

NORTHERN ONTARIO HILL DAYS



**DECEMBER 1-2, 2025
OTTAWA, ON**



LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association (NOMA) and the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities (FONOM) respectfully acknowledge that the municipalities we collectively represent across Northern Ontario are situated on the traditional and treaty territories of many Indigenous Nations, including the Anishinaabe, Cree, Oji-Cree, Algonquin, and Métis Peoples. These lands are governed by historic and contemporary agreements such as Treaty 3, Treaty 5, Treaty 9, the Robinson-Huron and Robinson-Superior Treaties, and Treaty 11, as well as unceded territories across Northeastern Ontario.

We honour the Indigenous Peoples who have lived on, travelled through, and cared for these lands since time immemorial and continue to do so today. We recognize the enduring impacts of colonization, and as municipal leaders, we affirm our shared responsibility to advance reconciliation through respect, partnership, and action.

As we present this delegation package and engage with decision-makers, we carry our commitment to strengthening relationships with Indigenous governments and communities across the North, ensuring that our collective future is grounded in equity, understanding, and truth.



FONOM & NOMA Joint Delegation Package

Northern Ontario Hill Days – December 1-2, 2025 – Ottawa, ON

One North, One Canada: Uniting through Highways, Workforce, Safety, Resources, and Shared Purpose

Overview — A Unified Call to Build Canada Strong



The **Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities (FONOM)** and the **Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association (NOMA)** together represent more than **140 municipalities**, spanning thousands of kilometres and countless communities that form the backbone of Ontario and Canada’s northern economy. From the forest industry towns along Highway 11 to the mining and energy corridors of the northwest, our region sustains the nation’s prosperity, connects its people, and fuels its future.

The message we bring forward is clear and urgent: **the challenges facing Northern Ontario are national in scope and requires national solutions.** The North is not a

peripheral region — it is a vital pillar of Canada’s economy, security, and social fabric. The health of our highways, our workforce, our justice system, and our partnerships will determine whether Canada’s next century is built on resilience or regret.

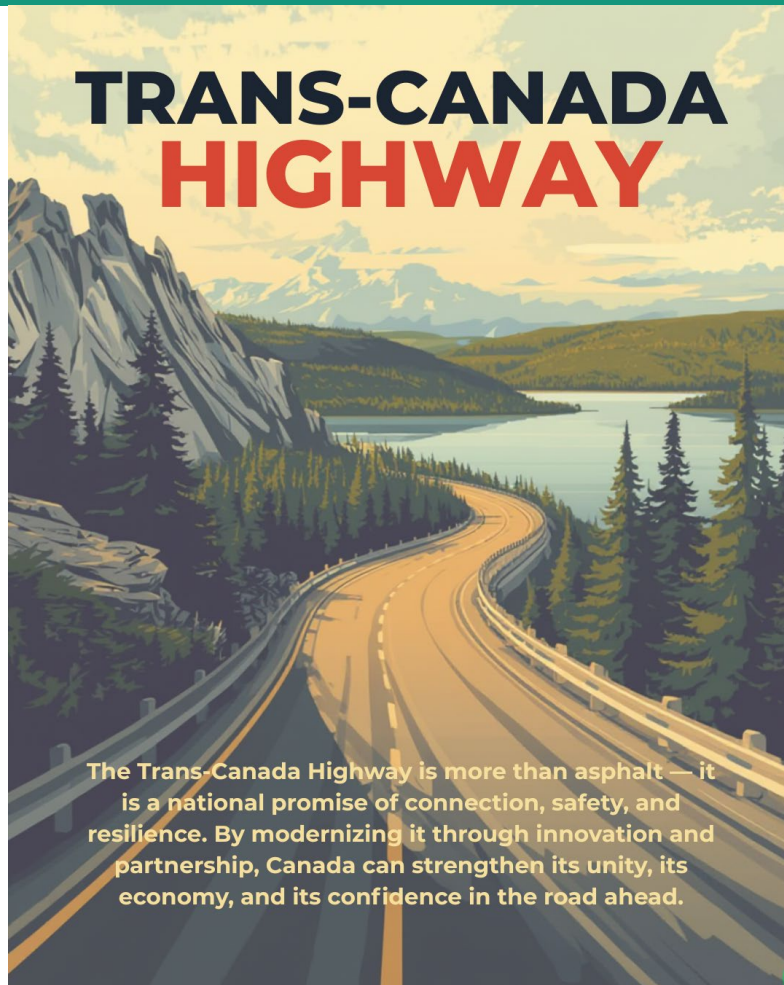
Our calls to action — on the **Trans-Canada Highway, labour and immigration, bail reform and community safety, natural resources, and federal–provincial–municipal collaboration** — are not isolated demands. They form a coherent vision of how to **build Canada strong**:

