to increase student achievement (particularly among Aboriginal and Francophone populations), prepare northern youth for postsecondary education and training, and lay the groundwork for careers in fields that have strong growth potential in the North.
  - a) Promote key areas of sustainable career development potential.
  - b) Allow for locally produced courses and skills development opportunities to meet specific educational goals in the North.
  - c) Work with community organizations to expand literacy supports.

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5. Strengthen collaboration among postsecondary facilities and industry to adapt apprenticeships, co-op programs and skills development initiatives to prepare students for market-relevant and emerging employment opportunities.

Figure 5: Research and Innovation Centres & Postsecondary Locations



## RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Leading edge research and innovation is occurring in universities, businesses and research centres throughout the North in the fields of mining, green energy, health, geomatics and digital media. Further efforts to nurture and support an environment of innovation and entrepreneurship will be essential to ensure economic prosperity across the North and the province as a whole.

A network of innovation centres across the North works closely with academic institutions, research facilities and entrepreneurs to ensure the continued commercialization of products and services for a global marketplace. Strengthening this network, and investing in research organizations like the Centre for Research and Innovation in the Bioeconomy, the Invasive Species Centre, and the Mining Centre of Excellence, will help to create opportunities for the further commercialization of products and services.

For these activities to succeed, it is important to continue growing research and PhD capacity in universities in the North, and enhancing their ability to attract highly skilled personnel to Northern Ontario.

Similarly, in the new economy, a more robust system of collecting and reporting information and knowledge is needed to assist business, government and communities as they develop solid, evidence-based policy and programming.

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Genesis Genomics Inc., with offices in Thunder Bay and the United Kingdom is a world leader and pioneer in the research, discovery, development and commercial application of mitochondrial DNA-based biomarkers for a wide spectrum of human diseases.

## Plan of Action

1. Establish a Northern Research and Policy Institute in partnership with universities, colleges, Aboriginal organizations and industry to focus on northern research priorities. This will provide linkages to national and international research initiatives in areas of innovation and emerging sectors, such as green energy, health and education.

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2. Strengthen collaboration across the province among innovation centres, postsecondary facilities and industry to support research that advances innovation in key sectors, such as mining, forestry, energy, agriculture and bioeconomy.

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3. Expand the role of Northern Innovation Centres, incorporating commercialization supports and collaborative partnerships into their mandates, ensuring their full integration into the proposed Ontario Commercialization Network. This could fulfill the role of an information utility network connecting all areas of the various northern research communities to a central shared bank of data through Geographic Information Systems (GIS).

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4. Link the MaRS Discovery District in Toronto with a Northern Discovery Network to provide opportunities for increased mentorships, online and video-conference training, and placements.

# 4 Forging a New Relationship with Aboriginal Peoples

Increasing Aboriginal peoples' access to education and employment opportunities and building a new relationship among communities is vital for the success of the region's future and a foundation of the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario.

The First Nations and the Métis communities across the North continue to shape the history and economy of the region. Many First Nation communities in Northern Ontario are signatories to one of six treaties: Robinson-Superior (1850), Robinson-Huron (1850), Treaty 3 (1873), Treaty 5 (1873), Treaty 9 (1905-1906, 1930), and the Williams Treaties (1923). In addition to these historic treaties, negotiations are underway for a modern-day treaty among Canada, Ontario, and the Algonquins of Ontario. Aboriginal and treaty rights are recognized and affirmed in Canada's constitution, and Ontario is committed to respecting these rights and upholding our duty to consult Aboriginal peoples where Ontario's actions may adversely affect an Aboriginal or treaty right. The Proposed Growth Plan for Northern Ontario recognizes the unique role that Aboriginal people have had and will continue to have in the development of Northern Ontario.

With 34 per cent of the Aboriginal population under the age of 15, the contributions of Aboriginal peoples are closely linked with the North's future success. Many communities have adopted economic development approaches that reflect a connection to the land and a focus on community benefits (e.g., co-operatives, social enterprises and not-for-profit organizations).

