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TBDHU.COM

July 20, 2026

The Right Honourable Mark Carney, Prime Minister of Canada
80 Wellington Street Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Sent via email: PM@pm.gc.ca

The Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

Sent via email: Premier@ontario.ca

Re: Improving Highway Safety in Northern Ontario

Dear Prime Minister Carney and Premier Ford,

On June 17, 2026, at a regular meeting of the Board of Health (the Board) for the Thunder Bay District Health Unit (TBDHU), the Board considered a letter from Northeastern Public Health (NEPH), which calls upon Federal and Provincial governments to improve highway safety in Northern Ontario with investments in infrastructure, considerations for equity, and proactive safety measures. The Board also received an update on Ontario's commitment to improve safety measures along the Highway 11/17 corridor, including increased enforcement, infrastructure improvements, and better support for commercial traffic.

The Trans-Canada Highway is a critical lifeline for residents of Northern Ontario, providing essential access to health care, education, employment, and other vital services. However, communities in the Thunder Bay District face significant threats to safety due to inadequate highway infrastructure and challenging road conditions. These risks are compounded by the region's long distances between communities, severe weather, heavy commercial traffic, and wildlife hazards.

Within the TBDHU region, land transport incidents (LTIs) are a cause of concern as they account for the third highest category (6.9%) of all emergency department visits for unintentional injuries. There are typically 1.5 times more LTIs in the TBDHU region compared to provincial rates.

With respect to provincial highways, Ontario Road Safety Annual Report data from 2015-2022 show that provincial highways consistently produced the largest share of roadway deaths in Thunder Bay District. While municipal roads generated many lower severity collisions, highway crashes were far more likely to result in fatal outcomes. This pattern reflects the unique transportation realities of Northwestern Ontario, where residents depend on long stretches of high-speed highways for work, health care, education, and essential services.

Several municipalities and unorganized areas experienced notable increases in collision activity over the 2015-2022 time period. Areas such as Greenstone and Oliver Paipoonge showed growth in reported collisions, reflecting increasing transportation pressures along major highway corridors.

Given the impact of land transport incidents in our catchment area, the TBDHU Board of Health endorses the letter and recommendations put forward by NEPH, and urges swift action on measures to improve safety along the Highway 11/17 corridor in Northern Ontario, a critical segment of the Trans-Canada Highway.

Sincerely,



James McPherson
Chair, Board of Health
Thunder Bay District Health Unit

cc:

The Honourable Steven MacKinnon, Minister of Transport
The Honourable Prabmeet Sarkaria, Minister of Transportation
Marcus Powlowski, MP – Thunder Bay – Rainy River
Patty Hajdu, MP – Thunder Bay- Superior North
Kevin Holland, MPP – Thunder Bay – Atikokan
Lise Vaugeois, MPP – Thunder Bay – Superior North
Northern Ontario Boards of Health
TBDHU District Municipalities



Northeastern
PUBLIC HEALTH
SANTÉ PUBLIQUE
du Nord-Est

January 14, 2026

The Right Honourable Mark Carney, Prime Minister of Canada
80 Wellington Street Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2
Sent via email: PM@pm.gc.ca

The Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1
Sent via email: Premier@ontario.ca

Dear Prime Minister Carney and Premier Ford

Re: Highway Safety in Northern Ontario

Highway safety in Northern Ontario has been a long-standing concern for Northern communities with tremendous tragic losses of beloved community members, impacts on local economies with frequent inability to access to work, education and necessary social and health care services. In addition, the Board of Health for the Northeastern Health Unit has seen the negative impacts and delays in emergency response systems during public health emergencies across the region. Please find enclosed a resolution along with a Briefing report outlining issues, impacts to public health, evidence and key recommended interventions for the improved development of Northern highways.

The Board of Health respectfully requests careful and urgent consideration of options to address highway safety and accessibility. While ensuring the same standards are available at minimum for residents of Northern Ontario would be preferred with four lane highways that are consistently cleared, FONOM's letter *A Nation-Building Case for a 2+1 Highway for enhanced east-west Canadian trade* issued by the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities (FONOM), shared important options for consideration. The Northern population already experiences poorer health outcomes on most indicators compared to the rest of the province, and prioritizing highway safety and accessibility across Northern Ontario is critical to protecting and preserving the health of our communities.

