

COMMON VOICE NORTHWEST

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Response to the
**Proposed Growth Plan for
Northern Ontario**

(Executive Summary)

February 12, 2010

COMMON VOICE NORTHWEST

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

February 12, 2010

Hon Michael Gravelle
Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry

Hon Brad Duguid
Minister of Energy and Infrastructure

Gentlemen

COMMON VOICE NORTHWEST is pleased to offer you, and the Places to Grow Secretariat, the collective response of Northwestern Ontario to the Proposed Growth Plan for Northern Ontario.

We thank the Province of Ontario for choosing the North for the second Growth Plan for Ontario. Unlike previous studies and reports we understand and support the final plan being based on a legislative framework which will mean it is less likely to 'sit on the shelf.'

We strongly support the purposes of the Act as outlined on page 7 of the draft document:

- 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;
- 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;

To enable planning for growth in a manner that reflects a broad geographical perspective and is integrated across natural and municipal boundaries

To ensure that a long-term vision and long-term goals guide decision making about growth and provide for the coordination of growth policies among all levels of government.

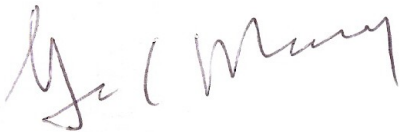
Integral in that purpose is the word 'growth', as Northern Ontario, and in particular the Northwest, has been experiencing a significant reduction in employment and population over the past five years due to the crisis in the forest industry. Growth of our economy and therefore our region is paramount as we move forward.

The Growth Plan for Northern Ontario, as drafted, has allowed the Northwest to question the future we see for ourselves and how Ontario public policy can assist in achieving those goals. In our response we have built upon the draft recommendations and have attempted to add some detail and some specific action steps to assist in the ongoing implementation of the plan.

Our response consists of two key components. The first is a high level overview of where we think the North should be heading followed by a detailed, recommendation by recommendation review of the draft along with our suggestions for changes, additions and deletions.

Once again, we thank you for the opportunity to not only respond to the draft Growth Plan for Northern Ontario, but to assist in shaping the plan that will guide our development for decades to come. We will stay engaged and keep working through partnerships to take us to our common northern goals.

Yours truly



George Macey
Chair
COMMON VOICE NORTHWEST

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ABOUT COMMON VOICE NORTHWEST

The Common Voice Northwest (CVNW) Initiative is a movement toward unified action by the citizens of Northwestern Ontario to chart their own course within the Province and the Country by addressing regional challenges with realistic Northern solutions.

Northwestern Ontario is a distinct geographic, economic and social space within Canada. The challenges it faces are different and the contributions it makes to the Province and Country are unique. The complex decisions affecting the Northwest are best understood and made by those who live here.

To be heard clearly by the other regions of the Province and Country, Northwestern Ontario must operate as a consensual union that speaks clearly on common areas interest. This Common Voice includes area business, industry, labour, municipalities, areas without municipal organization, schools, post secondary institutions, multicultural organizations and development agencies.

The role of Common Voice Northwest is to ensure that, to the best of its ability, and through co-operation with all of its partners, the people of the Northwest become more advantaged than they are today. Common Voice Northwest will identify, promote and develop economic opportunities in and for Northwestern Ontario. It will also enter into a dialogue with all residents and interest groups of the Region to determine those projects that should be undertaken as a priority. Its Board of Directors are appointed by the member organizations with their Executive Committee elected annually by the Directors. CVNW currently operates with a full time Administrator (FedNor Intern) and a volunteer Executive Director. Its funding comes from its members.

Common Voice Northwest has engaged the expertise of regional leaders within identified industries and challenged areas. These leaders have formed into Task Forces or Regional Committees to identify the issues and create action plans. They are described on the following page.

COMMON VOICE NORTHWEST LEADERSHIP

| EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE | | | EXOFICCIO MEMBERS | |
|---------------------|---------------------|---|-------------------|--------------------|
| George Macey | Chair | N.W.O. Assoc. Chambers of Commerce | Dan Brenzavich | NODN |
| Gwen Garbutt | Secretary treasurer | N.W.O. Municipal Assoc - Thunder Bay District | John Guerard | MNDMF |
| Brian Campbell | | Confederation College | Katherine Turner | FedNor |
| Gary Gamsby | | NOMA– Rainy River District | | |
| Anne Krassilowsky | | President, NOMA– Kenora District | | |
| Lynn Peterson | | NOMA - City of Thunder Bay | | |
| Marvin Pupeza | | Industrial Labour-CEP | | |
| Jim Squier | | Thunder Bay Multicultural Association | | |
| BOARD OF DIRECTORS | | | STAFF | |
| Dennis Buset | | NOACC | Iain Angus | Executive Director |
| John De Faveri | | N.W.O. Education Leaders | Hugh Mullally | Administrator |
| Melanie Kelso | | Public Sector Labour TBDLC | | |
| David Farrell | | NSWPB, alternate | | |
| Penny Lucas | | Townships Without Municipal Organization | | |
| Marg Scott | | North Superior Workplace Planning Board | | |
| Harold Wilson | | NOACC—Alternate | | |
| Cathy Woodbeck | | TBMA, alternate | | |

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Common Voice Northwest gratefully acknowledges the input provided by a number of Northwestern and Northern Organizations in the preparation of this report.

Atikokan Economic Development Corporation

City of Thunder Bay – Aboriginal Liaison Office

Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association

Northwestern Ontario Associated Chambers of Commerce

Northwestern Ontario Development Network

Northwestern Ontario Health Network

Northern Ontario Service Delivery Association

Thunder Bay Multicultural Association

Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute

The input from the above organizations ensured that the Common Voice Northwest response was as comprehensive as it is.

PROCESS & SUPPORT FOR THE PLAN

Process for Developing the Response to the Proposed Growth Plan for Northern Ontario

Common Voice Northwest challenged its Task Forces, and member organizations to examine their sections of the Proposed Growth Plan for Northern Ontario. Those Task Forces met on a number of occasions to determine their responses. In addition, other groups were invited to submit their responses to CVNW for consideration. Some of those organizations did submit their comments to CVNW.

All the comments were incorporated into a master document that mirrored the recommendations of the Draft Plan.

The Common Voice Northwest Board reviewed the entire document at a Board meeting in February. The Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association Board reviewed two separate drafts of the CVNW draft response at their Board meetings. Throughout the process as elements were changed, added or deleted the updated drafts were shared with both Boards. CVNW Board Members also shared the drafts with their members. All feedback was then incorporated into the document.

The final document is a collaborative effort of several Northwestern Ontario Organizations and over 150 people.

Support for the Plan

COMMON VOICE NORTHWEST, in its review of the Proposed Growth Plan for Northern Ontario, will, in this document offer comments and make recommendations regarding many of the items proposed in the draft document. There are recommendations on which we have not offered any comment. For the most part they are not re-printed in this document. Those that have not been included are supported by the *COMMON VOICE NORTHWEST* Board of Directors.

The one key exception are those areas directly affecting the Aboriginals of Northwestern Ontario. We have chosen not to offer our opinions on those sections as we believe it is the right and responsibility of the representatives of the Aboriginal Peoples to review and comment on those specific recommendations.

Overview and Executive Summary

Introduction

“Northwestern Ontario is a region that is unique in the Province of Ontario. It is as distinct from the other parts of Northern Ontario as it is from Southern or Eastern Ontario. The Northwest of Ontario constitutes a distinct geographic, economic and social space within Canada. The challenges it faces are as different as are its strengths. The complex decisions affecting the Northwest are best understood and made by those who live here. The strongest voice for this vast and magnificent region comes through the strength of a consensual union of common interests.”

“Northwestern Ontario has experienced an unprecedented decline in its economy, its population and its sense of empowerment. Collectively, the Northwest believes that it is being ignored by both the Provincial and Federal Governments and that if it was in charge of its own destiny things would be better. The challenge for the Northwest is to determine how best to move the economy of the region forward.”

The above two paragraphs were contained in the report *Forging the Future* ...an economic vision for Northwestern Ontario, January 16, 2007 which led to the creation of *COMMON VOICE NORTHWEST* (CVNW). Those sentiments continue to resonate across the Northwest today.