- By **investing in the Trans-Canada Highway**, we safeguard national trade, strengthen supply chains, and connect Canadians coast to coast.
- By **expanding rural and Northern immigration and workforce programs**, we build the labour force needed to deliver on housing, infrastructure, and clean-energy commitments from **Budget 2025**.
- By **reforming bail and enhancing mental health supports**, we restore safety, trust, and stability in every community.
- By **unlocking responsible natural resource development**, we secure Canada’s place as a global leader in critical minerals, forestry, and clean energy.
- And by **forging a Team Canada approach** — one that is evidence-based, outcome-driven, and rooted in respect — we can achieve a new era of cooperation that benefits every province, territory, and citizen.

FONOM and NOMA believe this moment is a defining one for our nation. **The North has the potential to lead Canada’s next great chapter** — to build, to innovate, and to unite. But we need strong, consistent partners in both Queen’s Park and Ottawa who recognize that investing in the North is investing in the country’s future.

When we build up Northern Ontario, we build up all of Ontario — and when we strengthen Ontario, we strengthen Canada.

2. The Trans-Canada Highway — A Nation-Building Project and Federal Responsibility



The **Trans-Canada Highway (Highways 11 and 17)** is Canada’s only continuous east–west ground transportation link — a lifeline that carries people, goods, and services through the heart of the country.

Across **Northern Ontario**, however, large stretches of this corridor remain **two-lane, overburdened, and unsafe**, often subject to closure due to collisions or severe weather. When the Trans-Canada shuts down, communities are cut off, supply chains halt, and the national economy feels the impact.

While the **Province of Ontario** oversees day-to-day operations and maintenance, the **Government of Canada** shares a fundamental responsibility to ensure this national corridor meets modern safety, reliability, and capacity standards.

The Trans-Canada must be treated as **shared national infrastructure**, equal in strategic importance to our airports, ports, and rail networks — the arteries that keep Canada moving.

Modern Solutions for a Northern Reality

Constructing full four-lane divided highways across the rugged **Canadian Shield** is extraordinarily costly and complex. In many regions, terrain and environmental constraints make traditional twinning slow to deliver and financially prohibitive. The proven “**2 + 1**” **highway design** — featuring **alternating passing lanes separated by a continuous median barrier** — offers an immediate, cost-effective, and life-saving solution. This model delivers **safety outcomes comparable to full twinning**, improves traffic flow, and can be implemented rapidly with existing right-of-way and construction capacity.

A **blended approach** is therefore essential:

- **Twinning where feasible** in higher-volume and growth corridors, and
- **Adopting the 2 + 1 model as an alternative** where full four-laning is cost-prohibitive, particularly through Shield country.

In parallel, **immediate action must be taken to add passing lanes** on long, single-lane stretches of Highways 11 and 17 throughout Northwestern and Northeastern Ontario — providing critical safety relief while larger upgrades are planned.

Our Ask

- **Formally designate Highways 11 and 17 as Trans-Canada Highway segments of national significance** under the National Trade Corridors Fund.
- **Establish a federal–provincial Northern Highways Secretariat** to coordinate investment, design standards, and long-term planning.
- **Adopt a blended investment strategy** that prioritizes twinning where feasible and implements the 2 + 1 design as a practical, proven alternative through the Canadian Shield.
- **Accelerate immediate safety improvements**, including new passing lanes, enhanced signage, and barrier installations along high-risk single-lane corridors.
- **Reinstate a shared cost-funding model** between Canada and Ontario to accelerate upgrades and ensure predictable, multi-year investment.