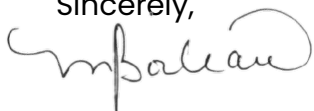
On behalf of the Board of Health, thank you for the attention that you will give to this report.

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Sincerely,



Michelle Boileau

Chair, Board of Health

Northeastern Public Health

Copies to:

Right Honourable Mark Carney, Prime Minister of Canada

The Honourable, Steven Mackinnon, Minister of Transportation

Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario

Honourable Prabmeet Sarkaria, Minister of Transportation

Honourable Jill Dunlop, Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Response

Honourable Sylvia Jones, Minister of Health

Honourable Paul Calandra, Minister of Education

Honourable Michael S. Kerzner, Solicitor General

Honourable George Pirie, Minister Northern Economic Development and Growth, Member of Provincial Parliament – Timmins

Guy Bourgoin, Member of Provincial Parliament – Mushkegowuk – James Bay

John Vanthof, Member of Provincial Parliament – Timiskaming – Cochrane

Bill Rosenberg Member of Provincial Parliament – Algoma – Manitoulin

Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH)

NEPH member municipalities

Commissioner Thomas Carrique, Ontario Provincial Police

Ontario Boards of Health

Association of Local Public Health Agencies (ALPHA)

Board of Health for the Northeastern Health Unit

Encl: Northeastern Public Health Resolution BOH – 2025-R-51 Improving Highway Safety and Equity in Northern Ontario Early

Northeastern Public Health Briefing Note – Northern Highways

Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities A Nation Building Case for a 2+ 1 Highway for Enhanced east-west Canadian Trade



October 23, 2025

SUBJECT: Improving Highway Safety and Equity in Northern Ontario

At the October 23rd meeting, the Board of Health for the Northeastern Health Unit, supported this motion to highlight the need to address Northern highway safety.

The following motion was read:

MOVED BY: Andrew Marks

SECONDED BY: Jeff Laferriere

Board of Health Resolution #BOH-2025-R-51

WHEREAS Highway safety is a critical public health issue in Northern Ontario, where long distances between communities, severe weather, heavy commercial transport traffic, and wildlife hazards increase risks for residents, service providers, and emergency responders. Spanning more than 11,000 kilometres, Highways 11, 17, 101, and 144 serve as lifelines, connecting Northeastern communities to the rest of the province (2). These routes are vital links in the Trans-Canada Highway system, providing essential access to health care, education, employment, and basic services (1,2); and,

WHEREAS From 2018 to 2022, emergency department visits for motor vehicle collisions in the Northeastern Public Health (NEPH) region were consistently 1.6 to 2.0 times higher than the Ontario average, highlighting both the region's elevated collision risk and its heavy reliance on these critical corridors (8); and,

WHEREAS The Northern region records the highest rate of large-truck collisions in Ontario – 94% higher than the next highest region and over three times higher than the lowest – as well as the highest fatality rate from motor vehicle collisions, 27.8% above the next highest region and 15.5 times higher than the lowest (7,8); and, serious and fatal collisions along with prolonged road closures, hinder access to goods and essential services, delay emergency response and jeopardize the well-being and safety of Northern Ontario

WHEREAS Northern communities, including Indigenous and First Nation communities and Francophone populations (32.8% Francophone, 17.5% Indigenous), face significant barriers to health care that are intensified by highway closures, isolating residents from emergency care and essential services. These inequities are further exacerbated for First Nations and Indigenous peoples, rooted in historical trauma and reflected in ongoing disparities in access to care, essential services, and overall health outcomes (3,4,5). Unsafe and unreliable highways deepen these inequities, threaten community well-being, and widen gaps in overall health and quality of life; and,

WHEREAS Limited access to primary care and medical specialists further compounds the challenge. In 2022–2023, more than 170,000 Northern Health Travel Grants were issued to assist 66,000 residents with travel and accommodation for medical needs, demonstrating the region’s dependence on long-distance highway travel for essential health care (6); and,

WHEREAS Each year, Northern Ontario roads experience increasing numbers of drivers and collisions, traveling on highways that are substandard, outdated, and unsafe (1). Every day, more than 8,400 trucks transport over \$200 million in goods across these same routes, which have limited passing lanes, inadequate shoulders, and numerous high-collision zones (10). Current highway designs lack sufficient median separation, safe passing lanes, and refuge zones, increasing the risk of head-on collisions and dangerous overtaking, especially under winter conditions; and,

WHEREAS Investing in safer Northern Ontario highways is a matter of health equity(10). Residents of Northern Ontario and First Nation communities deserve the same level of safety, accessibility and opportunity as those in southern regions, and the continued loss of life on unsafe roads is unacceptable (9, 10).

