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NEEGANII-IISHAWIN Gathering 2026 Continues to Grow!



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Atmosphere In NW
Ontario

City of Thunder Bay
seeking public feedback on
new Council governance
structure

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 @tbay25  @Scott Sumner

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Tenth Annual Ontario Economic Report: A resilient economy in need of renovation

Business confidence in Ontario economy largely unchanged at 23%, down from 26%

(Business confidence in Ontario is stalled but stable, and trade turbulence is reshaping business decisions, according to the Ontario

Chamber of Commerce's 10th annual Ontario Economic Report.

This year's report finds that while Ontario's economy has shown strength, prosperity depends on lowering costs and risk for business, incentivizing investment, expanding to

new markets, building infrastructure and developing talent.

"At a time of turbulence, Ontario's economy is showing remarkable resilience – but that's no guarantee of growth," said Daniel Tisch, president and CEO of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. "It's time to move from resilience to renovation of our economic foundations: a more attractive investment climate, diversified trading relationships, and additional supports to help businesses move from surviving to thriving."

Only 23 percent of businesses are confident in the Ontario economy, according to the report, down slightly from last year's 26 percent, but far stronger than during the pandemic and its inflation highs.

In 2026, businesses are also slightly more confident in their own prospects than they were a year ago (52 percent, up from 49 percent). Confidence is lowest among small businesses (20 percent), and higher among mid-sized and large businesses (34 and 35 percent respectively).

"CUSMA has protected most Ontario businesses from the worst shocks, but it can't be our only plan, especially with uncertainty around this year's review," said Vincent Caron, vice president of policy at the OCC. "Reducing business risk, streamlining regulation, developing the skilled talent our economy needs, and building the infrastructure and healthy communities that support growth are essential to our success."

Key findings

- Business confidence sits at 23 percent, down 3 percent from a year ago; 52 percent are not confident in Ontario's economic outlook, up 4 percent.
- Businesses are responding to U.S. trade and tariff policies by increasing prices (25 percent), diversifying suppliers (22 percent) and absorbing costs (20 percent).
- Only 19 percent of firms report increasing their business investment in 2025, and only 26 percent plan to increase their investment in 2026. Many firms are neither increasing nor decreasing investment, as high costs and trade uncertainty have prompted many to pause or scale back capital projects.

- Nearly half (49 percent) of businesses headquartered outside Ontario plan to expand here, more so than in the U.S. (45 percent), but also cite concerns about costs, political and economic stability, and talent gaps in key industries and regions.

- Business policy priorities reflect the need for near-term relief and longer-term certainty, including strengthening domestic demand (e.g., through reducing interprovincial trade barriers and buy local campaigns), targeting financial supports, simplifying tax incentives, and improving coordination between decision-makers.

- Ontario's real gross domestic product (GDP) is projected to grow by 1.2 per cent in 2026, following a subdued 1.4 per cent in 2025, as the economy adjusts to U.S. tariff impacts and weaker economic conditions.

- Inflation is expected to remain within the 1-3 percent target range, supported by softer demand and slower growth, though global supply-side pressures may keep some business costs elevated.

- Ontario's unemployment has stabilized but remains high at 7.6 per cent heading into 2026, among the highest in Canada, as employment growth cools and population growth slows.

- Technology adoption is advancing, but unevenly. Just over half (52 per cent) of businesses report moderate or extensive use of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI). Barriers cited include cost, skills gaps, and uncertainty around return on investment.

- Diversity, Equity Accessibility and Inclusion (DEAI) actions are growing marginally: Almost half of firms (48 percent) now have diversity and inclusion strategies – up 2 percent from a year ago, and up 7 percent in the last two years.

- Workforce and mental health pressures continue to weigh on productivity, retention, investment readiness, and community safety, but only 49 percent offer mental health resources and supports.

- Trade uncertainty persists, even with the Canada U.S.-Mexico Agreement in place. Many businesses say they can adapt, but tariff volatility continues to disrupt pricing, supply chains, and long-term planning. In this context, recent government efforts to leverage domestic demand are creating greater optimism.

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**Publisher's
Note
Scott
Sumner**



It was fun to attend the recent economic development conference, NEEGANII-IISHAWIN Gathering 2026, held at the Nor'Wester Hotel in Thunder Bay, Ontario. It featured Indigenous economic development officers from the 36 communities that they serve.

I grew up in the small town of Manitowadge Ontario, which was a mining community. I am quite familiar with living in these smaller communities and how the major industries affect the people that lived there.

My father was a mining engineer and moved to Manitowadge fairly on in his career. It was very evident how important mining was in Northwestern Ontario, Canada and the world. I always remember going with my father to visit the mine development site at Hemlo in 1984 when all there was there were core samples on the ground from exploration activities.

