



LARIDAE



Almaguin Highlands

Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan

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Executive Summary

The Almaguin Highlands is a unique and special place. It is defined by its stunning landscape; the warmth of its people and its history.

The Steering Committee worked with Laridae from May to September 2018 to complete a full review of economic development efforts, complete a situational analysis to determine the potential for future opportunities in the Almaguin Highlands region, and establish the first Regional Economic Development (RED) Strategic Plan. The RED Strategic Plan Steering Committee came together through a partnership among the Village of Burk's Falls, the Burk's Falls & Area Community Economic Development Committee (BACED), the Central Almaguin Economic Development Association (CAEDA), The Municipality of Powassan, the Labour Market Group (LMG), and NECO Community Futures Development Corporation.

The Economic Development Steering Committee saw meaningful stakeholder engagement as a critical step to planning. Throughout 11 focus groups and roundtables, two (2) public meetings, 26 interviews, and an online survey, it was evident that there is great opportunity for the Almaguin Highlands region to conduct economic development by leveraging its assets and collaborative efforts. ***Based on research, engagement, and industry best practices, it is abundantly clear that regional municipal collaboration is integral for greater economic impact across the region.***

The outcomes of this project will be used to:

- ***Determine the foundational strategies*** for economic development across the region;
- ***Prepare plans of action*** built on strategy and responsive to opportunity;
- ***Identify an ideal structure and funding model*** for regional economic development.

Building on Laridae's review of past plans, studies, and reports completed across the region, its analysis of the area's demographic information, and the extensive stakeholder engagement, a series of recommendations are outlined to guide a successful economic development strategy forward.

In the following plan you will find an ***ambitious, bold, and forward-looking*** set of strategies that will both launch the organization needed to execute the plan and offer a series of actionable strategies for the organization to pursue. While not everything will be achievable in the coming few years, it was felt that it was best to offer a series of priorities to consider to establish the foundation to build upon while driving the region's economic success over the next five-years.

The economic development strategy is built on the three key pillars:

- The Land
- The People
- The Legacy

What differentiates this plan to individual initiatives from the past, is a ***regional approach and structure*** to facilitate meaningful regional economic development. The recommendations combine accountability to municipalities with the importance of attracting business and other stakeholders.

To review the:

- Planning context – please see [Section 5: Key Considerations and Observations](#)
- Strategy – please see [Section 6: Strategic Directions](#)
- Suggested approach – please see [Section 7: Recommended Structure and Funding Model](#)

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Section 1: Introduction

Background

The Village of Burk's Falls, in partnership with the Burk's Falls & Area Community Economic Development Committee (BACED) and the Central Almaguin Economic Development Association (CAEDA), including their municipal members, The Municipality of Powassan, the Labour Market Group (LMG), and NECO Community Futures Development Corporation is seeking to take a regional approach to economic development that maximizes the opportunities for economic, business, and community development in the East Parry Sound area.

To guide this approach, the decision was made to develop a regional plan that builds on the work that has already been undertaken by individual organizations; that is consistent with a situational analysis of Almaguin Highlands; that is reflective of input received from a range of municipal, business, and other stakeholders; that includes a vision to guide future activity; and that presents a series of achievable and measurable activities designed to meet the plan's goals and objectives.

Economic Development Overview

Economic Development is a professional industry that strives to improve the regional environment to support greater economic performance and foster sustained growth. It is the set of sustained, concerted actions taken by to promote the economic well-being and the standard of living of certain communities or regions. These actions may involve investing in infrastructure, social well-being, human capital, business development, among other initiatives.

Typically, an economic development corporation is an organization whose mission is to promote economic development within a specific geographical area. The function of these entities is to assist businesses within their respective geographical area to get started, and also to succeed and grow, helping to develop economic sustainability and growth. They often facilitate projects and partnerships while working with government, and private sectors to build strong communities, industries, and markets.

Project Goals and Objectives

Developing a strategic Regional Economic Development (RED) plan is a major milestone in the progression of regional partnerships and collaborative efforts. The creation of such a plan is intended to achieve the following broad goals:

- Align the current priorities of individual and clustered stakeholder municipalities and organizations in one inclusive, mutually beneficial strategy;
- Assist with the implementation of recommendations and action items defined in current strategic plans and in past studies;
- Create a united vision and direction for the execution of economic development activities throughout the region that eliminates the risk of duplication and maximizes shareholder investment;
- Identify and prioritize new economic development tactics and sector best practices as they relate to the strategic development of the Almaguin Highlands region.
- Secure long-term recurring funding from regional shareholders by defining clear actions and desired outcomes.

Section 2: Project Design & Methodology

Approach

The Village of Burk's Falls engaged a third-party consultant to develop the Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan. Laridae, a full-service management consulting firm, uses stakeholder engagement as the foundation of its work to inform the development of reports and plans that are not only readable and engaging, but that also inspire action.

Laridae takes a positive stakeholder approach that strives to educate while engaging. This methodology produces frank, galvanizing conversations that assist clients in the development of outreach plans that drive a region's strategic directions, while ensuring stakeholders develop a positive view and understanding of the project's intent.

This process has resulted in the provision of a holistic overview of the needs and opportunities that exist in the Almaguin Highlands region, which will serve to inform economic development decisions for the future.

The project was completed in three phases, as described below.

Phase One: Planning and Situational Analysis

In Phase One of the project, final project planning and a current state analysis were completed. This phase included collaboration between the RED Steering Committee and Laridae to establish a work plan and stakeholder engagement plan. The current state analysis included a detailed review of existing economic development activities across the region, demographic analysis, and a review of existing plans and reports.

Phase Two: Stakeholder Engagement

In Phase Two, a full stakeholder engagement plan was designed and executed, including an online survey, focus groups and roundtable meetings, public sessions, and interviews. This component of the project helped to determine the overall strengths of the region, identify needs and opportunities for future development, and clearly outline areas for improvement. Stakeholder engagement offered the opportunity to learn more about the communities and economic drivers, to determine opportunities, and to further educate participants about economic development in the region.

Phase Three: Analysis and Recommendations

A detailed analysis of qualitative and quantitative data was completed and recommendations were made. The final report includes a review of data, themes, key observations, strategic approaches, and recommendations for structure and funding models. *The strategic directions that have been outlined are the priorities to be addressed in order to establish a strong foundation for broader economic development impact in the future.*

Strategic Planning and Operational Planning

For the purpose of this RED Strategic Plan, the strategy and Recommended Action Items are established to set the strategic direction for the region. Looking specifically at initiatives that will set a strong foundation and create an environment for future economic prosperity. The strategy set in this plan establishes the path for the Board of Directors to govern the economic development entity.

It is recommended that detailed annual operational plan that includes steps for each actionable item that will consider any changes in the landscape in which economic development operates, such as funding

models and availability, government shifts, changes in mandate, geographic focus, etc. The project plans will also clearly identify steps, roles and responsibilities, milestones, and required resources.

Section 3: Stakeholder Engagement Summary

Increasingly, municipal, non-profit, and public-sector organizations both desire, and are expected, to periodically "check in" with those stakeholders who interact with them most often. Strategic plans that provide meaningful direction over the course of their stated duration rely on an authentic engagement process, one that genuinely seeks input and allows for those invested in the success of an organization or region to provide ideas, input, and feedback. Of course, conceptually, leadership means to ask tough questions, make decisions, encourage commitment, and provide the required direction.

Properly done, stakeholder engagement is in no way an abdication or devolution of leadership. It's the opposite. Leaders who reach out and seek the input of those people who deliver or receive services every day are far more likely to craft future strategic directions that will resonate with those they affect, and those who must in turn implement the directions.

Purpose

Early on, before striking a RED Strategic Plan, the Almaguin Highlands Regional Economic Development decided to seek input from a wide array of stakeholders. In doing so, the region ensured that its joint strategic plan will have a solid base and be informed by experience, evidence, and the broadest-held perceptions.

The engagement phase took place between **Wednesday, June 20th – Friday, July 27th, 2018**. Engagement sessions and opportunities were promoted by email, social media, word of mouth, and phone calls.

The survey, focus groups, roundtable sessions, and public meetings had two general purposes:

- To **engage stakeholders** by gathering input, ideas, and suggestions and including them in the planning process directly and in a meaningful way;
- To **educate stakeholders** about the work of the Almaguin Highlands Economic Development Steering Committee and generally promote the economic opportunities to the broader region (as a positive legacy of the planning process).

In-person Focus Groups and Roundtables

Focus groups and roundtables were held across the region with a variety of stakeholders. The participants were engaged during each of the sessions and a comfortable rapport was perceived over the course of the process.

A total of **63 individuals participated** in the process. Below is a list of the participants from the focus groups and roundtable sessions.

Group	Location	Date	Time	Total Participants
Seniors Organizations	Powassan	Wed, June 20	11:00 am – 12:30 pm	3
Agriculture	Powassan	Wed, June 20	1:30 pm – 3:00 pm	6
Municipal Staff	South River	Thurs, June 21	9:00 am – 10:30 am	9
Artisans	South River	Thurs, June 21	11:00 am – 12:30 pm	10
Tourism	South River	Thurs, June 21	1:00 pm – 3:00 pm	5
Manufacturing	Burk's Falls	Mon, June 25	11:00 am – 12:30 pm	7
Professional Organizations	Burk's Falls	Mon, June 25	1:30 pm – 3:00 pm	5
Retail	Burk's Falls	Mon, June 25	6:00 pm – 8:00 pm	3
Health Care	Burk's Falls	Tues, June 26	9:00 am – 10:30 am	0
Community Organizations	Burk's Falls	Tues, June 26	11:00 am – 12:30 pm	5
Municipal Councils	Burk's Falls	Tues, June 26	1:30 pm – 3:00 pm	10
Total Participants				63

Public Meetings

Public meetings are hosted to offer an opportunity for a larger group of residents and the general public to attend and offer their insight. There was a total of **28 participants** at two public meetings and over **40 participants** at a Chamber of Commerce event, in addition to attendance at the Chamber of Commerce regional guide launch. The aim of participation at the Chamber of Commerce event was to enhance awareness about the initiative and encourage further involvement through the online survey and upcoming engagement sessions.

- **9 participants** at Public Meeting in Powassan (Thurs, June 21, 2018)
- **19 participants** at Public Meeting in Burk's Falls (Mon, June 25, 2018)
- **Approximately 40 participants** at Chamber of Commerce regional guide launch (Wed, June 20, 2018)

Key Informant Interviews

Key informant interviews are qualitative in-depth interviews with individuals considered knowledgeable about the region. The purpose of these interviews is to collect detailed information from experts who—with their particular knowledge, experience, and understanding—may provide insight on challenges, opportunities, and potential solutions.

A total of **26 key informant interviews** were conducted.

Category	Representation/Roles	Number of Participants
Funders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FedNor • MNDM/NOHFC 	2
Partner Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BACED • Labour Market Group • Chamber of Commerce • Municipal staff 	4
Associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three Mile Lake Cottage Association 	6

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pickerel Lake Property Owner's Association • Cecebe Waterways Association • Ahmic Lake Cottage Association • Lake Bernard Property Owner's Association • Eagle Lake Conservation Association 	
Business Owners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Finley Consulting • Shift Leadership • Stan Darling Insurance • Lofthouse Manufacturing • Highlander Brew Co. • Louisa Moffit Real Estate • Magnetawan Home Hardware Building Centre • Property developer 	8
Political Representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MP, Muskoka Parry Sound • MP, Nipissing • MPP, Muskoka Parry Sound • MPP, Nipissing • Mayor, Powassan • Deputy Mayor, Magnetawan 	6
Total Interviews		26

Discussion Themes

The Stakeholder Engagement process has been consolidated in a themed approach, capturing consistently discussed topics. This ensures anonymity and presents the various perspectives from each theme. Below is a general summary of the themes discussed through the Stakeholder Engagement process. For more details, please see the Stakeholder Engagement Summary Report in [Appendix 3: Stakeholder Engagement Summary](#).

Sectors

Participants felt that the natural environment and the availability of outdoor activities for tourism purposes were a great strength for the region. Generally, participants expressed that there is opportunity to do more with tourism.

When referring to retail and services, participants noted that while groceries, hardware, drug stores, and health care services are available, their offerings can be limited, and people usually have to leave the community in order to purchase clothing and other essentials.

Participants noted that smaller agricultural producers in the area are able to cater to the local farmers' markets, for which there is increased interest. However, it was mentioned that the markets don't yet provide enough income to support farmers and that there is a lack of infrastructure to support the 'eat local' movement. A significant challenge identified for the local agricultural and forestry industries are input costs,

such as taxes, hydro, high insurance costs, forestry management plans, and minimum wage. It was noted there is a lack of processing capacity in the region, which has a negative impact on those who raise livestock.

In terms of manufacturing, it was noted that access to a four-lane highway for transportation to the larger Ontario markets is an asset, while some expressed issues with reaching outside markets such as the U.S. The cost of land in the area was identified as affordable for establishing new facilities; however, the ongoing overhead costs, such as hydro, are prohibitive.

Infrastructure

When considering infrastructure in the region, participants expressed great appreciation for the four-lane highway that connects the region. During every engagement session, participants described a need for high-speed internet. This is viewed as a current gap, and an opportunity that could support the attraction of people from more urban areas to work from home when they are in the region. It seems that access to high-speed internet is inconsistent across the region, and those in more rural areas who aren't directly connected to existing lines have to rely on very expensive solutions. Participants noted that improvement would require investments from the upper levels of government. In addition, participants expressed a need for more serviced land to attract businesses and housing developments.

Housing

Housing was a consistent point of discussion throughout the engagement process. It was identified as a core need for the community, and participants agreed that additional housing would support the attraction of younger people to the region and serve the tourism industry, as well as residents. Although housing and lands are affordable in the area, there was agreement that addressing the need for infrastructure, such as water and sewer, would reduce the challenges with developing lands for new housing or sub-divisions. In addition, there was agreement that there is a need to look at the continuum of housing – providing more communal housing options for seniors so that their homes are open for younger families to move in.

Labour Market and Employment

When discussing the various sectors and opportunities for business in the region, participants consistently referred to the available labour market. They shared that it is difficult for local businesses to find qualified people to employ and noted that the younger generation seems to have to leave the community to find employment. Some may eventually return to the area; however, it is generally when they are ready to retire. Many participants identified that there is a lack of skilled labour in the area and that it is hard to recruit people to their sectors. On the other hand, many also expressed concern about a lack of employment opportunities in the region. It was also discussed that employment expectations and working styles have shifted, and that those they try to recruit aren't as interested in "hard work," as compared to previous generations. It was noted that businesses could use assistance in figuring out how to better position and market employment opportunities that will attract a younger generation.

Families and Children

Throughout engagement, participants often spoke about the importance of offering programs and services that will attract and retain younger families, including extra-curricular activities for children and youth, social experiences for adults, and local access to education and schools. It was noted that there is an aging population in the region with fewer young families and children. Many shared that parents often travel to larger centres for activities such as gymnastics, swimming, etc. with their children. It was mentioned that although there are some great offerings available across the Almaguin Highlands, these offerings are either unknown by residents or they remain uncompetitive, and, as a result, families eventually need to head to larger centres for competitive activities. Participants also expressed that it is hard to get younger people

more involved in the community, because they have to work multiple jobs or work outside the region in order to survive financially. In addition, volunteerism has changed in ways that find it challenging to find the right people or the right volunteer opportunities that best suit the people. This has a negative impact on community events and service organizations.

Transportation

Participants often spoke of transportation being both a strength and a weakness across the region. Participants agree that the establishment of the four-lane highway has had a positive impact on the region and has connected the communities. An opportunity that was raised would be to attract people off the highway and into the villages themselves. The example of Burk's Falls was given, where visitors will stop at the Tim Hortons and gas station but won't go any further into the town. In general, participants thought that a lack of public transportation has a negative impact on the mobility of seniors, the attraction of new residents, and the ability of employees to travel to work.

Communications and Branding

Participants felt that the branding of "The Villages of Almaguin" has set a common theme for the region, and that it has been helpful to see the region as 'a community of villages.' Many expressed that there is a lack of access to information in the region as many businesses do not have a website or showcase out-of-date information, while many others only have a cell phone as a contact method. Participants expressed that using consistent branding – including brand language and a visual identity, using methods such as consistent signage – will help establish the region and strengthen its ability to consistently communicate its value and the offerings available to residents (current and future) and visitors alike. There is an appetite for a stronger, comprehensive online resource that can be an information hub.

Collaboration and Leadership

Generally, participants noted the importance of consistent collaboration and strong leadership to drive the collective region forward. Participants noted that there have been significant changes in recent years across the Villages, as the communities, and particularly the municipal staff, get together and listen to one another more regularly. They expressed that in general, there is more respect for each other's perspectives. Participants expressed concern that not all municipal politicians have bought into the regional approach to economic development, and that leadership was needed at the political level to really push the approach forward. It was noted that local politicians face a significant challenge in the different assessments that exist in different townships, and there is concern that there is no incentive to look at economic development from a regional perspective.

Economic Development

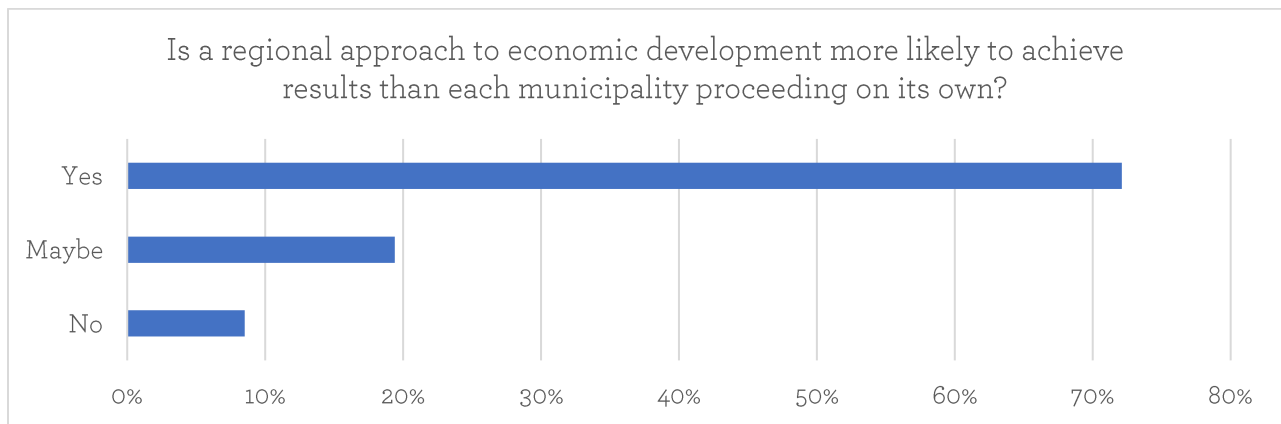
Overall, participants thought that there is value in the municipalities taking a regional approach to economic development. One noted that "[economic development] will be stronger with more people involved in it." Participants think there are opportunities to create community events that establish the region as a destination that can attract many visitors. It was expressed that there are opportunities to promote activities in agriculture, tourism, retail, and services, and that each should become objectives of the economic development strategic plan. They agreed that municipalities should look at how land use planning can encourage more sustainable agriculture in the region, and should encourage farming and forestry. Some suggested early successes for economic development, including consistent signage across the region that communicates location, places to stop, and attractions; the establishment of a strong online presence for the region; and, the launch of a 'shop local' program and/or promotional plan that could support local business and communicate the importance of supporting local.

