



TOWNSHIP OF BONFIELD, ONTARIO

COMMUNITY ECONOMIC PROFILE

Prepared by



for the Township of Bonfield

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**Prepared for the Township of Bonfield and the
BR+E Working Group**

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
1.0 Community Overview	3
2.0 Demographic Profile	4
2.1 Population Trends.....	4
2.2 Age Distribution	4
3.0 Economic Base	5
3.1 Industry Composition.....	5
3.2 Major Employers	6
3.3 Business Size Distribution.....	7
3.4 Commuting Patterns	7
4.0 Labour Market Indicators.....	8
4.1 Labour Force Characteristics.....	8
4.2 Income	9
4.3 Regional Labour Demand	10
5.0 Cost of Living and Housing	13
5.1 Housing Market.....	13
6.0 Key Challenges and Opportunities.....	14
6.1 Key Challenges	14
6.2 Key Opportunities	15
7.0 Strategic Priorities	16
Data Sources.....	18

1.0 Community Overview

This Community Economic Profile was prepared to give the Township of Bonfield, the BR+E Working Group and the Economic Development Strategy project team a common statistical baseline. It is not the Strategy: its findings are summarized for general readers in Section 1.2 of the Economic Development Strategy 2026-2031.

A note on geography. Unless stated otherwise, all data in this profile describe the Township of Bonfield as a whole - the full 206 square kilometres and all of its residents - because that is the geography Statistics Canada reports on. Where the text refers to the rural settlement areas it means the Hamlets of Bonfield and Rutherglen; where it refers to the wider rural area it means everything outside those two hamlets. No hamlet-level census data is published for Bonfield, so settlement-area conclusions in the Strategy rest on the engagement evidence rather than on this profile.

The Township of Bonfield is a rural municipality in Nipissing District, situated along the Mattawa River in northeastern Ontario, approximately 30 kilometres east of North Bay. Encompassing a land area of 206 square kilometres with a population density of 10.4 persons per square kilometre, the township comprises the communities of Bonfield, Rutherglen, and the wider rural area. The Township is bound by the Trans-Canada Highway (Highway 17) corridor to the north, which connects the township to North Bay and the broader regional economy, and by a network of lakes, rivers and tributaries - including Lake Nosbonsing, Kaibuskong Bay, Lake Talon and Trout Lake - that defines much of its recreational identity.

First settled in 1882 as a station on the Canadian Pacific Railway, Bonfield attracted settlers through the availability of affordable land and a growing economy centred on logging, forestry, and agriculture. For much of the twentieth century, the township's economic character was shaped by these resource-based industries. In the post-war period, as some of the community's traditional resource industries declined, a new wave of activity emerged in the form of recreational investment - cottages, fishing, canoeing, and seasonal tourism. In 2007, Bonfield joined with the Town of Mattawa and several neighbouring townships to launch the Mattawa Voyageur Country tourism brand, formalizing the region's identity as a recreational destination.

The Township of Bonfield recorded a population of 2,146 in the 2021 Census of Population, representing growth of 7.8 percent over the 2016 count of 1,990 - a rate that outpaced many rural northern Ontario communities and established Bonfield as one of the fastest-growing municipalities in Nipissing District. This growth reflects two reinforcing trends: Bonfield's emergence as a bedroom community for North Bay, drawing working families who value lower housing costs and natural amenities while commuting to employment in the city; and a sustained increase in four-season recreational and cottage-country investment driven by remote-work flexibility and lifestyle migration accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Today, Bonfield stands at a pivotal juncture in its economic evolution. The foundation built on natural resource industries and recreational appeal is being supplemented by residential growth, light industrial interest, and professional services. The township's strategic location relative to North Bay

- with its healthcare, education, and government employment base - provides residents with access to urban amenities while maintaining a distinctly rural quality of life. This profile examines the demographic, economic, and labour market characteristics that define Bonfield’s current position and considers the structural opportunities and challenges that will shape its trajectory in the years ahead.

2.0 Demographic Profile

2.1 Population Trends

The Township of Bonfield’s population history reflects the broader patterns of northeastern Ontario: gradual resource-era stability, a period of modest post-industrial decline in the early 2000s, and renewed growth in the years surrounding the 2021 Census. After falling from 2,064 in 2001 to 1,981 in 2006 - a decline of approximately 4.0 percent at a time when Ontario as a whole grew by 6.6 percent - the township stabilized at 2,016 in 2011 before slipping to 1,990 in 2016 and then achieving its strongest recent growth of 7.8 percent to reach 2,146 by 2021.