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Positive Economic Atmosphere In NW Ontario

This resulted in three operating mines that produced billions in economic activity.

We are currently going through a very prominent mining resurgence in North Northwestern Ontario in this area. It was nice talking to Steve Lines about the First Gold Mining project located north of Sioux Lookout, Ontario. The magnitude and complexity to produce an operating gold mine like this over a number of years is impressive. The billion dollar plus investment, along with all the regulatory steps that need to be taken place was very, very informative and it shows the resilience of people to achieve a complex goal.

Also, it was very nice chatting with them with the John D. Beardy from Windigo company who was involved in the creation of this economic development conference. He is definitely interested in creating the



Many smiles by the exhibitors
environment for his 36 communities to create economic opportunities for their

members. On average about 1000 people live in each of the communities so we're really almost reaching a community of 40,000 people located to the north of Thunder Bay. The opportunity to improve the quality of life of these communities is great with things such as more road access, better electricity access, and jobs for the members. There are also great business opportunities available to service the new mining operations and forestry operations.

We live in an exciting time in Northwest Ontario, as our vast resources are definitely required by others in this massive world of 8 billion people.

It will be very interesting to see how many of these projects progress over the years.



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RFDA Completes Expansion Campaign!

The RFDA welcomed Metro and the Feed Ontario team who presented a generous \$300,000 contribution to the Building Hope Capital Campaign and officially opened the “Metro Shared Training Kitchen”. Metro and Feed Ontario launched this collaborative program in November 2025, aiming to provide food banks with professional facilities for educational cooking classes, community meals, and food rescue initiatives in a variety of communities.

“Congratulations to the team at the RFDA on the launch of their new Metro Shared Kitchen,” said Carolyn Stewart, CEO of Feed Ontario. “This remarkable space will strengthen partnerships, create opportunities for innovative programs, and benefit community groups and individuals across Northern Ontario. Feed Ontario sincerely thanks Metro for making this shared kitchen possible and for laying the foundation for new partnerships and lasting community impact that will



expand access to fresh and healthy food in the North.”

“Our goal was to develop a program that enables us to respond to local needs in a meaningful way. We are very proud of our collaboration with Feed Ontario in creating a tangible project for their food banks, allowing us to establish a lasting impact in the communities where we operate. This initiative brings to life METRO’s purpose to nourish the health and well-being of our communities,” says Marie-Claude Bacon, Vice President, Public Affairs and Communications, METRO.

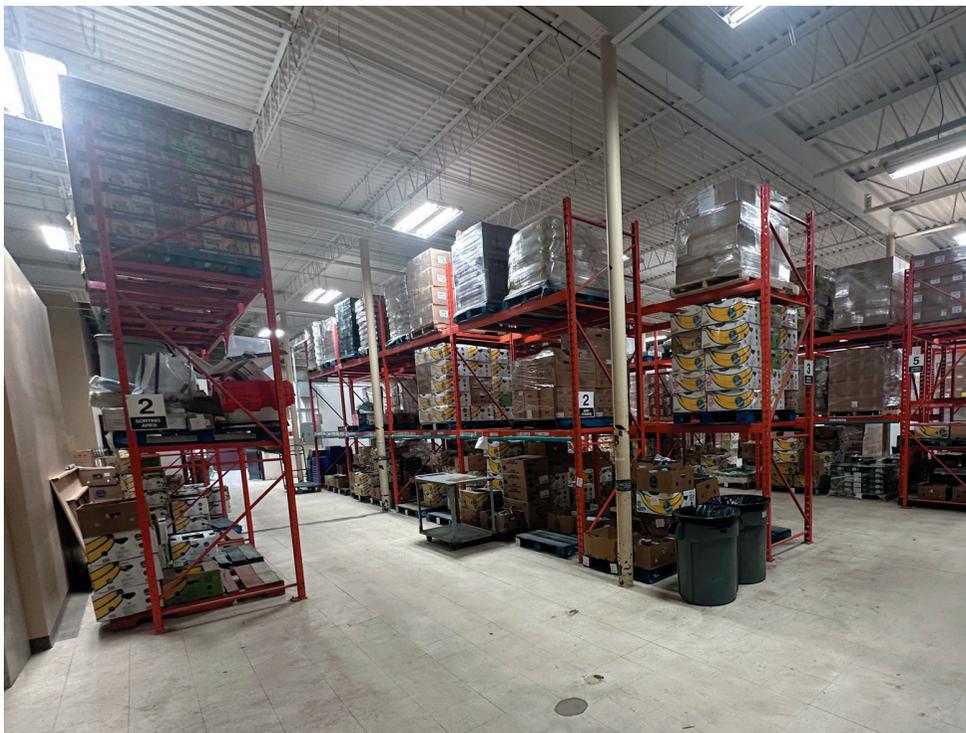
A number of other major corporate donors stepped up recently to show their support in Building Hope: RBC (\$100,000), Thunder Bay Hotel Association (\$50,000), the Roots Trillium Insurance Fund (\$25,000), Twin City Refreshments (\$10,000), Iron Range Bus Lines (\$10,000), Auto

Home Paints (\$10,000), and Strasser & Lang (\$10,000).