Targeted education and training initiatives, developed in partnership, are already helping to build a skilled workforce, but more is needed to integrate the economic development planning of Aboriginal communities with other regional efforts. Support for regional Aboriginal economic development organizations will help bolster economic development goals across the North.

## ABORIGINAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Provincial initiatives, such as the modernization of the Mining Act, the Far North Land Use Planning initiative, the Green Energy Act, and the Aboriginal Energy Partnerships program are creating opportunities for Aboriginal peoples to engage in and benefit from economic development opportunities. The New Relationship Fund is supporting capacity building for First Nation communities and Métis organizations to engage in negotiations with government and private developers. The Ontario government and Aboriginal partners are also working together to develop a province-wide resource benefits-sharing plan to include Aboriginal communities in the socio-economic benefits from natural resource development in Ontario. New funding and procurement approaches and skills training initiatives will also provide benefits.

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KISH-GON-DUG Canada of Naicatchewenin First Nation produces handcrafted outdoor furniture, including pre-manufactured cedar saunas distributed by a Thunder Bay wholesaler with exports to the U.S. and Europe.

Aboriginal peoples have also identified anticipated labour shortages within their communities and across the region as areas to target for job growth. In addition, collaboration in community and infrastructure development and land use planning may also create opportunities. Advancing the job creation potential of these areas will require new relationships among municipalities and Aboriginal communities.

While land claims are primarily an area of federal responsibility, Ontario is committed to working with federal, municipal and Aboriginal communities on these matters. Resolution of land claims can reconcile the Crown-Aboriginal relationship and will help to stimulate economic development and improve social conditions.



## Plan of Action

1. Increase economic development capacity of Aboriginal organizations.
  - a) Provide operational support for Aboriginal regional economic development agencies to increase outreach and training, and support strategic planning.
  - b) Facilitate training for Aboriginal economic development organizations and communities to participate in regional economic, infrastructure and labour market planning.

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2. Create business opportunities for Aboriginal enterprises.
  - a) Increase opportunities for Aboriginal businesses through a provincial procurement strategy.
  - b) Encourage partnerships among municipalities and Aboriginal communities to meet local and regional business and labour market needs.
  - c) Create employment, training and business opportunities for Aboriginal enterprises in public infrastructure projects including winter roads, all-season roads and the Aboriginal Energy Partnerships program.

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3. Expand opportunities for Aboriginal peoples to participate in local labour markets.
  - a) Increase Ontario internships, work exchange and summer experience opportunities and awareness of these programs in Aboriginal communities.
  - b) Continue to increase access to education and skills training in remote communities.
  - c) Work with Aboriginal communities to develop economic opportunities close to home while also working to provide supports for those people who relocate from remote First Nations to urban or rural communities.

4. Develop new approaches and mechanisms to build economic partnerships.
  - a) Develop alternative mechanisms (including working capital and micro capital) for Aboriginal enterprises to attain collateral and equity positions.
  - b) Work with the federal government and Aboriginal communities and municipalities to settle outstanding land claims to facilitate social and economic development.
  - c) Ensure eligibility within government programs for various forms of Aboriginal enterprises, including social enterprises and cooperatives.

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5. In partnership with Aboriginal peoples and the federal government, examine capital programs to address immediate critical needs and develop a long-term investment plan for regional infrastructure (e.g., all-season roads) that maximizes benefits, employment and economic opportunities for Aboriginal peoples.

## ABORIGINAL EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

While educational attainment for Aboriginal learners is increasing overall, a significant gap remains between the Aboriginal population and the non-Aboriginal population. Closing the gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in areas of literacy and numeracy, student retention, graduation rates and post-secondary studies are critical priorities of the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario and Ontario's Aboriginal Education Strategy.

Improving the educational attainment levels of Northern Ontario's Aboriginal people will require increased co-ordination among all partners. Access to learning opportunities, support services close to home, and better linkages to jobs are all critical success factors.

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"The future of northern Ontario – for aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities alike – is interwoven and neither can move forward without the other."