Under the umbrella of CVNW there are a number of sectoral task forces which have reviewed their sections of the Proposed Growth Plan for Northern Ontario. In areas where CVNW did not have their own task force, advice was sought from existing organizations and where available has been incorporated into our response. The CVNW Board of Directors reviewed all of the submissions it received and modified the recommendations where appropriate to ensure a balance of approach and a consistency of language.

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This document is structured into two sections; the first a general overview and summary of the key recommendations and the second the detailed, recommendation by recommendation, response from the Northwest.

THE PLACES TO GROW ACT

We strongly support the purposes of the *Places to Grow Act* as outlined on page 7 of the draft document:

- 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;
- 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;
- To enable planning for growth in a manner that reflects a broad geographical perspective and is integrated across natural and municipal boundaries;
- 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.

Key in that purpose is the word 'growth.' As Northern Ontario, and in particular the Northwest, has been experiencing a significant reduction in employment and population over the past five years primarily due to the crisis in the forest industry, growth of our economy and therefore our region is paramount as we move forward.

The Growth Plan for Northern Ontario, as drafted, has allowed the Northwest to question the future we see for ourselves and how Ontario public policy can assist in achieving our collective goals. In our response we have built upon

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the draft recommendations and have attempted to add some detail and some specific action steps to assist in the ongoing implementation of the plan.

VISION FOR NORTHERN ONTARIO

We support the Vision outlined on page 6 of the draft report. However we believe that it must be enhanced through the addition of the following statement:

Northern Ontario is a vast storehouse of forest and mineral wealth and with the economies of China, India and Brazil eventually driving resource prices up, once again Northern Ontario will be the economic engine of Ontario.

At the same time Northwestern Ontario's traditional economic pillars of transportation, natural resources and government are in the process of evolving into a new economic base that can most succinctly be described as value-added, knowledge creation, and services. The Ontario Government must support and facilitate Northwestern Ontario's transition to a value-added knowledge culture that generates high-end products and services based on the traditional resource-sector and transportation activities, as well as in the new areas of health research, education and the bioeconomy. This knowledge economy spans across all economic sectors, as the application of innovation and technology is as pertinent to traditional sectors such as retail/service, forestry, manufacturing and mining as it is to new emerging economic streams such as bio-technology, communications and waste management.

In the next decades Northwestern Ontario will drive the economy of the Province, generating the revenue to support Provincial programs and creating employment in the region. The Northern Ontario Growth Plan must be the framework that ensures that the people of the North are the prime beneficiaries of the resources that they tend on a daily basis. The

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Plan must also ensure that key decisions respecting the viability of the North are made by the people who live here and rely on those resources for their sustainability. All future changes to the Northern Ontario Growth Plan must be generated by the people who live and work in the north and they in turn must be selected by the people of the North.

Additional Visions

- The population of Northern Ontario has stabilized and modest annual growth is achieved. Every community, no matter how small or large, has reached a sustainable level with both jobs and the revenue to maintain the services that its residents require.
- Job creation and retention in Northern Ontario must be the key vision for the Northern Ontario Growth Plan, now and 25 years into the future.
- Decision making, after having been fully examined by the people of the North, regarding life and the economy of Northern Ontario, will be devolved to those who live in the North's two regions – Northwest, and North East at a pace and a degree that is defined by the people of the region.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

We support the Guiding Principles outlined on page 6 of the draft report. However we believe that it must be enhanced through the addition of the following modifications to the existing principles:

- The Aboriginal peoples must also have the opportunity to share in the wealth creation opportunities the North presents. This partnership includes a new collaborative working relationship between First Nations, Inuit and Métis

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Communities and Municipalities which will include joint decision making in matters of mutual interest.

- It is essential that any and all of the transportation, energy, communications, social and learning infrastructure networks include funding for the ongoing maintenance and enhancement of the established networks.
- Ontario is already a world leader in environmental management with regards to forestry, mining & prospecting. For clarity, government focus needs to be changed to “promoting awareness of” as opposed to “demonstrating” current world class standards to the public and consumers of Ontario’s forest products, both locally and globally.

The following are the additional Guiding Principles that *COMMON VOICE NORTHWEST* wishes to see added to the plan:

- The Northern Growth Plan will be reviewed every five years, and will be preceded by the issuance of a report card outlining both the original components of the plan and the milestones achieved.
- The plan is to be guided by the requirement to create employment in the North for the people of the North, and to maximize the benefits of the natural resources located within the North for the benefit of the people and economy of the North.
- The plan is to include real targets with measurable outcomes and related benchmarks.
- The plan must build institutional, organizational, human resources and economic capacity in Northern Ontario and for Northern Ontario.

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- The plan must make the best use of resources. This principle is timely related to the current initiative to revise Ontario's approach to forest tenure and pricing. It is imperative that this initiative contributes to Northern Ontario's forest economy moving up the value chain and not to a movement toward more lower value-added products.
- The plan must take into consideration asymmetric policy development and implementation in Northern Ontario. The distinct needs and interests of three regions within Northern Ontario need to be considered: Far North, Northwest, Northeast.

NORTHERN DECISION MAKING

Although various sections of the Proposed Growth Plan for Northern Ontario touch on the concept of Northern Decision Making, *COMMON VOICE NORTHWEST* believes there is a need for a dedicated section dealing with this important subject.

Northern Decision Making is at the heart of the growth of Northern Ontario! Without it, there will continue to be a centralization of the key decisions at Queen's Park. *COMMON VOICE NORTHWEST* is not offering a specific solution but a process that will first determine if there is support for some form of devolution of Provincial authority to the North, and then if there is support, the development of the most appropriate method or mechanism that will meet the needs of the North. The following are our specific recommendations:

- *COMMON VOICE NORTHWEST* requests that the Northern Ontario Growth Plan be amended to include a specific commitment to a process to examine new mechanisms that will allow key economic decisions to be made in Northern Ontario by northerners (not at Queen's Park) and that the Province commit itself to taking the step of devolving some of its powers and responsibilities to the North.

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- The Northern Ontario Growth Plan should outline the process to be used to achieve a consensus amongst northerners as to how such decisions are to be made in the future (the northern body), who should make them (how those individuals are chosen) and what provincial responsibilities are to be delegated to the northern body.
- It is recommended that *COMMON VOICE NORTHWEST* be identified as the organization tasked with the responsibility of steering the consultation across Northwestern Ontario and to work in concert with a similar representative body based in the North East. *COMMON VOICE NORTHWEST* would require appropriate funding from the Province to participate in this way.
- As a transition to more decision making in the North, the current Places to Grow Secretariat which is under the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure be should be split into two separate Secretariats, with one focusing on Northern Ontario, attached to the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry and be physically located in the North. Its role will be to assist in the implementation of the Grow North report recommendations. To guide the Grow North Secretariat in facilitating and monitoring the implementation of the Northern Ontario Growth Plan, a group of Northern Residents shall be nominated by key organizations based in the North. Those organizations should include NOMA, FONOM, NOACC, Workforce Planning Boards, Aboriginal Organizations, Post-Secondary Institutions, NOSDA etc.

Northern Participation

In addition, throughout the Proposed Growth Plan for Northern Ontario reference is made to consultation, advice etc. In all cases, any implementation of this plan must be by Northerners, chosen by Northerners. The implementation will have

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no credibility if it is administered from and by Queen's Park and the Government of Ontario.

NORTHERN ONTARIO PUBLIC POLICY INSTITUTE

A Key element in plotting the course of economic development in Northern Ontario is full knowledge of the issues and policies that impact the region. Currently, there is no one organization with the resources and data base to provide unbiased advice to governments and leaders either in the North, at Queen's Park or in the Federal Government.

COMMON VOICE NORTHWEST recommends that the Proposed Growth Plan for Northern Ontario be amended to include the establishment of a Northern Ontario Public Policy Institute (NOPPI) in partnership with universities, colleges, Aboriginal organizations, regional and community stakeholders to focus on Pan-Northern public policy issues. Independent from government, NOPPI will be created with a mission to analyze economic, business, and social issues and generate policy advice that can be applied to Northern Ontario's economy and society, either for the entire North or for some of its geographic or sectoral components.

