For Immediate Release

Labour for Lithium:
Analyzing the availability of labour for a lithium-processing facility in Thunder Bay

13 August 2024 – There is growing interest not only in mining lithium in Northwestern Ontario, but also in processing it locally. Northern Policy Institute's latest publication finds that Northwestern Ontario can provide the labour needed for a lithium-processing facility.

Lithium processing facilities require workers that are trained in numerous professions: mechanics, millwrights, instrument technicians, supervisors, control and process operators, steamfitters and electricians. To name just a few of the key skillsets. By forecasting labour market demand and supply NPI has modelled the local labour market in 2026 – a future year when a lithium-processing facility may begin operations in Thunder Bay.

Our findings show that Northwestern Ontario can supply enough workers in the required professions to meet the combined demands of a lithium processor and other local employers; however, this will require coordinated efforts to recruit and retain new workers. Demand for many of these professions is likely to rise by 2026, while many individuals currently in the workforce are likely to retire. This means that new workers will be needed to avoid potential labour shortages.

"If lithium extracted in Northwestern Ontario is processed locally, that means more of the economic benefits stay in the region" said NPI President & CEO Charles Cirtwill. "Northwestern Ontario can provide the labour force to make this happen."

This report was completed through NPI's Northern Analyst Collective program, which is supported by NOHFC and local partners; in this case, the Thunder Bay CEDC.

Jamie Taylor, CEO at Thunder Bay CEDC, said "The CEDC commissioned this report to assess our workforce readiness for a Thunder Bay Lithium refinery. We're pleased to find that Thunder Bay boasts the necessary training programs, educational institutions, and a skilled workforce to support this exciting development."

Want to learn more about how Northwestern Ontario can supply the labour needed to process lithium? Read the report: https://www.northernpolicy.ca/labour-for-lithium

Media Interviews: NPI President & CEO Charles Cirtwill is available for comment. To arrange an interview, please contact:

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About the Authors:

William Dunstan *holds a Bachelor of Public Affairs and Policy Management from Carleton University. During his studies, William learned about the wide world of public policy and developed a particular research interest in economic policy and regional development. Professionally, he has worked in several policy-related roles both in the think tank sphere and with the federal government. Originally from Ottawa, William developed a love for Northeastern (or Central) Ontario and the region's high quality of living during his time as an Experience North intern in 2021.*

Manson Collagène *is originally from Haiti, where he studied economics and finance at the Institut des Hautes Études Commerciales et Économiques, then obtained a Master of Business Administration Executive degree from the Université Notre-Dame d'Haïti and the Inter American University of Puerto Rico. He gained professional experience in public finance as Assistant Financial Controller and through various training courses offered by the International Monetary Fund. In 2020, he started a Master's program at the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Ottawa. His research project focused on the problem of the low tax burden observed in Haiti over recent decades. Manson is interested in economic policy issues, the analysis of social and economic problems, and project management.*

Bogdan Koutsenko *graduated from the University of British Columbia in 2022 receiving a bachelor's degree in honours history and international relations. During his studies, he completed an undergraduate research thesis on the evolution of free market institutions and behaviors in the post-Soviet space. His minor in economics helped him apply a more robust multidisciplinary approach to the analysis of this complex historical process. At the same time, he participated as a project assistant and researcher for an international, professional association called the Vehicular Technology Society.*

About Northern Policy Institute:

Northern Policy Institute is Northern Ontario's independent, evidence-driven think tank. We perform research, analyze data, and disseminate ideas. Our mission is to enhance Northern Ontario's capacity to take the lead position on socio-economic policy that impacts our communities, our province, our country, and our world.

We believe in partnership, reconciliation, collaboration, communication, and cooperation. Our team seeks to do inclusive research that involves broad engagement and delivers recommendations for specific, measurable action. Our success depends on our partnerships with other entities present in or passionate about Northern Ontario.

Based in Thunder Bay and Kirkland Lake, NPI is active in every region of Northern Ontario. During the summer months, we have satellite offices in communities across Northern Ontario staffed by teams of Experience North placements. These placements are university and college students working in your community on issues important to you and your neighbours.