Online Survey Summary

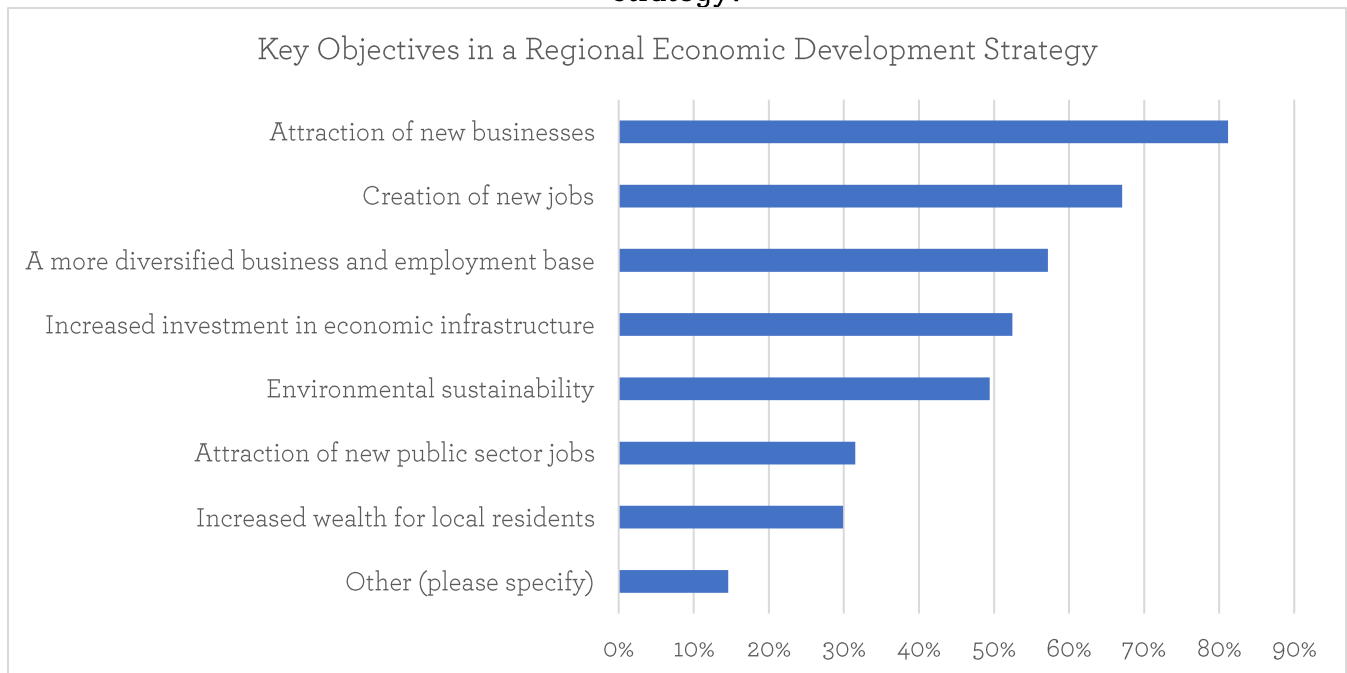
A confidential online survey was conducted, available to the above noted stakeholder groups, including seasonal and year-round residents. Anonymity was guaranteed to encourage participants to be comfortable and honest in their responses. The survey was circulated via email and available to respondents from June 20th to July 10th, 2018.

There were 449 respondents to the survey. Below highlights some of the responses. For more comprehensive results see [Appendix 3: Stakeholder Engagement Summary](#).

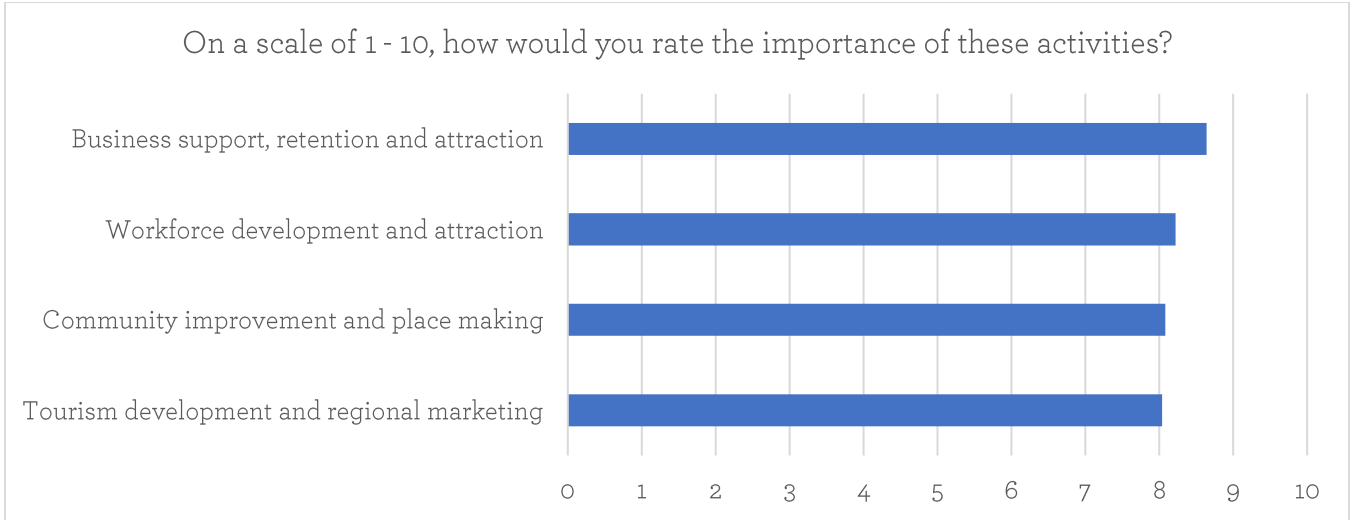
Knowing that the Almaguin Highlands region includes 14 municipalities, do you agree that a regional approach to economic development is more likely to achieve results than each municipality proceeding on its own?



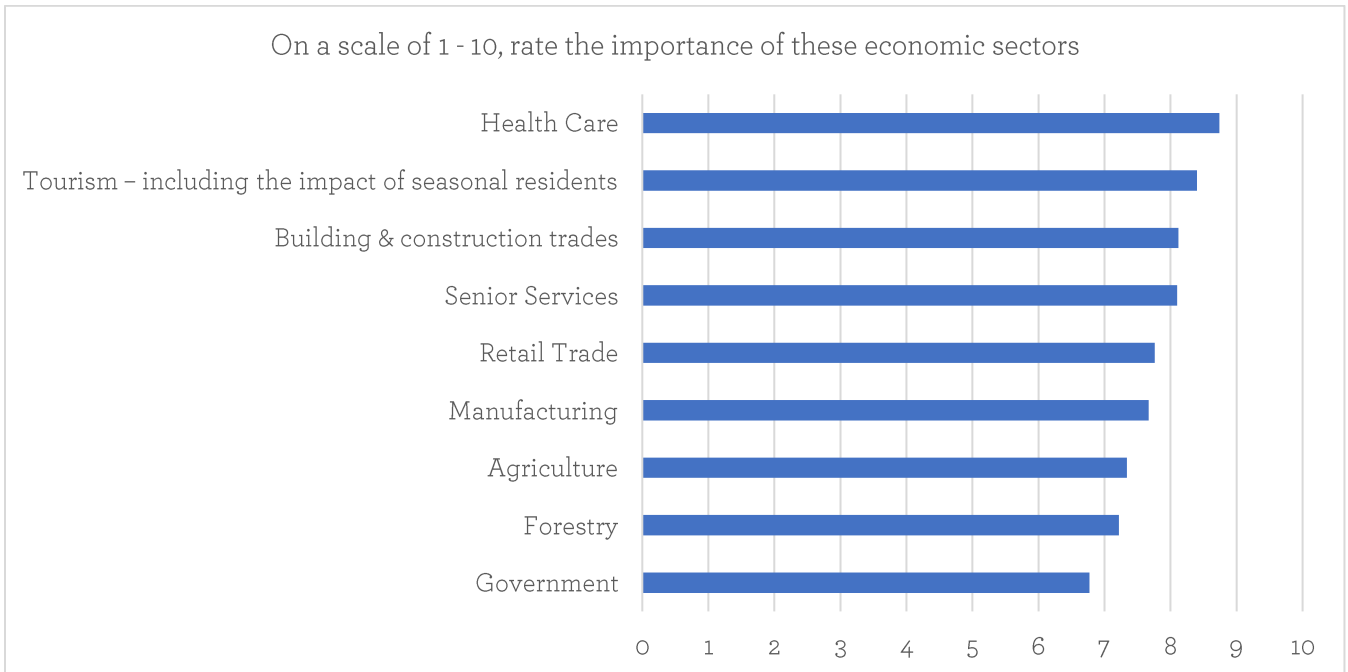
Which of the following objectives should be included in a regional economic development strategy?



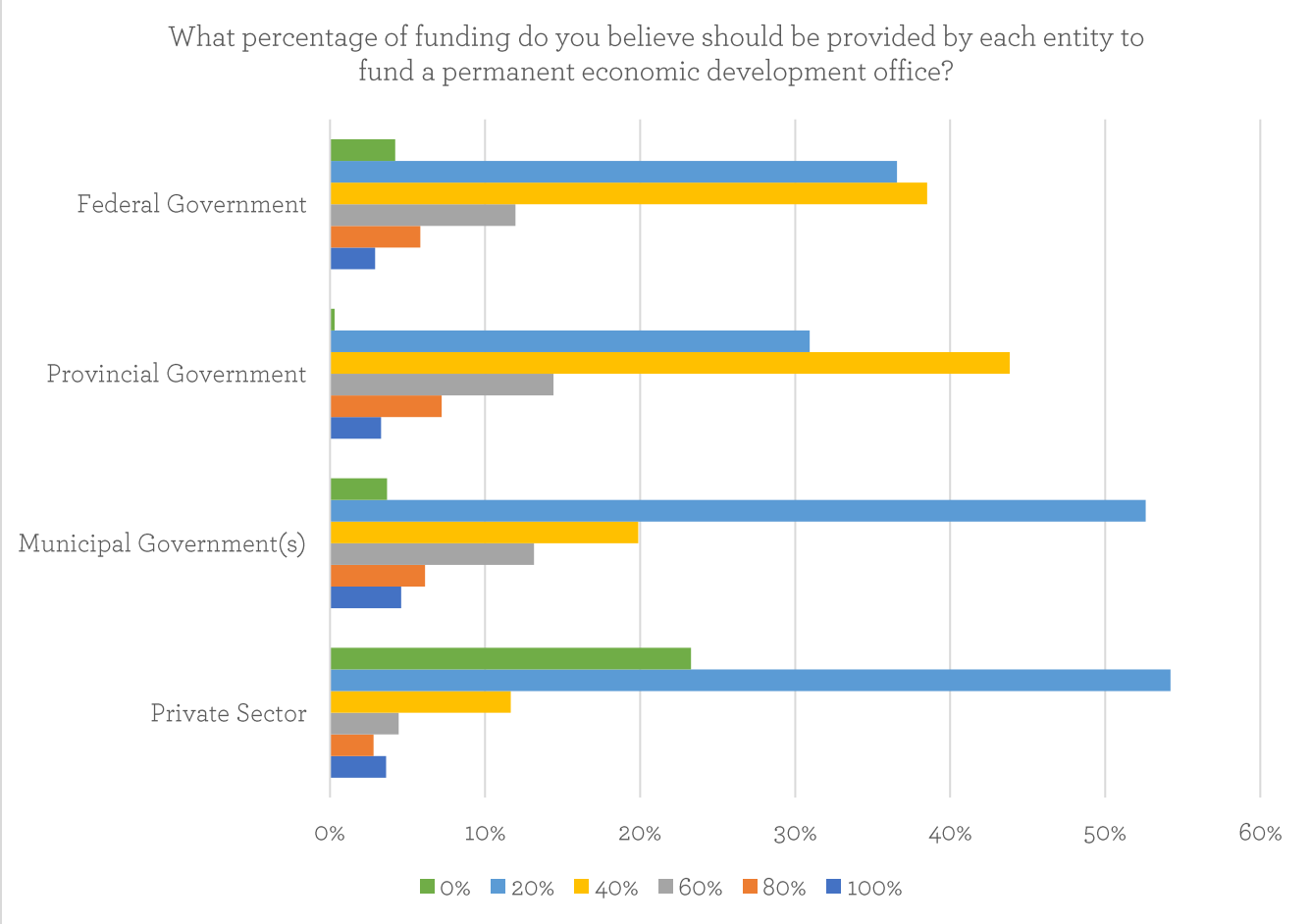
Thinking about possible actions to assist in economic development, on a scale of 1 to 10 – with 10 being very important and 1 being not important at all – how would you rate the importance of the following activities?



On a scale of 1 to 10 – with 10 being very important and 1 not being important at all – how would you rate the importance of each of the economic sectors to the Almaguin Region?



In order to establish a long-term stable funding model for regional economic development and growth, partnerships are integral. Who do you believe should fund a permanent economic development office? Please indicate the percentage of funding you believe each should provide.



Section 4: Situational Analysis

Purpose

The purpose of the situational analysis and review of the current state was to develop a more thorough understanding of the communities across the Almaguin Highlands region.

The analysis provides background demographic and economic analysis for input into the Regional Economic Development Plan for the Almaguin Highlands Partnership, as well as an analysis of past plans and studies completed by separate municipalities within the partnership.

Statistical data is sourced from the 2011 and 2016 Census from Statistics Canada and from the Labour Market Group:

- Canadian Business Counts (June 2017)
- National Household Survey (2011)
- Emsi Analyst Program: In order to capture a complete picture of industry employment, Emsi combines employment data from Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours (SEPH) with data from the Labour Force Survey (LFS), Census, and Canadian Business Patterns (CBP) to form detailed geographic estimates of employment. Projections are based on the latest available Emsi industry data, 10-year past local trends in each industry and growth rates from national industry projections from the Canadian Occupational Projection System (COPS) produced by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.”

Below you will find a high-level summary of some of the findings from the quantitative research. For a full Situational Analysis report, please see [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis](#).

Almaguin Highlands Profile

For the purposes of the Regional Economic Development strategic plan, the Almaguin Highlands Partnership is comprised of 14 distinct municipalities. The 14 municipalities will be referred to as the Almaguin Region for the remainder of this document.

As of 2016, the population of the region within the Partnership was 18,039. However, the region is home to a large cottage and seasonal population which increases the overall population by approximately 50,000 in the summer months. Also, many seasonal residents are moving permanently to the region for retirement.

The 14 municipalities cover 2 census divisions (Parry Sound and Nipissing).

Parry Sound District

- Municipality of Powassan
- Village of Sundridge

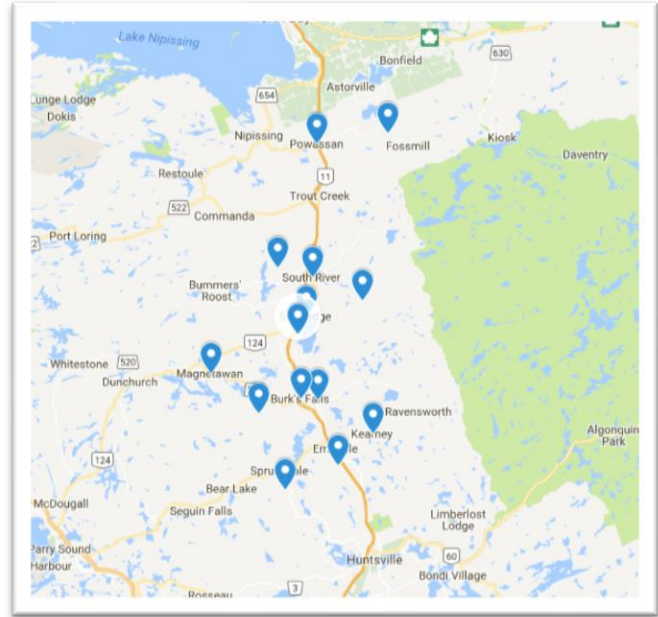


- Township of Strong
- Township of Joly
- Village of South River
- Township of Machar
- Town of Kearney
- Municipality of Magnetawan
- Township of McMurrich/Monteith
- Township of Perry
- Township of Ryerson
- Township of Armour
- Village of Burk's Falls

Nipissing District

- Township of Chisholm

Located along the Highway 11 corridor, the region spans from north of Huntsville to south of North Bay, and from east of Parry Sound to west of Algonquin Provincial Park.



Source: Google Maps

Population

According to the 2016 census, the total population for the Almaguin Region in 2016 was 18,039. The largest municipalities comprise of Powassan, Perry, Strong, Armour, Magnetawan, Chisholm, and South River (all with populations > 1000). The population varies widely across the region, from 304 in Joly to 3,455 in Powassan.

Table 1: Population, 2016

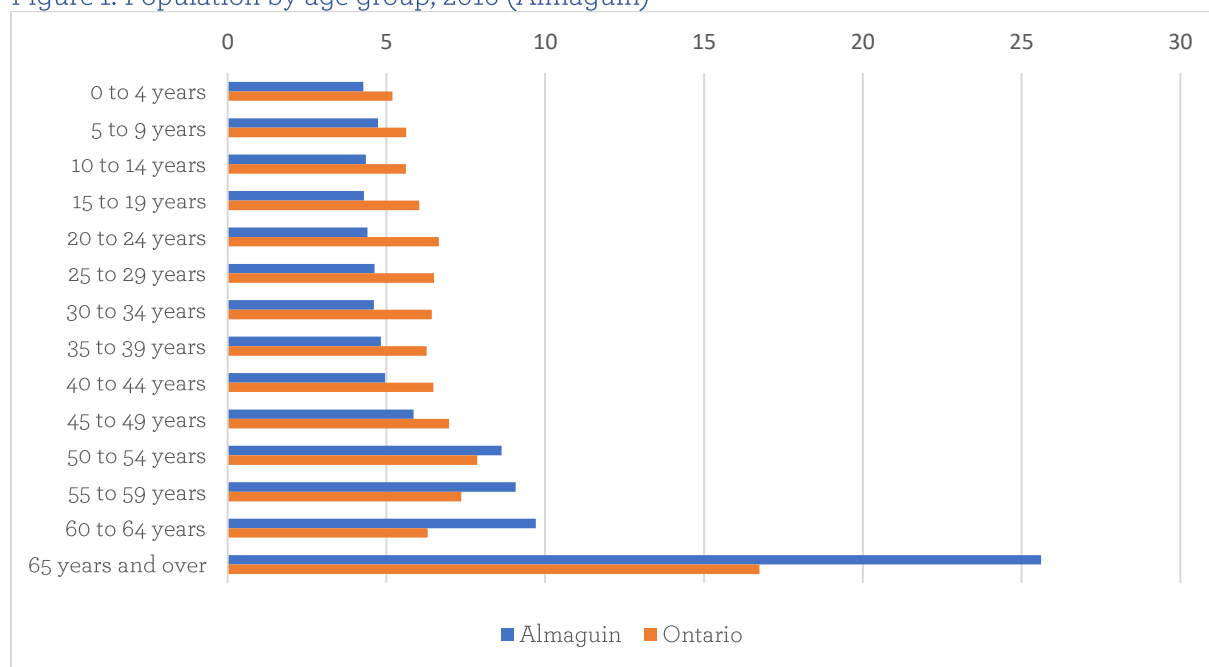
	Population	% of Almaguin	Population Change 2011-2016
Armour	1,414	7.8%	3.1%
Burk's Falls	981	5.4%	1.4%
Chisholm	1,291	7.2%	2.2%
Joly	304	1.7%	7.0%
Kearney	882	4.9%	4.9%
Machar	882	4.9%	-4.4%
Magnetawan	1,390	7.7%	-4.4%
McMurrich/Monteith	824	4.6%	3.0%
Perry	2,454	13.6%	5.9%
Powassan	3,455	19.2%	2.3%
Ryerson	648	3.6%	2.2%
South River	1,114	6.2%	6.2%
Strong	1,439	8.0%	7.3%
Sundridge	961	5.3%	-2.4%
Total Population	18,039	100%	

The total population for the Region has increased in each census year since 2006, though the amount of change is small. The rate of change is lower compared to Ontario. The municipalities of Strong, Joly, South River, Perry, McMurrich/Monteith had the most growth (greater than 5%) since 2006. Only Magnetawan, Chisholm, and Ryerson experienced declines in their populations since 2006. Refer to the community profiles in the [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#) for population change for each municipality.

