

Executive Summary

Decline is a real and protracted issue that has taken shape and form in different ways across Northern Ontario. While not all municipalities have been hit equally hard by the effects of industry flight, an aging population, and youth out-migration, the general trend is one of, at best, stagnation and slow growth. While the Province implemented the *Growth Plan for Northern Ontario* in 2011 to try and address these issues, it has been limited in its capacity to effect much change. The *Growth Plan for Northern Ontario* generally fails to address the needs and priorities of all communities, large or small, diversified economy or single-industry town. The smallest of the small feel left behind, while the largest municipalities are left wondering what the *GPNO* really does for them at all when the province fails to follow through on its promises or provide the resources to back up its policies.

Following a comprehensive review of demographics, policy, case studies, and content and validation interviews, this report provides ten next step recommendations:

<u>Jurisdiction</u>	<u>Next Step Recommendations</u>
Local	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Develop a comprehensive strategy for combatting decline. Recognize the problem, and work together towards a solution.2. Focus on community-led economic development as much as possible. Give residents something to rally around and contribute to in order to build capacity from the inside-out.3. Industry might come back, so plan accordingly. Just don't make industry returning the only plan.
District	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Develop resource-sharing measures for skilled white-collar employees that bring feet on the ground at least at the district-level.2. Help facilitate contract-splitting between municipalities.

<p style="text-align: center;">Provincial</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Produce schedules and policy that fully implement and explain all aspects of the plan. 2. Fund projects, services, and infrastructure with full-costing in mind. Upfront capital investments can do more harm than good if they do not also provide the funding to maintain the service long-term. 3. Consider implementing social procurement policies that promote hiring and retaining local contractors and businesses as much as possible, even when costlier.
<p style="text-align: center;">Local, District, & Provincial</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Northern Ontario doesn't need one <i>Growth Plan</i>. It needs several smaller-scale plans developed in conjunction with the Province. 2. Provide resources to help all levels of government identify and prioritize larger-scale projects with the greatest long-term benefits, so that municipalities can receive the greatest return on investment as their tax bases decline.

These next steps are addressed to various levels of government and are not an exhaustive list of the various policies and initiatives that could be undertaken to address the issues of decline in Northern Ontario. However, what they do accomplish is presenting high-level directions for each level of government that prioritize local knowledge and decision-making. By empowering local communities, and listening so that they can be provided with the tools they know they need to succeed, provincial influence and investment can be applied in a much more directed and meaningful manner.

This research presents ideas for how this can be realized, and hopefully inspires and initiates a conversation regarding how the implementation of these next step recommendations could benefit the North.