*Participant, Aboriginal Economic Development technical table*

## Plan of Action

1. Continue implementation of Ontario's First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework to reduce gaps in student achievement.
2. Increase access to distributed learning and e-learning infrastructure for remote locations.
3. Increase the number of Aboriginal teachers in the provincial school system and professional development resources focused on Aboriginal students' needs.
4. Work with Aboriginal education representatives and communities and the federal government to develop harmonized standards and measurement tools for on-reserve and off-reserve schools to facilitate successful transition of students into provincial education and training activities.
5. Encourage and support partnerships among Aboriginal communities, postsecondary institutions, skills training providers and industry to respond to labour markets by providing appropriate education and training programs for Aboriginal peoples and removing barriers to access to these programs.

# 5 Connecting and Strengthening Northern Communities

Communities will play a key role in implementing the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario and achieving a healthy, prosperous future for the North. What makes a community thrive varies from place to place. It often involves cultural and economic diversity, integration of economic, social and environmental considerations and engaged residents who actively build “quality of place.”

“Case after case has demonstrated that people (as opposed to money or other resources) are the one absolutely necessary ingredient to successful development.”

*Small Towns, BIG IDEAS,*  
Will Lambe

With more than half of northerners living in the cities of Thunder Bay, Sudbury, Sault Ste. Marie, North Bay and Timmins, these cities act as gateways to the North, attracting new investment to surrounding regions. Connecting these communities to the world and to each other will also be a critical factor for Northern Ontario’s long-term success. Communities and industries increasingly depend upon effective, efficient networks of technology, infrastructure, and people. Digital highways and air, marine, road and rail linkages are the backbone of these networks.

Building strong communities in the future will require a new regional approach to planning that meets the needs of the North. That regional approach can drive and direct a renewed approach to investment in transportation, communications and community infrastructure to ensure stronger, healthier, more prosperous communities.

## REGIONAL ECONOMIC PLANNING

Experience shows that collective action by communities to jointly pursue regional priorities yields greater success than isolated, fragmented community actions. Collaborative regional economic planning takes into account infrastructure, labour force, environment and socio-economic circumstances to build an integrated long-term plan to achieve shared economic priorities. Effective regional economic planning is inclusive, comprehensive, aligned with key sectors and connected to regional and world markets. It helps develop competitive advantages by connecting a region's assets with necessary infrastructure, education, innovation and business supports.

“The socio-economic inter-dependency of communities is self-evident – the stronger the ‘spokes,’ the stronger the wheel ... without the hub the wheel cannot turn.”  
*Mayor Howard Whent,  
Municipality of Wawa*

The regions of Northern Ontario do not fit a “one-size-fits-all” approach. They have differing areas of expertise, geographic connections and markets. Creating regional economic zones recognizes their distinct nature and also the interconnectedness of urban, rural and Aboriginal communities.

Economic regions capitalize on local strengths in a way that makes greater use of financial and technical resources, builds stronger, more inclusive networks and creates sustainable employment. Nearly every jurisdiction in Canada has a model of regional economic planning. In implementing regional economic zones, northerners can benefit from best practices and build a model that best serves the North.

### Plan of Action

1. Establish regional economic zones in Northern Ontario as an inclusive, collaborative mechanism for long-term economic development, labour market, infrastructure, land-use, cultural and population planning, which will:
  - a) Engage urban, rural and Aboriginal communities, business, labour, economic development organizations, research and education sectors, service delivery organizations and other non-government organizations.
  - b) Reflect sector/corridor initiatives and the interconnection of urban, rural and Aboriginal communities in a regional plan that is comprised of:
    - An economic plan identifying key regional sectors, niche products, cultural planning and trade and export opportunities,

- A regional capital plan identifying strategic community, transportation, information and communications technology, education, research and health infrastructure,
  - A service investment plan for key regional services and amenities,
  - A labour market development plan that attracts, retains and develops highly qualified personnel with market-relevant skills, supports participation of underrepresented groups and creates education and training strategies to meet anticipated workforce needs.
- c) Develop implementation plans that coordinate collective actions and leverage investments through partnerships of the public and private sectors.
- d) Base capital investments and operational funding on an accountability framework, including a service level agreement, performance measures and regular monitoring and evaluation.
- e) Proceed with implementation of regional economic zones within a year. Establish a technical advisory group to examine approaches of other jurisdictions and provide input on proposed principles/models for regional economic zones in the North. Begin regional economic planning pilots among interested communities.
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2. Invest in Geographic Information System community information networks to provide an inventory of regional assets and community/economic data.
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3. Introduce a leadership development program for northern community and business leaders (especially youth) to support new planning approaches.

## REGIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY

Unlike other Canadian and Ontario jurisdictions, Northern Ontario has few regional structures to facilitate co-ordinated service delivery. Planning and delivery issues are exacerbated by the North's challenging geography and dispersed population. There is a need for a new approach to enable a more cohesive, efficient and collaborative approach to service delivery.

Many models of regional collaboration exist in other jurisdictions, including British Columbia, which has a flexible regional service delivery model that builds economies of scale and also accommodates for services more effectively delivered at the local level. Further examination of approaches will identify practices that may work in Northern Ontario.

### Plan of Action

1. Initiate a review of northern service delivery to enhance planning, service delivery, and administrative effectiveness in incorporated and unincorporated areas:
  - a) Establish and work with a review team (with representation from northern municipalities, unincorporated areas, Aboriginal communities, and service delivery organizations) to examine service delivery mechanisms in the North and other jurisdictions; identify potential options and guiding principles; and prepare a plan for gaining broad northern input on proposed options.
  - b) Map the existing administration and delivery of public services (e.g., transportation systems, water supply and distribution, waste management, fire protection, emergency services, social services) in Northern Ontario.



## TRANSPORTATION

The strength of Northern Ontario's extensive transportation network is critical for linking communities across the North's vast geography. The region's communities and economy rely on a safe and efficient transportation network. Inter-community/inter-regional travel and the affordability and frequency of bus, air and rail services are critical issues in the North where residents travel great distances for schooling, work and health services. Ontario has 29 remote Far North communities with no permanent road access. They rely on winter roads and air transportation for fuel, food, basic amenities and access to education, health and emergency services.

Northern Ontario sits at the strategic centre point bridging eastern and western Canada with ports on the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway. Ports and waterways offer an environmentally responsible and efficient freight transportation system, open new opportunities for container and short-sea shipping and support tourism development.

With the public and business focused on efficient and sustainable modes of transportation, the North needs an integrated system that responds to open markets, seamless borders and just-in-time delivery to markets around the world. Efficiency of transportation is a deciding factor in investment and business growth decisions.

An integrated and efficient transportation network will require strategic expansion and remediation for highways, roads, bridges and ports; short-line railway networks, air transport and airport facilities, including preserving underused infrastructure for future use. A long-term outlook and a shift to more comprehensive, co-ordinated planning will leverage investment by all levels of government and align it with strategic priorities.

Strategic investments will improve service to communities and redefine the region's position within global trade corridors and an international transportation network.

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"In any society, reliable and reasonably priced transportation that provides needed access is vital to a successful economy."  
*Dr. Robert Rosehart,  
Northwestern Ontario  
Economic Facilitator Report*

Figure 6: Transportation Network



## Plan of Action

1. Develop and implement a comprehensive inter- and multi-modal transportation plan with identified priorities and intergovernmental funding for an integrated air, rail, marine and road network serving the North and linking to global trade corridors.
  - a) Include an innovation adoption strategy, job creation initiatives, and a corridors/connections strategy that realizes Northern Ontario's potential as a continental and trans-polar gateway for the global supply chain.
  - b) Continue investments in major northern highways including four-laning and passing lanes in priority area.
  - c) Increase use of waterways and ports for environmentally-responsible and efficient freight transportation and tourism development.
  - d) Invest in long-term strategic regional infrastructure and services, including northern airports, aviation service centres, short-line rail, ports and multi-modal freight facilities.
  - e) Improve access for Far North communities by expanding and realigning winter roads and developing permanent roads.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

Within the last two decades, use of information and communications technology (ICT) and the Internet has fundamentally changed society and the dynamics of economic growth and investment. ICT is now core infrastructure for businesses and industries of all sizes. It is critical to the delivery of education and health sciences and it has become mainstream in our communications, social interaction and leisure activities.

