



The Northeastern Ontario  
Social Enterprise Round Table Report

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By

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# The Northeastern Ontario Social Enterprise Round Table Report

## 1.0 Introduction

SEE's Northeastern Ontario Social Enterprise Roundtable event hosted by the Timmins Economic Development Corporation was held in Timmins on February 27, 2019. This one-day event, the first of its kind in the area, aimed to build a supportive ecosystem for social enterprises (SEs) in the region by strengthening connections between SEs, funders, business development officers (BDOs) and other service providers, and community members. Topics included examples of successful ventures, and how to develop and pitch a venture, and available resource to support SEs from ideation to scaling up. The networking opportunities supported greater relationship building across the ecosystem.

Social Enterprises (SEs) have a mission to address social, environmental or cultural challenges by reinvesting profits back into their missions and using a triple bottom line (people, planet, profit) to measure their success. SEs take many forms, including, non-profits, co-operatives and sole proprietorships to name a few.

SEs can strengthen Northern Ontario's resilience and sustainability in the following ways:

- Develop new approaches to respond to community needs; can be formed with little capital;
- Contribute to the local economy by retaining profits through reinvesting in the overall mission of the organization
- Employ people who face barriers to employment
- Provides non-profit organizations with an alternative way to generate funds
- Measure their success differently –although they must cover their core operational costs, they also measure their social return on investment

The Round Table provided a rare opportunity for people to gather in-person to learn about the social enterprise business model that is gaining significant attention in other jurisdictions. Everyone was welcomed to attend.



## 1.1 Participants

The SE movement is gaining traction as more people in the north become familiar with this business model. The growing interest in addressing community issues through equitable commerce attracted 45 participants to the event. Following is a breakdown of attendees' association:

- 8 Social Entrepreneurs
- 9 Aspiring Social Entrepreneurs
- 11 Service Providers (business developers, economic developers)
- 13 Non Profits
- 3 educators
- 2 funding agencies

The diversity of participants greatly contributed to knowledge sharing and the development of relationships. There were representatives from Indigenous, Anglophone, Francophone communities from across Northeastern Ontario. Participants also represented a wide range of ages, including post-secondary students.

Travel subsidies, offered on a first come/first served basis, enabled a number of SEs to attend from further afield, extending networks and increasing the unique perspectives and experiences in the SE field.

## 1.2 Event Planning

A small planning committee organized the event. The committee was comprised of staff from the Timmins Economic Development Corporation, the SEE Events Coordinator (based in Timmins) and the SEE Project Coordinator. As a starting point, the committee reviewed the agenda from the previous regional SE Round Table held in Sault Ste. Marie in February 2018. Specific goals were identified for this year's event based on Timmins' and Northeastern Ontario's context. A list of potential key note speakers, panelist, workshop leaders was generated, then narrowed to invite a mix of representatives from local, regional and international ventures to increase awareness of ways they advance social missions through viable businesses. A panel comprised of representatives from the Ontario Network of Enterprises (ONE) Social Enterprise Partnership, of which SEE is a member, was selected to highlight resources available to SEs and business development service providers. Timmins residents were invited to provide training on how to develop a social enterprise, giving people a connection to local resource people. The program also drew on the SEE partnership to lead a session or participate in a panel.

The SEE Events Coordinator, tasked with organizing the Round Table, created supportive documents to assist panelist and workshop leaders in preparing their presentations and traveling to the event. A sponsorship letter was circulated resulting in an important

endorsement from The Venture Centre Timmins. The Events Coordinator also managed the SE Travel Assistance Program, organized the event location, food and beverage services and accommodations. Round Table feedback was gleaned throughout the day and a post-event evaluation survey was created to provide additional comments.

The event was promoted through the SEE partnership, NORDIK's diverse networks, at post-secondary institutions' events, through the Timmins local media and the SEE monthly Newsletter and social media. CTV News covered the event and the media coverage can be found at: <https://northernontario.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=1622393>.

## 2.0 Event Activities

The Round Table program was designed to meet the interests of a wide range of participants, from those new to the field to business developers providing them an overview of the SE sector. The day began with a traditional opening with Elder Dave Faries Sr. of Missaway First Nation that included a prayer and smudging, followed by opening remarks including a short framing of what SEs are and their contribution to Northern Ontario's social and economic health and well-being.