The Trans-Canada Highway is more than asphalt — it is a national promise of connection, safety, and resilience. By modernizing it through innovation and partnership, Canada can strengthen its unity, its economy, and its confidence in the road ahead.

3. Rural and Remote Immigration & Labour Needs — Building Canada Strong Through People

Rural and Remote Immigration & Labour Needs Building Canada Strong Through People



The Rural Community Immigration Pilot is not just a workforce program — it is a nation-building tool. To build Canada strong, we must first build the workforce capable of doing it.

The **2025 Federal Budget** commits unprecedented investments in **national infrastructure, housing, energy corridors, and community renewal**. These initiatives recognize that building Canada’s next generation of housing, roads, and clean-energy infrastructure requires not just funding — but people. Without a strong, skilled workforce, these transformative projects will stall. Nowhere is that challenge more urgent than in **Northern and rural Ontario**.

Across the North, municipalities face **acute labour shortages** in construction, healthcare, skilled trades, transportation, forestry, and hospitality. The workforce that once powered the region’s economy is aging, and outmigration continues to deplete small communities. Without immediate intervention, many of the projects promised in Budget 2025 risk delay simply because there are not enough workers to complete them.

The newly announced **Rural Community Immigration Pilot (RCIP)** offers a pivotal opportunity to correct course — by linking immigration directly to housing, infrastructure, and regional economic development. The RCIP recognizes what Northern Ontario has long understood: **population growth and workforce attraction are essential to nation-building.**

Our Ask

- **Ensure the Rural Community Immigration Pilot (RCIP) is permanent, well-funded, and fully inclusive of all Northern municipalities**, including small and remote communities that can demonstrate workforce and housing needs.
- **Allocate dedicated Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program (OINP) spaces** for Northern employers to meet urgent labour demands in infrastructure, housing, and healthcare.
- **Integrate immigration planning with Budget 2025 infrastructure and housing programs**, ensuring workforce recruitment and settlement supports are built into federal–provincial funding frameworks.
- **Invest in local housing, childcare, and healthcare infrastructure** to retain newcomers and support long-term community growth.
- **Create a Northern Workforce and Immigration Secretariat**, co-led by federal, provincial, and municipal partners, to align immigration, training, and infrastructure strategies.

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4. Bail Reform & Community Safety — Restoring Safety, Trust, and Confidence in the North



Northern and rural communities across Ontario continue to face escalating public safety challenges driven by **repeat violent offenders**, untreated mental health and addiction issues, and the limited capacity of police services responsible for covering vast geographies. These pressures erode public confidence, disproportionately strain small municipalities, and expose deep structural gaps in Canada’s justice and health systems.

The federal **Bail and Sentencing Reform Act (Bill C-14)** represents important progress by strengthening bail laws for violent and repeat offenders, expanding reverse-onus provisions, and tightening the public-confidence grounds for detention. These measures respond directly to concerns long raised by Northern municipalities. However, **legislation alone will not break the cycle that communities are experiencing daily.**

Repeat Sureties and Loopholes That Undermine Public Safety

A major gap in the existing bail system allows the **same surety to repeatedly bail out the same individual**, even after multiple arrests, breaches, or violent incidents. This loophole contributes directly to revolving-door patterns where offenders are rapidly released back into the community without meaningful oversight or accountability — a situation especially acute in small Northern jurisdictions.

Mental Health Act Gaps and the Need for Realistic Intervention Tools

Police frequently arrest individuals experiencing acute intoxication, mental illness, or violent behaviour linked to substance use. Once sober, these individuals often **no longer meet the threshold for involuntary care under the current Mental Health Act**, leading to immediate release — often within hours. They reoffend, are re-arrested, and the cycle continues. This is unsafe, unsustainable, and unjust for communities, first responders, and the individuals themselves.

Northern Ontario needs a **graduated continuum of intervention**, including the authority to hold individuals for stabilization, assessment, and withdrawal support when they present a repeated and predictable risk.

A New Model for Northern Communities

To protect communities and support individuals in crisis, we must integrate justice reform with health, housing, and Indigenous-led supports. This includes establishing **Transitional Withdrawal Management Centres** capable of receiving individuals from police, EMS, hospitals, or courts — with both **voluntary and involuntary pathways**, based on clinical and risk assessments.