In a global marketplace, access to high-speed Internet has become a minimum requirement for businesses to operate competitively. Economic growth is tied closely to broadband capacity and access. Broadband reduces the costs of communication and data transfer, allowing all communities to participate in a greater array of innovation and economic activities.

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The Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre is recognized as the world's first true Community Information Utility (CIU), sharing geospatial data, tools and knowledge among community organizations to create safer, healthier and more prosperous communities.

Infrastructure for high-speed Internet and cellular telecommunications is particularly important to rural and remote communities. It provides residents with access to information, public services, health support, education and training, and employment opportunities. Communities where Internet service is inadequate or non-existent face economic and social disadvantages. About 43,000 people in 120 northern communities remain without reliable, affordable access to broadband.

The northern ICT sector is rapidly growing. Specialized activities and niche markets include resource mapping, global positioning systems, geographic information systems and radio frequency identification systems. Forestry and mining sectors rely heavily on ICT for resource mapping. This can provide both new business opportunities and greater efficiency of the North's traditional resource industries.

The greatest economic and social benefit is realized when technology is used for value creation. Keeping an eye towards next generation web technologies, a northern ICT strategy will optimize infrastructure investments, increase Internet literacy rates, and maximize business innovation and the creation of value.

## Plan of Action

1. Expand broadband service to unserved and underserved areas as part of a federal-provincial ICT resources infrastructure plan to invest in next generation technologies, including ultraspeed connectivity. Maximize investments and the reach of network expansions through public and private sector collaboration.

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2. Enhance existing fibre corridors to establish high-access capacity points, north-south fibre interconnection and improved “last mile” capabilities, connecting homes and businesses.

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3. Expand community networks – public Internet portals in schools, libraries and community centres – to broaden access to advanced web technologies.

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4. Develop a post-connectivity strategy and new public-private partnerships to support access and usage of high-speed broadband and telecommunications technology. Include a state-of-the-network report with information on current capacity, future plans and market analysis/strategies for specialized ICT services.

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5. Fully integrate Web 2.0 technologies to improve delivery of government services and prepare for next-generation technologies. Maximize use of technology through e-health, distance education and online learning initiatives.

## QUALITY OF PLACE

A community's attractiveness to people and to jobs is measured by its quality of place – the characteristics that make it a desirable place to live, work and play. Municipalities play an important role in promoting quality of place through the development and implementation of land use, infrastructure, economic development and sustainability planning.

### Plan of Action

1. Encourage incorporation of quality of place principles to local planning, including downtown revitalization, brownfield remediation, promotion of parks, public open spaces, trails, and cultural amenities and preservation of heritage sites.
2. Research and develop alternative infrastructure solutions for small rural communities (e.g., water and wastewater treatment).
3. Encourage the use of existing tools (e.g., Planning Act and Municipal Act provisions) to support urban and rural planning objectives of the Growth Plan.
4. Consider the distinct circumstances of northern and rural communities in the next five-year review of the Provincial Policy Statement.

# 6 Promoting Environmental Stewardship

The land and its natural resources have sustained the people of Northern Ontario for generations. Even with recent diversification into non-resource-based activities, the region's natural heritage still anchors the economy. Northerners depend on the continued health of their natural environment for employment, recreation and quality of community life. They recognize the importance of sustainable resource management to long-term economic prosperity and that the future of tourism, forestry, bioeconomy and agriculture industries depends upon the health of natural resources and ecosystems. Opportunities and challenges must be met within an evolving framework of legislation and policies based on scientifically sound research and traditional ecological knowledge.

## Climate Change

With extensive forests and immense wetlands, Ontario's North is a significant carbon sink and plays an important role in climate change mitigation. In the Far North alone, forests, tundra and peatlands store more than 97 billion tonnes of carbon and help to filter Ontario's air, absorbing 12.5 million tonnes of carbon dioxide each year.

Northern communities and their ecosystems are vulnerable to climate change. Trends observed for Northern Ontario, combined with climate change modeling, show average temperatures are rising more quickly in the North than in southern regions and will likely continue to increase in coming years.