A panel highlighting successful northern SEs set the tone, encouraging participants to think about other development possibilities. It was followed by a workshop on SE business plan development. The key note speaker engaged the attendees in her journey in launching an internationally successful SE. The lunch break provided time to both reflect on the morning discussions and continue the dialogue with others. The afternoon began with an interactive session on communicating the value of SEs that assisted attendees to build a social business plan using the business model canvas. The resources panel provided valuable information on available resources and funding for social enterprises. The day wrapped up with a peer mentoring workshop where participants were able to connect with each other and identify next steps for strengthening the SE ecosystem. The interest to continue the SE movement was evident in this session, as well as the network created by the event.

### 2.1 Key Note Speaker

Barb Stegemann, CEO and founder of the very successful Social Enterprise, 7 Virtues (<https://www.the7virtues.com/>) based in Halifax, provided considerable encouragement as she shared her experience of launching a social entrepreneurship and expertise in leading it to international fame. Her venture gathers oils in war or conflict zones to create Canadian-made vegan fragrances that are paragon free and phthalate free. She markets these fragrances with the tag line 'Make Perfume Not War'. She stressed that the purpose of a social enterprise is to support the cause and not necessarily the product or service. That is, the product or service is a means of supporting the cause. During her talk she noted that "If Abdullah grew saffron, I

would be the spice lady.” She informed participants that studies show that nine out of ten Millennials will switch brands for one that supports a cause. Similarly, 60% of North Americans want to support companies that support a cause.

Barb walked the attendees through the seven virtues that her perfume line is based upon, providing a deeper meaning to the products, and direction on how to live together. The seven virtues are: Wonder, Moderation, Truth, Courage, Justice, Wisdom, and Beauty.

Questions about mentorship arose during the question period and answer period, specifically, defining who mentors are and the dynamics of a mentoring relationship. She replied that mentors have a vast network to share with you, and there’s a natural, organic connection that exists with them. Barb has had multiple mentors including her social worker, her army captain friend, and a Sephora mentor she was introduced to when entering in a partnership with Sephora.

Barb encourages anyone interested in learning about social enterprise, or in the process of launching their own social enterprise to add her on Linked In, stating “This is our introduction, this is just the beginning.”



## 2.2 Social Enterprises in the North Panel

Mark Marsolais of Birch Bark Coffee and Manon Cyr of La Maison Verte shared their successes and challenges of operating a Social Enterprises in the north.

Mark provided the background context and inspiration for the Birch Bark Coffee Company (BBC) (<https://birchbarkcoffeecompany.com>) and its development process. BBC is a small SE in its first year of business and is slowly innovating the coffee industry with its cause-driven initiatives. Its primary existence is to improve on-going social issues for Indigenous families with a focus on creating a positive community change. The Company aims to inspire future Indigenous entrepreneurs interested in social enterprise as it becomes part of a new movement in business and entrepreneurship. Birch Bark Coffee Company’s goal is to become a highly profitable social

enterprise to ensure the foundation is a secure and sound venture. It endeavours to be a revenue-generating business with a twist that maintains a balance between Indigenous social missions and the productivity of the coffee venture.

The Birch Bark Coffee Company is a certified organic, fair trade, ethically sourced coffee company with a mission to help solve water issues in First Nations communities by bringing clean drinking water to all water advisory communities. The website states they are “... passionate about our aim to tackle 'All Water Advisories' and not just the 'Long-Term Advisories' effecting Indigenous communities across Canada. We are about solving the water crisis one coffee bag at a time”. Set amounts of proceeds from coffee sales enable them to purchase and install, free of charge, Certified Water Purification Systems in Indigenous community homes across Canada that are suffering from the water advisories. To date, approximately 50 homes have received units.

As a First Nations Entrepreneur, profiting from the business was never Mark’s first intention; however, sustainable revenue still plays an essential role in his venture.