Population by Age

In general, the population of Almaguin Highlands region is much older compared to Ontario. Figure 1 shows the population by age group for the Region compared to Ontario. An older population is characteristic of many rural areas where there is an outmigration of youth, but also where people relocate for retirement. This can present challenges for recruitment and finding skilled labour for jobs. Also, it can indicate the need for additional services and programs that support an older population.

Figure 1: Population by age group, 2016 (Almaguin)



Seasonal Population

The Almaguin Region has a large cottage and seasonal resident population, which is a vital component of the Region’s culture, traditions, and overall economy. Though precise numbers are hard to calculate, estimates indicate the population may increase by upwards of 50,000¹ residents over the summer months.

¹ Ontario Provincial Police. Almaguin Highlands Detachment 2017-2019 Action Plan
<http://www.armourtownship.ca/documents/notices/CORPORATE/2017-2019AlmaguinOPP.pdf>

According to reported numbers from each municipality, **seasonal dwellings make up 38.5% of the region’s overall dwellings**. In addition, there are a number of visitors staying in seasonal campgrounds. This represents a significant increase in population, visitors, investment, and economic impact across the region on a seasonal basis.

Migration

Over the past five years, 67% of Almaguin region residents have not moved. Of those that did, 26% relocated from within their own community (census sub-division) and the remainder (74%) relocated from outside of their community. Table 2 shows the mobility status of the Almaguin region compared to Ontario.

Table 2: Mobility Status, 5 years ago, 2011

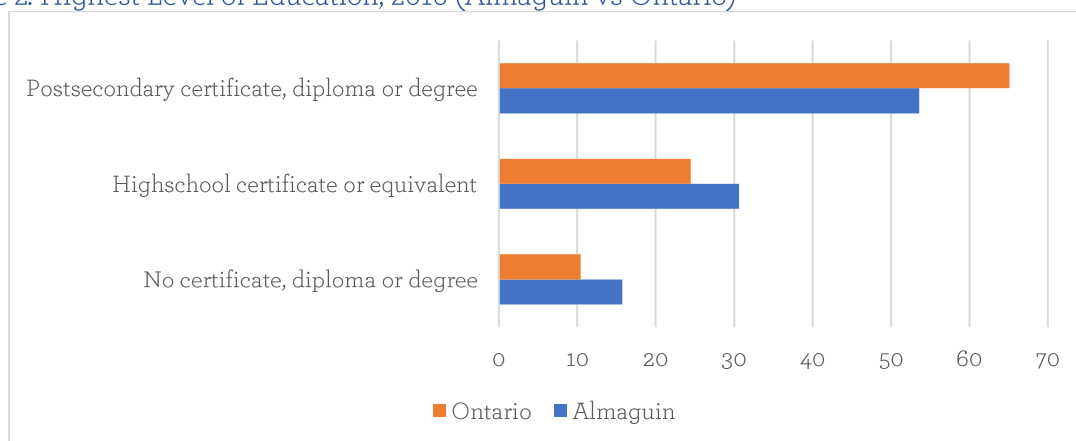
	Almaguin Region	Ontario
<i>Non-movers</i>	67%	63%
<i>Movers</i>	33%	37%
<i>Non-migrants</i>	26%	54%
<i>Migrants</i>	74%	45%
<i>Intraprovincial</i>	94.7%	65.4%
<i>Interprovincial</i>	4.5%	11.6%
<i>From outside Canada</i>	1.0%	39.8%

Of those that did move to the region, almost 95% came from within Ontario (intra-provincial migration) and 4.5% migrated from other provinces. Only 1.0% came from outside Canada.

Educational Attainment and Field of Study

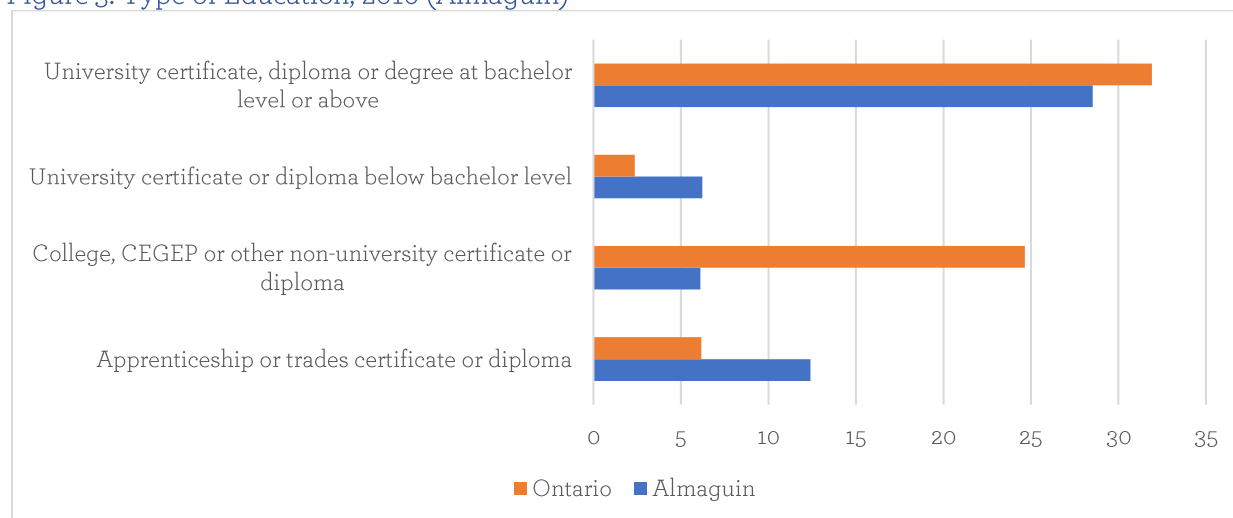
Based on the 2016 census, the educational attainment level of the population aged 25-64 years of age in the Almaguin Region was lower compared to Ontario. As shown in Figure 2, of the population 25-64 years of age, 53.6% have obtained a postsecondary certificate, diploma, or degree (compared to 65% for Ontario).

Figure 2: Highest Level of Education, 2016 (Almaguin vs Ontario)



The following figure shows the breakdown of the type of post-secondary education obtained. Note that residents are less likely to have a university degree, but are more likely to have a skilled trade, compared to Ontario.

Figure 3: Type of Education, 2016 (Almaguin)



Household Income

Average household income is another socio-economic indicator used to describe a population. A high average income can indicate a larger amount of disposable income, which has implications for supporting local goods and services producing businesses targeted to the resident population.

Table 5 shows the average total income for private households in 2015. There is a high level of income inequality across the region, as demonstrated by the large difference in average income for each community (range of \$50,158 in South River to \$82,145 in Powassan).

Table 3: Total Household Income for Private Households (2015)

	<i>Average Total Income for Private households in 2015</i>
<i>Armour</i>	\$71,142
<i>Burk's Falls</i>	\$52,625
<i>Chisholm</i>	\$70,720
<i>Joly</i>	\$53,340
<i>Kearney</i>	\$72,863
<i>Machar</i>	\$68,923
<i>Magnetawan</i>	\$71,317
<i>McMurrich/Monteith</i>	\$59,393
<i>Perry</i>	\$69,781
<i>Powassan</i>	\$82,145
<i>Ryerson</i>	\$65,487
<i>South River</i>	\$50,158
<i>Strong</i>	\$68,891
<i>Sundridge</i>	\$64,114

Labour Force Profile

This section describes labour force characteristics for the total population 15 years and over by labour force activity and provides insight on specific industries where the labour force is employed, and the occupations in which they work. According to the 2016 census, the Region's labour force was 8,095 people, aged 15 years and over. This reflects a 44.9% participation rate, compared to 64.7% for Ontario.

Definitions:

Participation rate refers to the number of people who are either employed or are actively looking for work.

Employment rate refers to the number of people who worked for pay or profit. It is expressed as a percentage of the working age population.

Unemployment rate is the number of unemployed workers expressed as a percentage of the labour force.

Table 4 shows the labour force profiles for each municipality. Each municipality within the Region has participation and employment rates below those of Ontario. This indicates a lower percentage of the population willing and wanting to work, or looking for work. The rate of employment of the population is one measure of, and an influence of, the region's ability to support its local business sector.

Table 4: Labour Force Profiles, 2016 (%)

	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>In the Labour Force</i>	<i>Participatio n Rate</i>	<i>Employment Rate</i>	<i>Unemployment Rate</i>
<i>Armour</i>	1224	615	50.2	45.3	9.8
<i>Burk's Falls</i>	820	405	48.8	41.5	17.5
<i>Chisholm</i>	1025	630	61.5	54.6	11.1
<i>Joly</i>	270	140	51.9	42.6	17.9
<i>Kearney</i>	710	360	50.7	45.1	11.1
<i>Machar</i>	820	350	42.7	37.8	10.0
<i>Magnetawan</i>	1240	605	49.2	44.0	10.7
<i>McMurrich/Monteith</i>	740	340	45.3	41.2	10.4
<i>Perry</i>	2105	1220	58.0	53.4	7.8
<i>Powassan</i>	2,725	1600	58.7	53.2	9.1
<i>Ryerson</i>	630	365	57.9	50.0	12.3
<i>South River</i>	905	450	50.3	42.5	15.4
<i>Strong</i>	1220	675	55.3	47.1	14.8
<i>Sundridge</i>	805	340	41.6	39.1	7.5
<i>Ontario</i>			64.7	59.9	7.4

Labour Force by Industry

Table 5 shows employment by industry in the Region. Note that the data represents the industries in which residents are employed, not the actual jobs present in each municipality.

As shown in Table 5, the industries with the highest proportion of the Region's overall labour force in 2016 are:

- Retail Trade (13.8%)
- Construction (13.5%)
- Health care & Social Assistance (13.3%)
- Manufacturing (8.8%)
- Accommodation & Food Services (7.3%)

Table 5: Total Labour Force Population Aged 15 Years and Over by Industry for 2016 (NAICS)

	Almagui n	Ontari o
11 Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	2.8	1.4
21 Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	1.5	0.5
22 Utilities	1.2	0.7
23 Construction	13.5	6.7
31-33 Manufacturing	8.8	9.6
41 Wholesale trade	2.5	3.8
44-45 Retail trade	13.8	11.0
48-49 Transportation and warehousing	5.1	4.6
51 Information and cultural industries	0.8	2.5
52 Finance and insurance	1.5	5.3
53 Real estate and rental and leasing	1.6	2.0
54 Professional, scientific and technical services	4.4	8.0
55 Management of companies and enterprises	0.0	0.2
56 Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	4.2	4.7
61 Educational services	5.6	7.4
62 Health care and social assistance	13.3	10.6
71 Arts, entertainment and recreation	1.2	2.1
72 Accommodation and food services	7.3	6.7
81 Other services (except public administration)	4.6	4.2
91 Public administration	5.4	5.8

Commuting Patterns

Within the Region, approximately 8% of the labour force worked at home, 18% worked at no fixed workplace (those that move from worksite to worksite) and 73% worked at a usual place of business.

Commuting data for the Region is based on place of work data and therefore excludes the portion of residents who work at home, work outside Canada, and those with no fixed place of work. Commuting flow data was reported for 5,305 persons which represents approximately 73% of the Region’s labour force.

The Almaguin Region covers two census divisions (Parry Sound and Nipissing). Overall, 19% of residents commute within their own census subdivision (municipality). 34% commute outside of their municipality (census subdivision), but remain within their census division (Parry Sound or Nipissing District). 47% commute to an entirely different census division. For commuting destination and duration for each municipality, refer to the Community Profiles in the [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).

Table 6: Commuting Destination

Commute within census subdivision (CSD) of residence	19.1%
Commute to a different census subdivision (CSD) within census division (CD) of residence	34.0%
Commute to a different census subdivision (CSD)	46.9%
Commute to a different province or territory	0.4%

Table 7 shows the average commuting time for the entire Region.

Table 7: Commuting Duration

Less than 15-minute commute	27.6%
15 to 29-minute commute	30.3%
30 to 44-minute commute	22.0%
45 to 59-minute commute	9.9%
60 minutes and over	10.2%

Tourism

Tourism is an important driver of economic activity in the Almaguin Region and is a key source of employment. According to the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, 15.3% of employment, 11% of GDP and 5.7% of taxes were attributed to Ontario’s Tourism Receipts in RTO12 (includes Algonquin Park, Almaguin, Muskoka & Parry Sound) in 2012.² Data specific to the Almaguin Region is not available.

Review of Existing Economic Development Efforts

A review of current and past projects and initiatives at the local level and in other economic and community development organizations can inform the direction for a regional economic development strategy.

² http://www.occ.ca/wp-content/uploads/Report_Closing-the-Tourism-Gap.pdf

The economic development landscape in the Almaguin Highlands region has seen many changes over the last five to ten years. Currently, 10 out of the 14 municipalities are included in existing partnerships, and the other four municipalities have expressed interest in participating in regional efforts. In addition, many of the region's municipalities have been engaged in some form of economic development programming, regardless of whether or not the community has dedicated staff or resources for economic development.

Current Municipal and Organizational Strategic Plans

Organizations and municipalities have developed their own economic development/strategic plans to guide their current and future efforts. In addition, for some, background research and other reports have been completed. Relevant documents created to date include:

Economic Development Strategic Plans (only active plans):

- 2008 Kearney Strategic Plan (In House)
- 2009 Central Almaguin Strategic Plan
- 2012 Perry Township Strategic Plan (In House)
- 2013 Burk's Falls & Area Economic Development Plan (updated in 2015) (In House)
- 2013 Magnetawan Economic Development Strategy
- 2013 Powassan Strategic Plan
- 2016 EcoDev Strategic Plan (In House)
- 2017-2018 Almaguin Highlands Chamber of Commerce Strategic Plan (In House)

Relevant Studies and Reports (Since 2013)

- 2013 CAEDA Market Study & Needs/Gap Analysis Report
- 2013 Powassan Target Market Study and Business Opportunity Overview
- 2014 BACED Asset Inventory, Gap Analysis and Market Study
- 2016 Almaguin Highlands Business Retention and Expansion Report (BR+E)
- 2018 BACED Target Sector Analysis Final Report

The documents listed above show that the member communities and organizations are making economic development a priority. Further, the work illustrates a willingness to invest in drafting and adhering to strong, evidence-based plans for the advancement of individual economic development priorities.

When reviewing these plans, there is an abundance of shared priorities, target areas for growth, and desired activities that have at times contributed towards a duplication of efforts and the unnecessary use of additional funds and resources.

Plan Comparison

There are a number of regional economic development plans based on partnerships formed through BACED and CAEDA. Also, some municipalities have created joint strategic plans, while others have created plans solely for their own municipality. There has also been background research conducted for the various partnerships to support their planning efforts. The full inventory of projects and initiatives across the Almaguin Region is summarized in Table 12 in [Appendix 4](#).

Comparison of Municipal Economic Development Strategic Plans

Powassan, Kearney, Magnetawan, McMurrich/Monteith, Chisholm have each recently developed their own strategic plans. Many of the municipalities have similar priorities, some priorities are very specific to each community. Table 8 shows where municipalities share priorities.

Table 8: Comparison of Economic Development Strategies

Priority	Powassan	Kearney	Magnetawan	McMurrich/ Monteith	Chisholm	AHCC	BACED	CAEDA (2009)
Community Services (incl. housing)	√						√	
Improvements to infrastructure					√	√	√	√
Recreation & Leisure (incl. trails & waterfront)	√	√		√				√
Promote Tourism		√		√		√	√	√
Technology (broadband connectivity)		√	√		√	√	√	
Support local/small business	√		√			√		
Community Improvement Plan/Downtown revitalization		√	√			√		
Study/promote local business park	√							
Business retention & expansion	√		√	√		√	√	√
Communications (incl. signage)	√			√	√		√	√
Economic development (hire, partner)		√					√	√
Support regional partnerships/collaboration				√		√	√	√
Re-brand of region								√
Other			√					√

Business Retention & Expansion Highlights

The Business Retention and Expansion report, 2015-2016, was launched in June 2015 with the intent to create a regional plan to help grow existing firms, identify investment attraction opportunities, and gauge the health of the local business community. The communities highlighted in the BR&E report include the same as those in the regional economic development partnership.

Five key areas of growth within the next five years were identified, and include the following:

1. Strategic regional effort to attract residents, businesses and tourists through increased promotion and the development of enhanced products and services;
2. Formal downtown revitalization efforts;
3. Improved region-wide access to, and dependability and affordability of infrastructure services such as internet, electricity, water, and sewer;
4. Transparency and streamlined services and support of businesses from municipal staff and councils; and
5. Increased collaboration among communities and businesses.

As part of the plan, a survey was conducted and the following key strengths within the Almaguin Region were identified:

1. Demonstrated interest from area businesses in expanding operations;
2. Many businesses are owned by local people who are invested in the area and its success;
3. Business are well supported by other local businesses and residents;
4. Quality of Life is favourable (cost of living, landscape, community feel);
5. Proximity to regional centres and larger markets, quality roads, and access to major highway system;
6. Access to quality services such as parks, roads, libraries, police;
7. Increased willingness for 13 communities to work together as a region; and
8. Demonstrated commitment to partnering on initiatives such as the BR+E study, which was collaborated among, and partly funded by, communities throughout the region.

Other initiatives undertaken within the region include the following (the list is not exhaustive):

- Partnering between the municipalities to hire a Community Development Officer (CDO) Intern through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation (NOHFC) youth internship program for 2 years.
- The 'Local Love for the Villages of Almaguin' Campaign (Shop Local -2016 & 2017)
- Support for the Almaguin In Motion (AIM) Cycling Initiative (2016 & 2017)
- The Villages of Almaguin Marketing Partnership (2016 & 2017)
- Almaguin Careers and Trades Day (ACT-2017)
- The 3R Volunteer Recruitment Campaign, in partnership with Burk's Falls and Area Community Economic Development (BACED) (2017)
- Business Workshop Series, in partnership with BACED (2017)

For a full comparison, see [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).

Section 5: Key Considerations and Observations

Based on the review of quantitative information, stakeholder feedback, and past economic development efforts across the region, a number of key considerations and observations have been made.

The considerations and observations have been categorized under three key pillars, including:

- The Land
- The People
- The Legacy

Below is a high-level overview of the conclusions of the research that create the foundation for the Strategic Directions and Recommended Actionable Items.

The Land

Attributes to Build On

The Almaguin Highlands is blessed with a unique natural beauty. Situated on the Canadian Shield, it presents a rugged attractiveness not substantially encroached on by development. It appeals to those seeking something different and provides an opportunity to those who want to build a stronger economy, while employing previous lessons learned. Its protection is paramount, but it is important to remember that using the land is different from using up the land.