The Government of Ontario, through the implementation of the Northern Ontario Growth Plan should, by regulation, create NOPPI and should provide start up funding for annual operating costs for the first five years, and provide a one time legacy contribution whose interest will sustain the ongoing operation of the Institute.

REGIONAL ECONOMIC PLANNING

We support the existing recommendations outlined on page 42 of the draft report. However we believe that it must be

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enhanced through a modification of the main recommendation. It must be recognized in the Growth Plan that Northwestern Ontario is an existing Economic Zone with a number of geographical sub-zones each sharing a commonality. Northwestern Ontario should be identified as one area for the purpose of the proposed pilot project and that sufficient investment incentives should be provided by the Ontario Government to facilitate the evolution of the Zones. Each sub-zone will develop its own strategies and will feed into the decisions to be made at the Zone level. The Governance Body 'managing' the Economic Zone must be chosen by Northerners and remain accountable to them. The proposed public policy institute for Northern Ontario will be a logical source for the northern analysis of socio-economic and environmental issues and the basis for policies and programs that significantly impact northern business, residents and communities.

We recommend that the Proposed Growth Plan for Northern Ontario be amended to clearly recognize Northwestern Ontario as a unique economic zone and that it be designated one of the pilot projects under the Plan's implementation component.

REGIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY

The Proposed Growth Plan for Northern Ontario recommends "a review of northern service delivery to enhance planning, service delivery, and administrative effectiveness in incorporated and unincorporated areas." *COMMON VOICE NORTHWEST* recommends that this Section should be removed from the Plan! If the Province is to conduct a review of how municipal services are delivered, it first should review how it delivers provincial services throughout the North. Secondly, the priority of the Growth Plan must be enhancing the economy of the North and any 'review' of Municipal services will only distract regional leadership from the real issue.

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ATTRACTING INVESTMENT AND GROWTH

In addition to the views of *COMMON VOICE NORTHWEST* in the Regional Economic Planning section, we wish to indicate that we support the recommendations contained therein. However, it is further recommended that:

- The Ministry of Economic Development & Trade (MEDT) be directed to provide access to its services and programs to Northern Municipalities, economic development officers and businesses. Further, the annual funding allocation and operational direction for the Province's GO North initiative should all be reallocated to MNDMF.

The Far North Act should not be included in the Growth Plan of Northern Ontario.

The Growth Plan was developed in response to feedback received from Northerners. In contrast, the *Far North Act* been imposed on us, not the result of consultations and recommendations coming from the North. The Growth Plan outlines supporting strategies to help business grow our economy; business investment and addressing new opportunities. This opportunity is hindered by uncertainty. The Far North Act has already been inhibiting investment, which is estimated to represent billions of new dollars to be spent in the North. The Far North Act has not been supported by the First Nations, Inuit and Métis leadership in Northern Ontario.

Lastly, the elements of the Act are regulatory in nature, and are therefore at odds with the document which is about enabling and stimulating growth. References to this Act must be removed; it should stand on its own merits during the normal course of legislative review.

RESEARCH & INNOVATION

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Research and Innovation is a key ingredient for the future economic well being of Northwestern Ontario.

CVNW recommends removing the words “and Policy” out of the Research & Innovation section and creating new language/action for the creation of a Northern Ontario Public Policy Institute as outlined previously in this submission.

Instead of the current recommendation to “Strengthen collaboration across the province” CVNW recommends the following instead:

- “Build on existing capacity in Northern Ontario and enable these existing organizations to do more and to deliver programs on behalf of the Ministry of Research and Innovation and others.
- Provide resources so that these organizations can collaborate in delivery to this vast region, by building on their strengths.”
- Instead of “linking MaRS” to the North, CVNW recommends creating a new MaRS Discovery District in Northern Ontario to maximize the potential to turn R&D ideas into business initiatives. The current cluster of health care research and development in Thunder Bay makes it the logical centre for MaRS North.
- Develop strategies that will break down the barriers and enhance the availability of public and private funds to support innovations in healthcare. This will include public and private R&D investment; venture capital investments, angel investments etc.
- Establishment of a Northern Research Chairs fund similar to the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research (AHFMR) be created in order to recruit outstanding mid-career health researchers of international calibre. The fund

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would accelerate research activity in key areas that are priorities for Northern Ontario.

- Support the development of a Northern Ontario health cluster and capture synergies that enable great innovation and business development.
- Support the health enterprise approach through the development of programs, facilities and resources that integrate learners, researchers, care providers and industry partners.
- Create a new mechanism for identifying and removing barriers to investment in Northern Ontario.

MINING

Northern Ontario is a vast storehouse of forest and mineral wealth and with the economies of China, India and Brazil eventually driving resource prices up, once again Northern Ontario will be the economic engine of Ontario. In the next decades Northwestern Ontario will drive the economy of the Province, generating the revenue to support Provincial programs and creating employment in the region.

Ontario was once positioned as the number one jurisdiction when it came to the support of mining. Ontario has now dropped to number 4 according to the most recent Conference Board of Canada report. Ontario must strive to become number one again through the effective use of public policies and taxation.

CVNW has reviewed the recommendations contained within this section and generally supports them. We have the following comments related to the existing recommendations (numbers refer to those in the Plan):

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1. There needs to be a new partnership between Northwestern Ontario and organizations in the North East (i.e. Sudbury) in order to draw on the expertise and knowledge they have developed as a mining cluster.
2. There needs to be a commitment to long term funding, and special programs to deal with the remediation and disposal of existing tailings. This will also require additional funding of research into new technologies – research that should be conducted by northern Universities and Colleges.
3. The Northwest and Northeast should have their own infrastructure planning group which would coordinate airport, rail, road, natural gas and electric distribution systems and high-tech (broadband) pipelines. This also requires First Nations, Inuit and Métis inclusion and participation.

It is essential that the Ontario Government immediately appoint an Infrastructure Coordinator or Facilitator to work with the multitude of developers of the Ring of Fire mining area north of Greenstone.

4. The plan should include a commitment to hire more environmental assessment officers for the Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry as a tool to reduce the time required to process applications.
7. Geoscience mapping must be done directly by the Province over the next five years, rather than through individual municipalities.
8. (a) A new Northwestern Ontario School of Mining needs to be established as a joint effort of Lakehead University and Confederation College and shall include key linkages to area and First Nations, Inuit and Métis and their political organizations.

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- (b) The Province, through the local workforce planning boards and the industry should conduct an inventory of present instructional, training and skills capacity in the mining sector, project the skills and numbers of employees required to meet future demand including growth and retirement, and outline a training program based at both the Community College and University level.
 - (c) The Province needs to immediately create a Human Resources team to recruit and secure miners and environmental assessment officers.
11. Ontario must commit to not establishing any new taxes on any mining property currently under staking.
 12. Ontario must facilitate a positive relationship between mining exploration companies and the First Nations, Inuit and Métis – community by community where that is appropriate and through Treaty Organizations where that is appropriate.

FORESTRY

Northerners live and work within the Boreal Forest. They know and respect the need to have a sustainable forest industry that also respects the environment within which they operate. That environment includes the watershed, the flora, fauna and wildlife but also includes the thousands of families and the communities where they live who have relied on this industry for a generation or more. A health forest means a health economy for Northern Ontario.