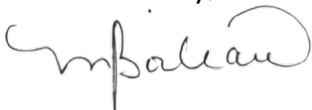
WHEREAS FONOM and Northern municipalities propose the 2+1 upgrade on Highways 11 and 17, including *North Bay to Cochrane* and *Renfrew to Sudbury* in Phase 1, and *Cochrane to Nipigon*, *Thunder Bay to Kenora*, and *Sault Ste. Marie to Sudbury* in Phase 2 recognizing this alternating passing lane design with a crash-rated median barrier is proven, safe and cost-effective fit for Northern Ontario, and reducing fatal crashes by up to 76% (10);

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT The Board of Health for the Northeastern Health Unit calls upon the Government of Ontario and Canada to prioritize highway safety and equity across Northern Ontario by:

1. Committing to the full, phased implementation of the 2+1 highway model along Highways 11, 144 and 17 as a priority investment in safety and health equity
2. Collaborating with northern Municipalities, First Nation communities and urban First Nation, Inuit and Metis partners to ensure infrastructure planning incorporates health, safety and equity considerations.
3. Designating high-collision and high-risk zones for safety upgrades, with priority for sections that affect emergency response, health-care access, and the delivery of essential goods and services.

CARRIED AS PRESENTED

Sincerely,



Chair Michelle Boileau,
Board of Health for the Northeastern Health Unit

Copies to: Right Honourable Mark Carney, Prime Minister of Canada
The Honourable, Steven Mackinnon, Minister of Transportation
Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario
Honourable Prabmeet Sarkaria, Minister of Transportation
Honourable Jill Dunlop, Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Response
Honourable Sylvia Jones, Minister of Health
Honourable Paul Calandra, Minister of Education
Honourable Michael S. Kerzner, Solicitor General
Honourable George Pirie, Minister Northern Economic Development and Growth, Member of Provincial Parliament – Timmins
Guy Bourgoïn, Member of Provincial Parliament – Mushkegowuk – James Bay
John Vanthof, Member of Provincial Parliament – Timiskaming – Cochrane
Bill Rosenberg Member of Provincial Parliament – Algoma – Manitoulin
Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH)
NEPH member municipalities
Commissioner Thomas Carrique, Ontario Provincial Police
Ontario Boards of Health
Association of Local Public Health Agencies (ALPHA)
Board of Health for the Northeastern Health Unit

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Briefing Note:
Northern Highways

Issue

Northern Ontario highways pose serious risks. Dangerous single lane designs, narrow winding roads, unpaved shoulders, harsh winters, and limited emergency access (i.e. poor cellular service, intermittent patrols, few exits and rest stops). Northern highways carry heavy-load commercial vehicles and residents who rely on them for specialized and life-saving medical care, amenities, employment and education (1, 2). Alongside serious and fatal collisions, prolonged road closures and delays hinder timely access to goods and essential services, slow emergency response time with concern for timely life saving measures and overall well-being of Northern Ontarians.

Background

Road safety is not just a concern – it is a critical public health issue. Every year, Northern Ontario roads see more drivers, and more collisions (1). Northern Ontario highways span over 11, 000 km, with highways 11, 17, 101 and 144 serving as lifelines connecting Northeast communities to the rest of the province (2). These highways are crucial links in the Trans-Canada highway and essential routes for residents who need access to healthcare, education and basic services.

The Impact on Public Health:

During the COVID-19 pandemic and a blastomycosis outbreak in a remote First Nation community, Northern Ontario's single-road access to remote communities failed. A three-day highway closure delayed critical healthcare and access to supplies. Throughout the pandemic, vaccine shipments were constantly at risk from road conditions, and healthcare workers faced dangerous commutes to reach isolated communities.