The land of the Almaguin Highlands is priceless, and is one of its most valuable assets. At the same time, the land remains affordable and offers various opportunities for usage. This **combination** of value and affordability provides a marketing opportunity that needs to be developed. A regional economic development approach should emphasize value and affordability, not an inexpensive version of elsewhere or a “cheap” alternative.

The Almaguin Highlands, despite its significant rural nature, is adjacent to a large commercial and consumer market. This provides an opportunity for entrepreneurs to integrate into large and complex value chains developed by urban based manufacturers. It provides a nearby market place for goods and services that can be produced locally, taking advantage of lower input costs. It also presents a market for tourism that goes beyond traditional cottaging and allows for the development of short stay tourism built on “close to home – far from the every day.”

The Almaguin Highlands is anchored in the north and south by urban centers that have significant impact on the local economy. Although some may see Huntsville and North Bay as competitors, the reality is that they present an opportunity to leverage already built assets that will support economic development in the region. Rather than struggling to compete with the retail, accommodation and labour sectors, the region needs to seek out partnerships that enhance both areas and create additional economic activity for the broader Highway 11 corridor.

The development of a four-lane highway through the heart of the Almaguin Highlands presents a range of options that were not previously available. Shipping to the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) market has become more economical, promoting proximity to key GTA infrastructure (Pearson Airport) makes good sense, and the increase in traffic volume as the preferred route to move people north and south provides a wide range of marketing activities.

Matters to Mitigate

Although the land of the Almaguin Highlands presents many opportunities, there are key issues which need to be addressed to support regional economic development.

These include:

- The lack of wide spread availability of high-speed internet connections suitable for commercial and institutional activities. Although many attempts have been made in the past to rectify the situation, success has been limited and site specific. A much broader strategy is required that encompasses a large geographic area and includes a well-designed public/private partnership. Pursuing such a partnership will likely require an initial investment by the municipalities to start the process; however, in looking at other models and best practices across the province the private sector must commit to investments that will be complimented by public funding to mitigate the competitive disadvantages of investing in the area.
- With development comes the risk of crossing the line between the use of the land and using up the land. Any initiatives taken must find the appropriate balance between growth and environmental sustainability and be publicly positioned to make this point.
- Many of the initiatives that would form the basis of a strong economic development approach will need to be cognizant of limited rural municipal water and sewer supply. Provincial policies now generally mandate such services for large commercial and residential development. The Almaguin Highlands needs to take a regional approach to the development of such services, avoid duplication, and build upon existing resources. Any approach should recognize that the attraction of new residents and businesses benefits the entire region, regardless of the township in which they are located.

The People

Attributes To Build On

The number one asset of the Almaguin Highlands is its people. Whether tracing a family history that goes back many generations or newly arrived in the area, people have a deep connection to the region. The attributes which help distinguish the region; its natural beauty, the primary resources which fuel its economy, and the large number of visitors it hosts annually, have shaped a community that values individualism, hard work and a spirit of getting things done.

The residents of the Almaguin Highlands take great pride in their region. There is a deep connection to the area's villages, which has helped to shape the culture and heritage of the existing 14 municipalities. As was often shared throughout the planning process, there are

many villages making up one place. This economic development strategy will build on this cohesion and present a solid, unified and interconnected community as it markets itself to the Province, Country and the world.

In developing an economic development strategy, it will be important to build on the existing knowledge base of the people who live in the area. Their collective experience, knowledge of the area and commitment to getting things right, will help shape a plan that is practical and scoped to be successful. Most importantly they can test new ideas against past practice, help ensure a new path is charted and to avoid approaches that have not been successful in the past.

Matters To Mitigate

- The ability to attract new economic activity to the area is impaired by a lack of suitable rental and owned housing for families, seniors and others. Prospective new employees and others looking to reside in the area are finding it difficult to buy a new home. Young people starting out are not able to find suitable rental accommodations. The lack of “life cycle housing” for seniors make aging at home difficult and many are required to move out of the area to secure appropriate housing support. This is not an issue that lends itself to immediate resolution, however, a successful approach over the next five-years needs to include progress on housing. Small initial successes will stimulate further new investment. As a start, a strategic objective should be to meet with possible private-sector investors in housing and determine how the availability of inexpensive land can be used to entice investment and what other factors need to be addressed.
- There is a lack of public transportation in the area. People who do not own an automobile are challenged in seeking employment or even to utilize the area’s retail sector. There is insufficient population density to support a public transportation system and there is little appetite from the private sector to provide any broad-based services. In the past, several innovative approaches were tested, however, without any long-term sustainability. Like housing there is no ‘quick fix,’ but also like housing it is essential that efforts be launched that begin to address the issues raised from the lack of public transportation.
- As demonstrated in our demographic review, the Almaguin Highlands suffers from a classic conundrum “people without jobs; jobs without people.” Unemployment has been a long-standing challenge in the area resulting in some people leaving the area, others accepting under-employment and still others being economically marginalized. The solution is not simply about creating new jobs, but to train people with transferrable skills to acquire the knowledge and training needed to meet the labour demands of the 21st century. Designing education and training to assist residents in acquiring the skills they will need in the workforce begins in the school system. As students move towards entering the workforce more detailed training will be needed to be provided, based on local employers’ needs and those of potential employers. Much of this responsibility rests with senior levels of government and is outside the scope of municipal economic development. Regardless, it will be critical for the regional economic development group, working with the local workforce

development board, to identify the gaps and to urge the federal and provincial governments to make the appropriate training investments in the area.

- Although there are some important successes throughout the region, generally the Almaguin Highlands retail sector is in decline. In many cases a decline in business volumes has been met with decreased offering, which has led to further loss of customers. For retailing to be successful in the area it needs to be profitable. Entrepreneurs face significant price competition from large retailers operating out of North Bay and Huntsville. To address this, an economic strategy needs to encourage existing and new retailers to mitigate price competition by emphasizing its advantages; selecting products that are more niche and unique and not likely to be offered by the large retailers, emphasizing the convenience of shopping locally and by providing a superior level of customer service.
- The Almaguin Highlands has seen its access to primary health care services become more challenging in recent years. The potential changes to the Huntsville Hospital threaten to exacerbate this trend. Access to healthcare is a pre-requisite to a successful economic development strategy, particularly around the opportunities to provide goods and services to a growing senior population. Like the issues relating to labour force, training solutions to this issue rest mostly with senior levels of government. The regional economic development group, along with area councils and other organizations, need to make the case to Provincial and Federal governments that health care services need to be maintained and where possible enhanced, that access to a family physician is critical and reasonable access to acute hospital care be provided.

The Legacy

Attributes To Build On

Going back more than a century, the Almaguin Highlands has played host to a significant cottage population that resides mostly on the region's waterways. Many of these properties have been in the same family for generations and there is a deep loyalty to the Almaguin Highlands region. Others have changed hands, a process which generally heralds new and often significant investments. This activity, along with maintenance, security, and minor repairs, provides a lucrative market for area contractors and the long standing and significant cottage population. Expanding the local purchasing habits of seasonal residents is an opportunity that should be pursued.

Beyond the cottage population Almaguin Highlands has historically hosted a large number of day visitors and short-term stays in local cabins and other vacation accommodations such as trailer parks, camp grounds, bed and breakfasts, etc. Most visitors come for the natural beauty of the area; however, given that the area's reputation is already well established, the expansion of the population in the GTA, the propensity for second generation immigrants to seek recreational opportunities outside the GTA, and the newly developed transportation network, the number of visitors can be expanded through aggressive marketing and an expansion of a local offering beyond the natural beauty.

The Almaguin Highlands has long been home to a number of successful small manufacturers. The factors that led to their establishment centre on lower input costs, proximity to a large GTA market and an entrepreneurial perspective, which defines many in the region. The expansion of Highway 11 to four-lanes has further enhanced access to the region. This advantage continues and needs to be built on with a successful economic strategy.

A unique and growing part of the region is a robust arts community. Many artists are attracted by the lifestyle and find it a good place to develop their crafts. A potential partnership exists between the local arts community, who seek opportunities to sell their work, and the tourism industry, who want to develop additional reasons for people to travel to the area.

Farming has been an important part of the Almaguin Highlands, dating back to the original settlement. Despite the less nutrient dense land and the shorter seasons, as compared to southwestern Ontario, producers have been successfully raising livestock and growing crops. Although the evolution of the Canadian agriculture industry would diminish the opportunity for large scale farming in the area, the availability of land, the access to markets, and the changing climate presents an opportunity to develop niche market farming concentrated on smaller livestock and particular cash crops.

The people of the Almaguin Highlands have long been strong stewards of the land. The natural beauty of the area has been maintained and the current economic activity is mostly pursued in a sustainable manner. This reality provides a key marketing opportunity when attracting people and businesses to the area. It can also serve as a living laboratory where the lessons learned in Almaguin Highlands can be studied, evaluated, and taught.

Matters To Mitigate

Although the foundation of the Almaguin Highlands provides numerous possibilities to develop additional economic development opportunities or to expand existing ones, there are a number of issues that need to be addressed in order to maximize the opportunities.

These include:

- The region has a significant lack of roofed accommodation. This makes the hosting of multi-day events more difficult, limits family visitations, and bleeds economic benefit to adjacent jurisdictions. Past studies have indicated that a business model for traditional roofed accommodation is not supported by current volumes. The region should explore alternative accommodation uses that can be used to house visitors. This can include approaches such as bed and breakfasts, Airbnb, campgrounds, cottage rentals, inclusion of second units in new developments, and the refurbishment of existing facilities. In doing so, it will be important not to impinge on the enjoyment of property owners who currently reside in the area.
- For many years, the spirit of volunteerism has supported many organizations, which contribute to tourism, the arts, agriculture, and the general quality of life. As is the case elsewhere, the willingness of people to volunteer has waned. For an area as dependent on volunteers as is the case in the Almaguin Highlands, this places many organizations, events, and support services at risk. An economic development

strategy needs to ensure the development a volunteer strategy that addresses the issue by finding new ways to attract and retain volunteers, while being efficient and effective with their time and resources.

- The Almaguin Highlands suffers from the conundrum of, at the same time, having both unfilled jobs and unemployment. Many existing and new jobs require skills that are not widely held by the existing local workforce. Many workers who bring their skills to local job vacancies cannot find suitable local housing and therefore settle outside the region, diminishing their economic impact. There needs to be a focus on identifying the competencies and skills required for the future regional economy, and then engage the potential workforce with support education, training, and resources required to help fill the gaps. The development of new rental and single-family homes will also help address the labour shortage.
- Many small businesses, particularly in the retail sector, are finding it difficult to remain competitive with the large retailers in Huntsville and North Bay. The economies of scale available to retailers in larger municipalities are mitigating the impact of any new investments by local retailers to enhance their competitiveness. In response, the region needs to narrow its market efforts into two broad directions. Firstly, the region needs to offer services that are local and built on local knowledge. Secondly, the region needs to avoid direct competition with large retailers by offering niche products, some of which should be tied to specific local areas, that large retailers are unlikely to offer.

Section 6: Strategic Directions

The Almaguin Highlands is a unique and special place. It is defined by its stunning landscape; the warmth of its people and its strong foundation. Its strength lies in what it is, not what it isn't.

The Almaguin Highlands' road to economic success needs to be built on the strong regional foundation and through collaboration. This together will lay the path never before explored by the region. The Almaguin Highlands is not a pale imitation of somewhere else; it is a region with a unique set of attributes and strengths that when appropriately focused will host wealth and job creation.

Building on Laridae's review of the work completed by various municipalities and other organizations, its review and analysis of the area's demographic information, and its extensive engagement of a wide range of stakeholders, a series of recommendations were developed that will guide a successful economic development strategy forward.

The economic development strategy is built on the three key pillars:

- The Land
- The People
- The Legacy

To assist the region, Laridae has also proposed an approach and governance structure to facilitate the pursuit of regional economic development. It combines accountability to municipal funders with

the importance of attracting business and other stakeholders to the pursuit of economic development.

Prioritization of Activities

In determining priorities for the Almaguin Highlands Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan there were many potential initiatives to pursue. What is found in the plan is a list of strategic initiatives that are considered priority from the wide range of possibilities. The Recommended Action Items are a set of initiatives that once implemented will set a stronger foundation and open new opportunities for future economic success.

For example, expanding on export markets may have been a priority to make the first 5-year plan, however, it was determined that ensuring there is reliable access to internet, strengthening the local small businesses, and positioning the region through a collective brand will support opportunities for export markets in the next strategic plan.

When determining the priority areas for the Recommended Action Items, the following guiding principles were considered. The identified priority Recommended Action Items will:

- Establish a strong foundation by addressing existing needs of the region to prepare for future opportunity and trends; and,
- Ensure all regional assets and resources are maximized, utilized to their full capacity, and leveraged for full regional economic development, including but not limited to accommodations, hubs, industrial land and space, etc.

For planning purposes, a high-level sample budget and workplan was created. See [Appendix 1: Recommended Actions' Sample Workplan and Estimated Budgets](#).

It is recommended that detailed project plans be developed to for each actionable item that will consider any changes in the landscape in which economic development operates, such as funding models and availability, government shifts, changes in mandate, geographic focus, etc. The project plans will also clearly identify steps, roles and responsibilities, milestones, and required resources.

Below you will find considerations for each pillar, a clear strategic direction, and actionable items.

The Land

The natural beauty, access to rural landscapes, proximity to larger urban markets, and overall affordability offers the region with a unique opportunity. The Almaguin Highlands will work together to facilitate the required infrastructure that will establish “The Villages of Almaguin” as a destination to visit, to work, and to live. Through collaboration, the region will aim to support business growth and attract complimentary industry that value the land while driving experiential tourism, niche market agriculture, and manufacturing.

Recommended Actionable Items

- **Develop Collective Branding Strategy:** Many people travel along the Highway 11 corridor daily, for professional, commercial, and personal purposes. Attracting these individuals to use services provided in the string of villages adjacent to the highway provides an opportunity to build on an existing strength. Establishing a cohesive, regional brand strategy building on “The Villages of Almaguin,” will help establish the area as a

destination to visit, conduct business, and locate. This plan should include compelling brand language that offers clear differentiators, value propositions, and brand story that can be used across the Almaguin Highlands; a consistent visual identity to be used consistently on signage, marketing materials, and online platforms. Within an overall Brand Strategy, establishing a strong online presence through a user-friendly website, video storytelling, and active social media will be a significant aspect to focus attention. This plan will help to promote the wide range of existing services and attractions; however, in the longer term, the regional economic development organization should build on existing, large employers by attracting companies to meet the companies supply needs and in the long term seek to attract new anchor companies, which creates a regional destination attraction.

Rationale: This recommended action item is supported by or in response to:

- The regional perspective of those offering feedback through the Stakeholder Engagement phase of the project found in [Appendix 3: Stakeholder Engagement Summary](#).
 - Shared priorities of enhancing communications as outlined in the strategic and economic development plans developed by *Powassan, McMurrich/Monthieith, Chisolm*, and *BACED*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
 - The strategic priority of completing a re-branding initiative outlined in the *CAEDA* plan. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
 - Shared priority of improving signage as outlined in the *BACED* and *CAEDA* plans. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
- **Enhance Access to Highspeed Internet:** Using models developed in other areas of the Province as well as considering past effort by Blue Sky Net, work with Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities (FONOM), FedNor, the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation (NOHFC), and the Ministry of Energy, Northern Development and Mines (MENDM) to assemble private and public partners to seek funding for broadband upgrades. Government funding should be used to trigger but not replace private sector investments.

Rationale: This recommended action item is supported by or in response to:

- The regional perspective of those offering feedback through the Stakeholder Engagement phase of the project found in [Appendix 3: Stakeholder Engagement Summary](#).
- Shared priorities of enhancing technology, such as broadband connectivity as outlined in the strategic and economic development plans developed by *Kearney, Magnetawan, Chisolm*, and *BACED*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).

- **Attract and Retain Business:** Building off the affordability of land, highly competitive labour rates, and adjacent housing availability in both the north and south, target appropriate and pre-selected GTA-based small businesses for relocation to Almaguin Highlands. For example, businesses that will support the experiential and active transportation tourism sector, and niche market agriculture will be ideal to support the growth of sectors. In addition, identifying established, large companies across the region and conducting supply chain mapping exercises will identify the types of materials and inputs that they currently source from the region and from outside the area. This will determine gaps in the local supply chains, and identify the type of businesses that may make sense to attract to the region based on existing anchor companies. For example, packaging and skid companies that would supply existing local companies.

Rationale: This recommended action item is supported by or in response to:

- The regional perspective of those offering feedback through the Stakeholder Engagement phase of the project found in [Appendix 3: Stakeholder Engagement Summary](#).
 - Shared priorities of supporting local, small businesses & community events, as outlined in the strategic and economic development plans developed by *Powassan, Magnetawan* and *BACED*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
 - Shared priorities of supporting business retention and expansion initiatives as outlined in the strategic and economic development plans developed by *Powassan, Magnetawan, McMurrich/Monteith*, and *BACED*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
 - Identified priorities outlined in the *Almaguin Highlands Business Retention and Expansion Report (BR+E)*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
- **Develop Regional Industrial/Commercial Parks:** Develop one or two regional light industrial/commercial parks with appropriate water, sewer and energy services. Given the significant cost, municipalities should take a regional approach to identifying ideal location and resource the infrastructure and services required to establish. It is important not to compete among municipal jurisdictions and collectively seek provincial and federal funding to complete.

Rationale: This recommended action item is supported by or in response to:

- Shared priorities of supporting business retention and expansion initiatives as outlined in the strategic and economic development plans developed by *Powassan, Magnetawan, McMurrich/Monteith*, and *BACED*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
- Identified priority to research, establish, and promote a local business park as outlined in the *Powassan Strategic Plan*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).

- **Build on Niche and Non-Traditional Farming Opportunities:** Agriculture has been a traditional resource industry in the area. Although the soil and climate conditions do not support large scale farming, there is an opportunity to develop niche products and non-traditional processing and retailing of primary production. Niche markets and small Farming are types of farming viable to the new agricultural economy. A niche farm creates or grows a specific product that few people are producing; for example, lavender, truffles, shiitake mushrooms, hops, goat cheese, and pasture-raised beef and poultry. The region should build on the new soils mapping initiative to identify appropriate opportunities, and work with Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) to further develop the lands. Such initiatives should also include the development of agritourism opportunities. Agritourism includes a wide variety of activities, such as buying produce direct from a farm stand, navigating a corn maze, slopping hogs, picking fruit, feeding animals, or staying at a bed and breakfast (B&B) on a farm. Furthermore, conducting a needs assessment for existing and potential agriculture operators will determine the needs and identify businesses to attract, such as a processing centre, that will support the growth of agricultural uses of the land.

Rationale: This recommended action item is supported by or in response to:

- The regional perspective of those offering feedback through the Stakeholder Engagement phase of the project found in [Appendix 3: Stakeholder Engagement Summary](#).
 - The available and affordability of the lands, as well as a regional history of the agriculture sector.
 - The current state research conducted as part of the project and as outlined in the [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
 - Work previously completed by Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) that outlines opportunities for niche market agriculture and agri-tourism.
 - Considering agriculture as small and local businesses, the shared priorities of supporting business retention and expansion initiatives as outlined in the strategic and economic development plans developed by *Powassan, Magnetawan, McMurrich/Monteith*, and *BACED*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
- **Develop Active Transportation Networks:** One of the emerging recreational trends is the pursuit of active transportation, such as cycling, kayaking, cross country skiing, and snowshoeing. This presents a significant opportunity for the region, as the land base provides an opportunity to develop trails, the use of the lakes, and the current back roads network, without having to make large capital investments. The development of active transportation networks should introduce and maintain residents' and visitors' connections with the land, attract visitors comfortable with existing area accommodations, and allow for new recreational opportunities for residents.