CVNW has reviewed the recommendations contained within this section and generally supports them. We have the following comments related to the existing recommendations:

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- 1.a. There is a requirement to establish in law, through regulations, that there will be 26 million cubic metres of available fibre on a sustainable basis for the creation of wealth in the Province of Ontario even if it is not being used because markets come and go.
- 1.b. MNDFM needs to provide clear measurables/objectives associated with the tenure and pricing review.
- 1.c. Government must implement a reduction in red tape/regulatory burden as has been requested for over 6 years.
- 1.d. The government of Ontario needs to commit to socio-economic impact assessments associated with any legislation, regulation or policy that impacts the forest sector.
2. Any Forestry Cluster Council established by this Plan must be specific to those stakeholders that have a vested interest and that are directly impacted by the outcome, and those that understand the forest industry.
3. A strong secondary sector cannot exist without a strong primary sector. The Government also needs to recognize that the value added sector does not typically provide significant employment opportunities – the majority of jobs are within the primary sector. Any objective that promotes innovation for new products should also promote innovation for existing products.
- 4.a. Government must explicitly recognize that sustainable forest management, as practiced on Crown land in Ontario and the use of wood products contribute to mitigating climate.
- 4.c. Government must be prepared to cover any incremental costs in forest practices, including renewal.

Maintain and enhance funding to the Ontario WoodWorks initiative.
- 5.a. Fund and implement a new wood promotion campaign to a similar extent as the Foodland Ontario campaign.

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- 5.b. Government must publicly recognize all three third-party, international certification systems that exist in the Canadian/Ontario context and ensure that no legislation, regulation or policy is developed that favours one standard. The Ontario government must revise the paper procurement policy that favours the Forest Stewardship Council to provide equity to all three standards.
- 5.c. As part of the Northern Ontario Growth Plan the Ontario Government must commit to a Wood First Policy, modifying the Ontario Building Code to permit and encourage the use of wood framing on buildings up to 6 stories. The Ontario Government should also create incentives to encourage the use of Ontario wood and paper products as a means to stimulate the lumber and paper industry.

Ensure that the primary and secondary/value-added forest industry have access to the fibre they need by guaranteeing a minimum of 26 million m³, even if it is not being used because markets come and go.

Ontario should maintain the policy of highest and best use of the sustainable fibre. The main processor of fibre should continue to the sawmill, with that residual going to pulp and paper and the remainder, including slash, burned and diseased fibre being allocated to the bioenergy field. Finally, as Ontario does not have the capacity to produce fine paper used for business processes every effort be taken to re-establish such an operation.

GREEN ENERGY

Energy is a vital part of Northwestern Ontario's economic past and future. Its availability dictates the nature and degree of any industrial and residential development. It is too important to be limited to one classification of energy, i.e. 'green'. It is also too important to link to an existing *Act* adopted by the Ontario Legislature, i.e. *Green Energy Act*.

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Energy Sustainability

The Section should be renamed ENERGY SUSTAINABILITY. Tying the future of Northern Ontario Energy to a Southern Ontario Energy Act is inappropriate. In addition, green energy tends to reject the damming of rivers – an existing and future opportunity for electrical generation in the Northwest.

Industrial Electricity Rate

In both the Mining and Forestry sections of the CVNW response to the Proposed Growth Plan for Northern Ontario, specific reference is made to the need for a long term 'industrial electricity price' as a key tool for economic development in the region. Without it, industry will choose to develop and operate in jurisdictions that have a more favourable electrical pricing regime. The Plan must include a provision for such a pricing structure.

Transmission Infrastructure

The Proposed Growth Plan for Northern Ontario states that “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.” *COMMON VOICE NORTHWEST* welcomes this commitment to enhancing the transmission and capacity of our electrical system in the region.

- CVNW supports and welcomes the construction of a new transmission line connecting Nipigon to the Crow River Distribution Station at Pickle Lake. It also supports the upgrading of the line from Pickle Lake to Ear Falls and from Pickle Lake to Ignace.

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- The Nipigon to Pickle Lake line should only be constructed if part of the plan includes the construction of connecting links to the communities of Whitesand First Nation, Armstrong and Gull Bay First Nation and an upgrading of the line from the vicinity of the Little Jackfish Generating Station to the Longlac TS.
- The Nipigon to Pickle Lake line should only be constructed if the Ontario Government approves the construction of the Little Jackfish Generating facility.
- Prior to constructing a second line to link the Thunder Bay – Nipigon area to Wawa to enable additional transmission capacity to southern Ontario it is essential that the improvements to the existing infrastructure in the Northwest be planned and approved.

The Northwest requires the majority of the power produced within the area to create wealth and employment in the Northwest. Steps need to be taken to ensure that the cost of electricity is affordable on a sustainable basis across the Northwest.

BIOECONOMY

In addition to the one recommendation under this section which is supported by CVNW it is our recommendation that the Atikokan and Thunder Bay Generating Stations must be converted to biomass and kept operating as they are an essential part of the electrical generating and transmission system in the Northwest.

The Proposed Growth Plan for Northern Ontario should commit to the continued operation of these Generating Stations before any forest biomass is allocated to the thermal stations in Southern Ontario. In addition, only fibre inappropriate for use in the lumber or pulp process should be utilized for biofuel purposes.

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TRANSPORTATION

Transportation is an essential element in the economic well being of Northwestern Ontario. It not only allows the movement of goods, services and people between our communities but also connects the Northwest to the rest of Ontario, the rest of Canada and to the United States and the world. Northwestern Ontario boasts two national railroads, three highway systems, a network of small and international airports and a strategically located marine port serving western Canada as well as the Great Lakes of both Canada and the United States. The Port, the largest in Ontario, directly connects Northwestern Ontario to the world.

Freight Transportation Study

- (a) It is essential that a comprehensive study of freight movement, into, out of and through Northern Ontario be conducted. This study would identify cargoes, routing, freight rates, backhaul situations, handling requirements with a view of a comprehensive understanding of the needs and wants of transportation throughout Northern Ontario. Critical will be the identification of future requirements, including the retention of existing infrastructure to support those requirements. An examination of the highest and best use of modes based on geography, environment, distance etc. should be incorporated into the document.

Modern Technologies

- (c) The Province must invest in current, well-tested technologies that improve the capacity, efficiency and safety of existing transportation infrastructure.

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Transportation Modes

Marine

- 1.(c) The Province needs to recognize the work being done by the Province of Manitoba in the Centre Port Development at the Winnipeg International Airport and provide the funding to the Thunder Bay Port Authority to enhance their ability to provide the eastern access to Centre Port.
- 2.(c) The Province needs to fund a separate study into the incorporation of water borne containers to be transferred by the Thunder Bay Port Authority to CN, CP or to trucks for trans-shipment to the west. Conversely containers originating in Asia or western Canada could be transferred to ship at Thunder Bay.
- 3.(c) The Plan must recognize the value of the Thunder Bay Port Authority facilities as they relate to the economic future of the region.
- 4.(c) There are immediate opportunities in project cargo and high value break bulk marine cargo that could lead to the establishment of a liner service to Thunder Bay. This would provide direct access to European markets for the region. Northern Ontario Growth Plan should endorse and support the work of the Thunder Bay Port Authority as they pursue these opportunities.

Airports

1. As a number of studies have indicated, Northern Airports (i.e. those located throughout Northern Ontario) are essential to the communities and areas they serve. Municipal Airports have been in decline since the

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cancellation of the Ontario Government owned Nor-Ont Air, a subsidized air service to the smaller communities.

- 1.(d) In order to enhance the economic future of many of these communities, ongoing operating subsidies are required for each of these airports in order that they can maintain a basic service level.

Rail

In the past five years two rail lines in Northern Ontario are under threat of discontinuance of service and removal. The Kinghorn Rail line, which connected Thunder Bay to Longlac, has been removed. In Sault Ste Marie the rail line connecting to Sudbury received a one year reprieve with funding from the Ontario Government. Both lines are essential to the economy of their respective regions. On the horizon, is the loss of the CN line from Rainy River to Thunder Bay. This line is heavily dependent on the movement of coal to Atikokan and Thunder Bay.

- 2.(d) The Ontario Government, as part of the Northern Ontario Growth Plan must immediately facilitate the purchase of the Kinghorn Rail Line, and work with CN to find alternative cargo to maintain the Rainy River to Thunder Bay line.
- 3.(d) There is a need to re-establish container service by rail to Thunder Bay and the Northern Ontario Growth Plan should commit to providing the funding to do the necessary market research and to facilitate the return of this service.