Table 1: Population Trends, Township of Bonfield and Ontario, 2001-2021

Geography	2001	2006	2011	2016	2021
Bonfield (Township)	2,064	1,981	2,016	1,990	2,146
Bonfield % change	-	-4.0%	+1.8%	-1.3%	+7.8%
Ontario (Province)	11,410,046	12,160,282	12,851,821	13,448,494	14,223,942
Ontario % change	-	+6.6%	+5.7%	+4.6%	+5.8%

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2001-2021; City-Data.com (historical estimates).

The 7.8 percent growth recorded between 2016 and 2021 represents a reversal from the township’s long-run tendency to grow more slowly than the provincial average. While Ontario’s population increased by 5.8 percent over the same period, Bonfield’s growth exceeded the provincial rate - an unusual outcome for a small rural municipality outside a major urban centre. This growth is primarily attributed to residential in-migration from North Bay and other urban centres, driven by relative housing affordability, recreational amenity value, and the expansion of remote and hybrid work arrangements. The township’s total private dwelling count of 1,080 - with 889 occupied by year-round residents - also reflects a significant seasonal and recreational housing component that underpins the local tourism economy.

2.2 Age Distribution

Bonfield’s population is notably older than the provincial average, a characteristic pattern for rural communities in northeastern Ontario that experience net out-migration among younger cohorts. The 2021 Census recorded an average age of 44.2 years in Bonfield, compared with approximately 40.4 years for Ontario. The proportion of residents aged 55 to 64 - those approaching retirement - stands at 21.1 percent of the population, and those aged 65 and over represent a further 20.1 percent, meaning that over two-fifths of township residents are at or near conventional retirement age.

Table 2: Age Distribution, Township of Bonfield and Ontario, 2021 Census

Age Group	Bonfield	Ontario (approx.)	Gap (pp)
Under 15 years	15.3%	16.2%	-0.9
15-24 years	8.6%	11.5%	-2.9
25-34 years	11.6%	13.8%	-2.2
35-44 years	11.3%	13.6%	-2.3
45-54 years	12.0%	13.0%	-1.0
55-64 years	21.1%	13.0%	+8.1
65 years and over	20.1%	18.9%	+1.2
Average age (years)	44.2	40.4	+3.8 yrs

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021 (Table 98-10-0021-01). Ontario provincial averages are approximate.

The underrepresentation of residents aged 15 to 44 - the prime working and family-formation years - by approximately five to seven percentage points compared with the provincial average presents a structural labour supply challenge. Bonfield's workforce is aging, and without sustained in-migration of working-age residents, the township will face an accelerating labour force contraction over the next decade. At the same time, the large share of residents approaching or in retirement creates sustained demand for health, personal care, and community services - presenting both a labour market challenge and an opportunity to develop service-sector employment that retains younger workers.

3.0 Economic Base

3.1 Industry Composition

The Township of Bonfield's labour force reflects its evolution from a resource-extraction economy toward a more diversified mix of trades, services, and public-sector employment. According to the 2021 Census, approximately 955 residents participated in the labour force. The largest employment sectors are trades and transportation, sales and service, and health occupations - a composition that mirrors the broader shift in northern Ontario rural communities from direct resource extraction toward service provision, residential construction, and community care.

Table 3: Employment by Major Occupation Group, Township of Bonfield and Ontario, 2021 Census

Occupation Group	Bonfield (approx. share)	Ontario (approx. share)
Trades, transport & equipment operators	20-25%	15.4%
Sales and service occupations	18-22%	23.5%
Health occupations	10-14%	9.0%
Natural resources, agriculture & production	8-12%	3.4%
Business, finance & administration	8-10%	15.0%
Management occupations	6-9%	9.1%

Occupation Group	Bonfield (approx. share)	Ontario (approx. share)
Education, law, social, community & government	6-9%	10.1%
Natural and applied sciences	2-5%	9.1%
Art, culture, recreation & sport	2-4%	3.5%

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021. Bonfield occupation shares estimated from Nipissing District CSD profiles; Ontario figures from Statistics Canada Table 98-10-0396-01.

The elevated share of trades and transportation workers relative to the provincial average reflects Bonfield's construction activity - particularly residential development driven by population growth - as well as ongoing forestry-adjacent employment in logging, hauling, and equipment operation. The comparatively higher health-sector share reflects the aging demographic profile, which generates demand for personal support workers, home care aides, and community health services. The underrepresentation of business, finance, knowledge-sector, and natural and applied sciences occupations is consistent with Bonfield's character as a residential and resource-based community rather than a professional services or technology hub.

3.2 Major Employers

Bonfield's employer landscape reflects its small population and rural character, with no single dominant anchor institution. Employment is distributed across a range of small and medium enterprises, municipal services, and regional institutions.

Columbia Forest Products operates a hardwood veneer processing facility in neighbouring Calvin Township close to the Hamlet of Rutherglen, and is one of the most significant private-sector manufacturers in the immediate area. The plant processes hardwood timber into veneers for composite panel and furniture manufacturing, representing the most direct link between Bonfield's forestry heritage and current industrial employment.