Rationale: This recommended action item is supported by or in response to:

- The regional perspective of those offering feedback through the Stakeholder Engagement phase of the project found in [Appendix 3: Stakeholder Engagement Summary](#).
- Shared priorities of developing trails, parks & waterfront with activities such as improving trail system, promoting and enhancing environmental protection, provincial parks, as outlined in the strategic and economic development plans developed by *Kearney, McMurrich/Monteith, CAEDA* and *BACED*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
- Shared priorities of promoting recreation and leisure as outlined in the strategic and economic development plans developed by *Powassan, Kearney* and *BACED*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).

The People

The Almaguin Highlands has an existing knowledge base, a strong culture, and a deep-rooted pride complimented by unique assets across all 14 municipalities. Together the region will build on the past experiences and honor the hard-work and dedication of “The Villages of Almaguin” to re-energize the retail and service sectors valued by residents, facilitate opportunities for a skilled workforce, and explore options for housing and transportation. This will enhance the quality of life for residents, attract and retain new skilled labour, and address seasonal demands.

Recommended Actionable Items

- **Rejuvenate Retail and Service Sectors:** The economic development strategy should include an initiative that engages the retail sector and, with their input, develop a “Retail Renaissance Plan” that identifies key services and products that complement and do not directly compete with large retail chains. The plan should also include ideas on how to market the convenience of local shopping, research best practices in other areas, and promote superior customer service as a competitive advantage.

Rationale: This recommended action item is supported by or in response to:

- The regional perspective of those offering feedback through the Stakeholder Engagement phase of the project found in [Appendix 3: Stakeholder Engagement Summary](#).
- Shared priorities of supporting local, small businesses & community events, as outlined in the strategic and economic development plans developed by *Powassan, Magnetawan* and *BACED*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
- Shared priorities of supporting business retention and expansion initiatives as outlined in the strategic and economic development plans developed by *Powassan, Magnetawan, McMurrich/Monteith*, and *BACED*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).

- Identified priorities outlined in the *Almaguin Highlands Business Retention and Expansion Report (BR+E)*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
- **Respond to Seasonal Demands and Opportunities:** The Almaguin Highlands has a significant seasonal population increase during the summer, as well as the spring and fall shoulder seasons. This presents an opportunity, but also a challenge to meet the surge in demand, while managing a reasonable cost structure that suits the off season. In response, the economic development strategy should explore the current use of “pop-up” stores and consider the application of local ownership of pop-up retail facilities to meet increased peak season demand.

Rationale: This recommended action item is supported by or in response to:

- The regional perspective of those offering feedback through the Stakeholder Engagement phase of the project found in [Appendix 3: Stakeholder Engagement Summary](#).
- Shared priorities of promoting recreation and leisure as outlined in the strategic and economic development plans developed by *Powassan, Kearney* and *BACED*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
- Shared priorities of promoting the region for tourism, including existing attractions & community assets, as outlined in the strategic and economic development plans developed by *Kearney, Magnetawan, CAEDA* and *BACED*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
- The current *tourism trends and increase in seasonal population* as outlined in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
- **Enhance Skilled Workforce:** An economic development priority should include the development of targeted initiatives which attract a trained workforce to the area. This can include, among other things, targeting school alumni that have moved from the area, encouraging migration from other areas of Ontario and Canada by presenting the advantages of living in the Almaguin Highlands and by attracting immigration of skilled individuals wanting a new start outside of a large urban centre. In addition, the Almaguin Highlands economic officers and its Board of Directors should engage the Federal and Provincial governments to provide additional training resources to the area and to provide more flexibility in secondary curriculum to meet the specific needs of the region.

Rationale: This recommended action item is supported by or in response to:

- The regional perspective of those offering feedback through the Stakeholder Engagement phase of the project found in [Appendix 3: Stakeholder Engagement Summary](#).

- The demographic research outlining current labour force as outlined in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
 - Past studies conducted by the *Labour Market Group*.
 - Identified priorities outlined in the *Almaguin Highlands Business Retention and Expansion Report (BR+E)*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
- **Encourage Work Sharing Programs:** To address the current shortage of skilled labour and to address the seasonality of the local economy, work with area employers to explore the possibility of introducing a formal work sharing program among local manufacturers and other business.

Rationale: This recommended action item is supported by or in response to:

- Practical opportunity and existing practices identified through the Stakeholder Engagement phase of the project found in [Appendix 3: Stakeholder Engagement Summary](#).
- **Partner to Inform Region about Workforce Trends:** Working with the local Workforce Development Board and other partners organize and host an employment summit with employers to provide an updated understanding of today’s labour market, the perspective of a millennial workforce and proven methods to attract skilled and reliable labour.

Rationale: This recommended action item is supported by or in response to:

- The regional perspective of those offering feedback through the Stakeholder Engagement phase of the project found in [Appendix 3: Stakeholder Engagement Summary](#).
 - Shared priorities of supporting regional partnerships as outlined in the strategic and economic development plans developed by *McMurrich/Monteith, the Almaguin Highlands Chamber of Commerce* and *BACED*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
 - Identified priorities outlined in the *Almaguin Highlands Business Retention and Expansion Report (BR+E)*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
- **Explore Short-Term Housing Options:** As outlined, the development of new housing and services will be a longer-term process. In the short and medium term, the community should work with Huntsville and North Bay as an initial residence for new employment. A pro-active approach of placing new workers will help maintain the connection to where they work and will assist in eventually attracting people to live in the area in close proximity to their employment in the future.

Rationale: This recommended action item is supported by or in response to:

- The regional perspective of those offering feedback through the Stakeholder Engagement phase of the project found in [Appendix 3: Stakeholder Engagement Summary](#).
 - The demographic research outlining dwellings and population as outlined in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
 - Identified priority to support housing and residential growth as outlined in the *Powassan Strategic Plan*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
 - Needs as identified in the *2008 Housing Strategy*.
- **Establish a Long-Term Housing Development Plan:** Reach out to potential developers and housing investors to better understand what they require. Areas to be explored should include how to maximize less expensive land, the types of housing required, the inclusion of second units in developments, the provision of water and sewer, ancillary infrastructure requirements, use of existing under-utilized facilities, zoning and by-law impediments and other issues identified as important.

Rationale: This recommended action item is supported by or in response to:

- The regional perspective of those offering feedback through the Stakeholder Engagement phase of the project found in [Appendix 3: Stakeholder Engagement Summary](#).
 - The demographic research outlining dwellings and population as outlined in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
 - Identified priority to support housing and residential growth as outlined in the *Powassan Strategic Plan*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
 - Needs as identified in the *2008 Housing Strategy*.
- **Establish a Range of Housing Options for Aging Population:** Reaching out to to developers of assisted senior living to determine what type of facilities could be developed in the region that provide seniors with escalating services that allow them to age at home. This should include the conversion of currently underused assets, the feasibility of smaller scale models and the types of Federal and Provincial assistance that may be available.

Rationale: This recommended action item is supported by or in response to:

- The regional perspective of those offering feedback through the Stakeholder Engagement phase of the project found in [Appendix 3: Stakeholder Engagement Summary](#).
- The demographic research outlining dwellings and population, and the aging population's needs as outlined in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).

- Identified priority to support housing and residential growth as outlined in the *Powassan Strategic Plan*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
 - Needs as identified in the *2008 Housing Strategy*.
- **Seek Innovative Approaches to Public Transportation:** To address the lack of public transportation, explore the use of new social communications technologies, such as social media, websites, and apps, to develop innovative approaches to public transportation. Many ideas have been explored in the past however, rather than using a lack of past success as a reason not to proceed, these should be considered learning opportunities to be built upon.

Rationale: This recommended action item is supported by or in response to:

- The regional perspective of those offering feedback through the Stakeholder Engagement phase of the project found in [Appendix 3: Stakeholder Engagement Summary](#).
- The demographic research outlining the income levels of population and the increasing aging population’s needs as outlined in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
- Shared priorities of improving infrastructure and completing Community Improvement Plans as outlined in the strategic and economic development plans developed by *Kearney, Magnetawan, Chisolm* and *BACED*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).

The Legacy

The foundation of the Almaguin Highlands lies within its long history and experience. Home of a robust arts and culture sector, a large seasonal cottage industry, active small manufacturers, and niche-market farming, “The Villages of Almaguin” will leverage its long-standing assets for economic success. While exploring creative ways to support regional prosperity, the region will collectively increase volunteer engagement, enhance supports for business growth, host more visitors.

Recommended Actionable Items

- **Organize and Promote Non-Traditional Accommodations:** Organize and promote non-traditional tourism accommodation by ensuring an up-to-date and comprehensive inventory of the region’s roofed accommodations is in place, and working with individual municipalities to update by-laws to meet the needs of evolving industries, visitor trends and expectations, and accommodation demands.

Rationale: This recommended action item is supported by or in response to:

- The regional perspective of those offering feedback through the Stakeholder Engagement phase of the project found in [Appendix 3: Stakeholder Engagement Summary](#).

- Shared priorities of promoting recreation and leisure as outlined in the strategic and economic development plans developed by *Powassan, Kearney* and *BACED*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
 - Shared priorities of promoting the region for tourism, including existing attractions & community assets, as outlined in the strategic and economic development plans developed by *Kearney, Magnetawan, CAEDA* and *BACED*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
 - The current *tourism trends and increase in seasonal population* as outlined in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
 - Shared priorities of supporting regional partnerships as outlined in the strategic and economic development plans developed by *McMurrich/Monteith, the Almaguin Highlands Chamber of Commerce* and *BACED*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
- **Facilitate Access to Existing Accommodations:** The number of multi-day events in the region could be expanded if more overnight accommodations were available. Given that the current lack of consistent volumes of overnight visitors does not warrant establishing new large roofed accommodations, and given that the geographic size of the region would prevent a new build from servicing the entire area, event promoters should work with Huntsville and North Bay accommodation properties to promote events, tours, and unique facilities in the Almaguin Highlands. By filling of unused rooms in these two centers over time, it will support the need for smaller scale or ‘boutique’ overnight accommodations and will increase demand that would support a local build.

Rationale: This recommended action item is supported by or in response to:

- The regional perspective of those offering feedback through the Stakeholder Engagement phase of the project found in [Appendix 3: Stakeholder Engagement Summary](#).
- Shared priorities of promoting recreation and leisure as outlined in the strategic and economic development plans developed by *Powassan, Kearney* and *BACED*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
- Shared priorities of promoting the region for tourism, including existing attractions & community assets, as outlined in the strategic and economic development plans developed by *Kearney, Magnetawan, CAEDA* and *BACED*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
- The current *tourism trends and increase in seasonal population* as outlined in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
- Shared priorities of supporting regional partnerships as outlined in the strategic and economic development plans developed by *McMurrich/Monteith, the Almaguin Highlands Chamber of Commerce* and *BACED*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).

- **Market Business Services:** Seasonal property owners require a significant amount of goods and services. This represents a significant economic opportunity for both existing small businesses and potential start-ups. Many owners, especially those who are new to the area, may not be familiar with local offerings and may purchase goods from elsewhere for transport to the area or may contract services from firms beyond the region. It is recommended that economic developers work with the Chamber of Commerce and other organizations to develop an inventory of businesses, attract membership and market business services targeted to cottagers.

Rationale: This recommended action item is supported by or in response to:

- The regional perspective of those offering feedback through the Stakeholder Engagement phase of the project found in [Appendix 3: Stakeholder Engagement Summary](#).
 - Shared priorities of supporting regional partnerships as outlined in the strategic and economic development plans developed by *McMurrich/Monteith, the Almaguin Highlands Chamber of Commerce* and *BACED*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
 - Shared priorities of supporting local, small businesses & community events, as outlined in the strategic and economic development plans developed by *Powassan, Magnetawan* and *BACED*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
 - Shared priorities of supporting business retention and expansion initiatives as outlined in the strategic and economic development plans developed by *Powassan, Magnetawan, McMurrich/Monteith, and BACED*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
 - Identified priorities outlined in the *Almaguin Highlands Business Retention and Expansion Report (BR+E)*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
- **Encourage Increased Volunteerism:** Given the declining number of available volunteers and their importance in staging events and supporting other activities (i.e. recreational opportunities), it is recommended that a strategy be developed to attract more people to volunteerism and to increase the effectiveness of those who do participate. This strategy should include a concerted effort to expand recruitment beyond traditional participants, develop a repository of best practices for volunteer attraction and retention, and explore and encourage volunteer organizations to collaborate across municipal boundaries.

Rationale: This recommended action item is supported by or in response to:

- The regional perspective of those offering feedback through the Stakeholder Engagement phase of the project found in [Appendix 3: Stakeholder Engagement Summary](#).
- Shared priorities of supporting regional partnerships as outlined in the strategic and economic development plans developed by *McMurrich/Monteith, the Almaguin Highlands Chamber of Commerce* and *BACED*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).

- **Maintain and Expand Recreational, Sports and Cultural Opportunities:** The Almaguin Region has a large number of facilities that provide recreational, sports, and cultural opportunities for residents. Maintaining and expanding these opportunities is critical to attracting new residents. A regional approach to providing enhanced quality of life opportunities (recreational, sports, cultural), would avoid the duplication of infrastructure, help coordinate event scheduling, create new regional opportunities, and prioritize activities and events, helping to attract people to the area.

Rationale: This recommended action item is supported by or in response to:

- The regional perspective of those offering feedback through the Stakeholder Engagement phase of the project found in [Appendix 3: Stakeholder Engagement Summary](#).
 - Shared priorities of promoting recreation and leisure as outlined in the strategic and economic development plans developed by *Powassan, Kearney* and *BACED*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
 - Shared priorities of promoting the region for tourism, including existing attractions & community assets, as outlined in the strategic and economic development plans developed by *Kearney, Magnetawan, CAEDA* and *BACED*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
 - The current *tourism trends and increase in seasonal population* as outlined in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
 - Shared priorities of supporting regional partnerships as outlined in the strategic and economic development plans developed by *McMurrich/Monteith, the Almaguin Highlands Chamber of Commerce* and *BACED*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
- **Create an Inventory of Unused Built Assets:** The Almaguin Highlands has a number of built assets that are unused or significantly under-utilized. Repurposing these assets would attract new economic activity from within and outside the region. To facilitate this process, it is recommended that an inventory of unused built assets be completed that includes identifying specific uses directed at filling business and economic development gaps.

Rationale: This recommended action item is supported by or in response to:

- The regional perspective of those offering feedback through the Stakeholder Engagement phase of the project found in [Appendix 3: Stakeholder Engagement Summary](#).
- Shared priorities of supporting regional partnerships as outlined in the strategic and economic development plans developed by *McMurrich/Monteith, the Almaguin Highlands Chamber of Commerce* and *BACED*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
- Shared priorities of supporting local, small businesses & community events, as outlined in the strategic and economic development plans developed by *Powassan,*

Magnetawan and *BACED*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).

- Shared priorities of supporting business retention and expansion initiatives as outlined in the strategic and economic development plans developed by *Powassan*, *Magnetawan*, *McMurrich/Monteith*, and *BACED*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
 - Identified priorities outlined in the *Almaguin Highlands Business Retention and Expansion Report (BR+E)*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
 - Identified priority to research, establish, and promote a local business park as outlined in the *Powassan Strategic Plan*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
 - Shared priorities of improving infrastructure and completing Community Improvement Plans as outlined in the strategic and economic development plans developed by *Kearney*, *Magnetawan*, *Chisolm* and *BACED*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
- **Develop Community Hubs:** The Township of Powassan has been very successful in using an existing asset to construct a community hub. It is recommended that the process of development be examined to understand what worked well and what may be improved upon – developing a list of best practices. It is recommended that this model be replicated to utilize under used assets in other areas to develop a limited number of community hubs similar to what has been created in Powassan.

Rationale: This recommended action item is supported by or in response to:

- The regional perspective of those offering feedback through the Stakeholder Engagement phase of the project found in [Appendix 3: Stakeholder Engagement Summary](#).
- Shared priorities of supporting regional partnerships as outlined in the strategic and economic development plans developed by *McMurrich/Monteith*, *the Almaguin Highlands Chamber of Commerce* and *BACED*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
- Shared priorities of supporting local, small businesses & community events, as outlined in the strategic and economic development plans developed by *Powassan*, *Magnetawan* and *BACED*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).
- Shared priorities of supporting business retention and expansion initiatives as outlined in the strategic and economic development plans developed by *Powassan*, *Magnetawan*, *McMurrich/Monteith*, and *BACED*. Table summarizing similarities in plans are found in [Appendix 4: Situational Analysis Report](#).

Section 7: Recommended Structure and Funding Model

To assist the region, Laridæ has also proposed a long-term governance structure to facilitate the pursuit of regional economic development. It combines accountability to municipal funders with the importance of attracting business and other stakeholders to the pursuit of economic development.

Context

It is Laridæ's opinion that the most effective approach for economic development in the Almaguin Highlands is a regional, cooperative effort that includes all 14 municipalities.

To be effectively implemented, the solution proposed by Laridæ requires the establishment of a permanent economic development office of at least two (2) people and which represents the economic development interests of the entire Almaguin Highlands region.

The co-operative approach addresses a series of challenges that individual municipalities would find difficult to manage on their own:

1. Business Attraction and Retention: Business attraction and marketing activities will be more productive if focused on presenting regional opportunities. Prospective clients have little interest in municipal boundaries, but instead are interested in regional assets and how they can be levered to their economic advantage.
2. Fiscal Capacity: The financial resources and commitments required for delivering great economic impact through economic development activities are most likely beyond the financial capacity of any one municipality alone. Taking a regional approach shares the fiscal responsibility and makes it more affordable for individual communities.
3. Leveraging Public Funding: Senior levels of government are more likely to provide specific project funding to a cooperative initiative involving multiple jurisdictions.
4. Avoiding Duplication: Many of the strategies suggested involve single, place-based projects that serve the entire region. Numerous municipal economic development initiatives would likely lead to a duplication of efforts and supporting infrastructures, create competing programs, and fail to maximize scarce financial resources.

Guiding Principles

In designing a regional approach, it is recommended that the following principals be considered:

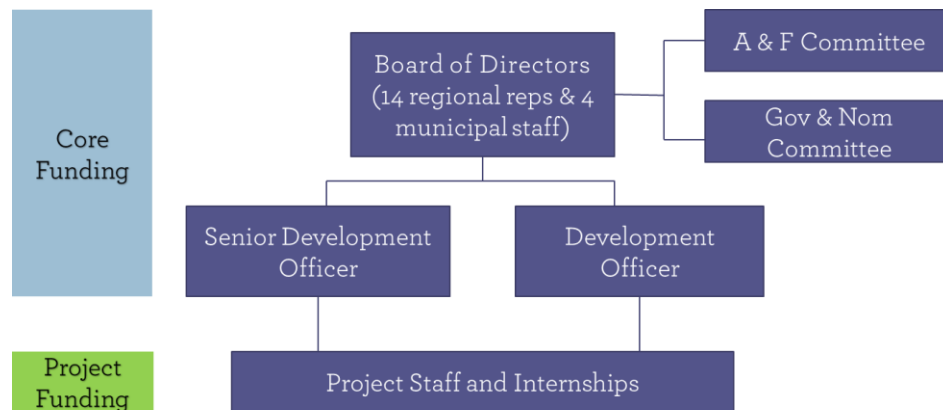
- Municipally Led: Although it will be important to seek project funding from federal and provincial sources, core funding should come from municipalities and be subject to multi-year commitments with funding agreements to be reviewed once each term of council;
- Inclusive: regional economic development should include all 14 municipalities, or as many as possible;
- Competent: Support the initiative with permanent professional economic development staff;
- Equal: Economic development in the region impacts the entire area regardless of the specific municipality in which a specific activity takes place. Contributions to the initiative should be equal among all municipalities.