- The Northeastern region is shared with 11 First Nations, many without road access (3, 4).
- **Rural and Vulnerable Populations:** Higher rates of residents who identify as Francophone (32.8% vs. 3.3% Ontario), Indigenous (17.8 % vs. 2.9% Ontario) (4). The Northeastern Public Health (NEPH) area has a larger rural population (32.9%) compared to the province (13.3%) (17, 18).
- **Poorer Overall Health:** Elevated rates of chronic disease and preventable deaths (associated factors such as smoking and substance use, increased cost of living, and lack of affordable nutritious foods) (5).

- **Lack of Healthcare Services:** 2.5 million in Ontario do not have a family doctor (16). In 2022-2023, about 170,000 Northern Health Travel Grants were issued for 66,000 residents' travel and accommodation needs (6).
- **Increase Use:** In just one year, the number of licensed drivers increased by 170, 877 individuals with a staggering total of 10, 877, 259 driving on Ontario roads in 2021 (1).

Current Status

The Ministry of Transportation has made some initial investments in Northern Ontario's highways, but it is not enough. These efforts are a start, but fall short to the actions needed:

- Expanding parts of Highways 11/17 and 69 (2).
- Piloting a 2+1 passing lane model on highway 11 (7).
- Improvements to and addition of rest areas (2, 8).
- Enhancements the Cochrane by-pass, 11 to 652 (2).

Winter highway clearing is inadequate. The MTO strives for 90% bare pavement, but in Northern Ontario, this translates to subpar standards that fall short of those in other areas of the province. In Northern Ontario, minor highways (servicing 401-800 vehicles per day) only require the center lanes to be cleared within 24 hours after a storm. For local highways (service an average 400 vehicles per day), the standard permits for snow-packed driving surfaces within 24 hours post-storm.

Minor improvements have been announced, yet none address the need for adequate clearing times to meet bare pavement standards, leaving safety compromised:

- 14 new Road Weather Information System (RWIS) stations for winter crews.
- Enhanced use of anti-icing liquids for highway snow clearing.
- Upgrades to the Ontario 511 app (limited cellular service restricts access to this app) (8).

Key Considerations

Human behaviour inevitably increases the risk of highway injuries and deaths with distracted driving, high speeds, substance impairment, and fatigue as major factors (9). In 2022, the Northern region led in motor vehicle collisions due to each of these causal factors: alcohol/drugs, distraction, seatbelt non-use, speed. The Northern region was higher by 2.5 to 4.6 times compared to other regions (10).

The Evidence

- **Injury Rates:** From 2018 to 2022, Northeastern ED visits due to motor vehicle collisions consistently exceeded the Ontario rate – 1.6 to 2.0 times higher than the Ontario average (2018-2022) (11).
- **Truck Collision:** The Northern region reported the highest rate of large trucks collisions in Ontario - 94% higher than the next highest region and 3.1 times higher than the lowest region (11).

- **Cost of Transport-Related Injuries:** In 2019, transport-related injuries in Ontario cost over \$1.3. billion annually, with motor vehicle collisions accounting for the highest cost, even before pedestrian and cycling collisions (12).
- **Fatalities:** Between 2018 and 2022 the Northern region recorded the highest fatalities from motor vehicle collisions - 27.8% above the next highest region and 15.5 times higher than the lowest (10, 11).
- **Impact on Emergency Response:** Poor highway conditions and closures have repeatedly prevented paramedics from reaching their regional bases, jeopardizing emergency response:

"Ensuring our highways are properly maintained, especially in Northern Ontario, is critical for the safety of all road users. Improved highway cleaning and maintenance can significantly reduce the risk of motor vehicle collisions, which have devastating consequences for families and communities. Additionally, highway closures not only cost lives but also hinder our ability to respond to emergencies and assign paramedics where they are needed most. Keeping our highways clear is essential for saving lives and ensuring that emergency services can reach those in need without delay." Marc Renaud, Chief (A) of Cochrane District Paramedic Service

- **Essential Services Perspective:** Luc Mignault, a local business owner and tow truck operator, highlighted how lengthy highway closures severely impact safe, timely travel across Northern Ontario. Northern Ontario highways require commercial drivers to navigate unique challenges, including rapidly changing weather and remote, single-lane routes. To address these specific risks, additional training and education for drivers of heavy-load vehicles are essential, equipping them to respond safely to Northern Ontario's demanding conditions.
- **Public Concern:** A 2021 national survey found that road safety to be a top 5 priority of Canadians, yet fewer than half feel safe on our roads (39% vs 46%) (13).

