

IMPLICATIONS OF A NORTHERN CORRIDOR ON SOFT INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE NORTH AND NEAR NORTH

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OUTLINE

- Soft infrastructure deficits across the North and near North illustrate the interconnections between health care, housing, education, emergency services and employment, and thus necessitate a comprehensive, systems view on deficits and their impact to individual and community well-being;
- Sparse settlement patterns and a lack of permanent roads in many areas has led to significant challenges vis-à-vis the transportation of people and goods, exacerbating the costs of soft infrastructure delivery and limiting the possibilities for responding innovatively to community-identified soft infrastructural needs;
- There is significant potential for the development of hard infrastructure to support the resilience of northern peoples and communities in the face of climate change;
- Accessibility and connection, affordability, recruitment and retention, and Indigenous self-determination and northern autonomy are all areas in need of support and expansion across the landscape of soft infrastructure in the North and near North;
- Consultation of northern community members and leaders, and their meaningful and sustained engagement across all stages of northern corridor development, is critical if such a northern corridor is to benefit northern peoples, communities and regions;
- Policies prioritizing northern and Indigenous businesses in order to benefit from hard infrastructural development are necessary to limit leakage of economic benefits from northern communities;
- Accessible education and training of northerners is necessary to ensure they can benefit from employment opportunities created through hard infrastructure expansion;
- Strong policy around extractive industry to ensure the distribution of mining revenues and benefits is key to ensuring relative economic well-being and to avoid potential political conflicts between individual communities and the governments and organizations that represent them;
- Appropriate policy development and community planning will be required in order to plan accordingly and to provide the necessary supports and resources for northerners relocating to regional centres and/or to support smaller communities in ensuring an equitable distribution of services, supports and opportunities.