- **Transparent:** Activities of a regional economic development initiative need to be transparent and open to public scrutiny. Professional staff need to pro-actively engage and report to the public.
- **Accountable:** Municipalities and other funders will be responsible for approvals of contributions. The economic development organization will be responsible for ensuring adequate reporting of spending, and will be accountable to implementing contribution agreements in a fiscally responsible manner.
- **Professional Governance:** Program direction should be shaped by a board of experienced business, economic development, and financial experts. Municipal participation beyond financial accountability should be limited.

Recommended Structure

There are many models that could be developed that would adhere to the principals noted above and which would address the challenges of a regional initiative. Moving forward, it will be important not to become immersed in a debate about the details of a particular structure, but rather to keep focused on implementing the strategic priorities outlined in our report.

Based on Laridae’s observations and past experience, the following structure is recommended.



Funding

- Core operating funding to be sourced equally from the 14 municipalities through four-year agreements, which will support permanent staffing positions and overhead expenses.
- Project funding to be sourced from Federal and Provincial programming, which will support initiative-specific activities and additional contract staff or internships necessary to support these activities. For currently available funding information see [Appendix 2: Public Funding Analysis](#).
- Other funders and stakeholder groups, such as community partners and private sector, may contribute financially to operations or projects.

Governance

Board of Directors

- Establish a Board of Directors that is comprised of a range of 14-18 members:
 - Four (4) members to be selected from the region's municipal clerks. Appointments to rotate among municipalities.
 - The balance of the positions will be populated with the aim of equitable regional representation across all 14 municipalities and will be based on skills and competencies that support a strong economic development board. These members will be drawn from business, relevant community partners, economic development, finance, or related fields;
- Board will be responsible for developing sets of policies to govern its work, which could include foundational partnerships and contribution agreements, terms of reference, conflict of interest, etc.
- Selection Committee for the Board of Directors will consist of four clerks with economic development staff as ex-officio participants. It is recommended to have public solicitation of applicants to the Board.
- President, Vice President, Secretary/Treasurer to be selected from the non-clerk appointees.
- The Board of Directors would be expected to meet five (5) times per year, approximately bi-monthly and considering a summer-break, and including the Annual General Meeting.

Terms

- All board appointments will be for four (4) years with a maximum of two consecutive terms.
- In addition, it is recommended that the terms of the members be staggered in order to support Board succession planning, and offer refreshed perspective and energy through overlapping turnover.

Sub-Committees

- An Audit & Finance sub-committee will be established by the Board and made up of appropriate members of the Board with additional community expertise as required. The Audit & Finance sub-committee will be responsible to review finances, make recommendations to the Board of Directors to approve annual budgets, and facilitate appropriate annual audits.
- An Executive sub-committee made up of one (1) clerk from the four clerk appointments and the President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer charged with providing day-to-day and programming direction.

Staffing

- Two paid professional staff whose salaries are sourced from core operating funding mentioned above. Staff will be responsible for reporting to the Board of Directors, however, will not hold board positions, nor having voting rights. In addition, they will support regular reporting to municipalities. They will be responsible for maintaining the operations of the organization and executing projects and programs.
- Additional contract staff or internships on a project basis, sourced from Federal and Provincial programming.

Operations

- Core overhead expenses and office support sourced from municipal contributions subject to four-year commitments.
- Partnership with a municipality for back-office support would be recommended for such administrative functions as book-keeping, banking, and payroll. This is an administrative contribution to the economic development office, and would be done with an understanding that the supporting municipality does not manage the mandate, staff, or programs nor do they supersede the partnering municipalities and Board of Directors.

First Year Operations

In the first year of operations the Economic Development organization will be busy establishing the entity. This will include establishing and populating a Board of Directors, establishing an incorporated body, setting by-laws and policies, and securing staff.

In addition, it is important to note that much of the efforts in the first months will be administrative in nature, and will focus on core economic development activities such as business expansion and retention, regional outreach and engagement, and operational planning for the organization. It is expected that the initial year be a year of partnership engagement, and project planning, to ensure that the organization and the region is aligned and prepared to execute the broader strategic initiatives.

Estimated Core Operating Budget

Based on the recommended structure, the creation of a municipally funded regional economic development initiative is ideal.

In doing so the following guiding principles should be employed:

- Core operating funding to be sourced equally from the 14 municipalities through four-year agreements, which will support permanent staffing positions and overhead expenses.
- Project funding to be sourced from Federal and Provincial programming, which will support initiative-specific activities and additional contract staff or internships necessary to support these activities.
- Other funders and stakeholder groups, such as community partners and private sector, may contribute financially to operations or projects.

Below is an estimated *basic core operating budget* once the organization is established.

REVENUE		Notes
Municipality Contributions	\$210,000	14 shares of \$15,000
Federal/Provincial Funding	\$5,000	To be sourced
Event Revenue	\$8,000	
Partnership/Sponsorship	\$0	
Other	\$10,650	
TOTAL REVENUE	\$233,650	

EXPENSES		
Operating		
Salaries	\$150,000	Includes one senior Economic Development Officer, One Development Officer. Includes salary burden. Assumes a 2.4% Cost of Living Increase year over year.
Rent	\$3,000	
Communications	\$2,500	Cell phones, website maintenance,
Office Supplies	\$2,500	
Professional Development	\$2,000	
Operating Sub-total	\$160,000	
Core Programming		
Advertising and Promotion	\$10,000	
Travel	\$5,000	Mileage and expenses
Business Development Events	\$5,000	
Miscellaneous	\$5,150	
Core Programming Sub-total	\$25,150	
Leveraged Projects		
Strategic Recommended Action Items	\$48,500	These are estimates only. They do not include a few items in Sample Workplan where capital costs are TBD.
Internships/Project Staff	\$0	To be considered when seeking grant funding
Leveraged Projects Sub-total	\$48,500	
TOTAL Expenses	\$233,650	

Please note: The above core operating budget is the basic amounts required to have a regional economic development entity. These amounts will change as administrative costs evolve. This does not include additional project specific budgets and funding. For project cost estimates associated with strategic directions see [Appendix 1: Recommended Actions' Next Steps and Estimated Budgets](#).

Conclusion

The Almaguin Highlands region has made significant progress in strengthening collaborative initiatives and opportunities.

Based on the qualitative and quantitative review completed through this initiative, it is clear that the Almaguin Highlands Regional Economic Development strategy should prioritize municipal collaboration to enhance capacity, reach, and impact. In addition, pursuing some foundational activities such as collective branding, joint online communications initiatives, and support for the establishment of core communications infrastructure such as broadband will significantly enhance the success of a RED strategy.

Appendix 1: Recommended Actions' Sample Workplan and Estimated Budgets

Prioritization of Activities

In determining priorities for the Almaguin Highlands Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan there were many potential initiatives to pursue. What is found in the plan is a list of strategic initiatives that are considered priority from the wide range of possibilities. The Recommended Action Items are a set of initiatives that once implemented will set a stronger foundation and open new opportunities for future economic success.

For example, expanding on export markets may have been a priority to make the first 5-year plan, however, it was determined that ensuring there is reliable access to internet, strengthening the local small businesses, and positioning the region through a collective brand will support opportunities for export markets in the next strategic plan.

When determining the priority areas for the Recommended Action Items, the following guiding principles were considered. The identified priority Recommended Action Items will:

- Establish a strong foundation by addressing existing needs of the region to prepare for future opportunity and trends; and,
- Ensure all regional assets and resources are maximized, utilized to their full capacity, and leveraged for full regional economic development, including but not limited to accommodations, hubs, industrial land and space, etc.

For planning purposes, a high-level sample budget and workplan was created.

Sample Workplan and Budget

The following is an outline of the activities associated with the recommended action items. It is important to note that this includes only activities relevant to the strategic directions outlined in the Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan and does not include all ongoing projects and general operations. The outlined activities and costs may vary based on establishing detailed project scopes and future changes in the landscape in which regional economic development is conducted (government shifts, funding availability, industry needs, etc).

Sample High-Level Workplan

The following breaks out the high-level activities to move forward. This is not an exhaustive list of next steps for each initiative, and it is recommended that annual operational planning, and individual project plans be completed by Economic Development staff.

Keeping in mind, that all the Recommended Action Items have been identified as priorities over the next five years from a broader list of possible actions, the activities in the sample workplan has been categorized in the following way:

- **Core Economic Development Activities:** which outlines the strategic activities that are part of a typical economic development function.

- **Foundational Priority Activities:** which are the activities that will clearly establish the basic foundational components required for future economic development initiatives and opportunities.
- **Broader Priority Activities:** which are specific to sector opportunities.

It is also important to note that it is assumed that economic development staff will be conducting the items with no budget attributed to it in the sample workplan.

See sample workplan on the following page.

Sample High-Level Workplan

Activities	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total	Measurable Outcomes
Core Economic Development Activities							
<i>Establish a Regional Economic Development Organization</i>							
Establish Board of Directors with letters of incorporation and by-laws	\$2,500					\$2,500	• Populated Board of Directors • Completed Incorporation
Develop policies	\$0					\$0	• Developed policies
Hire staff	\$0					\$0	• Hired staff
<i>Enhance Awareness of Organization and Strategic Plan</i>							
Develop operational plan	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	• Completed operational planning
Engage all municipalities	\$0					\$0	• Executed agreements with 14 municipalities
Undertake “road show” presentations of Strategic Plan	\$2,000					\$2,000	• Completed Roadshow
Identify additional project partners	\$1,000	\$500				\$1,500	• Engaged partners
<i>Attract and Retain Business</i>							
Develop a list of business sectors that have a competitive advantage operating in the Almaguin Highlands		\$10,000				\$10,000	• Completed list of sectors and competitive advantage
Conduct supply chain mapping of existing companies to determine potential opportunities and gaps		\$2,500	\$5,000			\$7,500	• Completed supply chain map
Hire third-party site selectors to approach a limited number of pre-selected GTA area firms			\$10,000	\$15,000		\$25,000	• Completed short-list of selected companies to engage
<i>Market Business Services</i>							
Work with the Chamber and other organization to develop and publish an annual guide of service providers. Distribution targeting should focus on seasonal residents	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$100,000	• Published annual guide
<i>Partner to Inform Regional Businesses about Workforce Trends</i>							
Work with the Chamber and Work Force Development to organize a summit with local businesses, designed to inform employers of new trends in the labour market		\$12,000				\$12,000	• Hosted summit

Foundational Priority Activities							
<i>Develop Collective Branding Strategy</i>							
Consult with local stakeholders	\$1,000					\$1,000	• Completed Consultation
Hire a third party to complete a branding strategy		\$20,000	\$20,000			\$40,000	• Completed Brand package/guidelines including consistent language • Completed Brand Strategy for Region
<i>Enhance Access to Highspeed Internet</i>							
Review best practices from other areas in the province	\$2,500	\$2,500				\$5,000	• Completed Best Practice Analysis
Build a consortium of private and public partners		\$5,000	\$5,000			\$10,000	• Identify private and public partners
Work with third parties and government to develop and implement a rollout plan			TBD	TBD	TBD	\$0	• Completed implementation plan
<i>Explore Short-Term Housing Options</i>							
Work with housing providers and economic developers in North Bay and Huntsville to identify accommodation opportunities for new workers in the region	\$2,500	\$2,500				\$5,000	• Identified opportunities for short-term housing
Develop a housing inventory document for use by businesses recruiting employees		\$8,000				\$8,000	• Completed inventory
Establish communications plan for informing employers of available housing opportunities			\$2,000			\$2,000	• Developed and executed communication plan for informing employers of available housing opportunities
<i>Establish a Long-Term Housing Development Plan</i>							
Hire a third-party firm to reach out to potential developers and housing investors to identify suitable longer-term housing projects appropriate for the region			\$5,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$25,000	• Identified long-term housing opportunities and developed strategy to address the region's needs
<i>Establish a Range of Housing Options for Aging Population</i>							
Host a local symposium with housing stakeholders to identify key opportunities and actions needed to develop them		\$4,000				\$4,000	• Hosted symposium

Hire a third-party firm to reach out to potential developers and housing investors to identify suitable longer-term senior housing projects appropriate for the region. To save costs, this should be completed jointly with the development of a more general housing plan, as outlined above			\$5,000	\$15,000		\$20,000	• Identified long-term housing opportunities and developed strategy to address the region's needs
Enhance Skilled Workforce							
Host an Almaguin Alumni event targeted at younger adults who have left the area, designed to identify what inhibits them from returning to the region			\$20,000			\$20,000	• Hosted event
Hire a third party to develop a business case to use in approaching the provincial government to make new investments in training in the Almaguin Highlands				\$20,000		\$20,000	• Developed business case and approach for training
Organize and Promote Non-Traditional Accommodations							
Complete an inventory of non-traditional accommodations available in the region	\$5,000					\$5,000	• Completed inventory of regions accommodations
Work with area municipalities to update land use policies to appropriately use these assets		\$5,000				\$5,000	• Reviewed best practices and policies used by municipalities • Drafted policy updates for consideration by municipalities
Facilitate Access to Existing Accommodations							
Work with roofed accommodation providers in North Bay and Huntsville to develop accommodation packages targeted at key events in the Almaguin Highlands.	\$5,000					\$5,000	• Developed experience packages and promotion strategy
Create an Inventory of Unused Built Assets							
Work with local organization to develop an inventory of unused built assets		\$4,000				\$4,000	• Developed inventory of unused assets
Hire a third party to develop a select number of business plans on key assets identified in the inventory			\$10,000	\$10,000		\$20,000	• Developed select number of business plans for unused assets
Broader Priority Activities							
Develop Regional Industrial / Commercial Parks							
Work with area planners to develop a list of potential sites for possible parks			\$5,000			\$5,000	• Completed list of potential sites

Once two or three key sites are identified, hire a firm to complete a feasibility review				\$10,000	\$10,000	\$20,000	• Completed feasibility study
<i>Build on Niche and Non-Traditional Farming Opportunities</i>							
Host a local symposium to identify key opportunities		\$2,000				\$2,000	• Hosted Symposium
Work with officials from OMAFRA and AFCC to determine feasibility of opportunities			\$3,000			\$3,000	• Determined feasibility
Hire a third-party firm to prepare two or three business cases for selected niche agricultural opportunities				\$15,000	\$10,000	\$25,000	• Established business cases
<i>Develop Active Transportation Networks</i>							
Strike a regional Trails Committee to develop possible opportunities	\$2,000					\$2,000	• Established steering committee with Terms of Reference and meeting schedule
Host a local symposium to identify key opportunities		\$2,000				\$2,000	• Hosted symposium
Seek capital infrastructure investment to complete priority trails			TBD	TBD	TBD	\$0	• Established plan and identified funding for future trail development
<i>Rejuvenate Retail and Service Sectors</i>							
Work with local retailers develop the framework for a “Retail Renaissance Plan”		\$5,000				\$5,000	• Developed framework for “Retail Renaissance Plan”
Hire a third party to complete a “Retail Renaissance Plan” and implementation strategy			\$15,000	\$15,000		\$30,000	• Established plan and implementation strategy
<i>Respond to Seasonal Demands and Opportunities</i>							
Review best practices from other areas in the province	\$5,000					\$5,000	• Identified best practices that suit the Almaguin Highlands • Developed plan to engage the region in implementing best practices
<i>Encourage Work Sharing Programs</i>							
Host a symposium with selected local businesses		\$2,000				\$2,000	• Hosted symposium
Develop framework for work sharing program						\$0	• Developed framework for work sharing

<i>Seek Innovative Approaches to Public Transportation</i>							
Review best practices from other areas in the province			\$5,000			\$5,000	• Identified best practices • Developed plan for implementing best practices in partnership with municipalities
<i>Encourage Increased Volunteerism</i>							
Hold a symposium of volunteer organizations designed to develop best practices and explore opportunities to collaborate across municipal boundaries		\$3,000				\$3,000	• Hosted symposium
Develop a regional Volunteer Strategy and Action Plan that considers region's needs, opportunities, and best practices as well as next steps			\$20,000	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$25,000	• Developed Volunteer strategy
<i>Maintain and Expand Recreational, Sports and Cultural Opportunities</i>							
Consult with local stakeholders on a Terms of Reference for developing a Recreational, Sports and Culture Regional Master Plan		\$1,000	\$2,000			\$3,000	• Completed Terms of Reference
Hire a third party to complete a Recreational, Sports and Culture Regional Master Plan				\$25,000	\$25,000	\$50,000	• Completed a Recreational, Sports and Culture Regional Master Plan
<i>Develop Community Hubs</i>							
Review best practices from other areas in the province and develop plan		\$5,000				\$5,000	• Identified best practices • Developed plan
Seek capital infrastructure investment to complete additional community hubs			TBD	TBD	TBD	\$0	• Secure capital infrastructure investment
TOTAL	\$48,500	\$116,000	\$152,000	\$157,500	\$77,500	\$551,500	

Note: This is a sample ONLY to be used for future planning. It considers the project specific estimated budget items related the RED Strategic Plan Recommended Action Items, and not ongoing project related activities. All estimates are subject to change once detailed project plans are completed for specific action items.

Sample Budget

It is important to note that estimated costs may vary based on establishing detailed project scopes and future changes in the landscape in which regional economic development is conducted (government shifts, funding availability, industry needs, etc). This is a high-level breakdown of activities and it is recommended that more detailed project planning be conducted for each initiative.

These are basic estimates ONLY to be used for planning purposes. Annual budgets and operating plans will be developed and necessary to capture all planned activities, new available funds, and changing landscape of economic development, and will enable the economic development entity to be flexible and responsive to emerging opportunities.

The language used to describe the expenses throughout the budget are as follows:

Operating: the amounts used towards general economic development expenses.

Core Programming: the amounts required for core economic development programming.

Leveraged Projects: the amounts required for leveraging projects in addition to core economic development programming and includes leveraging additional 3rd party contributions and government funding.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Notes
REVENUE						
Municipality Contributions	\$210,000	\$210,000	\$210,000	\$210,000	\$210,000	14 shares of \$15,000
Federal/Provincial Funding	\$5,000	\$106,100	\$135,786	\$145,061	\$43,926	To be sourced
Event Revenue	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$8,000	From various events
Partnership/Sponsorship	\$0	\$20,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	To explore with private sector and community partners
Other	\$10,650	\$10,650	\$10,650	\$10,650	\$10,650	
TOTAL REVENUE	\$233,650	\$354,750	\$394,436	\$403,711	\$302,576	
EXPENSES						
Operating						
Salaries	\$150,000	\$153,600	\$157,286	\$161,061	\$164,926	Includes one senior Economic Development Officer, One Development Officer. Includes salary burden. Assumes a 2.4% Cost of Living Increase year over year.
Rent	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	
Communications	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	Cell phones, website maintenance,
Office Supplies	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	
Professional Development	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	

Operating Sub-total	\$160,000	\$163,600	\$167,286	\$171,061	\$174,926	
Core Programming						
Advertising and Promotion	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	
Travel	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	Mileage and expenses
Business Development Events	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	
Miscellaneous	\$5,150	\$5,150	\$5,150	\$5,150	\$5,150	
Core Programming Sub-total	\$25,150	\$25,150	\$25,150	\$25,150	\$25,150	
Leveraged Projects						
Strategic Recommended Action Items	\$48,500	\$116,000	\$152,000	\$157,500	\$77,500	These are estimates only. They do not include a few items in Sample Workplan where capital costs are TBD.
Internships/Project Staff	\$0	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$25,000	To be considered when seeking grant funding
Leveraged Projects Sub-total	\$48,500	\$166,000	\$202,000	\$207,500	\$102,500	
TOTAL Expenses	\$233,650	\$354,750	\$394,436	\$403,711	\$302,576	

Appendix 2: Public Funding Analysis

Overview:

In moving forward with Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan as outlined it will be essential that the regional economic development initiative seek partnerships with senior levels of government. Generally, these partnerships should be focused on individual project initiatives, whereas administrative and core economic development activities should be funded through core funding from the municipal contributions.

