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Northern Policy Institute, Chamber push for Northern touch in federal budget

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Jodi Lundmark, tbnnewswatch.com

Northern Policy Institute president and CEO Charles Cirtwill wants to hear from the public about what they would like to see in the federal economic agenda for Ontario

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By Jodi Lundmark, tbnnewswatch.com

A northern perspective is what a pair of local organizations want to see in the federal economic agenda.

On Wednesday the [Northern Policy Institute](#) and the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce hosted a leader's luncheon at the Airlane Hotel to gather ideas from local stakeholders on what issues they want to see in federal political parties' election platforms.

"What are the things the federal government should be doing, that they're not doing or that they could be doing better? Or that they should stop doing to help Ontario and, in this context, Northern Ontario grow?" said Charles Cirtwill, president and CEO of the Northern Policy Institute.

About 40 people attended the luncheon and included people from various areas including social services, health care, education and the private sector.

With the federal election coming this year, Cirtwill said this is a good time to have this conversation, but it's also an opportunity to examine whether current federal policy is working and if it's coordinated with provincial and municipal policy.

Aside from the luncheon, the NPI is looking for input from the public in any way.

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The information will be collected and put in a report to be issues to the federal political parties.

"You have to call us, email us, mail us, come to an event. We have to hear your ideas," said Cirtwill. Cirtwill said they've heard from the public that high energy rates, a lack of infrastructure and workplace training are concerns.

The NPI is also working with the Mowat Centre, a non-partisan think tank and policy director Sunil Johal said he's been hearing a lot about infrastructure needs.

"The federal government needs to invest more and invest smarter in the infrastructure we have in Ontario whether it's roads and bridges or even things like housing," he said.

"We're hearing a lot about workforce development issues, so are people getting the support they need from the federal government in terms of workforce retraining."

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