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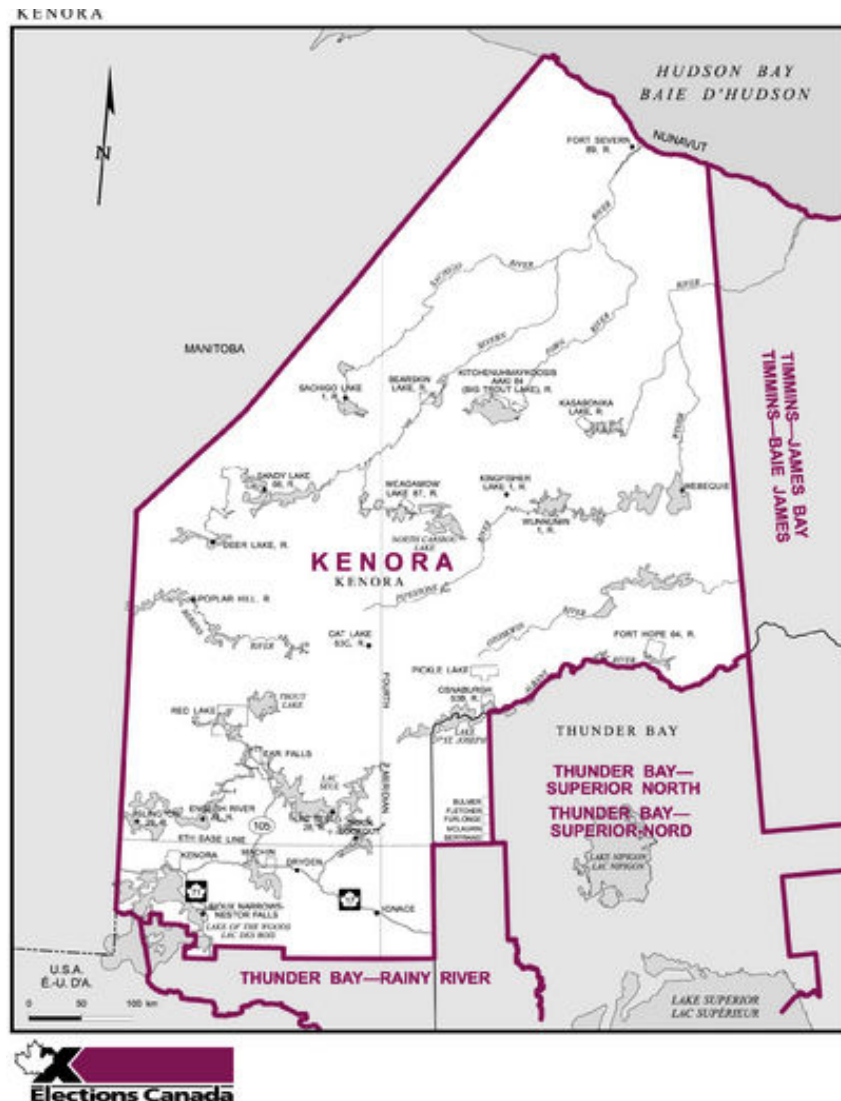
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Report: Northwestern Ontario labour market stabilizing

By Brandon Logan, Kenora Daily Miner and News
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The Northwestern Ontario labour market has stabilized, according to a report.

The Northwestern Ontario labour market is stabilizing and youth employment numbers are doing well compared to the rest of the province and Canada, according to a report entitled *Settling Down in the Northwest: Stability and Opportunity in the Northwestern Ontario Labour Market*. The report was written by James Cuddy, research coordinator with Northern Policy Institute. While there are positives, there are also negatives in the report, which include a high number of out-migration of youth and the decline of employment in primary and manufacturing industries.

In terms of youth out-migration, the region has seen negative numbers every year since 2001, including a net decline of 400 individuals in 2013 aged 15 to 29.

“Out-migration is somewhat prevalent in rural areas in general, not just in Northern Ontario,” Cuddy explained. “The youth out-migration has definitely still been a challenge, but in fact in 2013/14, it was one of the best years for youth out-migration. It’s a good sign, but we should still be striving to attract individuals.”

The news isn’t all bad, however. For the youth who stay in the Northwest, they have a much easier time gaining employment than their counterparts in the rest of Ontario and Canada.

“Since 2011, employment and participation have been higher than in Ontario and Canada, and unemployment has been lower,” Cuddy explained. “These are good signs, because it means that kids are working more. But it only means that for the kids that are staying here. We have to be cautious in talking about these figures because there are individuals leaving, which may have an impact on these numbers.

“But all in all, it’s good to see that employment and participation are at higher levels for the kids that do stay here, and they have a better chance getting a job.”

When it comes to the Northwest’s strongest labour sectors, the health care sector and service producing industries are “fairly constant and stable,” according to Cuddy.

The success of those two sectors have helped with the volatility of the overall employment rates in the region, but it’s still noted that Northwestern Ontario does see rates drastically change mostly due to the manufacturing and primary industries.

“One of our findings is that since 2009, unemployment has been less volatile than it used to be,” he said, noting it still is volatile, however. “In my opinion, Northwestern Ontario has been largely dependant on primary and manufacturing industries and it just so happens that these industries have been volatile before this.”

When looking at the big picture, labour market trends between Northwestern Ontario, Ontario and the rest of Canada, Cuddy said, “Northwestern Ontario is a unique place.”

“(Labour market) trends in Northwestern Ontario are completely different from trends in Ontario and Canada,” Cuddy said, noting the trends between Canada and Ontario are very similar. “This speaks to a larger issue that when we’re talking about the labour market in Ontario, we need to differentiate one region from another, because the implementation of a policy in one region might not have the same impact on another region.”


Overall, the outlook at the present and going forward is an optimistic one. While Northwestern Ontario still faces many challenges in the labour market, there are positives to build upon and “opportunities for us to enhance our labour market in Northwestern Ontario,” Cuddy added.

“Employment in general has declined, but what I think this means is that we’re on stable ground to start focusing on a comprehensive plan for building northern human capital,” he said. “We need to really strive to keep the youth here and keep them employed and build community capacity.”

“I guess that means there’s challenges and there’s a strong case to be made for creating strong partnerships between industry, post-secondary and even government in general to ingrain youth in our Northern issues.”

Brandon.Logan@sunmedia.ca

Twitter@BrandonWLogan

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