Township of Bonfield Municipal Services constitute a meaningful local employer, providing public works, administration, fire protection, and community programming. As one of the fastest-growing municipalities in Nipissing District, the township's administrative and operational requirements have grown in parallel with its residential base.

Construction and Trades Contractors have expanded substantially in response to sustained residential growth. New housing starts and recreational property development have driven demand for framing, foundation, electrical, plumbing, and finishing trades employment throughout the township.

Tourism and Recreational Operators - including cottage rental enterprises, outfitters, marinas, and hospitality businesses - provide seasonal and year-round employment. The Mattawa Voyageur Country regional tourism initiative positions the broader area as a destination for canoeing, fishing, snowmobiling, and nature-based recreation, with Bonfield's waterfront properties central to the accommodation supply.

North Bay Regional Employers - including North Bay Regional Health Centre, Nipissing University, Canadore College, the City of North Bay, and various provincial government offices - draw a significant share of Bonfield's commuting workforce. The township's bedroom-community character means the employment structure of the broader Nipissing economic region is highly relevant to understanding where Bonfield residents work, even when those jobs are not located within the township itself.

3.3 Business Size Distribution

Consistent with its rural and bedroom-community character, Bonfield's business base is dominated by small enterprises and self-employed individuals. The majority of businesses operating within the township employ fewer than five people, reflecting the prevalence of owner-operated trades contractors, agricultural operations, tourism businesses, and retail establishments. Businesses with 100 or more employees are effectively absent at the township level, with residents in those employment categories typically commuting to North Bay or other centres.

Table 4: Business Size Distribution, Nipissing Economic Region, 2022

Employment Size Range	Count	Share	Ontario Share	Gap
No employees (self-employed)	1,950+	~47%	~38%	+9 pp
1-4 employees	1,100+	~27%	~31%	-4 pp
5-9 employees	380+	~9%	~12%	-3 pp
10-19 employees	270+	~7%	~8%	-1 pp
20-99 employees	230+	~6%	~8%	-2 pp
100+ employees	80+	~2%	~3%	-1 pp
Total (all sizes)	~4,100	100%	100%	-

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Business Counts, 2022. Data shown for Nipissing Economic Region (closest available geography to Bonfield CSD). Shares are approximate.

3.4 Commuting Patterns

The 2021 Census commuting flow data reveals a defining structural characteristic of Bonfield's economy: the township functions primarily as a residential community for workers employed elsewhere - most overwhelmingly in North Bay. Of approximately 565 employed Bonfield residents with a usual place of work, 440 - representing fully 78 percent - commute to North Bay. This makes the city the employment anchor for nearly four in five of the township's commuting workforce. Only 50 residents (9 percent) work within Bonfield itself, with the remaining workers dispersed across East Ferris, Mattawa, West Nipissing, Callander, and other nearby municipalities.

Table 5: Commuting Flows from Bonfield (Township), 2021 Census

Place of Work	Total Commuters	Share
North Bay (City)	440	77.9%
Within Bonfield (Township)	50	8.8%

Place of Work	Total Commuters	Share
East Ferris (Municipality)	25	4.4%
Mattawa (Town)	20	3.5%
West Nipissing / Nipissing Ouest	10	1.8%
Callander (Municipality)	10	1.8%
All other destinations	10	1.8%
Total	565	100%

Source: Statistics Canada, Table 98-10-0459-01 - Commuting flow from geography of residence to geography of work by gender: Census subdivisions, 2021 Census. Counts rounded to nearest 5 per StatsCan disclosure control. Totals may not sum due to rounding.

These commuting flows carry significant implications for local economic development strategy. The township's economic base does not stand alone - it is deeply integrated with North Bay's institutional and private-sector employment ecosystem. Strategies to retain income and economic activity within Bonfield must account for this structural outflow, either by creating conditions for local employment growth or by facilitating remote-work-compatible residential attraction that allows high-wage employment to occur within the township itself.

4.0 Labour Market Indicators

4.1 Labour Force Characteristics

The most recent local labour force data for Bonfield derives from the 2021 Census of Population (reporting on 2020 labour market activity). The township recorded approximately 955 residents in the labour force, with an unemployment rate of 7.3 percent - comparable to the Ontario provincial rate of approximately 7.4 percent in 2021, though both figures were elevated by the economic disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic. More recent provincial data indicates Ontario's unemployment rate averaged 7.7 percent in 2025, above the national rate of 6.8 percent, as employment growth did not keep pace with population growth. Northern Ontario as a whole recorded employment growth of 3.2 percent in 2025 - a notably strong regional performance.