Options

Vision Zero has cut road mortality by 68% in Sweden from 2000 to 2019 and by 50% in Edmonton between 2015 and 2021. A zero-tolerance approach to road injuries demands a system-wide commitment from policy makers, law enforcement, road users and roadway designers (14).

Key interventions are recommended for the improved development of Northern highways:

1. **Target High-Risk Areas:** Assess collision prone sites in the Northeast, especially where vulnerable road-users are at risk (15).
2. **Overhaul Winter Maintenance Standards:** Prioritize timely, effective winter clearing, especially in rural and remote areas and align Northern Ontario's bare pavement standards with the rest of the province. **Equitable standards across Ontario are essential to ensuring safe, accessible roads for all residents, no matter where they live.**
3. **Expand Emergency and Law Enforcement Presence:** Enhanced presence of emergency respondents and law enforcement, for effective intervention.
4. **Strengthen Road Safety Education:** Implement targeted education for both commercial and residential road-users, addressing specific risks on Northern Highways.
5. **Revise Emergency Response Plans:** Update plans for motor vehicle collisions where closures are expected to exceed 8-12 hours, ensuring readiness for extended incidents.

6. **Expand Cellular Coverage:** Commit to improving cellular infrastructure to ensure travelers can access emergency services and real-time updates.
7. **Implement 2+1 Road Designs:** Expand the piloting of 2+1 highway model with alternating passing lanes on major Northern routes to reduce head-on collisions and allow safer passing in high-traffic areas.
8. **Increase Lighting and Signage:** Install better lighting and clear, reflective signage on high-risk stretches to improve visibility, especially in winter conditions.
9. **Install Safety Measures:** Install safety features (i.e., barriers, rumble strips), to prevent vehicles from veering off-road and to reduce the severity of collisions.
10. **Expand and Enhance Rest Stops and Road Shoulders:** Increase the number of safe and accessible rest stops to reduce driver fatigue and support commercial and long-distance drivers. Improve road shoulders to provide essential space for emergency stops and safer travel. Appropriately maintained rest stops.

Conclusion

The built environment has direct impact on preventable road injuries and deaths. Moving to a Vision Zero framework requires action from policy makers and influencers to enact meaningful change. With increasing numbers of vulnerable road users in the Northeast, urgent improvements in infrastructure, highway maintenance, emergency response, and management of highway closures and delays are essential. **Northern Ontario's road safety crisis demands immediate, decisive action.**

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Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities

July 15, 2025

The Right Honourable Mark Carney Prime Minister of Canada

80 Wellington Street Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

SENT BY EMAIL: PM@pm.gc.ca

The Honourable Doug Ford Premier of Ontario

Legislative Building, Queen's Park

Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

SENT BY EMAIL: Premier@ontario.ca

Dear Prime Minister Carney and Premier Ford,

Subject: *A Nation-Building Case for a 2+1 Highway for enhanced east-west Canadian trade*

in Alignment with Prime Minister Carney's Five Criteria

Purpose

This briefing presents a compelling case for federal investment in upgrading Northern Ontario's Highway 11 and Highway 17, utilizing **the proven 2+1 highway model**. Supported by evidence in infrastructure policy, safety, economic performance, and national security, the proposal aligns directly with the **five nation-building criteria** set out by Prime Minister Carney under the ***Building Canada Act***.

We propose a two-phase approach:

- **Phase 1**
 - Construct 2+1 on **Highway 11 segments from North Bay to Cochrane**
 - Construct 2+1 on **Highway 17 from Renfrew to Sudbury**

- **Phase 2**

- Extend the 2+1 **configuration from Cochrane to Nipigon on Highway 11**
- Construct the 2+1 **configuration from Thunder Bay to Kenora on Highway 11 and 17**
- Construct 2+1 on **Highway 17 from Sault Ste. Marie to Sudbury**

This initiative is far more than a regional infrastructure upgrade—it is a nation-building investment. It will strengthen Canada's internal connectivity, improve transportation resilience, and contribute to long-term economic growth, safety, and sovereignty.