Manon Cyr, representing La Maison Verte (<https://www.lamaisonvertehearst.com>), spoke about the venture’s origins and longevity. La Maison Verte located in Hearst, is owned by the non-profit Association Parmi-Elles, a group of women whose objective since the early 1980’s has been to set up business ventures that create jobs for women. It operates as a cooperative. Over the years, La Maison Verte has contributed greatly to the regional economy through the production of tree seedlings for reforestation, and more recently the supply of fresh produce to local markets. It now has a retail outlet. The three divisions of the business are seedlings, retail and vegetables. The SE provides flexibility with work schedules and works hand-in-hand with Hearst’s local employment centre. They are a large operation having planted 9.1M seedlings this year. La Masion Verte encourages partnerships with other local producers like Kapuskoise Cheese, and try to avoid duplication. There are challenges with the availability of staff and



competition with Canadian seedling producers, but they see opportunities to grow a strong labour pool by, for example, developing expertise through college agricultural programs.



### 2.3 Social Business Plan Development Workshop

This interactive workshop aimed to engage participants in the process of developing an SE. Led by Brittany Mohns of the Timmins Economic Development Centre it walked participants through a Business Model Canvas, illustrating that with SEs the social mission is the primary driver of the plan. A question arising from the workshop revolved around who is responsible for developing the business plan, inquiring if it should be the organization’s board of directors or the owner if it the SE was a propriety venture. Brittany indicated that it depends on the corporate structure of the business. SEs may involve their board of directors in the process, e.g. many non-profits involve their boards, but for-profits typically do not.



### 2.4 Communicating Your Value Workshop

Michelle Goulet of the Timmins Learning Centre helped participants craft a pitch for an SE during this interactive presentation. An elevator pitch is a 60-90 second verbal overview of your business intended to peek interest in your value proposition. It could be used to recruit personnel or volunteers, extend networks, gain media attention, or attract consumers or investment. The five key components of an elevator pitch are listed below:

- 1 Define the target audience;
- 2 Define the problem;
- 3 Introduce yourself;
- 4 Provide details about your value proposition – what is special about your SE?
- 5 The Ask – i.e. what you want from people or what you want them to do- the action item

Three other important points to keep in mind are:

- Nonverbal language is louder than verbal language (appearance; hand gestures; stance; fiddling; facial expressions eye contact);
- Don't highlight your insecurities (nervousness, tiredness; cold/flu; comparison to others); and,
- Your confidence is key to a successful pitch



Michelle suggested there are a number of online resources available to assist in developing an elevator pitch, or she can be reached through the Timmins Learning Centre, if you prefer in-person coaching.

## 2.5 Social Enterprise Resources Panel

The goal of this panel was to highlight available resources and provide examples of successful SEs at various stages of sustainability that could be utilized after the Round Table. The four panelists were representatives from diverse organizations creating SE resources: Maureen Strickland, SEE's Social Enterprise Development Specialists; Joanna Reynolds of Centre for Social Innovation located in Toronto, David Upton of Common Good Solutions based in Halifax, and Andre Vashist of Pillar Nonprofit Network servicing the southwestern part of the province.

Each participant provided an overview of the resources they have developed. Pillar Nonprofit Network's role is to connect people, organizations and enterprises for greater community impact. They believe that a connected network sparks collaboration and a willingness to lean on each other to help build an engaged, inclusive and vibrant community. Andre focused on

how to become capital ready and spoke about VERGE Capital's important role in connecting caring local investors with local social and environmental enterprises. VERGE Capital, a program of Pillar Nonprofit Network, has catalyzed over \$3.5 million in impact investing, shifting capital towards our community's most pressing social and environmental challenges. He noted that it is important to support those change makers who are "walking on glass" trying to launch their ventures, and those wanting to scale up.

David Upton detailed the many and various Social Enterprise Institute (SEI) training opportunities available online (<https://socialenterpriseinstitute.com>) and/or in person. Training covers topics such as start up, impact measurement, as well as how to become investment ready. He talked about SEI's role in bringing all the inspiration, knowledge and tools you will need to solve community and environmental problems.

The Centre for Social Innovation's web platform, Soshent (<https://soshent.net>), connects social entrepreneurs & innovators to the programs, opportunities and funding they need to accelerate their success and amplify their impact. Joanna Reynolds, linked in through Skype, spoke to growing a social enterprise ecosystem and its focus on social purpose. She explained that CSI and Soshent exist to match social entrepreneurs to opportunities and to get rid of barriers.

Maureen Strickland introduced participants to the many tailored, culturally appropriate and bilingual resources that the SEE project has created for SEs and business service providers in Northern Ontario. Her presentation walked people through the website (<https://seethechange.ca>) where resources can be downloaded that support development from assessing readiness to launching a venture to scaling up.