Table 6: Labour Force Characteristics, Township of Bonfield and Ontario, 2021 Census

Indicator	Bonfield (2021)	Ontario (2021)	Gap
Total labour force participants	955	7,160,960	-
Unemployment rate	7.3%	~7.4%	-0.1 pp
Labour force participation rate (est.)	~62-63%	~64.5%	~-2 pp
Employment rate (est.)	~58-59%	~59.7%	~-1 pp
Ontario unemployment rate - 2025 annual	-	7.7%	-
Northern Ontario employment growth - 2025	-	+3.2%	-

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021 (Table 98-10-0375-01); Labour Force Survey, Annual 2025 (Table 14-10-0090-01); Ontario Government Annual Employment Report 2025.

Bonfield's labour force participation rate - estimated at approximately 62 to 63 percent in 2021 - trails the provincial average, a pattern consistent with the township's older age profile. A higher proportion of residents aged 55 and over reduces the share of the population that is economically active. For 2025, Northern Ontario recorded employment growth of 3.2 percent - a notably strong performance suggesting that regional labour market conditions have improved since the pandemic-era baseline of the 2021 Census.

4.2 Income

The most recent income data for Bonfield from the 2021 Census (reflecting 2020 income) shows a median total household income of \$77,000, compared with the Ontario median of approximately \$91,000 for the same year. This gap of \$14,000 - approximately 15 percent below the provincial benchmark - reflects the township's occupational composition, which skews toward trades, services, and resource-sector employment rather than the higher-wage professional, financial, and technology sectors that drive provincial income averages. The gap also reflects the seasonal and part-time nature of a portion of Bonfield's tourism and hospitality employment base.

Table 7: Median Income by Family Type, Township of Bonfield and Ontario, 2021 Census

Family Type	Bonfield	Ontario	Gap
All census families (median household income)	\$77,000	\$91,000	-\$14,000
Couple families (estimated median)	~\$90,000-\$95,000	~\$107,000	~-\$15,000
One-parent families (estimated median)	~\$50,000-\$60,000	~\$59,000	~-\$5,000
Persons not in census families (estimated)	~\$32,000-\$38,000	~\$38,000	~-\$4,000

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021 (Table 98-10-0064-01). One-parent and non-family estimates are modelled from provincial distribution patterns; these are approximations.

The income gap relative to Ontario is most pronounced for couple families - where Bonfield residents likely forgo the dual-professional household incomes that characterize suburban Ontario - and narrower for one-parent families and individuals not in census families. This pattern suggests that Bonfield's income deficit is structural rather than uniformly distributional: the township lacks the concentration of knowledge-sector and professional employment that drives the upper end of Ontario's household income distribution. Continued diversification toward professional services, remote-work-compatible employment, and higher-skill trades and technology roles would help close this gap over time.

4.3 Regional Labour Demand

Job posting data from the Canadian Job Trends Dashboard (CJTD) for the Nipissing District - the labour market most directly relevant to Bonfield residents, given the township's strong commuting relationship with North Bay - provides a forward-looking signal of employer demand for skills, occupations, and credentials. Over the 365-day period ending April 2026, approximately 3,000 unique job postings were active across the district's top 20 occupation groups. Health care roles, retail and service occupations, and transportation-sector positions account for the largest share of demand.

Table 8: Top Occupations by Job Postings - Nipissing District, 12 Months to April 2026

Occupation Group	Unique Postings (12 mo.)	Year-Over-Year Change
Retail salespersons and non-technical wholesale sales	481	+24.5%
Nursing and allied health professionals	323	+26.6%
Customer and information services representatives	208	+1.4%
Transport truck and transit drivers	185	+12.4%
Home care provider occupations	178	+21.3%
Cashiers and other sales support	165	+35.2%
Office support and court services	163	-4.9%
Administrative, property and payroll officers	162	-0.6%
Food support occupations	157	+26.1%
Assisting occupations in health services	145	+11.7%
Supply chain, logistics and scheduling coordination	144	+36.8%

Occupation Group	Unique Postings (12 mo.)	Year-Over-Year Change
Auditors, accountants and investment professionals	133	+42.1%

Source: Canadian Job Trends Dashboard (CJTD), Nipissing District, 12-month period ending April 28, 2026. Figures represent unique job postings. Year-over-year changes reflect the same 365-day window from the prior year.

Health care demand stands out as particularly robust. Nursing and allied health professionals (323 postings, +26.6%) and home care providers (178 postings, +21.3%) together account for over 500 postings and are growing at rates well above the district average. This reflects structural demographic pressure from the region's aging population - a force equally present in Bonfield, where 41.2 percent of residents are aged 55 and over. The strong growth in supply chain and logistics postings (+36.8%) and accounting and investment professionals (+42.1%) points to emerging administrative and knowledge-sector demand that extends beyond the district's traditional service base.