Individual donors such as Scott & Richelle Dougall (\$50,000), Lee Bonnell (\$15,000), and John Bociurko (\$10,000) also came forward to assist.

With these recent donations, and the remarkable support from community, funding agencies and grants to date, the RFDA has successfully achieved their \$6.9 million goal. Of that goal, \$1.5 million was the public part of the campaign announced in January of 2025, and with the extraordinary support of our community, the RFDA Campaign Team is overjoyed to have met this goal.

Continued



RFDA Completes Expansion Campaign!

Continued

This milestone marks the official opening of the 5,200 sq. ft. facility expansion, featuring a Community Training Kitchen and a multi-purpose Gathering Hall- purpose-built spaces designed to strengthen community-led solutions to food insecurity and poverty across

goes hungry,” said Bruno Niederer, Campaign Chair, Building Hope, RFDA.

“While this expansion represents a significant breakthrough made possible through the support of NOHFC, municipal partners, corporations, foundations, and donors, the need for food

Mercier, Office Manager, RFDA.

RFDA remains dedicated to building a future where food insecurity is no longer a reality. Achieving this vision requires sustained community support, collaboration, and shared responsibility. The Regional Food Distribution Association of Northwestern Ontario

(RFDA) serves as a food bank for food banks, providing essential food support to over 70 organizations in local and surrounding communities. RFDA not only distributes food but also works at the grassroots level to address food insecurity through education, youth engagement, and community development initiatives.



Northwestern Ontario, which are spaces that are now available to the community for rent. “I would like to sincerely thank the Campaign Team, board members, staff, and all the generous donors who made this possible. Today we are celebrating the Grand Opening; and are extremely grateful for a community who stands behind us, in the best interest of making Thunder Bay and region, a place where no one

security services across our region remains profound. According to Feed Ontario’s Hunger Report, more than 1 million Ontarians are now relying on food banks, an alarming 165% increase since 2020. Enhanced infrastructure increases RFDA’s capacity, but the ability to operate and deliver essential services continues to depend on the generosity and commitment of donors and community partners.” says April



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Confederation College Hosts Annual Career & Job Fair

Confederation College reinforced its role in workforce development for Northern Ontario by hosting its annual Career & Job Fair on Tuesday, Feb. 3, bringing together students, alumni, community members and employers from across the region and beyond.

Filling the SUCCI Student Lounge and hallways within the Shuniah Building on the Thunder Bay Campus, the event welcomed over 70 local, regional and national employers representing sectors critical to Ontario's economy, including health care, skilled trades, mining, public service and community support services.

The Career & Job Fair serves as a platform for connecting employers with job-ready talent trained to meet regional workforce needs. Opportunities ranged from full-time and part-time roles to

tant role in preparing people for meaningful careers that support Northern communities," said Michelle Salo, President of Confederation College. "Events like the Career & Job Fair help

"We see the Career & Job Fair as an invitation to start conversations," said Kim Upton, Manager, Employee Experience at St. Joseph's Care Group. "It's about welcoming people, learning



summer and co-op placements, supporting learners at various stages of their career pathways.

strengthen connections between employers and a skilled workforce that is ready to live, work and contribute in Northwestern Ontario."

"Confederation College plays an impor-

about their goals and showing them that there's room to learn, grow and build a meaningful career with St. Joseph's Care Group."

The fair was open to Confederation College students, upcoming graduates, alumni and community job seekers, reflecting the College's commitment to inclusive access and regional workforce participation. Career advisors from Student Career Services and Northwest Employment Works were also on site, providing individualized support and guidance.

The Career & Job Fair is one of several initiatives that demonstrate Confederation College's ongoing commitment to workforce readiness, employer engagement, and economic resilience in Northern Ontario.

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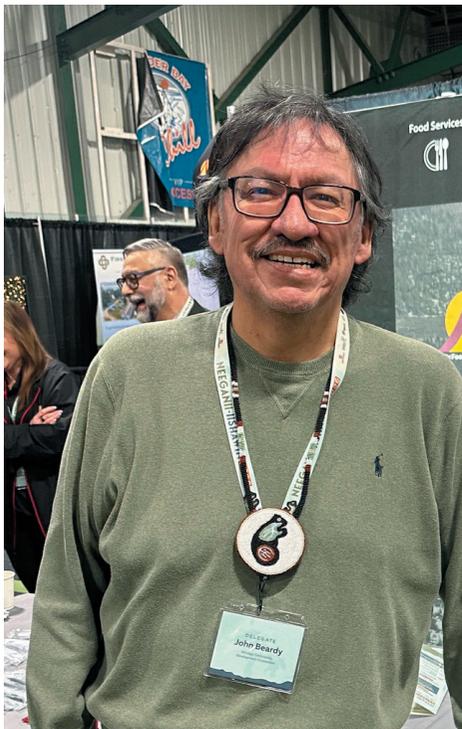
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NEEGANII- IISHAWIN Gathering 2026 Continues to Grow!