## 2.6 Peer Mentoring and Next Steps

One of the key issues in an emerging field such as social enterprise is connecting people with the desire to be engaged with those with sector knowledge. This is particularly vexing in Northern Ontario due to its vast geographical area and limited connectivity. This session was utilized as an opportunity to get feedback from attendees about the value of the Round Table and discuss next steps in supporting the development of an SE ecosystem. The Sli.do APP was employed by facilitator Maggie Matear of the Timmins Economic Development Corporation for this interactive session. The following are some identified areas where the ecosystem could be strengthened:

- Events: Hosting these types of events and workshops is vital for relaying information to other colleagues and clients; continue having in-person events;
- Funding: build capacity to prepare successful funding applications to meet applicants' needs within the funders' stated goals; funding is always precarious and mandates can be limiting; need to find ways to become more sustainable beyond government grants;
- Network development: staying current is challenging; expand networks and increase networking opportunities to assist in sharing this information and potentially partnering; and,
- Partnerships: Developing partnership and structuring grants to include partners requires time, attention and sensitivity to other people's schedules.

Feedback on becoming a mentee was enthusiastic, as evidenced by the word cloud image below. As a result of this session, two individuals signed up for SE mentoring.



## 2.7 Round Table Evaluation

Feedback regarding the event was gathered in three ways: comments during the Round Table; after the event by participants at community meetings and other activities; and, a post event survey through survey monkey. The organic comments were very positive with participants indicating they thought the Round Table was well organized and enabled them to increase their knowledge about SEs and expand their networks. Findings from the post-Round Table online survey corroborated the initial feedback, lending greater specificity.

When asked what they liked about the event, participants' responses highlighted the diversity and caliber of guest speakers, the opportunity for networking and sharing experiences, cultural recognition and inclusivity, saying:

“Great diversity of attendees, the indigenous weaving of culture, keynote was amazing. Making connections with people between sessions was key. Great presentation on social enterprise from TEDC. Good stories from social entrepreneurs.”

“Great variety and caliber of speakers.”

“The First Nation recognition and inclusion of smudging ceremony. Opportunity to meet others. Good variety of healthy food choices among the treats”.

“Chance to meet others in person who have similar interests”.

“I got to learn about some resources I previously did not know about.”

In terms of constructive improvements for future versions of the event, most respondents would not change a thing about the format. One recommendation was for discussion topics that were more inclusive of service providers.

### **3.0 Conclusions**

The Timmins Roundtable event was successful on many fronts. It provided an opportunity for a wide range of people to gather in-person and to increase their understanding of the SE business model that is gaining traction in many jurisdictions. Participants gained new knowledge and skills that can be shared, and extend their networks across sectors and cultural communities. SEs and business developers learned about resources that are available to support SEs from the ideation stage to scaling up. A number of next steps were identified to further strengthen the north’s SE ecosystem including: hosting more events of this type; increasing opportunities for more networking and communication that would keep people informed of changes and developments in the sector; and encouraging partnerships to increase impact and successful funding applications. Feedback collected during the event indicated that attendees were pleased with the diversity of the sessions and the quality of the speakers and session leaders. There is a keen interest in keeping the momentum going for SE and entrepreneurship in this region.

## Appendix 1: Speaker Bio's and Company Profiles

### **Manon Cyr**

#### **La Maison Verte**

<https://www.lamaisonvertehearst.com>

Manon has been employed at La Maison Verte since July 2011 as general manager. She has a bachelor's degree in psychology from l'Université de Hearst, an MBA and a bachelor education degree from Ottawa University. Starting as a plywood production manager in 1996 for 3 years, she then became an industrial manager for 7 years at Columbia Forest Products in Hearst. For the next five years, Manon worked as a primary school teacher and as registrar at l'Université de Hearst. Being a manager at heart, when the opportunity presented itself to work in the forest industry again, she accepted the position at La Maison Verte.

### **Mark Marsolais-Nahwegahbow**

#### **Founder, Birch Bark Coffee Company**

<https://birchbarkcoffeecompany.com>

Mark Marsolais-Nahwegahbow is Ojibwe and a Band Member of Whitefish River First Nation located on Birch Island, Ontario in the District of Manitoulin Island and is the founder of the Innovative First Nations social enterprise, Birch Bark Coffee Company and he is on a mission to change Indigenous lives across Canada.