In-Demand Certifications and Skills

Credential demand in the Nipissing labour market is heavily concentrated in health care and safety certifications, reflecting the dominant role of the health and social services sector. However, growing demand for Red Seal certification and commercial driving credentials signals continued strength in trades and transportation roles - sectors that align closely with Bonfield's existing occupational mix.

Table 9: In-Demand Certifications - Nipissing District, 12 Months to April 2026

Certification	Unique Postings (12 mo.)	Year-Over-Year Change
CPR Certification	256	+3.9%
First Aid Certification	248	-1.2%
Registered Nurse (RN)	217	+28.1%
Basic Life Support (BLS) Certification	116	+64.7%
Registered Practical Nurse (RPN)	100	-5.0%
Red Seal Certification	20	+10.0%
Commercial Driver's License (CDL)	17	+41.2%

Source: Canadian Job Trends Dashboard (CJTD), Nipissing District, 12-month period ending April 28, 2026.

Table 10: In-Demand Hard and Software Skills - Nipissing District, 12 Months to April 2026

Skill	Type	Postings	YoY Change	Trend Signal
Project Management	Hard	435	+34.5%	Strong growth
Construction	Hard	300	+34.3%	Strong growth
Bilingual (French/English)	Hard	310	+5.2%	Stable demand
Occupational Safety & Health	Hard	315	+22.5%	Growing
Inventory Management	Hard	307	+29.3%	Growing
Risk Management	Hard	230	+51.7%	Rapid growth
Artificial Intelligence	Hard	298	New	Emerging
Microsoft Office Suite	Software	621	+15.9%	Consistent
AutoCAD	Software	74	+52.7%	Rapid growth
MEDITECH EHR	Software	67	+37.3%	Health-sector
Power BI	Software	46	+60.9%	Rapid growth

Source: Canadian Job Trends Dashboard (CJTD), Nipissing District, 12-month period ending April 28, 2026.

Several cross-cutting themes emerge from the skills data. Bilingualism (French/English) appears in 310 postings - a consistent requirement in Northern Ontario's government, health, and social services sectors and a credential that provides a meaningful labour market advantage for local residents. The rapid growth in AutoCAD demand (+52.7%) and Power BI proficiency (+60.9%) indicates that digital and analytical skills are increasingly expected even in trades-adjacent and administrative roles. The appearance of Artificial Intelligence as a new in-demand skill - with 298 postings and no prior-year comparison - suggests that AI-related competencies are entering mainstream job requirements faster than traditional training pathways have adapted. For Bonfield residents seeking to upgrade credentials or develop new skills, these trends provide clear targets that align with the accessible North Bay training institutions of Nipissing University and Canadore College.

5.0 Cost of Living and Housing

Cost of living data for rural townships like Bonfield is most appropriately measured at the provincial level for consumer prices. Statistics Canada does not publish a Consumer Price Index (CPI) specific to Nipissing District; the Ontario provincial CPI is the relevant benchmark for residents who access goods and services across the broader regional economy.

Table 11: Ontario Consumer Price Index - Annual Average Change, 2024

CPI Component	Ontario Annual Change 2024	Ontario Annual Change 2023
All-items	+2.4%	+3.8%
Food	+2.6%	+7.1%
Shelter	Elevated	Elevated
Energy	+0.1%	-4.3%
Goods (excl. food and energy)	Moderating	Moderating
Services	Elevated	Elevated

Source: Statistics Canada, *The Daily - Consumer Price Index, Annual Review, 2024* (released January 2025).

Ontario’s overall inflation rate of 2.4 percent in 2024 represented a meaningful deceleration from the 3.8 percent recorded in 2023, though shelter costs - encompassing rent, mortgage interest, and property taxes - remained persistently elevated. For a township where 88.8 percent of households are owner-occupied, mortgage carrying costs and property tax levels are the primary housing cost driver. Rural Ontario property owners generally benefit from lower assessed values than urban counterparts, though rising tax bases driven by residential growth have been notable in fast-growing rural communities.

5.1 Housing Market

Bonfield’s housing market is shaped by its dual identity as a rural residential community and a recreational property destination. Within the broader Nipissing District real estate market, average residential sale prices ranged from approximately \$391,000 to \$485,000 in 2024-2025, with the North Bay market - the nearest urban benchmark - recording averages of roughly \$474,000 to \$485,000 in 2024. Recreational and waterfront properties in the Bonfield area have attracted buyers from southern Ontario, with some waterfront lots and cottages listing in the \$639,000 to \$649,000+ range.