BY SCOTT A. SUMNER
Thunder Bay BUSINESS

I asked John Beardy, Director of Business Development for Windigo Community Development Corporation and one of the organizers of the NEEGANII- IISHAWIN Gathering 2026 some questions about the event.

Windigo is a parent corporation and they own subsidiary organizations. One of them is Windigo Catering which provides food



services as well house keeping, laundry, light maintenance and janitorial services for 600 workers at the Orla Musselwhite for over 25 years now.

Who are the organizers of the NEEGANII- IISHAWIN Gathering 2026 ?

“ We are a partnership between 5 First

Nations- Bearskin Lake, Cat Lake, North Caribou, Slate Falls and Sachigo Lake”

“ This event event is a collaboration of our tribal groups. It started informally where the economic development offers from the communities met randomly to discuss partnerships and opportunities. After a few years we decided to make it more formal as a economic development gathering. It is a focus for our members with 5 tribal councils and 36 first nations, of which many have a local development office.”

When did the event begin?

“ The conference is now our third conference. We started at the Superior Inn and outgrew that, then tried the Valhalla Inn and maxed out their facility. Now we are at the Nor'wester Hotel including the Tournament Centre.”

“ We wanted to accommodate more of our partners and First Nation participants and so we used the Tournament Centre rink area to accommodate our trade show portion. We have suppliers and others in the trade show area. There are 350 participants but we are getting calls and adding more. There are 74 trade show booths.”

What is the purpose of the event?

“ This event is to build capacity in business readiness for our communities, employment training and business partnerships. We focus on the agenda with speakers helping our local communities with economic development. There is an increase in resource development projects whether it is mining, forestry or infrastructure. In some cases many of our communities aren't ready to take contracts for these projects, so this event is to help make everyone aware of what is coming and

how we can grow and expand our businesses.”

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Continued

“ We want to build capacity at the community level with the local economic development offices- to provide training to create

opportunities that are happening on our territories. One of the First Nation groups owns this hotel, the Nor'wester for instance.”



more resources to build their local enterprises as well as other opportunities in the region. At Windigo where I work, we build our businesses to capture these

How many people live in your communities?

“ In our communities there is an average

of about 1000 people each so about 40,000 total population. We see increased activity particularly in the mining areas with more exploration and plans to build more mines. Along with that there is so much opportunity whether it be in the construction phase or production phase. There are opportunities in construction, engineering work, fuel supply etc.

How are you feeling about the progress of your communities?

“ Based on the last 3 - 5 years we are very, very happy with the progress of our communities. We need to get ready and know we can run and manage these businesses and be successful. We work together, share and exchange resources. Behind the scenes





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we are working, getting ready and looking for partners. It is very, very active at this time and I am happy to see that for our team.”

“ Our goal is to create meaningful long term employment for our communities and as we grow create partnerships to grow and expand. We are interested in the federal and provincial government transportation corridor. It will take time to get ready but is very important.”

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First Mining Gold Project Progressing Well!

BY SCOTT A. SUMNER
Thunder Bay BUSINESS

I asked Steve Lines, Vice President, Sustainability for First Mining Gold some questions recently at the NEEGANII-IISHAWIN Gathering 2026, about the Springpole project north of Sioux Lookout

Where are you based Steve?

“ I live in Quebec and travel a lot to Toronto, Montreal, Thunder Bay and Sioux Lookout, doing work with Ontario and the communities. Our head office is in Vancouver. My background is in ecology and environmental assessment.”

What mining projects does First Mining Gold have currently?

“ We have two of the largest gold projects in terms of the resource. One is our Springpole gold project, about 140 KM north in Sioux Lookout and the other near Rouyn-Noranda, Quebec- in Duparquet.”

Tell me about the Springpole mine project.

“ Springpole is currently a fly in exploration camp with the closest access being a forestry road about 18 km from the camp. In the summer we go in with float planes, in the shoulder season we use helicopters and in the winter when the ice is ready, we will fly in by plane.”

“ The project is in a well-advanced development stage. The deposit had been known for a very long time. First Gold acquired the project in 2015 and started working on the EA in 2018 /19. That is when the environment assessment processes were initiated with the Federal and Provincial governments. We are at the tail end of this, close to potential approvals by

about May and shortly thereafter.”