This will alter the profile of the boreal forest and the sensitive ecology of waterways, lakes and wetlands. Temperature increases could result in new pest infestations, threats to the region's biodiversity and greater incidence of forest fires and storms. It will reduce the winter ice pack and shorten the transportation season for remote Aboriginal communities that rely

"Northern Ontario has the potential to become a North American, if not global, hub for the next economic revolution, which will be built on a zero carbon economy."

*Bill St. Arnaud, Canadian Advanced Network and Research for Industry and Education*

on temporary ice roads to import fuel, building supplies and other large goods. Major infrastructure such as ports, water treatment systems and telecommunications infrastructure, could also be affected.

Ontario's Climate Change Action Plan lays the foundation for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and adapting to climate change in Ontario. The Green Energy Act will support new energy supply and transmission directions and promote energy-efficient development – with the Ontario government taking a lead in making its own operations greener. Recent proposed changes to the Environmental Protection Act would support Ontario's ability to develop an emissions cap and trade program to reduce GHGs, joining other provincial, national and international efforts to reduce emissions. The Expert Panel on Climate Change Adaptation was created to help the government, municipalities and the public prepare for the impacts of climate change in areas such as public health, infrastructure, environment and the economy.

Developing climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies are increasingly important for industry, communities and as part of regional economic, infrastructure and transportation planning.

## **Protecting Endangered Species and Ecosystems**

Recent and proposed government legislation is improving the framework of environmental protection to preserve Ontario's valued natural environment and wildlife. The Endangered Species Act, 2007 provides a science-based approach to confirm species at risk, such as woodland caribou and polar bears, and triggers comprehensive species recovery plans and habitat protection policies. Working with the Ontario Biodiversity Strategy and other policy measures, this legislation will set the course for sustainable industry and community development in coming years.

Spectacular natural sites and sensitive ecosystems are a unique, irreplaceable part of Northern Ontario's cultural heritage. Preservation ensures these areas are enjoyed by future generations and recognizes their value in defining the region, inspiring its residents and attracting visitors from around the world.



## Land Use Planning in the Far North

Ontario's Far North represents over 40 per cent of the province's land mass and extends to the coasts of James and Hudson Bays. Proposed legislation with respect to land use planning and protection in the Far North was introduced in June 2009. If passed by the Legislature, the Far North Act would set out a process for community-based land use planning that would:

- Establish a leadership role for First Nations in the planning.
- Support protection for at least half of the Far North in an interconnected network of conservation lands.
- Allow for the sustainable development of the region's natural resources and recognize the environmental, social and economic interests of all Ontarians.

If passed, the Far North Act will require that community-based land use plans be developed by First Nations in advance of major development.

## Sustainable Resource Development

Ontario Crown forests are commercially harvested under comprehensive legislative frameworks, including the Crown Forest Sustainability Act which provides for the regulation of forest management planning, forestry operations, licensing, and public consultation. Ontario's forest industry will continue to be a leader in sustainable forest management through legislation that ensures responsible management of forest resources. Utilization of forests for an expanding range of uses (e.g., biofuel) requires careful planning to protect endangered species and forest sustainability. The White Feather Forest has become a model for locally supported planning, leading to an approach for harvesting timber that combines careful management of the forest with comprehensive involvement of and benefit to the area's Aboriginal population.

The Ontario Mining Act, in conjunction with other environmental approvals legislation, sets some of the world's highest standards for environmentally responsible exploration activity, mine development and mine closure planning and rehabilitation. The act already contains some of the world's most advanced mine closure environmental requirements that must be approved by the government in the planning stage and adhered to by a company when

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Mikro-Tek is an environmental biotechnology company in Timmins that has developed technology to increase plant survival and growth that also contributes to carbon sequestration.

it opens or expands a mine. Proposed amendments to the act, if passed, would increase environmental protection measures at the exploration stage, strengthening the act as an effective stewardship tool.

