

PROPOSED GROWTH PLAN FOR NORTHERN ONTARIO

October 23, 2009

Chapter 1: Context

After years of population decline, the North's population will stabilize between now and 2036. There are important shifts occurring:

- The Aboriginal youth population is growing and Aboriginal peoples will constitute about 25 per cent of the region's workforce in the next generation.
- More Northerners will live and work in urban areas.
- The international economy is experiencing rapid and far-reaching structural change driving traditional resource based industries, such as forestry and mining, to seek more value added business opportunities. This growing shift is a catalyst for the emergence of new sectors such as health, bioeconomy, and green energy.

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.

To help position the region for economic and employment growth, the Ontario government has developed a Proposed Growth Plan for Northern Ontario under the *Places to Grow Act, 2005*. The Plan is being built on the strengths of the North, and is led jointly by the ministries of Energy and Infrastructure (MEI), and Northern Development, Mines and Forestry (MNDMF).

Growth plans provide a framework for making decisions about growth that is sustainable, builds strong communities, and promotes a healthy environment within a culture of conservation. They also help guide co-ordinated government investment to support the Plan's policies.

Guiding Principles:

This 25-year Plan proposes short-, medium- and long-term policies and calls on government and diverse partners to focus their combined efforts on six key principles:

- Creating a highly productive region, with a diverse, globally competitive economy that offers a range of career opportunities for all residents.
- Developing a highly educated and skilled workforce to support an evolving knowledge-based economy and excellence in the trades.
- Partnering with Aboriginal people to achieve better health status and create greater educational and employment opportunities.
- Delivering a complete network of transportation, energy, communications, social and learning infrastructure, to support strong, vibrant communities.
- Demonstrating leadership in sustainable growth and environmental management.

Profile

Northern Ontario covers a span of 800,000 square kilometres and contains 90 per cent of the province's land mass. In 2008, the North's population was 808,448, including significant portions of Ontario's Aboriginal (40 per cent) and Francophone (26 per cent) population.

Chapter 2: Building Towards a New Economy

Over the next 25 years, the North is positioned to become a knowledge-based economy, building on its traditional strengths and expanding in areas of innovation and collaboration. Actions are directed at helping resource-based industries like forestry, mining, agriculture and tourism gradually change their areas of focus to new, value-added practices. Actions are also directed at helping to grow emerging sectors such as green energy, bioeconomy, and health care.

- **Mining:** Continued focus on new mineral reserves, green technologies, research and innovation in product development, and building globally competitive mining supply and service companies, through a modernized Mining Act that supports significant strides in Aboriginal consultation throughout the mining sequence.
- **Forestry:** Emphasis on value-added products, new markets for wood in construction, promoting the bioeconomy, advancing research and related sciences; a new forest tenure and pricing system and a coordinated approach to transforming the sector.
- **Green Energy:** Increase transmission capacity and support for development of renewable energy, build partnerships with Aboriginal and northern communities
- **Bioeconomy:**—Through the Centre for Research and Innovation in Biotechnology in Thunder Bay, develop and implement a Northern Ontario Bioeconomy Plan.
- **Agriculture and Aquaculture:** Strengthen food production, food processing infrastructure, product development to meet market demand and promote future opportunities through research.
- **Tourism and Cultural Industries:** Adopt a coordinated approach to developing new products and services that appeal to domestic and international visitors, and enhance skills and use of technology.
- **Attracting Investment and Business Growth:** Develop a Northern Investment Strategy to build businesses and markets through business supports, comprehensive market intelligence, action plans for key markets and coordinated investment attraction.

Chapter 3: Investing in People and Progress

Northern Ontario's most important resource is its people. Accessible health care and education are important building blocks for supporting an adaptive and knowledge-based economy. Actions are directed at using technology and collaborative networks to build a diverse, highly skilled pool of talent.

- **Health:** Promote health care as a career opportunity; attract health professionals; use electronic delivery and technology to enhance health care accessibility; encourage local involvement in developing health care delivery innovations.

- **Education:** Enhance use of distributive learning and encourage partnerships with local school boards, universities, colleges, Aboriginal education institutions, distance education providers and communities to increase education attainment and to lay the groundwork for careers in fields with strong growth potential in the North.
- **Research and Innovation:** Establish a Northern Research and Policy Institute to focus on research and innovation in emerging sectors such as green energy, health and education; help ideas move to market through a collaborative system of support for northern research, innovative practices and technology, and product development and testing.

Chapter 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 North's future. Actions focus on working with Aboriginal peoples to create sustainable employment through increased partnerships, capacity-building and helping to increase Aboriginal students' educational attainment levels.