Background

With the **Building Canada Act** in place, the Government of Canada is proceeding with consultations with provinces, territories and Indigenous rights-holders to determine the initial list of national interest projects. This proposal presents a project deemed of national interest.

The **Building Canada Act** focuses on creating a unified Canadian economy that promotes enhanced trade between the east and west within Canada. It also focuses on the development of major nation-building projects that will likely involve the transportation of large industrial materials for building. With a vast land area and diverse geography, an efficient transportation network is crucial for connectivity and facilitating the movement of materials.

While air and rail form part of Canada's transportation network, **highways and trucking are the backbone of Canada's transportation system**, connecting major cities, towns and rural communities. Trucking companies and drivers rely on governments to ensure a well-connected transportation network, including highways, major routes, border crossings, and ports, for efficient and safe operations. In turn, knowing the most efficient and safe highways and routes helps truckers save time, fuel, and operational costs.

The Trans-Canada Highway itself—of which Highways 17 and 11 are a vital part—is the **longest continuous national highway in the world**, connecting all ten provinces and three territories. During the Great Depression, the federal government funded the highway's early development as a job-creation initiative and a strategic investment in national cohesion. Over \$19 million was allocated to the provinces to construct a continuous road, enabling Canadians to travel across the Dominion without entering the United States. **That same nation-building spirit is now needed once again in Northern Ontario.**

Proposal

Except for Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, and Ontario, most of the routes used by truckers crossing Canada are four-lane highways. In Ontario, truckers heading east from Manitoba or west from Quebec can choose to cross the province via Highway 17, the Trans-Canada Highway, or Highway 11, and what is now known as the **Northern Trans-Canada Route**. Truckers travelling from Toronto to western Canada can choose to take either 1) Highway 69 to Highway 17, then join the **Northern Route** of Highway 11 via West Nipissing and King's Highway 64, or 2) Highway 11 to North Bay, then the **Northern Route**. Almost all sections of Highways 17 and 11 between the Manitoba border and Renfrew in eastern Ontario are two lanes, except for ongoing highway

twinning projects near Nipigon and west of Thunder Bay, as well as a small, complete section east of Sault Ste. Marie. A small section of twinning has also been completed at Arnprior.

With Ontario being Canada's busiest province for truck traffic, these vital highways, which are linked to much of the country's economic activity, need to be considered for continued expansion beyond their existing two-lane profile. From their early days, they have formed part of Canada's **critical national corridor**, from playing a foundational role in connecting Canada's frontier communities to enable economic development and assert national sovereignty across the North. Unfortunately, road safety and infrastructure conditions in northern Ontario are deteriorating, according to the Ontario Trucking Association. Their primary concern is the danger of passing other vehicles. In turn, the Truckers for Safer Highways association recently stated: "People and truckers are dying on these highways!" That is why the Federation of Northern Municipalities, an organization representing 110 cities, towns and municipalities, has been a consistent and vocal advocate for the adoption of the 2+1 highway model in Northern Ontario. This cost-effective, safety-enhancing design has proven successful in many countries, including Sweden, Finland, and Australia. A 2+1 highway expands on a 2-lane road by implementing continuously alternating passing lanes and separates opposing directions of traffic with a crash-rated median barrier, resulting in safety outcomes that are equal to fully twinned highways.

The Government of Ontario is responding and has announced two pivotal initiatives that mark a turning point for Highway 11, offering a clear opportunity for federal collaboration. First, a **pilot project** is scheduled to commence in 2026 on a 2+1 highway segment between **North Bay and Temagami**. Second, the province committed to extending the 2+1 configuration further north, from **Temiskaming Shores to Cochrane**. These two segments lay the groundwork for a scalable, long-term corridor strategy—a shared infrastructure vision well-suited to a federal-provincial nation-building partnership that would see a phased approach to northern Ontario's highway development.