These centres would provide stabilization, detox, harm reduction, treatment entry, and coordinated case management — addressing the root causes of repeated involvement with the justice system.

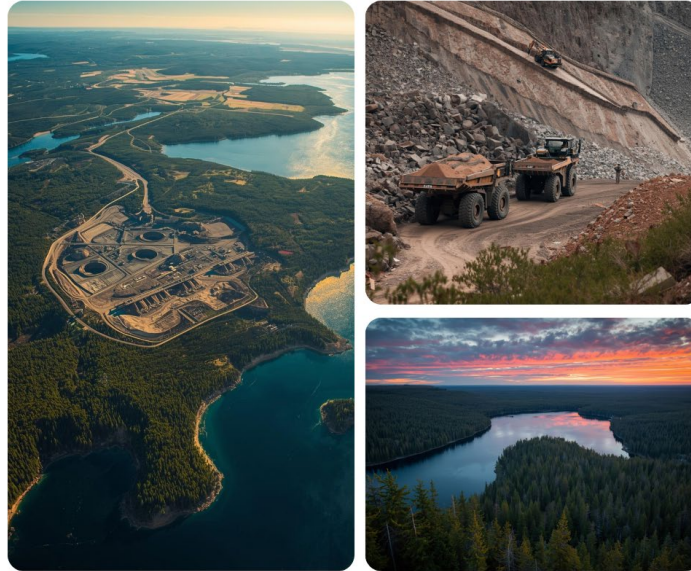
Our Ask

- **Implement Bill C-14 with a fully resourced federal–provincial–municipal partnership**, ensuring Northern municipalities have the tools and capacity required to operationalize stricter bail provisions.
- **Reform the surety system** by restricting how often the same surety can bail out the same offender, requiring judicial review for repeat bail releases, and strengthening accountability measures for sureties in cases of repeated breaches.

- **Modernize the Mental Health Act** to allow for **graduated involuntary holds** when individuals present with repeat violent incidents, addiction-driven crises, or a documented pattern of rapid reoffending following intoxication or withdrawal.
- **Establish community-based Transitional Withdrawal Management Centres** across Northern Ontario, with both **voluntary and involuntary options**, to provide stabilization, assessment, detox, and treatment pathways.
- **Create a Northern Community Safety and Prevention Fund** to support police, paramedics, Indigenous services, bail supervision programs, and inter-agency crisis response models.
- **Develop integrated Crown–court–policing–health teams** in Northern regions to streamline bail decisions, improve supervision, and coordinate treatment and housing supports.
- **Adopt an evidence-based, outcome-driven framework** to measure bail reform success, track regional impacts, and improve decision-making across all orders of government.

Community safety in the North requires more than tougher laws — it requires the services, supports, and partnerships that allow those laws to work. Bail reform must be matched with investments in healing, prevention, and justice if we are to restore dignity, safety, and trust for every Northern resident.

5. Natural Resources & Economic Growth — Unlocking Canada’s Full Potential



NATURAL RESOURCES & ECONOMIC GROWTH

Northern Ontario's resources — from critical minerals to forest products, natural gas, and deep-water port capacity — are the backbone of Canada's future prosperity. By reducing red tape, resolving trade barriers, expanding energy access, and modernizing export infrastructure, Canada can turn today's opportunity into generational nation-building success.

Northern Ontario is home to some of the most valuable and strategically important natural resources in the world. The region’s **critical minerals, forestry resources, gold deposits, natural gas reserves, battery-grade materials, and clean energy potential** position it at the centre of Canada’s long-term economic, environmental, and geopolitical future.

Canada’s transition to a cleaner, more resilient, globally competitive economy **cannot happen without the North**. The minerals required for electric vehicles, national defence technologies, energy storage, and global supply chain security — **nickel, lithium, cobalt, graphite, copper, and rare earth elements** — are overwhelmingly concentrated in Northern Ontario. So too are the world-class forests and mills that supply sustainable fibre, bio-products, engineered wood, packaging materials, and construction materials essential for Canadian and international markets.