Table 12: Nipissing District Housing Market Indicators, 2024-2025

Indicator	Nipissing District / North Bay Area	Ontario Average (approx.)
Average residential sale price - 2024	~\$474,000-\$485,000	~\$850,000-\$900,000
Average residential sale price - November 2025	~\$391,000	~\$820,000
Bonfield waterfront/recreational listings	\$639,000-\$649,000+	N/A
Owner-occupied dwellings (Bonfield 2021)	88.8%	~69%
Renter-occupied dwellings (Bonfield 2021)	11.2%	~31%

Source: Wahi.com, North Bay Housing Market Report, March 2026; Zolo.ca, Nipissing Housing Market Report, October 2025; Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

Bonfield's housing affordability relative to provincial norms is a competitive advantage for attracting working families from more expensive Ontario markets. However, rapid price appreciation for both residential and recreational properties has begun to compress this advantage. The township's 11.2 percent rental housing share - well below the Ontario average of approximately 31 percent - limits housing access for lower-income residents, younger workers, and seasonal employees who cannot or do not wish to enter the ownership market. Increasing rental supply is an emerging priority for communities experiencing Bonfield's pattern of growth.

6.0 Key Challenges and Opportunities

6.1 Key Challenges

Aging Population and Labour Force Contraction

With 41.2 percent of the township's population aged 55 and over, Bonfield faces an accelerating reduction in its working-age labour supply. As the large pre-retirement cohort exits the labour market over the next decade, the township will need to attract younger working-age residents at a rate sufficient to sustain local service capacity, business viability, and tax revenue. Without deliberate attraction and retention strategies, the workforce dependency ratio will worsen, placing greater demands on health and social services with a shrinking base of working-age taxpayers and caregivers.

Income Gap and Structural Economic Leakage

Bonfield's median household income of \$77,000 - approximately \$14,000 below the Ontario benchmark - reflects a structural gap in higher-wage employment accessible within the township itself. The 2021 Census commuting flow data quantifies the scale of this leakage: 440 of approximately 565 employed Bonfield residents - fully 78 percent - commute to North Bay for work. Income earned by those commuters supports consumer spending and business activity in both North Bay and Bonfield, but property tax revenues, business licensing activity, and local economic multipliers are disproportionately captured by the city.

Regional Skills Mismatch and Workforce Readiness

Job posting data for the Nipissing District reveals a labour market in which employer demand is increasingly specific about credentials and technical skills. Health care certifications - including Registered Nurse designation (+28.1% year-over-year), Basic Life Support (+64.7%), and Registered Practical Nurse credentials - dominate the regional certification landscape. Simultaneously, rapid growth in demand for digital skills such as AutoCAD (+52.7%), Power BI (+60.9%), and MEDITECH EHR (+37.3%) indicates that even non-professional roles increasingly require technology competence. For Bonfield residents - particularly those in the 55-and-over cohort approaching career transitions or the younger workforce seeking upward mobility - accessing the right training at the right time is critical. The proximity of Nipissing University and Canadore College provides a pathway, but local

awareness of in-demand credentials and active linkages between the township and training providers must be strengthened.

Rental Housing Deficit

Bonfield's rental vacancy is effectively minimal, with fewer than 12 percent of dwellings in rental tenure. For a community experiencing residential growth, the absence of a diverse rental housing supply limits the township's ability to attract younger workers, seasonal employees, newcomers, and lower-income households who cannot access homeownership at current price points. This structural gap is compounded by competitive pressure from recreational property buyers who have contributed to price appreciation across the housing spectrum.

Service Capacity and Infrastructure Constraints

Rapid residential growth creates pressure on municipal service capacity - including roads, water and wastewater systems, parks, emergency services, and recreation facilities - that can strain a small township's fiscal resources. Managing growth sustainably requires balancing development revenues against infrastructure costs, a challenge that is particularly acute when a significant portion of the housing stock consists of recreational or seasonal properties that impose costs on the municipality while generating lower assessed values than full-time residential units.

Seasonal Economy Vulnerability

Tourism and recreational employment, while an important component of the local economy, is inherently seasonal and subject to weather, discretionary spending patterns, and external factors such as fuel costs. Summer cottage and recreational activity peaks do not translate into year-round, stable employment for local residents. Building a more resilient economic base requires complementing seasonal tourism with employment that operates year-round.

6.2 Key Opportunities

Four-Season Tourism and Recreational Economy

Bonfield's position within the Mattawa Voyageur Country tourism region, combined with its lake and river access, positions the township to capitalize on growing demand for nature-based, outdoor, and wellness tourism. The expansion of snowmobiling, kayaking, and winter trail use beyond the traditional summer cottage season has begun to moderate seasonal revenue volatility. Investment in trailhead infrastructure, visitor services, and hospitality capacity - coordinated through the regional tourism brand - would allow Bonfield to capture a larger share of travellers currently passing through the Nipissing District without extending their stay. At the same time, the community needs to be mindful of the ageing demographic of individuals that operate several recreation-oriented service clubs within the Township, and work to identify solutions and pathways to increase membership and volunteerism in several areas of community life.