Data from Statistics Canada (see Appendix A) highlights that a five-year average from 2013 to 2017, over 925,000 truck shipments were made between Western Canada and the Toronto/Montreal region via two-lane highways in Northern Ontario. By comparison, 960,005 between Toronto and Montréal, 206,574 between Toronto and Hamilton and 96,607 between Toronto and Windsor — routes served by four-lane highways. Put simply, there is as much transport traffic on Highway 17 and 11 as on the Highway 401 corridor—but it is forced to spread over narrower, less safe roads.

Priority should be given to Highway 11, as it offers a **preferred westward route** for commercial carriers. Compared to Highway 17, it is less hilly reducing fuel consumption and is not subject to frequent closures caused by Lake Superior's weather systems. In short, Highway 11 is more reliable and increasingly indispensable to national logistics and supply chains. Highway 11 will also be critical to the rapidly expanding mining and agriculture sectors in the north that depend on a safe and efficient transportation corridor.

Ministry of Transportation **Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT)** volumes from 2021 confirm this importance:

- **Near Temiskaming Shores:** 7,800
- **Near Englehart:** 6,100
- **Between Kirkland Lake and Cochrane:** 3,200 to 5,500

These figures **meet or exceed international thresholds** for 2+1 highway justification. In fact, Ontario's Ministry of Transportation and Swedish transport authorities both find 2+1 highways are effective and safe at volumes of up to **18,000–20,000 AADT**, which is well above the current corridor levels of 3,200–7,800. This places Highway 11 within the model's ideal "sweet spot" — not only today, but for decades to come.

Moreover, these traffic counts were gathered during the COVID-19 pandemic, when private vehicle use was depressed. Actual normalized volumes are likely even higher.

Despite this high usage and strategic importance, Highway 11 faces challenges stemming from decades of underinvestment. These include:

- **Substandard Road Geometry**
- **Insufficient passing opportunities**
- **Above-average collision and fatality rates**
- **Regular closures due to weather and accidents**

These weaknesses not only endanger lives but also **disrupt freight movement, delay goods**, and **increase costs** for industries that depend on timely delivery. The **2+1 model, featuring a crash-rated median barrier and alternating passing lanes every few kilometres, significantly improves safety and traffic flow at a substantially reduced cost compared to** traditional four-lane twinning. This makes it the ideal design for long rural corridors with steady but moderate traffic, such as Highway 11.

Alignment with Prime Minister Carney's Five Nation-Building Criteria

1. Strengthen Canada's Autonomy, Resilience, and Security

- **Strategic Defence Logistics:** Highways 17 and 11 support access to key military and NORAD infrastructure, including CFB North Bay. It also offers critical redundancy should either highway become compromised.
- **Nuclear Waste Transport:** The Nuclear Waste Management Organization has identified these highways for the secure transport of used nuclear reactor rods to a planned long-term storage site in Northwestern Ontario. Enhanced road safety is essential.
- **Emergency and Climate Resilience:** These roads play a vital role in wildfire evacuations and emergency response functions that will only grow more urgent with climate change.
- **Critical Minerals Access:** As Canada builds out its critical minerals sector, Highways 17 and 11 are essential for transporting the tools, supplies, and workforce needed to unlock Northern resource potential.

2. Deliver Economic Benefits and Support Growth

- **Economic Resilience and Supply Chain Reliability:** Highways 17 and 11 are a lifeline for national industries such as mining, forestry, agriculture, and manufacturing. Collisions and closures in this corridor disrupt supply chains, delay shipments, and raise costs—undermining productivity and competitiveness. A safer, more reliable route will protect against these losses and help sustain Canada's industrial and export performance, particularly as interprovincial trade barriers ease and east-west commercial traffic increases.
- **Workforce Access and Regional Efficiency:** Improved traffic flow enhances access for workers, goods, and services, strengthening regional economies and making it easier for businesses to attract and retain talent.
- **Job Creation and Indigenous Participation:** Construction and long-term maintenance will create employment opportunities, with strong potential for Indigenous training, contracting, and equity partnerships.
- **Tourism and Local Business Vitality:** As the primary transportation artery for dozens of rural communities, Highways 17 and 11 support tourism, retail, and service sectors. Safer, faster routes help keep these towns economically viable and socially connected.
- **High Return on Investment:** According to the Northern Policy Institute, the proposed 2+1 pilot for Highway 11 delivers a benefit-cost ratio of **1.0 at 20 years**, rising to **3.6 at 60 years**—clear evidence of enduring value.

