

# Report reflects Northern desires

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A new report outlining priorities of Northern Ontario stakeholders has some interesting and creative advice for the federal party that wins this fall's election.

The Mowat Centre, in partnership with Northern Policy Institute, released Monday their latest report, A Federal Economic Agenda for Ontario, which outlines a vision for what the federal government should do after the coming election, regardless of who wins.

The report focuses on policy steps the federal government can take to help Ontario grow.

Among its 33 recommendations in six key areas, the report calls for the federal government: to invest in Aboriginal Peoples' education and skills training, take a greater leadership role in the Ring of Fire development, strengthen evaluation of and target expansion by Fed-Nor in programs that have the greatest impact, commit to better Northern infrastructure, and become a more flexible and committed partner in pursuit of Northern opportunities.

Last June, the Mowat Centre convened a group of leaders from Ontario's key industry and sector organizations to discuss what a federal agenda for Ontario might look like. Then, over the past six months, the Northern Policy Institute worked to give Northerners an opportunity to share their ideas with this group of leading experts. This involved the distribution and discussion of Mowat's interim working paper.

The final Mowat paper, released online Monday, reflects much of the key feedback provided by Northerners.

"Northerners took the opportunity we offered them to have their voices heard by the experts and the experts listened," Northern Policy Institute president Charles Cirtwill said Monday. "The next step is for Northerners to take the opportunity offered by the upcoming election to have their voices heard by the federal parties."

The report also calls for: Aboriginal controlled and culturally sensitive education; a more ambitious digital strategy including enhanced wireless infrastructure throughout Ontario; enhanced collection of local labour market information and the return of the long-form census; flexible training programs available to more Ontarians and tied to enhanced knowledge of local needs; and federal commitment to working with all stakeholders to develop, and fund, an actionable, inclusive plan for the Ring of Fire.