## **Protecting the Great Lakes**

Water quality and quantity, shoreline and watershed management, and climate change are critical matters for the long-term management of the Great Lakes. New multilateral water protection arrangements may place stiffer requirements on major water users and municipalities. There is growing consideration of Great Lakes shipping as a sustainable mode of freight transportation. Expansion of marine transportation would require attention to environmental issues such as invasive species, waste disposal controls, water level decline and the impact of infrastructure development on coastal ecosystems. If properly developed, it will place the North at the forefront of sustainable transportation. The Great Lakes are the largest system of freshwater on earth and Lake Superior is the largest and most pristine of these lakes. They offer great potential to draw tourists from Ontario and abroad.

## **Providing Safe Drinking Water**

Clean drinking water is one of life's basic necessities and new standards to protect water quality are in place through the Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002 and the Clean Water Act, 2006. Many northern communities are struggling to maintain infrastructure and meet monitoring requirements. As a result, many northern communities have experienced problems with their water supply, leading to disruptions and boil water advisories. New strategies and approaches to water system management and infrastructure funding for rural regions will need to be explored – including for First Nations communities under the jurisdiction of the federal government. As communities implement green energy plans over time, they will have an opportunity to explore new technologies that align with their water supply, conservation and wastewater treatment solutions.

## Transitioning to a Greener Economy

The Green Energy Act will promote and support green energy development and sustainable economic and community growth. Smart grids, renewable energy and incentives to promote energy efficiency will benefit northern communities. They will help industry and households reduce costs and minimize their carbon “footprints.” Green community strategies will support early adoption of new technologies, including local energy distribution systems for Far North communities to reduce reliance on diesel for electrical needs. Industry initiatives encourage the use of more energy-efficient technologies and processes. Other legislation and policies encourage the use of Ontario’s forest resources for such emerging green activities as bioenergy and new technologies that focus on the use of forest biomass.

Responsibility for effective environmental stewardship is shared among individuals, communities, industries and government. Moving forward on the Growth Plan will require enhanced collaboration with the federal government on areas of joint responsibility, such as fish habitat management and environmental protection.

Finding the right balance will require modern, streamlined processes based on clear, accountable principles of environmental stewardship. With a logical framework of environmental protection, a green economy focus, research and innovation, Northern Ontario can position itself as a model for sustainable development.

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“The entrepreneurial spirit that exists within Northern Ontario holds great opportunities for the development of technologies that will benefit other parts of the province and the world.”  
*Al Douglas, Ontario Centre for Climate Impacts and Adaptation Research*

## Plan of Action

1. Growth Plan development strategies undertaken by regions, communities and sectors will take into account environmental impacts and ecological values of Northern Ontario's land and natural resources to achieve a balance of social, environmental and economic objectives, consistent with legislative directions.
2. Measures to protect and preserve air and water quality, support green energy development and adapt to climate change will be included in regional economic, infrastructure and transportation planning.
3. Through the Ontario Centre for Climate Impacts and Adaptation Research, develop northern climate monitoring and research tools and adaptation strategies for use by communities and sectors to adapt to climate change.
4. Focus economic development efforts and industry support programs on encouraging the development and use of green technologies.
5. Ensure public buildings and infrastructure projects demonstrate leadership in green buildings and water and energy conservation.
6. Increase support for source water protection and drinking water quality initiatives (e.g., infrastructure for waste management, and water and wastewater treatment).
7. As part of the Open for Business initiative, ensure environmental approvals are harmonized with federal requirements and establish clear accountabilities for environmental protection.

# 7 Implementation

The Growth Plan for Northern Ontario is a long-term economic blueprint that sets out a framework to guide decision-making over the next 25 years. Over this period, there will be inevitable business cycles that will impact economic performance. These and other contributing factors will determine the fiscal capacity of governments. This Proposed Plan sets out a vision and a series of actions that are designed to strengthen the North's ability to mitigate future economic downturns. At the same time, implementation will have to be fiscally sustainable and resources will need to be used as wisely as possible, especially in today's tight fiscal environment. In fact, the only way to ensure that resources are invested effectively is to have a plan.

The strategies in this Proposed Growth Plan for Northern Ontario are complementary and interconnected with a series of short-, medium- and long-term actions. Some strategies will be implemented in the near future to lay the foundation for longer-term directions. Others will be implemented over the course of several years.