- **Aboriginal Economic Development:** Partner with Aboriginal peoples to build capacity in economic development planning; create business and employment opportunities for Aboriginal enterprises and develop new approaches and mechanisms to build economic partnerships, e.g. equity-building, settlement of land claims, investments in infrastructure.
- **Aboriginal Education and Skills Development:** Increase access to education and training through institutions and e-learning, harmonized standards, increase the number of Aboriginal teachers, and develop partnerships to support successful transition of students into provincial education and training activities.

Chapter 5: Connecting and Strengthening Northern Communities

Communities play a key role in achieving a healthy, prosperous future for Northern Ontario. Connecting these communities to each other and to the world will be a critical factor for the North's long-term success. Actions are directed at improved collaboration through regional economic planning and service delivery mechanisms, supporting a comprehensive infrastructure network of transportation, energy, communications, and promoting urban revitalization and a high quality of place in the North.

- **Regional Economic Planning:** Put in place regional economic zones to help communities plan collaboratively for their economic, labour market, infrastructure, land-use, cultural and population needs.
- **Regional Service Delivery:** Examine new approaches so that communities can effectively deliver services to the North's dispersed population.
- **Transportation:** Develop and put in place an integrated transportation network that links the North's air, rail, water and road networks, destinations and systems.
- **Information and Communications Technology:** Expand and enhance Northern Ontario's broadband service, connections and technology to provide access to northerners and business supports.
- **Quality of Place:** Consider Quality of Place principles in local planning to make communities a desirable place to live, work and play.

Chapter 6: Promoting Environmental Stewardship

Northerners depend on the continued health of their natural environment for employment, recreation and quality of community life. The government is implementing many key policies to promote environment stewardship, such as Far North land use planning, Endangered Species legislation, Great Lakes Protection and a Climate Change Action Plan.

Actions are directed at establishing the region as a world leader in environmental stewardship, sustainable resource management, and climate change mitigation. Major economic sectors of the North are dependent upon the continued health of natural resources and ecosystems. Areas of focus include adapting to climate change, protecting endangered species and ecosystems, ensuring safe drinking water and transitioning to a green economy.

- In development of Growth Plan strategies, take into account environmental impacts and ecological values to achieve a balance of social, environmental and economic objectives.
- Monitor and research climate change and develop adaptation strategies to mitigate its effects on northern communities and economic sectors.
- Encourage development and use of green technologies and demonstrate leadership in green building and water and energy conservation.

Chapter 7: Implementation

The strategies of the Growth Plan 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 Province 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 Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure 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.

- A final Growth Plan will guide future infrastructure investments and inform the development of a multi-year capital plan.
- Provincial policies and decision-making for Northern Ontario will be aligned to ensure coordinated actions and successful implementation of the Plan.

- A set of performance measures will be developed to measure implementation and strategies will be adjusted to ensure the successful realization of the Plan.
- Ongoing engagement will occur with the public, Aboriginal communities and stakeholders, to ensure information is shared and northerners are participating in the implementation process.

Tell us what you think

Northerners have the opportunity to get involved and determine the future of their region through discussion at town hall meetings, videoconferences, and webinars, as well as contributing their feedback by telephone, email, an online survey or in writing. The information gathered from these activities will be used to form the final Growth Plan for Northern Ontario.

There is tremendous potential for Aboriginal peoples, especially youth, to help chart the course for a new northern economy. Aboriginal groups will be invited to participate in all public meetings, and any additional opportunities explored, in order to maximize feedback from Aboriginal leaders, communities, businesses and economic and educational groups. The planning and carrying out of these engagement activities will be based on input from Aboriginal communities and their organizations.

For a copy of the Proposed Growth Plan for Northern Ontario, or to comment on it:

- Participate in a public meeting, videoconference or webinar. Visit www.placestogrow.ca for details.
- Visit www.placestogrow.ca to download a copy of the Proposed Plan and/or register comments online
- Write to: Proposed Growth Plan for Northern Ontario
 Ministry of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry
 159 Cedar Street, Suite 601, Sudbury, ON, P3E 6A5
- Call toll-free (1-866-479-9781)
- Email northerngrowthplan@ontario.ca
- Visit the nearest office of the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry or ServiceOntario location in Northern Ontario
- Visit the Environmental Bill of Rights Registry

We would appreciate your feedback by February 1, 2010.

Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure

Amy Tang, Minister's Office, 416-327-6747

Eric Pelletier, Communications Branch, 416-325-1810 (French
media)

ontario.ca/infrastructure-news

Disponible en français