Birch Bark Coffee Co. is new start-up that was established in March of 2018 and is proud to offer organic, Fair-Trade and SPP (Small Producers) certified coffee.

### **Brittany Mohns**

#### **Business Enterprise Centre**

<http://www.timminsedc.com/business>

Brittany helps Business Enterprise Centre clients start, expand and buy their businesses. She advises clients about program opportunities, financing options, business plan development and funding applications. Brittany coordinates business development training sessions and workshops throughout the community. Prior to joining the TEDC, she was the Assistant Manager of Operations and Merchandise at two TJX Canada locations.

Brittany holds a Bachelor of Commerce and is currently working on her certification as an Economic Development Professional.

**Michelle Goulet**  
**Timmins Learning Centre**  
<http://www.learnrlc.org>

Michelle Goulet is the Executive Director of the Timmins Learning Centre, which helps children and adults reach their full potential by providing learner-centred literacy, numeracy and essential skills programs. She is also the Owner and Instructor of Class Act Theatre, which offers acting classes and workshops for children and adults, to increase communication skills, as well as increase social confidence. Michelle has a B.A. in English Rhetoric and Media from Laurentian University and a Theatre Arts Certificate from Thorneloe University. An active member in community theatre groups in Sudbury and Timmins for over 15 years, Michelle has experience with board governance, volunteer management, marketing and communications, and event planning. In her down time, Michelle enjoys playing softball and volleyball, and enjoying snuggles with her two loveable furbabies!

**Joanna Reynolds**  
**Centre of Social Innovation/Soshent**  
<https://soshent.net>

Joanna Reynolds (Jo) works alongside community groups, foundations, social entrepreneurs, and business leaders to advance the application of social finance and social entrepreneurship. With roots in community development at West Neighbourhood House working with youth, newcomers to Canada, and adult literacy, Jo then jumped into working alongside the visionaries at Social Innovation Generation (2007) to advance social finance in Canada. In this role, she supported the Canadian Task Force on Social Finance, report, “Mobilizing Private Capital for Public Good” (2010) that led to the start of the MaRS Centre for Impact Investing where she was a founding team member. Over this period, Joanna curated Canada’s Social Finance Forum, and co-authored the report the “State of the Nation: Impact Investing in Canada” (2014). Jo also is proud to have supported SocialFinance.ca as a knowledge catalyst for engaging policymakers, community members, investors and social innovators. Joanna regularly speaks on social enterprise and impact investing and participates as a guest lecturer at various post-secondary schools.

In her role at CSI, Jo leads social enterprise and social innovation development across a number of vibrant networks in Ontario and Canada. She is part of the team developing the Impact Dashboard and Soshent.net. and engaged with an emerging national initiative called, Social Innovation Canada. Jo is grateful to live, learn, and play on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples, (also known as Kingston) with her partner and two kids. You can find her engaged with her queer and trans communities, growing food, cycling, and generally enjoying life!

## **Barb Stegemann**

**Top Game Changer CBC's *Dragons' Den* | CEO and Founder, The 7 Virtues**

<https://www.the7virtues.com>

Barbara Stegemann's entrepreneurial vision was formed after her best friend—a soldier—was severely wounded in Afghanistan. Understanding that supporting Afghanistan's economy was key to building stability for its people, Stegemann created The 7 Virtues, a company that sources organic, fair trade essential oils from countries experiencing turmoil (such as Afghanistan, Haiti the Middle East and Rwanda).

Stegemann became known to millions of Canadians when she became the first woman from Atlantic Canada to land a venture-capital deal on the CBC TV show *Dragons' Den* —for The 7 Virtues Beauty. She went on to become the "Top Game Changer" in the history of the popular reality show for creating her social enterprise.

Since then, Stegemann has been named one of Canada's Top 100 Most Powerful Women in Canada; won the Ernst & Young "Entrepreneur of the Year Award in the emerging Entrepreneur category for Atlantic Canada"; was ranked as one of Profit Guide magazine's "Top 30 Cool and Fabulous Canadian Entrepreneurs"; and was also made the first female Honorary Colonel in the history of 14 Wing Greenwood base, Royal Canadian Air Force.

