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Ministry of Northern Development and Mines

Ministère du Développement du Nord et des Mines

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PROVINCE LAUNCHES NORTHERN ONTARIO GROW BONDS BUSINESS LOAN PROGRAM

Small And Medium-Sized Northern Businesses To Benefit From Access To New Capital

THUNDER BAY – The Ontario government is building prosperity in Northern Ontario with a new pilot program, the Northern Ontario Grow Bonds Business Loan Program, that will fund loans to small and medium-sized northern businesses, Northern Development and Mines Minister Rick Bartolucci announced today.

"Our government listened when northerners told us that entrepreneurs across the region need better access to capital," Bartolucci said. "I strongly encourage businesses to step up with proposals for the new loans, and hope that all northerners purchase Northern Ontario Grow Bonds when they go on sale next month."

The Northern Ontario Grow Bonds program has two components: the sale of bonds to northern residents between March 21 and April 11, 2005 and the loan program for businesses, which will accept applications from February 25 to April 15, 2005.

New and existing small and medium-sized businesses that are located and controlled by residents in Northern Ontario are eligible to apply for loans. Generally, loans of $125,000 to $1 million will be provided to approved applicants for capital investments up to 50 per cent of eligible project costs. Funding cannot be used to establish or expand a retail, construction or hospitality business.

"The Northwestern Ontario Associated Chambers of Commerce initially proposed the concept of Northern Ontario Grow Bonds because we strongly believe they will help expand the northern economy," said NOACC CEO Mary Long-Irwin. "I'd like to thank the provincial government for moving ahead with this initiative."

"When I delivered our government's first budget, I said that the North is a region of boundless potential and that our government was committed to providing the people who live in the North the opportunity to realize that potential," said Ontario Minister of Finance, Greg Sorbara. "Today's announcement is another step towards making that happen."

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Grow Bonds are part of the government's Northern Prosperity Plan. The ministry is accepting loan applications until the April 15 deadline. More information is available online at www.northernontariogrowbonds.com or by calling 1-866-668-5437.

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Note to Editors: a prepared text of the minister's remarks is available online at the ministry's website:

www.mndm.gov.on.ca
www.resultsontario.gov.on.ca