“ It will be an open pit mine. The deposit is largely located under a northern bay of Springpole Lake and the deposit sits under that and very similar to other



Above far right: Steve Lines, Vice President, Sustainability for First Mining Gold

northern mines in Canada. It is about 1 gram per ton of gold and we anticipate mining 30 thousand tons per day.”

“ To get access to the property we need to build an 18 km all weather road as well as do some work on the forestry road in terms of maintenance. We would haul in all the construction materials, say to build an accommodation complex. There are anticipated about 350 employees during the operation period. In the construction phase that number is about 700 people. We will need a processing plant to process the ore as well as runway strip to accommodate a Dash 8 type aircraft. There will also be your typical mining facilities including stock piles.”

What would be the output of the Springpole mine?

“ We would produce gold bars with possible recovery of about 4 Million oz of gold as well as 20 million oz of silver. In

the first five years we are talking about 300,000 oz of gold per year. Gold has crossed over \$5000 per oz US recently.”

“ It is a good time to be building a gold mine. We are traded on the Toronto Stock Exchange under the symbol FF.”

It seems like this will be a significant investment to get to an operating mine?

“ It is a very significant investment, we recently updated our pre-feasibility study and it will be about \$1.5 billion of upfront costs to build this project, which is in the ballpark for this type of mining project.”

“ We are looking to enter construction at some time in 2027. After the environmental assessments nearing completion, there

is a permitting process we would still need to work through. We would start with establishing site access, some clearing for laydown areas and with the accommodation complex to help facilitate the further construction. It is about a 3 year con-

struction process so it will be about 2030 to be operational.”

“ It is a long haul and comprehensive process to go through to have the opportunity to build a mine.”

The mine will create many opportunities for economic growth?

“We do consultation with the Indigenous communities all along the way and will continue throughout the life of the mine. There are tremendous opportunities for the communities around Springpole. There are infrastructure opportunities with roads and the transmission line. It is life changing for the community based on where they want to go and how we can help them achieve their goals.”

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Orla Musselwhite Continues Proud History

BY SCOTT A. SUMNER
Thunder Bay BUSINESS

I asked you some questions about the current mine operation at Orla Musselwhite.

1. Tell me briefly some history of the Musselwhite operation and when Orla got involved in the project?

Musselwhite Mine has a long and proud history, with many people and partners contributing to the ongoing sustainability and success of the operation. Musselwhite is a fly-in, fly-out underground gold mine located in Northern Ontario on the Southern shore of Opapimiskan Lake, about 500km north of Thunder Bay and is on the traditional territory of North Caribou Lake First Nation. The mine has been in commercial production since 1997 and is one of the largest gold mining operations in Canada. Previously owned by Placer Dome, GoldCorp, and Newmont Corporation, Musselwhite was recently fully acquired by Orla Mining, a Canadian mining company. This acquisition has expanded Orla's production and geographic diversification. Orla also operates the Camino Rojo Oxide Gold Mine in Zacatecas, Mexico, and is advancing their South Railroad Project located in Nevada. To date, Musselwhite Mine has produced over 6 million ounces of gold in its nearly 29-year operating history.

2. What is the current operation like in terms of how you operate, how many employees you have, do they live in Thunder Bay or other areas surrounding the mine site and the impact on our economy?

Orla Mining is committed to creating and maintaining a culture of workplace diversity, respecting and valuing the perspectives, experiences, cultures, and essential differences that everyone possesses.

Maintaining strong partnerships with the

Indigenous Communities, governments and businesses where we operate are paramount to the continued success of Musselwhite Mine. We strive to create lasting positive change by supporting the economic and social well-being of our host communities. Our goal is to ensure the benefits continue well beyond the life of mine, while keeping our impacts to a minimum.



By working together, we aim to foster trust and maintain genuine, positive relationships.

Today, the mine employs more than 1000



employees, including both full-time employees and contractors. While many do reside in the Thunder Bay region and Northern First Nation communities surrounding Musselwhite, our workforce extends across Canada and beyond.

3. How is the current operation going in terms of the amount of minerals that you are extracting, current pricing levels and how that affects your operation?

Orla Mining was extremely excited with the acquisition of the Musselwhite Mine for the quality team, operation and favourable geology. Great efforts have been achieved

to maximize our systems and processes to safely and sustainably advance mine production. Orla believes in a long future for this mine and has already investing significantly into the Musselwhite mine to extend mine life and improve mine productivity for many years to come.

4. Can you tell me some future potential or growth opportunities that you have at the Musselwhite operation or within Northwestern Ontario for your company?