Stegemann is the author of the bestselling book, *The 7 Virtues of a Philosopher Queen*, a book which has empowered women (and men) to launch companies, run for public office, and end bullying. Her compelling story of overcoming adversity through the power of stoic wisdom is the subject of the feature-length documentary *Perfume War*. The film tells Stegemann's entrepreneurial story and has garnered many awards, including Best Humanitarian Film, Sedona Film Festival, Arizona; and the Vanguard award for cutting edge ideas at the Artemis Film Festival, Santa Monica, California.

She is a graduate of the Sephora Accelerate Cohort where she developed her new contemporary line. Her brand inspired the global beauty giant to create a new Clean & Conscious space in their USA stores. The 7 Virtues Peace Perfumes are hypoallergenic, cruelty-free and available at Sephora Canada and Sephora USA.

Stegemann earned degrees from the Universities of Dalhousie and King's College in sociology and journalism, and received an Honorary Doctor of Letters Degree from the University of New Brunswick.



**Maureen Strickland**  
**Social Enterprise Development Specialist, SEE**

<https://seethechange.ca>

Maureen is passionate about building a new economy that is fair, place-based and regenerative. These values motivate her work in social enterprise, co-operative development, community economic development and alternative lending. Maureen returned to Northern Ontario in 2011 and has worked for organizations such as Community Futures, Ontario Co-operative Association, NORDIK Institute and RAIN. Prior to this Maureen worked in these sectors in Nova Scotia and the United Kingdom and currently, Maureen is the Social Enterprise Development Specialist for the Northern Ontario ONE partnership and the Loans Specialist for the recently launched Fair Finance Fund. Maureen holds a BSc in Biology and Masters of Environmental Studies from Dalhousie University in Halifax. Maureen grew up on Manitoulin Island and is always happy when she gets to spend time with her animals at her hobby farm on the island.

**David Upton**  
**CEO, Common Good Solutions**

<http://commongoodsolutions.ca>

David Upton is a committed entrepreneur who is passionate about social change and using business as a tool to strengthen communities. Blending these passions, the focus of his work over the past 25 years has been building capacity within the social innovation and community based enterprise ecosystem on a regional, national and international basis.

**Andre Vashist**  
**Director, Social Enterprise & Social Finance**  
**Pillar NonProfit Network**

<https://pillarnonprofit.ca>

Andre is a social innovator passionate about building inclusive communities. He has 15 years of experience as a social entrepreneur, community development professional and impact investor.

Pillar Nonprofit Network (Pillar) supports over 610 nonprofits, social enterprises and innovators by sharing resources, knowledge and connections across the 3 pillars of nonprofit, business and government. For 15 years, Pillar has been building an inclusive community using a network mindset, "Be Inclusive" as the organization's strategic objective. Currently, Pillar's goal is to participate in reconciliation; ensure black, Muslim, LGBTQ2+, and vulnerable groups are active participants in the social fabric; and, supporting 340 nonprofit organizations that have a positive community impact.

Pillar's learning and development program, with academic partners in personal & organizational development and community resilience, hosts over 80 learning opportunities a year to over 3,000 participants, with a social enterprise competencies program being a core service offering. Pillar also operates Innovation Works, a 32-thousand square foot co-working space with over 180 co-tenants, to provide the London community with a cross-sector collaborative work-space between industries and sectors. Pillar's social-finance intermediary program, VERGE Capital, manages 2 impact investment funds with over 20 investors and \$3 million of assets under management. These funds invest in startup and growth enterprises and have helped 70 impact investors invested in 15 enterprises, and created over 50 jobs for underrepresented populations.

**Anne Vincent**

**Project Coordinator, Youth Wellness Hub, Timmins Native Centre**

The Youth Wellness Hub brings together youth and community partners to support social, mental, physical and spiritual wellbeing. The Hub gives people ages 12 to 25 spaces to get together for activities, and to access resources and services. Since its launch September 29, 2018 to the end of March 2019, there have been 38 hubs, with 695 youth visits. Over 40 organizations were involved including NEOFACS, Missaway Health Centre and all four local school boards.

<https://northernontario.ctvnews.ca/youth-wellness-pop-up-in-timmins-1.4028178>