Bedroom Community Growth and Remote Work Attraction

The structural shift toward remote and hybrid work that emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic continues to enable professionals to reside in communities like Bonfield while maintaining employment connections to urban centres. The township's 7.8 percent population growth between

2016 and 2021 is partly attributable to this phenomenon, and proactive marketing of Bonfield's quality of life, affordability, and natural amenities to remote workers in the Greater Toronto Area, Ottawa, and other high-cost markets represents an immediate and relatively low-cost growth lever.

Light Industrial and Value-Added Forestry Development

Bonfield retains access to the Nipissing District's substantial softwood and hardwood fibre resource, and the presence of Columbia Forest Products in Calvin Township, close to the Hamlet of Rutherglen, demonstrates the viability of manufacturing operations in the area.

Smaller-scale, value-added manufacturing - including millwork, engineered wood products, and specialty lumber - may be more achievable and sustainable than large-scale commodity processing, and would provide stable, year-round employment for trades workers and equipment operators.

Indigenous Partnership and Economic Reconciliation

The Township of Bonfield is situated within the traditional territory of the Algonquin First Nation peoples. Indigenous peoples represent approximately 13.6 percent of Bonfield's population - significantly above the provincial average of 2.0 percent - representing both an economic partnership opportunity and an imperative to ensure that local economic development is inclusive, culturally grounded, and developed in genuine consultation with Indigenous governments and communities. Procurement partnerships, Indigenous-led tourism enterprises, and joint land use planning represent concrete areas for collaboration. To further advance this goal, the Township may consider engaging partners to deliver a webinar series that informs residents about Indigenous heritage in the area and its potential contribution to the community's economic future.

Housing Supply Diversification

The township's strong residential growth trajectory, combined with demand from remote workers and recreational buyers, creates a foundation for expanding the housing supply in ways that serve multiple market segments. The Township should pursue proactive planning for purpose-built rental and affordable housing units in partnership with the District of Nipissing Social Services Administration Board (DNSSAB) and/or other provincial and federal programs which support new housing growth & development. Where satisfactory on-site servicing can be achieved, gentle densification in the Hamlet of Bonfield could help address the rental deficit while maintaining the township's rural character.

7.0 Strategic Priorities

The evidence presented in this report points toward six strategic priorities that would best position the Township of Bonfield for sustainable, inclusive, and diversified economic growth. These priorities are grounded in Bonfield's specific demographic realities, competitive strengths, and structural constraints, and are intended to guide collaboration between the township, Nipissing District, the Province of Ontario, local institutions, and private-sector partners.

1. Attract and Retain Working-Age Residents and Remote Professionals. Bonfield's most immediate economic imperative is to sustain and deepen its residential growth momentum by

actively positioning the township as a destination for remote workers, young families, and professionals seeking an alternative to high-cost urban markets. This requires a coordinated resident attraction campaign highlighting housing affordability, natural amenities, proximity to North Bay services, and quality of life - supported by investments in broadband connectivity to all year-round residential areas. Retention strategies should focus on ensuring that in-migrating households find the services, social connections, and community programming that encourage permanent settlement.

2. Diversify the Local Economy Through Light Industry and Professional Services. Reducing Bonfield's dependence on seasonal tourism and residential construction requires deliberate effort to attract light industrial, value-added manufacturing, and professional service employers. The Township should act on the results of its completed Community Business Survey and use them to identify sector gaps, infrastructure needs, and business development opportunities. Working with regional partners, the Township of Bonfield should develop a light industrial land use designation, and serviced lot inventory, which can be marketed to prospective employers in value-added wood products, agri-food processing, equipment maintenance, and remote professional services.

3. Expand Rental Housing Supply to Attract and Retain Workers. Closing the rental housing gap is a precondition for workforce attraction and retention across all sectors. The township should pursue partnerships with Ontario's affordable housing programs, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, and non-profit housing developers to bring purpose-built rental units to the Hamlet of Bonfield. Zoning amendments that permit gentle intensification - including Additional Dwelling Units (ADUs), duplexes, semi-detached housing, and small multi-unit residential buildings - would increase the rental supply without fundamentally altering the rural character of the community.

4. Develop Four-Season Tourism Capacity and Regional Partnerships. Strengthening the regional tourism brand, and extending the tourism season beyond summer cottage rentals, will require additional investment in trail infrastructure, waterway access, and visitor services which support snowmobiling, paddling, fishing, and nature-based tourism across all four seasons. The township could partner with local area municipalities and townships, plus provincial tourism bodies, to secure infrastructure funding for trailhead facilities, signage, and boat launch improvements. At the Township level, a Township-wide Green Infrastructure Study would help identify the gaps and potential opportunities within the local green space network to support additional social, recreational, and tourism-based activities.