Yet the full promise of Northern Ontario remains unrealized due to:

- **slow and duplicative environmental assessment processes,**
- complex and overlapping federal–provincial permitting regimes,
- **insufficient energy transmission capacity,**
- **limited natural gas, LNG, and CNG access,**
- infrastructure gaps across rail, road, and ports, and
- **unresolved softwood lumber trade disputes** that are damaging the sector.

Flagship operations such as the **KAP Paper Mill** and the **Ear Falls Sawmill** exemplify both the deep potential of the forestry sector and the vulnerability created by **crushing softwood lumber tariffs imposed by the Trump Administration**, high transportation costs, and lack of federal trade resolution. These facilities sustain hundreds of families and anchor their regional economies — yet long-standing trade barriers and slow modernization supports put them at risk.

Natural Gas, LNG, CNG & Energy Security

Reliable, affordable natural gas remains essential to powering new mines, mills, greenhouses, Indigenous communities, and industrial growth across the North. Expanded access to **natural gas, LNG, and CNG** is critical to reducing energy poverty, lowering emissions, supporting new processing facilities, and enabling growth in remote regions.

Equally essential is the need for major investments in **energy transmission**, including the Greenstone Transmission Line, the East-West Energy Corridor, and grid expansions that can power new critical mineral developments and Northern electrification.

Great Lakes Deep-Water Ports — Canada’s Inland Gateways

Northern Ontario’s access to the **Great Lakes deep-water ports** — including Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, and other regional port assets — remains a national strategic advantage. These ports serve as Canada’s inland gateway to world markets and are essential to:

- exporting minerals, forestry products, grain, and manufactured goods,
- enhancing continental supply chain security,
- expanding containerization opportunities, and
- providing resilient, climate-secure alternatives to coastal bottlenecks.

Building a Nation Through Resource Development

Canada cannot compete globally if it takes **12–20 years** to permit and construct a mine that should take **3–5 years**. To unlock the North’s potential, Canada must adopt Ontario’s **One Project, One Process (1P1P)** model — streamlining environmental assessments, eliminating duplication, aligning regulatory processes, and accelerating responsible development.

Northern resource development is not simply a regional priority — it is a **national economic, environmental, energy, and security imperative**.

Our Ask

- **Adopt a unified federal–provincial “One Project, One Process (1P1P)” permitting and environmental assessment model** to accelerate mines, mills, transmission lines, natural gas expansions, and major infrastructure from approval to construction.
- **Accelerate investment in energy transmission and energy access infrastructure**, including Northern grid expansions, new transmission lines, corridor development, and electrification to support critical mineral and forestry processing.
- **Expand natural gas, LNG, and CNG access** to unserved and underserved communities and industrial sites, supporting affordability, competitiveness, and clean-energy transition needs.
- **Invest in Great Lakes deep-water ports** to enhance export capacity, reduce transportation bottlenecks, improve global market access, and strengthen continental supply chain resilience.
- **Take immediate federal action on softwood lumber tariffs**, aggressively defending Canada’s forestry sector and securing fair access to U.S. markets to protect mills such as **KAP Paper** and the **Ear Falls Sawmill**.
- **Support value-added mineral and forestry processing**, including EV battery materials, refining, smelting, engineered wood, bio-products, and next-generation wood innovation — keeping more jobs and innovation in Canada.
- **Prioritize gold, lithium, graphite, nickel, cobalt, copper, and other high-value projects** through targeted funding, infrastructure support, and aligned permitting to position Canada as the global leader in critical minerals.
- **Strengthen long-term partnerships with Indigenous communities and people**, ensuring shared prosperity, revenue mechanisms, workforce participation, and Indigenous leadership in stewardship, permitting, and project development.

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prosperity. By reducing red tape, resolving trade barriers, expanding energy access, and modernizing export infrastructure, Canada can turn today's opportunity into generational nation-building success.

6. Federal–Provincial–Municipal Relationships

Federal–Provincial– Municipal Relationships



Building Canada strong means all levels of government working together with respect, inclusion, and a shared belief in a better Canada.

The challenges and opportunities facing Northern Ontario — from housing and infrastructure to healthcare, childcare, and mental health — demand more than incremental fixes; they require a **unified national effort**.