Following Orla's acquisition of Musselwhite Mine in February 2025, the Company launched an aggressive two-year exploration program designed to test mine trend extensions, replace and expand underground resources, and identify potential shallow open-pit satellite deposits. Major exploration successes were announced in October 2025 with drilling confirming a potential two-kilometer extension of the mine's primary gold trend beyond current

resources; and since announcing this initial discovery, the drilling campaign has delivered consistent high-grade results across all priority areas, supporting potential mine life extensions and future operational expansions.

In November 2025, we celebrated and introduced a \$6.6 million fund that will help create new education and skills development for Indigenous youth and communities across Northwestern Ontario. Orla Mining is proud to partner with the 24 First Nations who equally own 51% of Wataynikaneyap Power on this important initiative, which will support scholarships, trades training, mentorship, STEM programs, and land-based learning, emphasizing cultural revitalization. Over a 10-year period, the fund will be administered by Opiikapawiiin Services, a service organization owned by the 24 First Nations. Wataynikaneyap Power's transmission system is bringing cleaner, more reliable electricity to remote First Nations in Northwestern Ontario, replacing diesel generation. By reinvesting funds provided for Wataynikaneyap Power's pre-development costs, we're helping ensure this benefit stays in the region and creates many new opportunities for current and future generations.

5. How does Orla Musselwhite feel about being a part of the Thunder Bay and Northwestern Ontario community?

At Musselwhite, we are very proud of the relationships, both old and new, that we have grown and maintained over the years in Thunder Bay and Northwestern Ontario and we are very fortunate to be able to give back to the communities where we operate. The work that we and each of our partners do every day is truly what makes a community thrive and we look forward to many more successful and exciting years ahead!

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Accelerated Mining Supervisor Common Core launches this spring

Streamlined training pathway for Ontario companies

Workplace Safety North (WSN) is pleased to announce the release of its new Accelerated Mining Supervisor Common Core training pathway launching in May.

The Accelerated pathway is a streamlined delivery option that allows mining supervisors to complete required training more quickly. Delivered over four to five days, each course provides practical instruction while meeting all Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD) Modular Training Standard requirements.

“We’re excited to introduce the Accelerated pathway, which gives mining operations the option to have supervisors trained in less time,” says Cindy Schiewek, WSN Executive Director of Health and Safety Services. “It responds directly to industry demand for more flexible training options, while maintaining the same high standards for quality and learner outcomes.”

In addition to the Accelerated pathway, WSN continues to offer its Classic pathway for Mining Supervisor Common Core training, a proven, in-depth approach to supervisor education. “The Classic pathway can be taken on its own or alongside the Accelerated pathway. It offers flexibility by allowing individual modules to be taken as needed. If someone wants to dive deeper into a focus area like managing employees or ground control, they can do that,” says Schiewek. “To enhance training, our Health and Safety Specialists can support employers with one-to-one coaching in the workplace, helping supervisors apply what they learned in the classroom.”

Both training pathways meet all MLITSD requirements and are delivered to the same



quality standards.

“Training will be offered regularly in Sudbury, Timmins, and Thunder Bay, providing reliable access to legislated supervisor training across northern Ontario,” says Schiewek. “Employers will also be able to book training at their site if preferred.”

Starting this summer and running until March 31, 2027, WSN is offering free online refresher training for supervisors who have already completed a WSN Common Core program. This training helps supervisors stay up to date on legislation and workplace safety changes.

To recognize participants’ commitment to workplace safety, those who complete any WSN Mining Supervisor Common Core program will receive a free miner’s lunchbox.

Help make your workplace safer and register today: Mining Common Core for First Line Supervisors | Workplace Safety North

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About Workplace Safety North

An independent not-for-profit, Workplace Safety North (WSN) is one of four sector-based health and safety associations in Ontario. Headquartered in northern Ontario, WSN administers the Ontario mine rescue program and provides province-wide Ministry-approved workplace health and safety training and services for the mining and forest products

industries.

With health and safety specialists and mine rescue officers located across the province, WSN and its legacy organizations have been helping make Ontario workplaces safer for more than 100 years. A leading provider of health and safety training and consulting, businesses call upon WSN for expert advice and information. For more information, visit workplacesafetynorth.ca.

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Company to Discontinue Newsprint Mill Operations in Q1 2026

Citing a uniquely large decline in demand for newsprint over the past several years, Thunder Bay Pulp and Paper announced recently that it will file notices with the

Ontario Ministry of Labour to cease newsprint operations in Thunder Bay in Q1 2026

This decision was made only after significant efforts to reposition the company within the evolving and rapidly declining newsprint market were fully explored. The impacts of declining market demand were further compounded by significant increases in input costs. Up to 150 people will be directly impacted by the closure.

region.”