5. Connect Residents to Regional Workforce Development and In-Demand Credentials. Labour market data from the Nipissing District shows robust and growing employer demand for health care credentials (Registered Nurse, BLS, RPN), trades certifications (Red Seal, Commercial Driver's License), and digital skills (AutoCAD, Power BI, MEDITECH EHR). With 78 percent of Bonfield's employed workforce commuting to North Bay, residents who hold or upgrade these credentials are best positioned to access high-demand roles in the city's health, logistics, and professional services sectors. The township could strengthen partnerships with Nipissing University, Canadore College, and/or the Northern Ontario Services Coordinators Association to promote micro-credential

programs, trades upgrading, and bilingualism training - and explore whether employer partnerships, or relocation incentives, could be structured to bring high-demand jobs to Bonfield itself.

6. Deepen Indigenous Partnerships and Pursue Economic Reconciliation. With over 13 percent of its population identifying as Indigenous, Bonfield has both an obligation and an opportunity to ensure that economic development is pursued in genuine partnership with the Algonquins of Ontario and other Indigenous peoples. The township should formalize a government-to-government consultation protocol with the Algonquins of Ontario, and with other Indigenous governments as appropriate, for land use and development decisions and explore joint economic development opportunities - including Indigenous-led tourism enterprises, forestry partnerships, and local procurement commitments - that generate shared prosperity.

Bonfield's path forward rests on its capacity to transform a period of population growth momentum into durable economic diversification. The community's natural assets, affordability advantage, proximity to North Bay, and the clear signals of labour market demand in the Nipissing District together provide a strong and actionable foundation. Sustained progress will require coordinated investment in housing, workforce development, economic diversification, and inclusive partnership with Indigenous communities and regional institutions. By acting strategically and collaboratively - and by positioning Bonfield as both a residential haven and an increasingly self-sufficient economic community - the township and its partners can build a more resilient, diverse, and inclusive future that honours its natural heritage while expanding opportunity for all residents.

Data Sources

The following Statistics Canada data sources and external references were used in the preparation of this Community Economic Profile:

- Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016, and 2021 - Population estimates, age distribution, household characteristics, labour force characteristics, income, and occupation profiles (DGUID: 2021A00053548027 - Bonfield Township, Ontario).
- Statistics Canada, Table 98-10-0459-01 - Commuting flow from geography of residence to geography of work by gender: Census subdivisions, 2021 Census. Counts rounded to nearest 5 per StatsCan disclosure control.
- Statistics Canada, Canadian Business Counts, 2022 - Business size distribution by employment size range for the Nipissing Economic Region.
- Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, Annual 2025 - Ontario provincial and regional unemployment, employment, and participation rates (Table 14-10-0090-01).
- Statistics Canada, Consumer Price Index, Annual Review 2024 - Ontario provincial CPI by component (released January 2025).
- Statistics Canada, Focus on Geography Series, 2021 Census - Bonfield (Township) community profile highlights (<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/as-sa/fogs-spg/page.cfm?lang=e&topic=1&dguid=2021A00053548027>).

- Canadian Job Trends Dashboard (CJTD) - Job Postings by Occupation, In-Demand Certifications, In-Demand Hard Skills, and In-Demand Software Skills for Nipissing District, 12-month period ending April 28, 2026. Source files: Job Postings by Occupation-Nipissing_04-28-2026.csv, In-Demand Certifications-Nipissing_04-28-2026.csv, In-Demand Hard Skills-Nipissing_04-28-2026.csv, In-Demand Software Skills-Nipissing_04-28-2026.csv.
- Ontario Government, Annual Employment Report 2025 - Ontario and regional labour market summary.
- Township of Bonfield, Municipal Website - Community information, strategic plan, and business development initiatives (www.bonfieldtownship.com).
- Northern Ontario Business - Reporting on Bonfield economic development initiatives (northernontariobusiness.com).
- Wahi.com; Zolo.ca; Redfin.ca - Nipissing District and North Bay residential real estate market data, 2024-2025.
- Nipissing First Nation (Nbisiing Anishinaabeg) - Community and territorial information (nfn.ca).
- City-Data.com - Historical census data for Bonfield Township, 2001-2011.

Note on geographic cascading: The Bonfield CSD (DGUID: 2021A00053548027) has a small population ($n = 2,146$), meaning some Statistics Canada estimates carry higher coefficients of variation. Where CSD-level data was unavailable or suppressed, data from the Nipissing Census Division, North Bay CMA, or Nipissing Economic Region was used and is identified as such in the source notes for each table.