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# Northern Policy Institute doesn't speak for everyone: Spacek

By [Kevin Anderson](#), The Northern Times  
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Mayor Alan Spacek strongly disagrees with the Northern Policy Institutes assertion that FedNor is neglecting the north.

The people of Northeastern Ontario say the region is being held back by a lack of federal transfer payments, innovation, workforce development, and poor engagement from FedNor. Throughout December and January, Northern Policy Institute has been collecting feedback across Northern Ontario to help build the Federal Economic Agenda for Ontario. Northern Policy Institute president and CEO, Charles Cirtwill, said that this process provides an important opportunity to shed light on the unique challenges and opportunities faced by Northern Ontario.

Cirtwill said all feedback collected so far has listed federal transfer payments as having a significant impact on communities in the region. Respondents claim that a lack of federal transfers are inhibiting communities from developing infrastructure and holding them back in terms of innovation and education. Additionally, communities are calling for a review of FedNor in order to better align the program with the issues and priorities of Northern Ontario. There appears to be a lack of engagement from FedNor in Northeastern communities and some respondents want FedNor to take a stronger leadership role in the region.

Aboriginal education and training was also a key issue for many respondents.

"It is clear that there are a lot of issues on the minds of people in Northeastern Ontario," says Cirtwill. "We are pleased to see so many people speaking up and wanting a Northern voice included in the Federal Economic Agenda for Ontario. With many respondents seeing FedNor and federal transfers as a major issue impacting the region, it is key that these issues are included in this agenda because they are directly impacted by federal policy-makers."

Kapuskasing Mayor, Alan Spacek, said he did not concur whatsoever with Cirtwill's assertions.

"I couldn't disagree more," he commented. "You just have to look around at what was invested in Northern Ontario by FedNor last week and there's tangible proof of their interest, confidence and investment in the region. (FedNor) Minister Rickford has probably spent more time traveling the north, listening to northerners and reacting than any other Minister to date. Further to that, he is on the record numerous times, stating the federal government's support and willingness to be involved in the Ring Of Fire once there's a process to take part in. To make a blanket statement like that to me is most unfortunate."

Cirtwell said this is just a small selection of the feedback received so far. Consultations will be ongoing until January 31, 2015. The people of Northeastern Ontario are still encouraged to have their say. The discussion paper, *A Federal Economic Agenda for Ontario*, and the online comment form are available on the Northern Policy Institute website at [www.northernpolicy.ca](http://www.northernpolicy.ca).

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