While the Growth Plan is a Government of Ontario document, implementation of the strategies will be a collective effort, involving all communities and all sectors of Northern Ontario. It will require a coordination of efforts from provincial, municipal and federal governments, Aboriginal communities and organizations, business and labour, the research and education sectors, and individuals. The roles that partners may play are described in Appendix 1.

The Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure's Ontario Growth Secretariat will work in partnership with the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry to establish a framework for implementation, which will include the roles of provincial ministries and agencies, federal departments and northern working groups.

## Capital Investment

The Provincial government is spending more than \$3 billion over the next three years on infrastructure in Northern Ontario. Federal government contributions to cost-shared programs and capital investment will bring the total to almost \$3.5 billion.

This will support ongoing major transportation projects, such as the four-laning of Highways 11 and 69, hospital projects in North Bay and Sioux Lookout, and new stimulus investments. It also includes capital funding for the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation. These investments will help advance the capital priorities of the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario.

As the Growth Plan is finalized, it will guide future infrastructure investments by the Province and will inform the development of a multi-year capital plan for Ontario.

## Policy Alignment

Implementation of this plan will require alignment of provincial policies across various ministries and agencies. Similar to efforts co-ordinating capital investment, government policies will be aligned to ensure coordinated actions and successful implementation of the Plan. The Growth Plan will serve as a blueprint for the development of future policies and decision-making for the North.

## Performance Measures and Monitoring

A set of performance indicators will be developed to measure implementation of this Plan. Performance measures will be monitored and actions and strategies will be adjusted to ensure the Plan's successful realization.

The Province will also ensure ongoing engagement occurs with the public, Aboriginal communities and stakeholders. Information will be provided on the implementation of the Plan in order to ensure informed involvement in the implementation process.

## WE WELCOME YOUR COMMENTS

Feedback on this document can be submitted to –

Proposed Growth Plan for Northern Ontario  
Ministry of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry  
159 Cedar Street, Suite 601, Sudbury, ON P3E 6A5

Fax – 1-877-465-4411

E-mail – [northerngrowthplan@ontario.ca](mailto:northerngrowthplan@ontario.ca)

You can complete an online feedback form at [www.placestogrow.ca](http://www.placestogrow.ca)

For more information please call – 1-866-479-9781

We would appreciate your feedback by February 1, 2010.



## SCHEDULE 1

# PLACES TO GROW

BETTER CHOICES. BRIGHTER FUTURE.

# Northern Ontario Growth Plan Area

Note: The information displayed on this map is not to scale.



## APPENDIX 1: Partners and Their Roles

<b>PARTNERS</b>	<b>POTENTIAL ROLES / CONTRIBUTIONS</b>
<b>Ontario Government</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working collaboratively with other partners to coordinate, facilitate and monitor implementation of the Growth Plan.</li> </ul>
<b>Federal Government</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work collaboratively on:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alignment of northern policy and investment planning with Growth Plan priorities.</li> <li>Marketing and investment attraction strategies.</li> <li>Harmonized program requirements and regulatory environments.</li> <li>Work with treaty organizations and First Nations to settle land claims and develop new fiscal mechanisms to stimulate new Aboriginal enterprises.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Aboriginal Governments / Organizations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborate with sectors and other communities to undertake regional economic, infrastructure, transportation, labour force, cultural and population planning.</li> </ul>
<b>Communities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborate with other communities, education and industry sectors in economic, infrastructure, labour force, cultural and population planning.</li> <li>Develop strategic clusters and corridors of specialized business activity.</li> </ul>
<b>Business, Industry and Associations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with government and communities to develop sectoral strategies and strategic clusters. Contribute to regional economic planning.</li> <li>Work collaboratively across sectors to identify market-relevant skills; increase apprenticeship, mentorship and internship opportunities; as well as advance research and innovation priorities.</li> </ul>
<b>Education and Research Sector</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build networks and partnerships to enhance e-learning, align programs with workforce needs and increase placements and exchanges with industry.</li> <li>Work with industry to undertake research for improving the competitiveness of northern economic sectors and strengthening northern communities.</li> <li>Support adoption of new technologies, innovations and best practices.</li> </ul>





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