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Trucking/Road

- 4.(d) The current shortages of long haul drivers in the Northwest, the tendency of existing drivers to want to be home every night and the new hours of work legislation has forced a change in the shift schedules of many firms. It appears that Dryden has become the shift centre in the Thunder Bay to Winnipeg Route and should be recognized as such by the Government of Ontario. In addition, truck traffic from Toronto necessitates key shift change stopping areas east of Thunder Bay on both Highway 11 and Highway 17 as well. Funding for enhancement of local facilities should be made available to both the Municipality and the private sector operators to accomplish this.
- 5.(c) In the aviation sector, investment in GPS technology will improve the reliability of air corridors representing the only transportation link between remote northern communities and the rest of the world.
- 6.(c) Increased use of remote weather information stations (RWIS) and in-pavement sensors will improve highway safety and reliability vital to the transportation of people and goods by road throughout the north. In-pavement sensors are an example of technology that improves infrastructure capacity while reducing operating costs.

All Weather Roads

- (e) The Province needs to commit to a ten year plan of annual funding to assist the First Nations Communities plan for the construction of new all weather roads and to provide the capital funds necessary for the actual construction.
- (f) There is a clear need for provincially operated - open year round- rest stops throughout the hundreds of miles of forest that tourists and commercial travelers must travel as they move across Northern Ontario.

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Intercity Passenger Service

- (g) The Province of Ontario, through the Northern Ontario Growth Plan must commit to using the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission as the key tool to ensure inter-community passenger transportation amongst the communities of Northwestern and Northeastern Ontario.
- (h) It is recommended that the development of public transportation solutions for persons with low income, seniors and persons with disabilities living in rural and remote regions of Northern Ontario be considered under the Northern Ontario Growth plan, as a means of community capacity building, improving access to employment, as well as providing necessary *aging at home* supports and relieving alternative levels of care pressures on hospital beds.

Natural Gas

The Northern Ontario Growth Plan should include a commitment by the Ontario Government to assist and facilitate the exploration of the far north for natural gas and the long term planning for a co-ordinated utility corridor that will enable new pipelines, along with electrical transmission lines, all weather roads and where appropriate rail line development.

Tourism

While *COMMON VOICE NORTHWEST* understands the rationale for the decision to create a pan-Northern Regional Tourism Organization (RTO) with three sub-regions, it also recognizes that Sunset Country, James Bay Frontier and NOSTA (the NORTAs) continue to have a viable role to play. They know their members and they know their members' markets and should continue to be a source of knowledge to the new RTO. They should also be a mechanism that

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selects the representatives from their respective areas to the new Board.

COMMON VOICE NORTHWEST requests that the roles and responsibilities of the NORTAs be expanded and funding be increased to enable them to serve as leaders for tourism in Northwestern Ontario, more adequately addressing the issues that have been repeatedly identified by stakeholders as barriers to success in tourism.

2. The partnerships must recognize that Northwestern Ontario small municipalities are struggling to pay their existing bills let alone partner with other orders of government even with the potential return. Any partnership program developed should be done without a municipal financial contribution.
 - a) The design of such products should recognize the vast distances within Northern Ontario, the reality that only the large communities have the air service to accommodate such ventures and design programs that ensure that the smaller communities are part of the package offered.
 - 2.b) The Ontario Government should fund a Tourism Research Chair at Lakehead University under the Faculty of Outdoor Recreation, Parks and Tourism with a focus on Northwestern Ontario Tourism Markets and opportunities with an advisory board consisting of representatives of Sunset Country and NOSTA to guide the work of the Department.

The proposed Public Policy Research Institute currently being developed under the auspices of *COMMON VOICE NORTHWEST* should also receive annual funding for specific tourism research projects.

- c) *COMMON VOICE NORTHWEST* endorses the recommendation contained in the Rosehart Report, *Northwestern Ontario: Preparing for Change* that a three-year pilot program be established to support the use of web based technology to market tourism but that this program be offered to other tourism stakeholders who may need it including those who operate small tourism businesses.

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3. Creation of a long range product plan for Northwestern Ontario is viewed by tourism stakeholders as ultimately being more effective than the recommendation in the Rosehart Report that a contest be staged to determine what type of new attraction should be developed in Northwestern Ontario. However, stakeholders do feel that existing attractions can and should be strengthened in the meantime. Fort William Historical Park, for example, is a key element of Northwestern Ontario tourism. In spite of this, the attraction has not seen a major enhancement since it was constructed in the 1970s and the struggle for adequate operating dollars is ongoing.

Stakeholders believe that there should be a government program in place to begin to develop at least one new major attraction each year or to enhance existing attractions, with a long term plan to ensure every major tourist community in Northwestern Ontario ultimately has a major attraction. In addition the funding should include operating dollars as revenue from admissions and other sales will not likely pay for the annual operating costs. These attractions should be viewed as tourism generators rather than revenue generators.

COMMON VOICE NORTHWEST recommends that the following be added to this recommendation:

That funding under the Northern Development Fund be put in place to either develop or enhance one or more Northern Ontario public or private sector attractions annually. After the creation of the Northwestern Ontario Product Development Plan development priorities need to reflect the recommendations of the Plan. Support needs to include the provision of assistance in preparing funding submissions and for the preparation of feasibility studies and business plans.

COMMON VOICE NORTHWEST also recommends that an annual operating grant program be introduced to assist smaller communities in operating and maintaining their existing and/or new attractions.

Fort William Historical Park needs to have a family story written around it, converted to a 10-20 week series, translated into a number of Asian languages as well as those of the Nordic Countries, France & Germany and syndicated to them as was the Anne of Green Gables story. Create a culture of interest in those foreign countries, then market specialty charter tours to coincide with key Fort William events (Rendezvous etc.).

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COMMON VOICE NORTHWEST recommends that the following recommendation be added to the Plan:

Create a special northern film/video grant to enable the production and serialization of Northern Ontario based dramas designed for foreign television markets.

5. Specific funding must be provided under the Grow North Plan to finance these studies as the existing municipal tax base in Northwestern Ontario is unable to keep up with existing demands let alone new planning.

With respect to tourism infrastructure, stakeholders noted that snowmobile trails, if properly developed and groomed, offer an opportunity to expand off-season tourism.

COMMON VOICE NORTHWEST requests that an adequate level of funding be provided to develop and groom snowmobile trails in Northwestern Ontario.

Tourism operators in particular have pointed to the need for government to once again provide low interest loans or other incentives to help them to upgrade. *COMMON VOICE NORTHWEST* requests that a Northern Development Fund be established to provide low interest/interest deferred loans to tourism stakeholders and that providing tax credits also be considered.

Agriculture

Although relatively low on the radar of public policy and the economy of Northwestern Ontario, agriculture performs a vital role in a number of communities. Common Voice Northwest offers the following comments and recommendations:

1. Freshwater aquaculture must only be conducted in closed systems as was done with Snow Lake Fish Farm in Atikokan. Creating caged aquaculture facilities in 'open' water may lead to the destruction of other species due to the dissemination of disease into the wild stock.
2. The plan needs to recommend the creation of a new farm start up or expansion funding program including low interest loans and grants.

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3. Regardless of the success of 'Buy Local' food campaigns, certain communities at present cannot viably sustain themselves with current food production capacity and diversity, on top of rising transportation costs. These communities need support to expand the offering of local foods being grown, produced and consumed.

5.a) The Grow North plan must contain a commitment, with a time line to create a skilled farm labour co-op program for the Northwest.

b) Research and Innovation Centre for Northern Agriculture

We recommend the establishment of a research and innovation office for northern agriculture to assist in regional planning, pilot projects for new agricultural opportunities, and a local hub for research in the agricultural sector.

Access to Broadband for Agricultural E-Commerce

c) At present communities in the heart of the agricultural region are limited to dial-up and 'party-line' internet access. This severely cripples any exploration and revenue generation from e-commerce.

Remote communities in the North have suffered from being overlooked when agriculture dollars have been allocated. We recommend that regions be allocated their proper funds to be spent in their locality. Communications about government funding programs for agriculture have also fell short. There needs to be better campaigns to notify farmers and other stakeholders in the agricultural sector about funds and programs available to them.