An advantage for the Almaguin Highlands is being part of Northern Ontario. As such, it is eligible for funding programs not available in other parts of the Province. This includes initiatives sponsored by Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation (NOHFC) and FedNor.

In addition, funding may also be available through a variety of Federal and Provincial departments including Ontario Ministry Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) and the broader Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada portfolio.

A third source of funding would include accessing national/provincial programs targeted broadly across Canada or Ontario. Examples would include the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, as well as Federal/Provincial infrastructure programming.

It is important to note that programming offered by both the Federal and Provincial governments change regularly – new programs are added, other are ended and many have changes in terms and conditions. These changes are often undertaken in conjunction with new budget initiatives and it will be important to closely monitor new government directions moving forward.

Principals and Approaches

In seeking partnerships with senior levels of government the following principals and approaches should be considered:

- Administrative and compliance burdens are attached to most senior government grants and it will be important to ensure that there is local capacity to fulfill these obligations.
- Most programs require local contributions (cash and/or in kind) and the source of local funding needs to be considered and subsequently secured.
- Using both Federal and Provincial funding sources on specific projects trigger specific “stacking” rules and it will be important to understand and comply with these provisions.
- Given the large number of programs available it will be important to identify priority initiatives and to focus efforts in key areas.
- Before submitting any formal application, economic development staff should work closely with government officials to ensure they are proceeding correctly and that they have an internal “champion” for their projects.
- Developing partnerships for joint applications enhances the opportunity for success.
- Funding that is directed to entities that are for profit normally requires repayment.

Key Programs to Consider

The following areas are key opportunities for the Almaguin Highlights to seek senior level of government funding. It is important to note that the public funding landscape is continuously changing, and the outlined opportunities are as of September 2018, and will likely evolve in the coming months.

Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation:

- Northern Business Opportunity Program – targeted primarily at the business sector it is designed to encourage productivity, expansion and global investment.

Program streams include:

- Business expansion projects
 - Small business start-up projects
 - New investment projects
 - Film and television industry Projects
- Northern Innovation Program – designed to support the commercialization of new technologies by fostering collaborations between the private, academic and research sectors.

Program streams include:

- Opportunity Assessment Projects
 - Applied Research and Technology Development Projects
 - Pilot Demonstration and Commercialization Projects
 - Industrial Research Chairs
- Strategic Economic Infrastructure Program – concentrating on projects aligned with key economic sectors, the program focuses on strategic infrastructure programs that have a direct and measurable net economic impact and job creation impact in Northern Ontario. Applicants are generally municipalities, first nations and not-for-profit corporations.
 - Northern Community Capacity Building Program – Assists communities in building the capacity to pursue economic growth. The program supports non-capital projects in the areas of strategic planning, business retention and attraction strategies, infrastructure requirements studies, capacity assessments and similar activities.
 - Northern Event Partnership Program – Provides support to municipalities, First Nations and not-for-profit organizations to sponsor events with a core purpose related to economic development, tourism, job creation and retention and capacity building.
 - Northern Ontario Internship Program – funds one-year internships for recent post-secondary graduates with the aim of strengthening Northern Ontario’s economic competitive advantage by attracting and retaining graduates in the North.

FedNor:

- Community Economic Development – designed and targeted to help create the conditions for economic growth and development. Specific initiatives include strategic and business planning and related studies; strengthening economic, industrial and commercial assets; implementation of priority initiatives identified in strategic plans and youth internships.
- Business Growth and Competitiveness – targeted at assisting Northern Ontario SMEs through initiatives which enhance productivity, competitiveness and business management; supply chain integration; enhanced trade and export performance and attraction of outside investment.
- Innovation – targeted at promoting the adoption, adaptation and commercialization of new technologies, fostering linkages between businesses and institutions, supporting research and development and promoting community innovation initiatives.
- Community Futures – Provides debt and equitable capital to eligible small businesses.

MNDM:

- Business Support – MNDM offers several programs which provide support to businesses.

These include:

- Business Consulting Services
- Northern Industrial Electricity Rate Program
- Tourism
- Veterinary Assistance Program

- Community Support – MNDM also offers number of programs which provide support to communities.

These include:

- Assistance to agriculture and rural organizations in Northern Ontario
- Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E) – helps communities identify obstacles to success as well as opportunities for businesses to grow
- First Impressions Community Exchange – helps communities learn about their strengths and weaknesses
- Northern Communities Investment Readiness Initiative – assist communities to develop the tools and capability to attract, receive and successfully explore investment opportunities

Other programming to consider

- Rural Economic Development Program (RED) – supports planning and research of economic development strategies as well as implementing sector development plans, initiatives to diversify the local economy, marketing and branding activities and attraction of skilled workers.

- Canadian Agriculture Partnership (CAP) – a series of programs designed to assist producers and processors to pursue innovative approaches and/or expand operations.
- Infrastructure Ontario – provides affordable, long-term financing to public sector clients enabling them to modernize and renew their infrastructure.
- Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund (OCIF) – provides steady, long-term funding for small, rural and northern communities to develop and renew their infrastructure. A portion of funding is formula based and the remainder is application based.
- Infrastructure Canada Rural and Northern Communities Fund – A targeted approach to meet the unique infrastructure needs of rural and northern communities. \$250 million dollars committed over the next 10 years. (delivery subject to an agreement between Canada and Ontario) Eligible projects include improved food security, Improved road, air or marine infrastructure, improved broadband connectivity, and more efficient/reliable energy.
- Infrastructure Canada Community, Culture and Recreation Fund – A targeted approach to meet community cultural needs. \$407 million committed over ten years (delivery subject to an agreement between Canada and Ontario). Projects must result in improved access to and/or increased quality of cultural, recreational and/or community infrastructure for Canadians.

Appendix 3: Stakeholder Engagement Summary



Almaguin Highlands
Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan

Regional
Economic
Development
Strategic Plan

October 5
2018

Laridae
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Peterborough, ON K9J 2V3
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September 10, 2018

Dear Almaguin Highlands Regional Economic Development Steering Committee:

We are pleased to present you with this Stakeholder Engagement Summary Report – the culmination of our work together, and with your stakeholders, over the past few months.

It has been our pleasure working on this Regional Economic Development Strategic Planning process, and we look forward to completing the final stages of such an important project. Your insight, thoughtfulness, and hard work at our kick-off meeting, and since, have been integral to this process, and will ensure that you have a plan that is exciting and forward-looking, yet actionable and relevant.

This package offers you an overview of the themes of discussion throughout the community engagement process, including focus groups and roundtables, public meetings, and key informant interviews. You will find included in this package:

- A review of the planning process
- Stakeholder Engagement Summary

The contents contributed to, and were considered throughout, the process of drafting the strategic directions for the Almaguin Highlands region. Please note that the stakeholder engagement is one contributing factor to developing strategy, and that the situational analysis and previous plans, studies, and reports developed for the area were also very large contributors.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "D. Rocheleau". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Danielle Rocheleau
Vice President, Laridae

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A. Introduction

Setting out with the goal of creating an inspiring and actionable Regional Economic Development (RED) Strategic Plan, the Almaguin Highlands Steering Committee saw meaningful stakeholder engagement as a critical step from the outset.

Before identifying the strategic priorities for the region, the Steering Committee reached out to capture and engage the voices of the Almaguin Highland region's key stakeholders. Their feedback will serve to strengthen and shape the RED strategic plan.

Engagement strategies used to solicit input included focus groups and round tables, public meetings, key informant interviews, and an online survey. Throughout the engagement phase, from Wednesday, June 20th – Friday, July 27th, 2018, input and feedback were gathered from a total of:

- **63 participants** in eight (8) focus groups and three (3) round tables
- **28 participants** in two (2) public meetings
- **26 key informant** interviews
- **40+ participants** at the Chamber of Commerce Guide Launch
- **449 respondents** to the online survey

What follows is an overview of the themes, ideas, compliments, and concerns identified by each stakeholder group and/or method of engagement.

B. Stakeholder Engagement: Why, Who and How?

Increasingly, municipal, non-profit, and public-sector organizations both desire, and are expected, to periodically "check in" with those stakeholders who interact with them most often. Strategic plans that provide meaningful direction over the course of their stated duration rely on an authentic engagement process, one that genuinely seeks input and allows for those invested in the success of an organization or region to provide ideas, input, and feedback. Of course, conceptually, leadership means to ask tough questions, make decisions, encourage commitment, and provide the direction that is required.

Properly done, stakeholder engagement is in no way an abdication or devolution of leadership. It's the opposite. Leaders who reach out and seek the input of the people delivering or receiving services every day are far more likely to craft future strategic directions that will resonate with those they affect, and those who must implement them.

Purpose

Before striking a RED Strategic Plan, the Almaguin Highlands region decided early on to seek input from a wide array of stakeholders. In doing so, the region ensured that its joint strategic plan will have a solid base and be informed by experience, evidence, and the broadest-held perceptions.

The engagement phase took place from **Wednesday, June 20th – Friday, July 27th, 2018**. Engagement sessions and opportunities were promoted by email, social media, word of mouth, and phone calls.

The survey and the focus group sessions had two general purposes:

- To **engage stakeholders** by gathering input, ideas, and suggestions, and by including them in the planning process directly and in a meaningful way;
- To **educate stakeholders** about the work of the Almaguin Highlands Economic Development Steering Committee and generally promote the economic opportunities to the broader region (as a positive legacy of the planning process).

The Almaguin Highlands Steering Committee invited the following audiences to participate in the engagement process:

- Municipal councils and staff
- Various sectors (agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, retail, health, artisans)
- Professional and community organizations
- Business owners
- Property developers
- Provincial and federal political representatives
- General public

In-person Focus Groups and Roundtables

Focus groups and roundtables were held across the region with a variety of stakeholders. The participants were engaged during each of the sessions and a comfortable rapport was perceived over the course of the process.

A total of **63 individuals participated** in the process.

Public Meetings

Public meetings are hosted to offer an opportunity for a larger group of residents and the general public to attend and offer their insight. There was a total of **28 participants** at two public meetings and over **40 participants** at the Chamber of Commerce regional guide launch. Participating in the Chamber of Commerce event served to enhance awareness about the initiative and encourage further involvement from attendees through the online survey and upcoming engagement sessions.

Group	Location	Date	Time	Total Participants
Seniors Organizations	Powassan	Wed. June 20	11:00 am – 12:30 pm	3
Agriculture	Powassan	Wed. June 20	1:30 pm – 3:00 pm	6
Municipal Staff	South River	Thurs. June 21	9:00 am – 10:30 am	9
Artisans	South River	Thurs. June 21	11:00 am – 12:30 pm	10
Tourism	South River	Thurs. June 21	1:00 pm – 3:00 pm	5
Manufacturing	Burk’s Falls	Mon. June 25	11:00 am – 12:30 pm	7
Professional Organizations	Burk’s Falls	Mon. June 25	1:30 pm – 3:00 pm	5
Retail	Burk’s Falls	Mon. June 25	6:00 pm – 8:00 pm	3
Health Care	Burk’s Falls	Tues. June 26	9:00 am – 10:30 am	0
Community Organizations	Burk’s Falls	Tues. June 26	11:00 am – 12:30 pm	5
Municipal Councils	Burk’s Falls	Tues. June 26	1:30 pm – 3:00 pm	10
Total Participants				63

- **9 participants** at the Public Meeting in Powassan (Thurs. June 21, 2018)
- **19 participants** at the Public Meeting in Burk’s Falls (Mon. June 25, 2018)
- **Approximately 40 participants** at the Chamber of Commerce regional guide launch (Wed. June 20, 2018)

Key Informant Interviews

Key informant interviews are qualitative in-depth interviews with individuals considered knowledgeable about the region. The purpose of these interviews is to collect detailed information from experts who—with their particular knowledge, experience, and understanding—may provide insight on challenges, opportunities, and potential solutions.

A total of 26 key informant interviews were conducted:

Category	Representation/Roles	Number of Participants
Funders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FedNor • MNDM/NOHFC 	2
Partner Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BACED • Labour Market Group • Chamber of Commerce • Municipal staff 	4
Associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three Mile Lake Cottage Association • Pickerel Lake Property Owner's Association • Cecebe Waterways Association • Ahmic Lake Cottage Association • Lake Bernard Property Owner's Association • Eagle Lake Conservation Association 	6
Business Owners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Finley Consulting • Shift Leadership • Stan Darling Insurance • Lofthouse Manufacturing • Highlander Brew Co. • Louisa Moffit Real Estate • Magnetawan Home Hardware Building Centre • Property developer 	8
Political Representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MP, Muskoka Parry Sound • MP, Nipissing • MPP, Muskoka Parry Sound • MPP, Nipissing • Mayor, Powassan • Deputy Mayor, Magnetawan 	6
Total Interviews		26

Online Survey

A confidential online survey was conducted, available to the above noted stakeholder groups, including seasonal and year-round residents. Anonymity was guaranteed to encourage participants to be comfortable and honest in their responses. The survey was circulated via email and available to respondents from June 20th to July 10th, 2018.

There were 449 respondents to the survey.

C. Stakeholder Engagement Summary

Focus Groups and Roundtables

Eleven (11) focus groups and roundtables were coordinated, and 10 were completed – participants from the Health Sector session participated in the other engagement sessions. Throughout the sessions, it was clear that the stakeholders agree that a regional approach to economic development will strengthen the overall efforts and reach of activities from each municipality. The stakeholders see value and opportunity in developing a plan that can enhance the overarching reputation and positioning of the region as a whole.

The Stakeholder Engagement focus groups and roundtables each spoke to similar themes.

For the purpose of this report, the feedback obtained has been grouped into nine (9) themes:

- Industry/Sectors
- Infrastructure
- Housing
- Labour Market and Employment
- Families and Children
- Transportation
- Communications and Branding
- Collaboration and Leadership
- Economic Development

The feedback is as follows:

Seniors' Organizations Session

Date: June 20, 2018

Attendees: 3

Sectors

- Participants felt that the natural environment and availability of outdoor activities for tourism purposes were a great strength for the region. Such activities include camping, fishing, boating, ATVing, snowmobiling, etc.
- They also felt that there was opportunity to do more with tourism.
- Participants noted that while groceries, hardware, and drug stores are available, people have to leave the community in order to purchase clothing and other essentials.
- While participants noted that there are community and health services available in the region, they mentioned that many people leave the region for these services as well.
- Participants felt that a mobility and/or community bus would be appreciated by residents. At the moment, there is a volunteer-run bus on Wednesdays for shopping and once a month trips to Huntsville, but participants felt this could be expanded and/or strengthened.
- Participants felt that services for people with Alzheimer's and/or dementia are lacking in the community, along with respite care for caregivers. While they

mentioned meetings conducted by the Alzheimer's Society, participants were unsure about how often the meetings occur and what exactly the organization does.

Housing

- Housing was identified as a core need for the community, which participants felt could employ some of the younger people in the region and serve the tourism need, as well as residents.

Labour Market and Employment

- Participants recognized that it is hard for local businesses to find qualified people to employ.
- They noted that the younger generation has to leave the community to find employment, and while some do eventually return to the area, it is generally when they are ready to retire. This means that the community misses out on their prime economic years.

Families and Children

- It was noted by participants that the majority of residents in the area are older, with fewer young families and children. Those who do have younger family members often have to leave the community to find employment opportunities.
- They also noted that there are more older women than men, and one participant commented that “the North is hard on men.”
- Participants felt that it is hard to get younger people more involved in the community, because they have to work multiple jobs or work outside the region in order to survive financially. This has a negative impact on community events and service organizations.

Transportation

- Participants felt that the establishment of the four-lane highway has eventually had a positive impact on the region, but that more needs to be done to attract people off the highway and into the villages themselves. The example of Burk's Falls was given, where visitors will stop at the Tim Hortons and gas station but won't go any further into the town.

Communications and Branding

- Participants mentioned the need for better signage for the Tourism Centre in Novar, which might help draw people into the community from the highway.

Economic Development

- Participants believed that people in the community would be comfortable with the municipalities taking a regional approach to economic development.
- Participants want to see a destination community event developed for Burk's Falls, and provided examples of the harness races and boat races that used to draw in a lot of visitors. They noted that the Burk's Falls Fall Fair is dwindling in attendance, but there is a long history with the event.
- Participants felt that seniors still have a lot to contribute to the community and that more value needs to be associated with the wisdom they have to pass along.

Agriculture and Forestry Session

Date: June 20, 2018

Attendance: 6

Sectors

- One participant mentioned that the Kearney area might soon be looked at as a ‘new Muskoka’ with the abundance of snowmobiling, trails, and the natural environment.
- Participants noted that smaller agricultural producers in the area are able to cater to the local farmers’ markets, which are growing in interest. However, it was mentioned that the markets don’t yet provide enough income for farmers to survive on alone and that there was a lack of infrastructure to really support the ‘eat local’ movement.
- A participant stated that the region has an important renewable crop in forestry and that 98% of that crop goes local to Tembec. The forestry industry in the region is currently employing 200 – 250 people.
- A significant challenge for the local agricultural industry is input costs, such as taxes, hydro, higher insurance costs, forestry management plans, and minimum wage. Participants felt that the proliferation of provincial and federal regulations presented a barrier to growth for the sector.
- Participants noted there was a lack of processing capacity in the region, which has a negative impact on those who raise livestock.
- It was noted that financing for new or young farmers or foresters is hard to come by.
- Some new opportunities for growth were mentioned by participants, including working with local schools to develop gardening programs with students, the pursuit of the ‘science of agriculture’ in the younger generations, planting programs through Forests Ontario, and the development of niche markets for those who want higher-end products. Other areas were the firewood industry (“every time gas or hydro goes up, more people want firewood”), foraging for wild edibles, maple syrup, and small ruminants.

Housing

- Participants mentioned the lack of an interim housing policy to support people who are new to the region. While housing costs are going up, forcing some people to live in trailers while searching for permanent housing, municipal policies in some communities’ forbid trailers or other temporary housing.
- Generally, they agreed that there was a need for more affordable housing in the area.

Labour Market and Employment

- Participants from both the agricultural and forestry sectors agreed that there is a lack of skilled labour in the area and that it is hard to recruit people to their sectors. They also noted that expectations about work have shifted, and that those they try to recruit aren’t as interested in the hard work of agriculture and forestry compared to in previous decades.
- Participants agreed that the elementary and secondary education systems need to focus more on opportunities outside of going to college and/or university, such as apprenticeships or specific agricultural or forestry training. They felt that the lack of an approach like this is helping to contribute to an overall negative reputation for agriculture as a sector to pursue.