Thunder Bay Pulp and Paper will continue to operate as a single-line Softwood Kraft mill and generate renewable energy for sale to the grid while driving the local and regional economy with up to 7,000 jobs when reliant sawmills and others in the

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The company is working closely with the local unions and all levels of government to ensure affected employees have access to employment transition supports, retraining programs, and other necessary resources.

“North American newsprint demand has declined by 40% since 2022 when Atlas Holdings purchased the company. Demand for newsprint in North America declined 18% in 2025 alone. Demand decline is the most insurmountable factor in the decision to cease newsprint production in Thunder Bay,” says Norm Bush, CEO of Thunder Bay Pulp and Paper. “This was a very difficult decision, and we know how deeply it affects our employees and their families. After more than 100 years of operating in the Thunder Bay community, we also understand that the impacts extend beyond the mill, affecting local businesses, Indigenous partners, and the broader

supply chain are accounted for. In the months ahead, the company will work with the federal and provincial governments to refine its plans for new investments in the Softwood Kraft Pulp mill and appreciates the support of Premier Ford and his government in ensuring the company remains the anchor mill of Northwestern Ontario’s Forestry Sector. The paper machine will be safely shuttered in a condition that could enable future conversion.

“As a company, we are not going anywhere. We are the anchor mill here in Northwestern Ontario, and we will continue to be. We will work collaboratively with all stakeholders as this transition unfolds and we position the company for a bright future in Ontario,” concludes Bush.

The Forestry & Mining Industries within our region - March Feature

NORTH SUPERIOR
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Government of Canada invests over \$1.5 million in mining facilities and innovation in Northern Ontario

FedNor funding will support AI development and help NORCAT expand its Underground Centre

In a rapidly changing world, Canada's Government is focused on what we can control; building a stronger more resilient Canada. Through strategic investments that help us empower Canadians, communities and industries that drive our economy forward, including Northern Ontario's globally recognized mining innovation sector.

That is why, Viviane Lapointe, Member of Parliament for Sudbury announced that FedNor is investing \$1,560,000 to help NORCAT and LoopX advance two strategic initiatives designed to support innovation and growth in the mining sector, while creating good jobs. The announcement was made on behalf of the Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for FedNor.

Through FedNor's Regional Economic Growth Through Innovation Fund (REGI), NORCAT will receive \$1,080,000 to complete phase III of its Underground Centre expansion. This final phase represents the completion of a 550 square-meter space with state-of-the-art shop and mechanic facilities, equipment and tools, offices and meeting rooms, and learning spaces. This expansion builds on the recently completed 1,100-square-meter facility in Onaping Falls, supporting NORCAT's continued role as a global one-stop shop in mining technology and innovation.

Once complete, this project is expected to create over 15 new jobs and to support NORCAT's capacity to serve over 25 unique technology clients per year. In addition, over 10 mining technology businesses will be created, expanded, or modernized because of access to the new infrastructure, tools, and equipment this initiative will help provide.

As part of today's announcement, LoopX will receive \$480,000 to advance the development and commercialization of its generative AI-powered analytics system. This technology will enable safer, more efficient mining operations by improving real-time decision-making and operational awareness. It will also support new jobs, specialized equipment, supplies, and intellectual property protection, helping bring the technology closer to market.

By supporting world-class mining innovation, cutting-edge AI solutions, and local industries, Canada's Government is ensuring that Northern Ontario continues to prosper as a leader in mining technology. These projects will help create good jobs, strengthen regional economies, and position the sector for long-term success.

Quotes

"Canada's government is focused on what we can control: building a strong and resilient Canada. Through FedNor, we're helping build the infrastructure that supports innovation, protecting the strength of key sectors and, empowering Northern Ontario's workers to succeed. Today's investment not only supports the growth of organizations like NORCAT and LoopX, it helps drive long-term prosperity across the region."

• The Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister Jobs and Families and Minister Responsible for FedNor

"Greater Sudbury is a mining powerhouse, and organizations like NORCAT and LoopX are a big reason we remain a market known for innovation and production. This investment of over \$1.5 million will help create opportunities and foster new development by

helping to meet the industry demands of today and tomorrow. Resilience for the Sudbury region requires innovation to help move our economy forward, and partnerships with organizations like these will help make that happen."

• Viviane Lapointe, Member of Parliament for Sudbury

"NORCAT is proud to be a locally-driven organization that promotes, educates, and supports entrepreneurs, innovators, and workers. Thanks to support from FedNor and the Government of Canada, we will continue to help our clients fulfill their diverse and ambitious priorities by providing them with the skills and confidence to do so. Our impact is measured by the success of our partners, and we are proud to help them achieve excellence."

• Greg Major, Director, NORCAT Underground Centre



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Prosperity Northwest Conference Focuses on Regional Growth Opportunities and Partnerships

The Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce and the Anishnawbe Business Professional Association held the Prosperity Northwest Business Conference & Trade Show January 27 & 28. The presenting sponsor was Enbridge Gas.