Urban Aboriginal Support

With a growing urban Aboriginal population in a number of the communities of Northwestern Ontario, the Northern Ontario Growth Plan needs to not only recognize this phenomenon but also the Plan needs to have a specific section that addresses the needs of the Urban Aboriginal communities. This plan should include the following strategies:

- Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs needs to have an office established in the Northwest.

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- Provide assistance to Aboriginal people when they have migrated to urban centres (for example: Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs can partner with the municipal government and Aboriginal community to establish "welcoming centres" that help Aboriginal people settle into an urban centre more quickly).
- Assist First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities to find better housing solutions for students that need to leave their communities for high school completion (these rates are amongst the lowest for First Nations students).
- Assist municipal governments and community partners in the creation of Aboriginal youth spaces or centres which help students feel more connected to the community.
- Assist with the creation of more daycare spots that will allow women to complete education or enter into the workforce.
- Develop/communicate funding and program initiatives that promote self-employment.
- Encourage all ministries to participate on the Thunder Bay Urban Aboriginal Advisory Committee (and other similar committees in other communities) and the initiatives these committees have developed to address the needs of the Urban Aboriginal community.
- Develop communication strategies for the broader community that speaks to the need and benefits of encouraging Aboriginal people in all aspects of life - education, employment, recreation, sport, etc.

ABORIGINAL EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

The Northern Ontario Growth Plan must emphasize the need for the education system to be flexible enough to enable First Nations Communities and School Boards to work with Ontario Boards of Education in order to maximize the learning opportunities for their students.

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IMMIGRATION

Northern Ontario has a shortage of skilled labour that needs to be filled in the short term. This gap cannot be fully satisfied solely by Aboriginal workers or by employees that have been laid off from other industries being retrained, the time frame is immediate. The growing skills gap is creating a shortage of labour for business and industry who are becoming more dependent on the arrival of skilled immigrants and professionals as well as business development and investment. Business succession planning is difficult for those who would like to retire but cannot because they find it difficult to sell their businesses or replace themselves as employees. Our region is increasingly dependent on immigration for population growth, tax base growth and labour.

Developing strategies to attract skilled and professional immigrants to the region and to retain them in our communities is critical to our economic success. The larger centres of the north have been working together through the settlement agencies and economic development departments to establish immigration growth strategies. Immigration Partnerships and community immigration portals have brought communities together to discuss the issue and to plan for the future. Building welcoming communities, fostering acceptance and becoming more aware of the benefits of immigration are all steps along the path to a successful immigration attraction and retention strategy. There are agencies in NWO that are currently providing the services that newcomers need upon arrival through both federal and provincial funding programs. There is a need to promote, coordinate and support the services that assist immigrants as well as a need to train and educate employers and the community on how to welcome newcomers effectively. Directors of the agencies in Thunder Bay, North Bay, Sudbury and Kenora and interested managers of related departments in Sault Ste. Marie have formed a cooperative working group called Settlement North and have been working together on issues of attraction and retention.

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A vision of growth for the North must include a strategy for the attraction and retention of immigrants and a commitment to support them with the services they need as they settle into Northern communities.

HEALTH

COMMON VOICE NORTHWEST recommends that the following change be made to the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario (wording changes shown underlined):

1. Support compensation models to attract professionals to deliver services to populations who face accessibility barriers, including remote, Aboriginal and Francophone communities (e.g. Ontario Underserved Area Program, Health Career Promotion Program, to train French speaking professionals – Carrieres en santé).
5. Strengthen the applications and expand the utilization of the North's broadband infrastructure network and prioritize investments in systems that reduce travel needs for care (e.g. Telemedicine, e-Prescribing).
6. Support the development of resources that provide improved access to integrated medical information by both providers and patients, and identify more tele-home care applications.

In addition *COMMON VOICE NORTHWEST* makes the following observations:

2. The compensation model for Hospital Physician assistants needs to be increased so that there is less of a requirement for funding from the hospitals (Currently 50% of costs for PA's paid by hospitals).
The Satellite B.ScN program has been a success and should continue to be improved and expanded.
3. We support the expansion of training and recruitment of specialist (Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, etc), and the encouragement of youth to pursue careers in health research and life sciences through participation in outreach activities, mentoring and training programs.
4. Mentioning some stake holders and not others seems to suggest exclusivity and overlooks other service providers

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(i.e. municipalities, research centres addressing particular illnesses such as diabetes, substance abuse, providers of EMS, support housing, inter-ministerial services). A broader grouping of partners and less exclusive terms is recommended.

Furthermore, relations among groups can be strengthened to facilitate employment opportunities (i.e. Combining P/T opportunities for nurses in industry and in hospitals to create a F/T position).

COMMON VOICE NORTHWEST suggests that it is unrealistic to suggest or presume that Tele-Health will replace the need for emergency transport.

***COMMON VOICE NORTHWEST* recommends that the following be added to the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario:**

7. Sales and Commercialization

More support is needed for the final stages of the commercialization process – the “go to market” strategies. From Northern Ontario, successfully launching an innovation into the broader marketplace is a challenge. There currently are no available financial support mechanisms to assist with this crucial step. Private sector investors will often not participate until the initial response from the market is received. Government programs to support innovation must be flexible and responsive. These programs must recognize that they are supporting talent and people. This talent is not only at the research level but also at the entrepreneurial level. Programs must be flexible enough to get behind a management team that can make commercialization a reality. The bureaucracy of these programs should be able to provide an indication of funding within 60 days of a completed application.

8. Health Promotion

The Plan must include provisions for the development of preventative measures for improving health in the North. Key northern stakeholders need to be consulted in order to develop a comprehensive plan.

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9. Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) Mandate

The Plan should include a regular public review of the mandate and effectiveness of the LHINs.

Appointments to the Board should be made by residents of Northwestern Ontario through their existing leadership organizations.

10. Non-Urgent Medical Transfers

Non-urgent Medical transfer issue needs to be addressed and resolved for the areas outside of the City of Thunder Bay and across all three Districts. This includes the development of appropriate regulations to govern the supply of this service. This also requires that this not be added to the existing EMS mandate.

EDUCATION

It goes without saying that Education is the future of Northwestern Ontario. It will create the next generation of leaders and doers who will manage the economy of the region for the next half century. It is also a key barrier that must be overcome if the Aboriginal population in the Northwest is able to take their rightful place in society.

1.b) Aboriginal and Francophone issues should be separated as they are of such significant import they should be depicted as stand alone issues;

Francophone incentives and supports need to be implemented to remove barriers to training and to address the lower levels of education and literacy among older Francophone workers.

4. Improve achievement among First Nations, Inuit and Métis students and close the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in the areas of literacy and numeracy, retention of students in school, graduation rates and advancement to post-secondary studies.

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- a) Actively involve stakeholders in aligning education, training and employment strategies within a changing social, economic and employment landscape.
- b) Invest in providing local labour market information necessary to profile and project skill/occupational gaps, resulting in improved data to help inform post-secondary institutions in developing program offerings; job seekers and service providers with more local intelligence as to skill and occupational demands; and economic developers with information that contributes to business retention and attraction. Further, that Ontario programs be customized to support individuals in/skill training that can also then be supported through programs such as the self-employment program, to start new businesses.
- c) Provide literacy and essential skills programs and services, learning disability testing centres at the local level and funded at appropriate levels.

COMMON VOICE NORTHWEST recommends that the following be added to the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario:

6. Northwest Human Capital and Equity

The Northern Ontario Growth Plan must recognize the incredible human resource available in the Northwest from the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Communities and the Urban Aboriginal Population. This growing group is an important part of the future of the Northwest. Regardless of Federal – Provincial jurisdiction it must be recognized that Aboriginals are afforded the same education opportunities as the rest of the Province, regardless of where they live. Equity of service, where special circumstances and needs are a fundamental part of the service delivery mechanism are crucial if this population group is to take their place in modern society.

Equity in the Northern Ontario context does not mean equal. Differing circumstances – geographical, distance, isolation versus urban, socio-economic factors, all dictate a need to develop local solutions, that while the same outcome is desired, the manner of achieving that will vary from location to location.