3. High Likelihood of Successful Execution

- **Shovel-Ready Projects:** Ontario's North Bay–Temagami pilot is fully designed and poised to go to tender
- **Provincial Commitment Already Secured:** The province has also announced plans to extend the 2+1 model northward between Temiskaming Shores and Cochrane.
- **Proven Design Model:** The 2+1 design has achieved fatality reductions of up to 76% in countries like Sweden, Finland, and Australia. It offers a practical model for safe, efficient travel across long rural corridors. Ontario's projects benefit from this international evidence.
- **Faster Cheaper Delivery:** By leveraging existing roadbeds, 2+1 roads require less land acquisition and construction time, avoid delays from environmental permitting, and can be implemented in phases. Ontario's own pilot designs incorporate global best practices from around the world.
- **Expandable by Design:** 2+1 highways can be converted to 2+2 highways in the future when traffic volumes warrant it, making 2+1 roads a flexible and cost-efficient steppingstone, ideal for future-proofing national transportation infrastructure.

4. Advance the Interests of Indigenous Peoples

- **Early and Ongoing Engagement:** Highways 17 and 11 intersect the traditional territories of several Indigenous Nations. Their early and ongoing involvement ensures meaningful participation and long-term benefits.
- **Pathways to Economic Reconciliation:** Indigenous-led training, employment, and equity stakes can be prioritized into project delivery, creating generational value. With designs that are modular, the Proposal also supports phased contracting models.
- **Improved Safety for Remote Access:** Both Highways are a lifeline for many Indigenous communities, enabling access to healthcare, food, education, and evacuation routes. Safer highways are a matter of equity.

5. Contribute to Clean Growth and Climate Objectives

- **Lower Emissions from Freight:** Improved traffic flow reduces idling, braking, and congestion, directly cutting greenhouse gas emissions. Infrastructure for electric vehicle (EV) charging can be integrated into the design.
- **Sustainable Construction Practices:** Ontario's design process is already integrating lower-emission materials and recycled aggregates to help Canada reach its climate goals.
- **Reduced Environmental Footprint:** Compared to full twinning, 2+1 highways use less land, preserve wildlife corridors, and prevent overbuilding—balancing transportation needs with environmental stewardship.

Conclusion

Transforming the Trans-Canada's Highway 17 and its Highway 11 Northern Route into 2+1 corridors is not simply a matter of regional equity—it is a strategic investment in Canada's future. It safeguards our autonomy, strengthens our supply chains, advances reconciliation, and supports economic growth—while reinforcing the vital national bond between northern and southern Canada. FONOM believes this project reflects the values and vision of a confident, resilient country—one that invites its northern regions to be equal partners in prosperity. **We now call on the provincial and federal government to build a Trans-Canada Highway worthy of our national ambitions—modern, safe, autonomous, and truly coast-to-coast.**

Sincerely,



Danny Whalen President Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities

Appendix A

Number of Truck Shipments by Routes Note 1						# of lanes in Ontario
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	
Truck shipments to and from major destinations in western Canada to Toronto and Montreal	1,019,899	927,405	986,136	924,682	767,998 NOTE: 5 year average 2013 to 2017= 925,224	2 lanes northern Ontario / 4 lanes southern and eastern segments
Truck shipments to and from Toronto and Montreal	867,321	894,068	1,237,732	916,433	884,474 Note: 5 year average = 960,005	4+ lanes
Truck shipments to and from Toronto and Windsor	67,119	100,507	97,640	80,267	142,502 Note: 5 year average= 97,607	4+ lanes
Truck shipments to and from Toronto and Hamilton	181,567	191,839	186,954	332,986	139,044 Note: 5 year average= 206,514	4+ lanes

Note 1: Statistics Canada. [Table 23-10-0142-01 Origin and destination of transported commodities, Canadian Freight Analysis Framework](#) (see Appendix A). Shipments represent the aggregate number of shipments transported.