Too often, intergovernmental collaboration has been fragmented along political or jurisdictional lines, slowing progress and leaving municipalities to fill the gaps. At a time when Canada must build faster, smarter, and fairer, our country needs a renewed **Team Canada approach** — one that transcends partisanship and geography to deliver results for people in every corner of the nation.

The Vision

FONOM and NOMA believe that all orders of government must act with **shared purpose** — to build a Canada that reflects its diversity, values, and potential.

A strong Team Canada approach means:

- Working **across party lines** to sustain long-term national strategies, not short-term political cycles.
- Bridging **provincial and regional divides**, ensuring that Northern and rural realities inform national policy.
- Treating economic growth, public health, mental wellness, childcare, and social inclusion as **mutually reinforcing priorities**, not separate silos.
- Embracing **respectful, tough debate** that leads to better decisions and renewed trust in government institutions.

The Opportunity

With major infrastructure and housing investments underway through **Budget 2025**, Canada stands at a hinge moment: the choices we make today will define whether our country emerges as a global model of sustainable, inclusive prosperity. By working together, governments can build an economy that **reflects the full strength of Canada’s people** — diverse, skilled, compassionate, and innovative — and ensure that Northern Ontario plays a leading role in that story.

Our Ask

- **Establish a permanent Northern Policy Table** uniting FONOM, NOMA, Indigenous leadership, and both levels of government to align infrastructure, housing, and workforce strategies.
- **Convene annual joint federal–provincial–municipal summits** on Northern development, modelled on a “Team Canada North” framework.
- **Integrate mental health, healthcare, childcare, and economic growth priorities** under one coordinated federal-provincial investment lens.
- **Commit to evidence-based policymaking** and bipartisan collaboration to ensure that national programs remain stable through political transitions.
- **Empower municipalities as full partners** — with direct access to funding tools that reflect their front-line responsibilities and innovation capacity.

Building Canada strong requires every level of government rowing in the same direction — guided by respect, inclusion, and the shared conviction that Canada can once again be the envy of the modern industrialized world.

Building Canada, Strong, *Together*



The story of Canada has always been one of perseverance, courage, and collaboration.

Let the next chapter be written in partnership — built on Northern strength, driven by Canadian heart, and guided by the belief that together, we can build a country that remains the envy of the world.

The path to a stronger Ontario — and a stronger Canada — **runs through the North**. It runs along the snow-covered highways that link coast to coast, through the mills and mines that fuel our prosperity, and in the hearts of people who continue to believe in their communities — even when the odds are stacked against them.

Northern Ontario does not ask for special treatment; it asks for **partnership, fairness, and vision**.

Our municipalities, industries, and residents are ready to lead — ready to build, to welcome newcomers, to protect our communities, and to power the next century of Canadian growth. But we cannot do it alone.

At this defining moment in our nation's story, Canada stands before a choice: to continue piecemeal progress, or to act boldly — as one country, one team, united by shared purpose. The **Trans-Canada Highway**, the **labour force that will build our homes and hospitals**, the **justice and safety systems that protect our**

people, and the **natural resources that drive our economy** — these are not regional issues. They are **Canadian responsibilities**.

FONOM and NOMA believe in a **Team Canada approach** — evidence-based, outcome-driven, and rooted in respect — that brings together every level of government, every region, and every person willing to roll up their sleeves to build something enduring.

Together, we call on governments across Canada to:

- **Build the Trans-Canada Highway into a true nation-building corridor** that unites our people and secures our future.
- **Empower Northern communities to welcome and train the workers who will build the homes, hospitals, and industries of tomorrow.**
- **Deliver meaningful bail reform and mental health supports** that restore safety, dignity, and hope in every community.
- **Unlock the full potential of our resources and energy systems**, ensuring prosperity that is sustainable, equitable, and shared.
- **Commit to genuine, evidence-based collaboration** that measures success not by announcements, but by outcomes that improve lives.

The story of Canada has always been one of perseverance, courage, and collaboration. Let the next chapter be written in partnership — built on Northern strength, driven by Canadian heart, and guided by the belief that together, we can build a country that remains the envy of the world.