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7. Greater Commitment to Northern Post-Secondary Education

Barriers to training and education keep people from the training, education and ultimately, the jobs they need. There are skills and trade shortages across the North, particularly in the human services, that could be trained and kept employed locally (e.g. culturally appropriate Early Childhood Educators or Personal Support Workers to address the needs of an aging population). Municipal Service Managers could facilitate the development of local qualified trainers to assist in skills training or upgrading, and could facilitate linkages between clients, educational facilities and employers to provide clients with valuable employment experience. Planning for the unemployed whether or not they are on social assistance should be undertaken in an inclusive, coordinated and proactive way. This planning should systemically include Municipal Service Managers, along with Employment Ontario and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities across the North, to ensure effectiveness and efficiency.

Further, there needs to be a greater commitment to investment in Northern post-secondary education. This investment must include research centres (university and college-based) to foster the development of Northern Ontario innovation that will grow a new economy and new jobs for the North. This could support innovation in the traditional sectors but the strategy should not preclude new development in emerging sectors such as information technology, green technologies etc.

Social Services and Housing

The Grow North Draft Plan is devoid of any meaningful comment about the social safety net required in the Northwest. *COMMON VOICE NORTHWEST* offers the following comments and recommendations as authored by the Northern Ontario Service Delivery Association (NOSDA).

COMMON VOICE NORTHWEST recommends that the following be added to the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario:

- The Northern Growth Plan (NGP) must be applied in an integrated manner across the North to take advantage of

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instances of natural growth and ensure that social and economic infrastructure is significantly strengthened over time. The integrated implementation of the NGP would be well-guided by representative stakeholder leadership from all urban, suburban and rural geographies; the private and public sectors, First Nations, Inuit and Métis leaders, as well as sectoral leadership.

- Social housing is recognised as infrastructure. NOSDA member organizations are responsible for social housing in their respective catchment areas. Further, as identified in the *Places to Grow* legislation, upper and single tier municipalities need to develop housing strategies. That speaks directly to municipal service managers. Social Housing as infrastructure is discussed in detail in another recent NOSDA paper entitled *Improving the Housing System in Northern Ontario (2009)*.

In boom areas, there is a lack of affordable housing and in de-populating areas there is a modest surplus. However, it was recognized by a number of DSSAB's that there is an underinvestment in social housing in Northern Rural Ontario, and that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, as well as the Federal Government need to restore funding to affordable housing. The local property tax base cannot sustain the significant increases in costs, especially once mortgages and debentures are paid off, given that Northern Ontario has been under the very difficult economic times for a much longer period than the rest of the province. It was also recognized that there is a lack of affordable housing and no private sector involvement in social housing development in many areas of Northern Ontario, and this is a significant need.

- Social Services infrastructure must be better identified and further integrated into the NGP. Social service infrastructure provides a base upon which the people of Northern Ontario can rely in difficult times of cyclical economic downturn, and provides a means by which the people of Northern Ontario can integrate or re-integrate into the labour force.

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Environmental Stewardship

Northerners live and work within the Boreal Forest. They know and respect the need to have a sustainable forest industry that also respects the environment within which they operate. That environment includes the watershed, the flora, fauna and wildlife but also includes the thousands of families and the communities where they live who have relied on this industry for a generation or more. A healthy forest means a healthy economy for Northern Ontario.

COMMON VOICE NORTHWEST supports Statement number 4 in this section but recommends the following considerations:

4. In the past decade or more the Pulp and Paper industry in Northern Ontario has invested significant funds in their operations to reduce their requirements for externally produced electricity. They have maximized their ability to create green energy, yet are expected to invest more millions without a realistic expectation of a return on their investment. The Proposed Growth Plan for Northern Ontario must include provisions to ensure that any such 'support programs' re-establish a competitive environment for the industry.
5. The Proposed Growth Plan for Northern Ontario must include a recommendation that the Ontario Government provide funding to municipalities and other northern public organizations (i.e. Conservation Authorities) to enable them to afford to construct green buildings and other energy efficient projects.

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Priorities

Common Voice Northwest recognizes that the implementation of the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario must be staged. In order to assist the Government in identifying the priorities of Northerners we offer the following priority recommendations:

Short Term Implementation (2010):

- Establish the Northern Ontario Public Policy Institute.
- Establish the Northern Grow North Plan Secretariat as outlined in this document.
- Work with Common Voice Northwest on a process that will examine whether provincial decision making regarding life and the economy of Northern Ontario, will be devolved to those who live in the North's two regions – Northwest, and North East - at a pace and a degree that is defined by the people of the region.
- Provide the funding for the next steps.

Short Term Implementation (2011-2013)

In general the plan and government energies should focus on policy that will:

- Retain and generate long term, sustainable jobs for Northwestern Ontario (forestry, mining, transportation, telecommunications and energy).
- Foster Regional economic development (including designating Northwestern Ontario as a pilot region).
- Attractive investment and growth.
- Institute an Urban aboriginal support system.
- Attract immigrants to Northwestern Ontario.

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Prioritization Process

The Draft Grow North Plan contains an extensive list of policy areas. CVNW and others have suggested additional areas that the plan needs to address. The release of the next version of the Plan will be reviewed with great interest by the residents and leaders of Northern Ontario. Built into that next Plan must be a process that will enable the leadership of the region to assist in determining the priorities as the plan is implemented. Common Voice Northwest is well positioned to not only represent the collective view of the Northwest but also to seek out guidance from leadership groups across the entire region. To this end, Common Voice Northwest, is willing to work with the Government through the Grow North Secretariat to fulfill this important function. We already have pan-Northwestern Ontario representation chosen by the leadership groups we represent.

It is also important to note that the proposed Northern Ontario Public Policy Institute will be a key asset in assisting the determination of priorities and to conduct the necessary public policy research to provide certainty and clearer direction as we move the plan forward.

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COMMON VOICE NORTHWEST is pleased to submit to the Places to Grow Secretariat, the collective response of Northwestern Ontario to the Proposed Growth Plan for Northern Ontario. After months of review by seven of our own Task Forces, four pan-Northwestern organizations and a number of other entities, along with our own Board of Directors, Common Voice Northwest is pleased to provide a 151 page response to the proposed Growth Plan for Northern Ontario. Northern Ontario will be the economic engine of Ontario once again and that while traditional economic pillars of transportation, natural resources and government are in the process of evolving into a new economic base that can most succinctly be described as value-added, knowledge creation, and services, the Ontario Government must support and facilitate Northwestern Ontario's transition to a value-added knowledge culture that generates high-end products and services based on the traditional resource-sector and transportation activities, as well as in the new areas of health research, education and the bio-economy.

Key amongst Common Voice Northwest's recommendations is a call for the creation of a Public Policy Institute for Northern Ontario (NOPPI). The Institute would be developed in partnership with universities, colleges, Aboriginal organizations, regional and community stakeholders and would focus on Pan-Northern public policy issues. Independent from government, NOPPI will be created with a mission to analyze economic, business, and social issues and generate policy advice that can be applied to Northern Ontario's economy and society, either for the entire North or for some of its geographic or sectoral components. It is essential that NOPPI gets off the ground first as it will provide all leaders with the public policy advice essential for making the Grow North Plan work for us.

We also recommend that the current Places to Grow Secretariat which is under the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure be split into two separate Secretariats with one focusing on Northern Ontario, attached to the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry and be physically located in the North. Its role will be to assist in the implementation of the Grow North report recommendations. To guide the Grow North Secretariat in facilitating and monitoring the implementation of the Northern Ontario Growth Plan, Common Voice Northwest wants a group of Northern Residents to

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be nominated by key organizations based in the North. Those organizations should include NOMA, NOACC, FONOM, North Eastern Chambers of Commerce, Workforce Planning Boards, Aboriginal Organizations, Post Secondary Institutions, NOSDA, etc.

We want the Province to work with Common Voice Northwest on a process that will examine whether provincial decision making regarding life and the economy of Northern Ontario, will be devolved to those who live in the North's two regions – Northwest, and North East - at a pace and a degree that is defined by the people of the region. Just so we are clear, we are not definitively saying that we want the decision making transferred to us, but we want to have that discussion amongst the people of the North so that we can put forward a common position to the Government.