“Inspiring partnership and sustainable growth for Northwestern Ontario” is the theme. Prosperity Northwest focuses on regional and procurement opportunities in the mining, energy, forestry, bioeconomy sectors. January 27th fea-

tured a welcome reception followed by a full day conference and tradeshow on January 28th with both taking place at the Valhalla Hotel & Conference Centre.

Presentations and panel discussion topics include:

- Northwestern State of Mind: Trade, Tariffs and Rewriting Canada’s Value Proposition on the World Stage
- Opportunities Ahead: Strengthening Innovation in Northwestern Ontario



- Beyond Platitudes: Equitable Pathways to Prosperity in Project Development
- Project Update — Frontier Lithium: Building Canada’s Integrated Lithium Future
- Accessing Federal Government Procurement Opportunities – Defence and Beyond
- Procurement & Matchmaking Session

THUNDER BAY BUSINESS

2026 DEADLINE / PRINTING / DISTRIBUTION DATES

Issue	Ad Copy Deadline 4PM Friday	Printing Deadline Friday	Distribution Date	Topic
February	January 23	January 27	February 1	Financial/Legal
March	February 20	February 24	March 1	Forestry/Mining
April	March 23	March 30	April 1	Transport
May	April 20	April 7	May 2	Construction
June	May 22	May 26	June 1	Report On Thunder Bay
July	June 23	June 27	July 2	Manufacturing
August	July 24	July 28	Aug 1	Environment
September	August 21	August 24	September 2	Education
October	September 21	September 8	October 1	Aboriginal
November	October 23	October 27	November 2	Health/Remembrance Day
December	November 20	November 23	December 2	Technology/Christmas
January	December 18	December 22	January 4	Fitness

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Polaris Unveils 2027 Snowmobile Lineup Built for Confidence, Capability, and Rider-First Performance

Polaris Inc. (NYSE: PII), the global leader in powersports, announced its 2027 snowmobile lineup, delivering a new level of performance and innovation across mountain, trail, and utility riding. From race-proven mountain machines to premium trail performers and rugged Nordic-tested utility sleds, the 2027 lineup reflects Polaris' commitment to building top-performing sleds for every rider.

"At Polaris, we set a high bar for perform-



ance and reliability — because our riders expect it, and so do we. With the 2027 lineup, we advanced power, response, and capability in ways that reflect the strength and focus of our team," said Jenny Nack, vice president and general manager of Polaris Snow. "Reliability is engineered into these machines from the first design sketch to the last validation mile. Each model has been pushed, proven, and refined to perform in the toughest conditions."



RMK Factory Edition and RMK SPS:
Maximum Performance for Mountain Riders

Polaris continues to advance capability for mountain riders with the 2027 RMK Factory Edition and RMK SPS, each engineered for two distinct types of riders.

INDYVR1: Trail Performance Elevated

For more than four decades, INDY has defined trail performance. Polaris elevates

the INDY VR1 once again in 2027 by pairing its precise handling and ride comfort with the ultra-responsive Patriot 9R engine. This highly requested combination — uniting 9R power with DYNAMIX Active Suspension's real-time shock adjustments — sharpens handling and enhances ride quality by continuously adapting to terrain inputs

and rider movement. The result is a sled that feels coordinated with the rider, reacts instantly, and builds confidence on every mile. The 2027 Patriot 9R INDY VR1 is offered exclusively through SnowCheck.

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City of Thunder Bay seeking public feedback on new Council governance structure

The City of Thunder Bay is inviting residents to provide feedback on changes made to City Council’s governance structure earlier this year.

In July 2025, City Council approved a new model that replaced the former Committee of the Whole structure with three Standing Committees: Finance & Administration, Quality of Life, and Growth. The new model came into effect in September 2025.

The Standing Committee model has smaller groups of Councillors review reports, discuss

issues in greater detail within specific focus areas, and make recommendations to City Council. As before, Council continues have the final debate and vote on all decisions.

The change was designed to streamline meetings, improve focus on key areas of City business, and make the decision-making process clearer for the public.

“Governance models aren’t something most residents think about day to day, but they play an important role in how effectively Council does its work,” said Krista Power,

City Clerk. “The Standing Committee structure allows Council members to spend more time on specific subject areas, to help organize discussions more clearly, and to support more efficient meetings overall.”

Public feedback previously helped inform the recommendations that led to the new structure. Now that it has been in place for several months, the City is seeking input on how it is functioning.

Residents are encouraged to share their thoughts on:

- How the new structure is working
- Whether it feels clear and understandable
- How it could be improved

The survey is available at www.thunderbay.ca/getinvolved, and only takes a few minutes to complete. Feedback is welcome from all residents, whether they follow Council meetings regularly or only occasionally.



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