Common Voice Northwest also wants Northwestern Ontario designated as one of the Economic Zones proposed in the Growth Plan and “that sufficient investment incentives should be provided by the Ontario Government to facilitate the evolution of the Zones”. The Governance Body ‘managing’ the Economic Zone must be chosen by Northerners and remain accountable to them.

This document covers a range of topics and offers a total of 148 comments and/or recommendations to your government.

The final document is a collaborative effort of a broad range of individuals and organizations from across the Northwest. Common Voice Northwest challenged its Task Forces, and member organizations to examine their sections of the Proposed Growth Plan for Northern Ontario. Those Task Forces met on a number of occasions to determine their responses. In addition, other groups were invited to submit their responses to CVNW for consideration. Well over 150 people representing at least 16 distinct Northwestern Ontario based organizations provided feedback and input.

Task Force Membership

Mining Task Force: Providing policy advice to foster development and sustainability in the region's mining sector.

| | |
|------------------------|----------------|
| Harry Kelly (Chair) | Greenstone EDC |
| Rick Dumas | Marathon |
| Alvin Fiddler | NAN |
| George Macey | NOACC |
| Ian McCormack | Wardrop |
| Garry McKinnon | Atikokan EDC |
| Bob Middleton , P. Eng | |
| Michael Power | Greenstone |
| Eric Rutherford | Greenstone |
| Daryl Skworchinski | Marathon EDC |
| Roger Souckey | |

Transportation Task Force: Focus on the access and modes needed for a growing economy.

| | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Harry Kelly (Chair) | Greenstone EDC |
| Gerry Bouchard | MNDMF |
| Herb Daniher | USW |
| George Friesen | |
| Anne Krassilowsky | NOMA– Kenora District |
| Mel Parker | Port Authority |
| Jim Pretchuk | Fast Frate |
| Eric Rutherford | OGRA |

Task Force Membership

Energy Task Force: Examining the viability of developing a regional energy authority.

| | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Iain Angus (Co-Chair) | NOMA |
| Larry Hebert (Co-Chair) | CTB |
| Rod Bosch | |
| Dennis Brown | Atikokan Hydro |
| Dan Brenzavich | NODN |
| Alvin Fiddler | NAN |
| Dave Harris | Township of Dorion |
| Gary Human | Atikokan EDO |
| Paul Inksetter | TBCEDC |
| Mike Lewis | Atikokan EDO |
| Rob Mace | Thunder Bay Hydro |
| Mikael Mantyla | Atikokan EDO |
| Ian McCormack | Wardrop |
| Garry McKinnon | Atikokan EDO |
| Michael McLeod | Energy Consultant |
| Vic Prokopchuk | Atikokan EDO |
| Angela Sharbot | Atikokan EDO |
| Gary Shepanick | Power Workers Union |
| Wilf Thorburn | Atikokan Hydro |
| Jim Vezina | Township of O'Connor |

Task Force Membership

Regional Enhancement Committee: Provides region wide leadership for community and labour adjustment.

| | |
|--------------------------|-------------|
| Marg Scott (Co-Chair) | NSWPB |
| Marvin Pupeza (Co-Chair) | CEP |
| Iain Angus | CVNW |
| Lisa Belanger | AAC |
| Dan Brenzavich | NODN |
| Jason Card | USW/LDIACAC |
| Fay Clark | AAC |
| Chantal Croft | DAC |
| David Durance | DDC |
| Steven Dufour | DAC |
| Dave Farrell | NSWPB |
| Donna Korytko | WAC |
| George Macey | CVNW, NOACC |
| Don McArthur | SAC |
| Glen Morrison | KAC |
| Angela Sharbot | AAC |
| Debbie Skworchinski | MAC |
| Danielle Thompson | Nipigon LAC |
| Katherine Turner | FedNor |
| Jim Turner | GAC |
| Anne Marie Wesolowski | LNW |
| Harold Wilson | TBCC |
| Terry Walker | MTCU |

Task Force Membership

Policy Research Institute: Would serve as an arm's length source of policy advice to regional leaders and a repository of knowledge and data on the region.

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|--------------------|----------------------|
| Marg Scott (Chair) | NSWPB |
| Iain Angus | CVNW |
| Steve Demmings | TBCEDC |
| Dave Farrell | NSWBP |
| George Macey | NOACC |
| Royden Potvin | Thunder Bay Ventures |
| Frank Pullia | TBCEDC |
| Katherine Turner | FedNor |
| Dr. Rui Wang | LU |
| Margaret Wanlin | Thunder Bay Ventures |

Agriculture Task Force: Provides region wide leadership for the development of our agricultural industry.

| | |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|
| Kim Jo Bliss | LFFLP |
| George Emes | RRFDC |
| Mel Fisher | City of Dryden |
| Rick Nielson | RRFA, Chapple |
| April Szpara | RRCA |
| Dick Trivers | RRSCIA |
| Linda Turk | Ontario Federation of Agriculture |

Task Force Membership

Tourism Northwest: Developing and fostering a Northwestern Ontario tourism strategy which addresses key issues,

| | |
|----------------------|-------------|
| Gerry Cariou (chair) | OSCTA |
| Todd Eastman | NOTO |
| Bruce Fallen | NOSTA |
| Steve Hartle | PRTC |
| Tara Ingram | NONTA |
| Mike Loewen | PRTC |
| Harald Lohn | KDCA |
| Tim Lukinuk | CVNW, NOSTA |
| Paul Pepe | TTB |
| Doug Reynolds | NOTO |

Acronyms Found in this Document

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|--|--|---|
| Atikokan Adjustment Centre (AAC) | Marathon Action Centre (MAC) | Ontario Good Roads Association (OGRA) |
| Atikokan Economic Development Office (AEDO) | Ministry of Training, Colleges & Universities (MCTU) | Patricia Region Tourism Council (PRTC) |
| Common Voice Northwest (CVNW) | Nature and Outdoor Tourism Ontario (NOTO) | Rainy River Cattlemen's Association (RRCA) |
| Confederation College (CC) | Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) | Rainy River Future Development Corporation (RRFDC) |
| City of Thunder Bay (CBT) | Northern Growth Plan (NGP) | Rainy River Federation of Agriculture (RRFA) |
| Communication, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada (CEP) | North of Superior Tourism Association (NOSTA) | Rainy River Soil and Crop Improvement Association (RRSCIA) |
| District Social Services Administration Board (DSSAB) | North Superior Workforce Planning Boards (NSWPB) | Schreiber Action Centre (SAC) |
| Dryden Development Corporation (DDC) | Northern Ontario Public Policy Institute (NOPPI) | Thunder Bay and District Labour Council (TBDCL) |
| Dubreuville Adjustment Centre (DAC) | Northern Ontario Association of Chambers of Commerce (NOACC) | Thunder Bay Multicultural Association (TBMA) |
| Economic Development Corporation (EDC) | | |
| Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities (FONOM) | Northern Ontario Development Network (NODN) | Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce (TBCC) |
| Greenstone Action Centre (GAC) | Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Commission (NOHFC) | Thunder Bay Community Economic Development Corporation (TBCEDC) |
| Kenora District Campowners Association (KDCA) | | |
| Kenora Action Centre (KAC) | Northern Ontario Education Leaders (NOEL) | Tourism Thunder Bay (TTB) |
| Labour Adjustment Committee (LAC) | Northern Ontario Municipal Association (NOMA) | Townships Without Municipal Organizations (TWMO) |
| Lac Des Iles Action Centre (LDIACAC) | Northern Ontario Service Deliverers Association (NOSDA) | United Steel Workers (USW) |
| Lakehead University (LU) | Northern Ontario Regional Tourism Association (NORTA) | Wawa Action Centre (WAC) |
| Literacy Northwest (LNW) | Northern Ontario Native Tourism Association (NONTA) | |
| Local Food For Local People (LFFLP) | Ontario's Sunset Country Travel Association (OSCTA) | |