Communications and Branding

- Participants felt that agriculture in the region is not well-known and not as well branded as the Cochrane/Matheson area, which is well-known as the Clay Belt. In particular, they agreed that there is little government promotion of the region and that even though there are thousands of acres of Class 3 or Class 4 agricultural land, no one knows about it.
- There was disagreement among participants about whether government should help promote agriculture in the region. One felt that the government should stay out of trying to sell agricultural products, whereas another felt that if government is going to assist, there needs to be a consistent approach to the various producers. There was agreement that the larger associations seem to do good work on branding (e.g. Ontario Milk Producers).

Collaboration and Leadership

- There was general agreement that the current economic development leadership in Burk's Falls is doing good work and should continue.

Economic Development

- Participants felt that the promotion of agriculture should be an objective of the economic development strategic plan. They agreed that municipalities should look at how land use planning can encourage more sustainable agriculture in the region, and should encourage farming and forestry.
- When the idea of a stronger network of farmers' markets came up, participants were generally unsure if there was enough of a desire for produce in the region. A number of impediments to success were also mentioned, including a lack of understanding among the population about labelling (i.e. local is Ontario, not 100 miles), import of food from the Ontario Food Terminal, current lack of value-added products and take-away/ready-made food (which is generally available at the larger markets in the urban centres outside Almaguin), a lack of marketing, and the fact that the markets are currently run by volunteers who could use more support and training. That said, they did feel that if these impediments were addressed and the right investments were made, some producers could scale up enough to sell primarily in the region.
- Participants agreed that a regional approach to economic development would be best. One noted that "[economic development] will be stronger with more people involved in it."
- There was a desire among participants to see an apprenticeship or training program developed that could help pair people up for mentoring without a big investment. There was some disagreement from one participant who noted that they are less willing to give away their knowledge for free to a mentee, as they have not seen a return on investment in the past.
- A small change that could be made to help promote agriculture in the region would be for friendly policy changes such as putting in road signage to encourage drivers to watch for slow moving vehicles.
- Participants thought that a 'shop local' program and/or promotional plan could help business owners market themselves and explain why local product are better than those from outside the community.

Municipal Staff Session

Date: June 21, 2018

Attendance: 9

Sectors

- Some participants noted an increase in hand-made goods in the region and provided the example of locally-roasted coffee from Sundridge as indicators of the changing retail landscape.

Infrastructure

- Participants agreed there is a need for high-speed internet, which would allow people who live in urban areas to work from home when they are in the region.
- There are challenges with the communication infrastructure currently, as certain areas (e.g. Kearney) see a noticeable drop in internet speeds during the summer as compared to the winter. Other areas experience ‘spotty’ coverage and those who aren’t directly connected to existing lines have to rely on very expensive solutions.
- Participants agreed that it would take investments from upper levels of government to improve the situation now but they don’t see that kind of investment coming.
- A participant mentioned that there are old fiber lines in the area, but no one has accessed them. They may be too old to be useful now.

Housing

- Participants agreed that generally real estate prices are much lower than in Muskoka, and that this is a selling feature for the region.
- However, there was also agreement that there is a lack of housing in the region and restrictions prevent any new subdivisions in certain areas (including that they can’t be built for wells and septic systems, instead of on municipal water and sewer).
- There was agreement that there was a need to look at the continuum of housing – providing more communal housing options for seniors so that their homes are open for younger families to move into.

Labour Market and Employment

- Participants noted a lack of access to labour in the region, and that this makes it challenging to attract larger companies to the area.
- It was noted that businesses could use assistance in figuring out how to better market jobs in the way and in the places that youth will see and want to apply to.

Families and Children

- Participants agreed that there are few youths in the area, partly because they leave once they are old enough to go to school as there is little to keep them in the region, but also because people are having smaller families.

Communications and Branding

- Participants felt that the branding of “The Villages of Almaguin” has set a common theme for the region, and that it has been helpful to see the region as ‘a community of villages’.
- There was agreement that there is a lack of access to information in the region. Many businesses do not have a website or, if they do, it provides out-of-date information,

and others may only have a cell phone as the contact method. It was noted that this is frustrating to visitors and residents alike.

Collaboration and Leadership

- Participants felt that the communities, and particularly the municipal staff, do have the ability to get together and listen to one another and that there is general respect for each other's perspectives. They noted that there have been significant changes in the past few decades in the Villages, precisely because the municipalities have reached out beyond their own municipalities.
- Participants expressed concern that not all municipal politicians had bought into the regional approach to economic development, and that leadership was needed at the political level to really push the approach forward. They did note that local politicians face a significant challenge in the different assessments that exist in different townships – there is no incentive to look at economic development from a regional perspective.

Economic Development

- Participants believe a regional approach is the preferred approach to economic development. In particular, they are currently taking opportunities to work with each other and are actively looking for economies of scale. They feel that they share information and communicate with each other very well.
- There was agreement that a lot of the municipal planning relies on external consultants, which can slow down the processes and cause frustration.

Artisans Session

Date: June 21, 2018

Attendance: 10

Sectors

- Overall, it is perceived that a cohesive culture of supporting and promoting the arts does not yet exist across the region, and that it has taken years of work to have that happen in other areas, such as in Muskoka.
- When considering the arts and culture sector, participants expressed that it is very seasonal and described the difficulties of being profitable during the winter. They shared that this seasonality creates obstacles for securing funding as well.
- It was suggested that an economic base for artisans needs to be considered, as they experience most of their success on a seasonal basis with tourists and the ability to sell art at a higher price point. In addition, the cost of displaying art in the region is high, which reduces profit margins even further.
- Participants described initiatives, such as Crystal Cave, where artisan hubs have been created by renovating outbuildings and making the space available at a cheap rent, while offering opportunities for people to watch them create their art. They noted that this will allow for small storefronts and galleries, and micro-businesses such as stone carvers, coffee roasting, etc. It was added that there are plans to create an education centre for school groups within the same initiative.

- Participants appreciate organizations like the Chamber of Commerce, as they include the arts in their activities (i.e. Gravenhurst) and encourage the incorporation of the arts and culture as part of their strategies.
- When discussing grants and public funding for events, such as the Country Jamboree or the Third Friday Coffee House, participants agree that it is difficult to gather funds. They noted that proposals rarely get shortlisted, and that access to funding has largely ceased for the arts. It was suggested that there be a funding forum held to educate artisans about opportunities in the area, including provincial/federal funding opportunities.
- There was general agreement that it is difficult to attract locals to galleries, arts spaces, local events, etc. The participants shared that the best way to ensure local engagement is to have a café in the same building; however, visitors to the communities come from all over Ontario and often participate in workshops and events while in the area. One participant shared that they are selling 8 out of 10 paintings to visitors, as opposed to local residents.
- It was suggested that it would be feasible to host more festival events across the region; however, there is a challenge with accommodations for visitors. Participants explained that the region cannot accommodate 10,000-person events as there are limited places to stay. This limits the ability to host large scale events that would offer great economic impact across the region.

Infrastructure

- When speaking about regional infrastructure, participants agreed that reliable access to high speed internet continues to be a gap. It reduces the participants' abilities to reach the local market in a meaningful way.
- Participants expressed interest in having more facilities that are central to the region and that can host groups of people, workshops, and showcase artwork. Facilities such as the Highlander Brewing Company space are appreciated as they are welcoming and accessible.
- In addition, the availability of rental space/artist-available space is limited in the area. One participant shared that they wanted to move a Toronto-based sound art organization to the region, but could only find spaces to buy instead of lease.

Labour Market and Employment

- Participants agree that there is a phenomenal amount of talent in the main corridor of the Almaguin Highlands, and that the region also attracts people from Windsor to New Liskeard. There are strong connections to the local community, and people here are able to bring in talented people from afar.

Transportation

- Transportation was identified as an area of weakness across the region. Examples of opportunities were shared, such as the Art Bus in Hamilton and transportation in Toronto to the various art galleries.
- When discussing large festivals and events, participants agree that there is a need to coordinate travel services from the larger urban centres to the region.
- The efforts by RTO12 to establish an international airport in Bracebridge were viewed positively.

- The proximity to Toronto can be viewed as a positive or a negative, as there are many external factors to consider. Typically, it is 2.5 hours from Toronto, but last summer, for example, it was a 5-hour drive due to construction/obstructions/traffic. There are opportunities to promote and advertise the area in the GTA, but the variable travel times were identified as a risk.

Communications and Branding

- Communications was identified as an opportunity to better position the area for success.
- Participants suggested various opportunities to broaden the current communications reach, including having dedicated arts writers for the local media; having a stronger social media presence; and establishing a single talent directory or resource for the region.
- Promotion and advertising were viewed as a possible opportunity, specifically with the use of printed mail drops; however, it is understood that this is expensive and that it is challenging to quantify the impact of such activities.
- Local communications channels, such as the central newspaper, were viewed as expensive for advertising, and the lack of a regional radio station that everyone listens to was viewed as a weakness and possibly an opportunity.
- It was recommended that the region explore the most effective marketing options for the region and the artisans, while recognizing that the great part of the artistic community is that everyone is unique and that not everyone wants to do the same thing. They noted that it is important to respect the individuality of the person doing the work, but also the broader perspective of the artistic community.

“We can’t compare ourselves to Muskoka, as we are so different. The ‘Villages of Almaguin’ is a great approach”

Economic Development

- It was suggested that the economic development group should continue to offer support with grant writing in the region. This may include writing letters of support, guiding artists through the process, identifying existing opportunities, and educating artists on how best to position grants.
- Participants noted that education and training for entrepreneurs and businesses would be of great benefit as well, including the sharing of the tools and best practices.
- It was shared that the Chamber has held workshops previously. It was suggested that these activities continue, and that special effort be put forward to reach the people who are complaining and not engaging with the community.
- Another area of focus could be to offer education for councils and local politicians (municipal, provincial, federal) about the importance and economic impact of arts and culture across the Almaguin Highlands region. There are great resources and research offered through the Ontario Arts Council.

Tourism Session

Date: June 21, 2018

Attendance: 5

Sectors

- In discussing the markets, participants described the region as wide open and lacking in competition from other businesses, specifically from an accommodations perspective. This was viewed as an opportunity for entrepreneurs.
- There is a perception that the economic impact of tourism is not fully understood by businesses and government. In particular, they noted that there seems to be a variety of governmental ‘red tape’ from various levels of government that make it hard to operate.
- It was suggested that municipalities could limit the ‘red tape,’ as many bylaws are outdated and do not reflect the current state and opportunities. They noted that there is a perception that the private sector should be responsible for paying for any required improvements or changes.
- Participants agree that there is a lack of basic retail and services offered in the region. An opportunity that would benefit the tourism industry would be to expand businesses hours (stay open longer, be open on Sunday, etc.)
- Collectively, the region should look for creative ways to extend its ‘season’ (past 6 months). Participants shared that generally, they are open for 5 months of the year, but busy for only 7 weeks.
- Some participants recommended that partnerships could be established across the Almaguin Highlands to showcase the unique offerings available. For example, partnerships between a hairdresser/esthetician and accommodator to offer those services on site would be beneficial to both service providers. Other participants were unsure about the actual economic impact of partnerships.
- Participants expressed an inequitable distribution of funding from the Ministry of Culture, Tourism, and Sport (MCTS), as it is distributed to “roofed” accommodations, and campgrounds, cottages, and resorts don’t count. This is a challenge for the region, as there is a lack of available roofed accommodations. It was expressed that the region only gets \$1.3 million compared to \$24 million into the urban areas/GTA.
- RTO 12 was described as a leader in marketing campaigns in the province, and it was noted that they are doing it with no cost to the marketing budget.
- When speaking from a small business perspective, participants expressed that the taxation levels make it challenging to operate. One participant noted that they are “getting hammered” as a result of the taxes. They said that business owners are often working 15 hours a day, 7 days a week just to make a go of it, which is not a sustainable way of living.

Infrastructure

- Participants collectively agree that there is a lack of high-speed internet, and access was described as ‘spotty.’ This is viewed as a missed opportunity for attracting visitors to the region, as many look for accommodations with access to reliable internet. It was suggested that investments by government are required to ensure the proper infrastructure is in place.

- Furthermore, ensuring that there are serviced lands with available water and sewer would be an appropriate investment in attracting much needed housing developments.

Labour Market and Employment

- It was discussed that the local workforce is underdeveloped. There is a perception that there is no incentive to look for a position that will pay a moderate income for a finite period of time.
- Participants expressed that the change in minimum wage is having a ripple impact on companies in the area, which has resulted in fewer jobs.
- It was discussed that there is a lack of labour, with people not willing to work seasonally. Businesses are unsure of what to do or what incentive to provide. Programs that do exist are not enough, have too narrow criteria, involve too much red tape, require them to pay out of pocket, and involve compensation only at the end.

Communications and Branding

- It was suggested that there is a lack of awareness about the availability of services/activities etc. in the shoulder seasons.
- Participants suggested that there should be a multi-channeled approach to promoting the region, which includes online, print, etc. while understanding the amount of investment required to execute on a comprehensive plan.
- Participants strongly agreed that they would want to see a digital strategy for marketing that is unified and which would be executed by a core group, like the economic development groups. This strategy could include approaches to attract new tourists, attract new people/business owners/entrepreneurs, and convince other businesses to get on board and work together.
- It is recommended that such an approach needs to be consistent and take a regional approach.

Collaboration and Leaders

- The participants encouraged collaboration. They discussed a general lack of understanding about the power of working together, and suggested that there should be strategies to enhance a culture of cooperation in the area.
- Participants shared an example – Explorer’s Edge – in which there should naturally be more engagement. Currently it only has 300 members, but membership is only \$1.

Economic Development

- It was agreed that the Almaguin Highlands region offers a great quality of life, and has excellent natural resources compared to the rest of Ontario, especially when comparing it to the urban areas in Southern Ontario and the US. The area draws tourists in from other countries, as they come to take part in the wilderness experience.
- Participants expressed a need for educational opportunities for businesses. They acknowledged that there have been some strong workshops, and it was suggested that these continue and that resources be spread across the region.

- In order to be effective, there was agreement that a regional approach would offer a greater opportunity to position the region to outside visitors. It was acknowledged, however, that there will likely need to be a culture shift to adopt a regionalism approach.
- Participants expressed an interest in starting up a Business Improvement Association in Burk's Falls, which could help convince businesses to stay open longer/on weekends/Sundays. It was understood that this would take more than 3 - 4 weeks, and more like 3 - 4 years.

Manufacturing Session

Date: June 25, 2018

Attendance: 7

Sectors

- In speaking about manufacturing in the region, many participants shared that they have started and grown their businesses in the region because of the quality of life and the natural environment.
- Many participants expressed the value of sourcing many of the raw materials they use from Ontario. The close proximity means that materials are only shipped from a few hundred kilometres away.
- In addition, since many of the products from the Almaguin Highlands region are shipped to southern Ontario or Montreal, it is inexpensive to transport end products for sale. It is a great benefit that shipping costs are competitive to southern Ontario.
 - One challenge identified was shipping to the United States, as finding available and reliable trucking services can be difficult.
- Another benefit expressed by participants is that overhead expenses – such as building leases, wages, etc. – are typically much more affordable than in southern Ontario. That being said, some participants explained that depending on the size of the company, hydro costs become inhibitive. There are concerns that parent companies will review costs and make decisions to close plants and move to another province where hydro is less expensive. An outside threat that was identified was how Quebec offers subsidies for transportation, as well as for hydro.
- Participants noted that the sense of collaboration among manufacturers in the smaller communities is also an asset. There are many positive business relationships within close proximity.
- The participants discussed many opportunities for the region, including bio-fuel, the expansion of Almaguin Forest Products, and the production of packaging, such as skids.
- When discussing the expansion of Almaguin Forest Products, it was shared that there are issues with log supply and finding qualified staff.
- Some participants said that it would be a beneficial cost-saving measure to use rail as a way to ship products. It was explained that although perhaps a little slower, containers on rail are less expensive.
- When speaking about local retail stores and available services, participants agree that there is not much available for local and seasonal residents.

Infrastructure

- Many participants expressed a need to update the roads across the region, specifically for trucking purposes.

- There was interest in updating water and sewer infrastructure for possible future developments.
- When discussing the idea of attracting businesses and future developments, participants expressed that there are challenges with some of the available resources. In addition, it was acknowledged that some of the building inspectors and municipal staff can be challenging to work with and are not seen as collaborative or welcoming. This was seen as a barrier to the attraction of new potential investment.

Housing

- Participants agree that the Almaguin Highlands offers a great quality of life, and would be attractive to those who do not want to be “in the rat race.” Once new people are brought to the region for work, it is a challenge for them to find appropriate housing. Much of the time, they end up living in Huntsville.
- The south end of the region has very few affordable houses to buy or even to rent. For example, in South River, workers are commuting from communities outside of the area.
- Participants shared that the north end of the region does not experience the same concerns with affordable housing or available housing.

Labour Market and Employment

- The area’s landscape is seen as a great asset, and the lifestyle offers a great value proposition to those relocating to the area for work.
- All participants agreed that local talent has a natural ability to work with the technologies, and that there is a certain skill set to adapt and maintain tech/equipment. The sentiment was shared that the region can’t lose this ingenuity.
- Unfortunately, participants expressed concern about the lack of labour. One participant shared that they need to hire five people to keep one.
- Many participants agreed there is an issue with overall work ethic, commitment, and consistent attendance. It is typical for new applicants to average a job per year, demonstrating a lack of commitment to any one employer. This causes concern as it takes a long time and many resources to train new employees, and the participants are finding it challenging to retain trained staff.
- In the north end of the region, there is a larger pool of employees with proximity to North Bay; however, there is a perception that the younger generation has a sense of entitlement and views employment differently than the longer-term employees.
- It was suggested that collaboration with schools across the region would be beneficial, as an opportunity to bring in co-op and placement students and get them excited about the potential jobs. Currently, the education system seems to drive students into employment sectors that are not available locally.
- It was suggested that there needs more collaboration within the region to increase education and awareness about how important manufacturing is in terms of employment and economic impact. Ideally, a collaborative approach could reinforce vocational decisions with students and skilled workers. Manufacturers would be interested in working collaboratively with schools on training initiatives.
- It was acknowledged that North Bay high schools have great manufacturing programs; however, this does not exist locally.

Families and Children

- When discussing regional recreation, participants identified Burk’s Falls as an ideal space for a community centre. It was acknowledged that many residents head to Huntsville to access

their community centre, and then coordinate doing their regular shopping there at the same time. If there was a regional community centre, then it is believed that residents would be more willing to shop locally.

- Some participants expressed that a public pool would be a great attraction, including splash pads.
- South River was mentioned when discussing swimming. Participants shared that currently there are ‘no swim’ signs across the beach because of rebar and concrete in the water. It was suggested that this could easily be cleaned up.
- Participants explained that each community tries to deliver recreational programming with limited resources. Examples were shared such as the region having multiple arenas, figure skating clubs, etc. It was suggested that, ideally, there would be a central location for something collective.
- It was also acknowledged that communities are trying to maintain what once worked when there were many weddings and community events, but there are now fewer weddings and children in the area.
- The challenge participants identified was getting the whole region to work together, and encouraging communities to be open to sharing resources. The communities are perceived as territorial about where things take place.
- Participants agree that it is imperative that there is a regional approach to addressing the needs of permanent and seasonal residents.

Transportation

- The four-lane highway was identified as a great asset for the region.
- Participants agree that public transportation within the region is a challenge. Having reliable transportation would help ensure accessibility to work – and employers are open to accommodating shifts for this.
- It was suggested that there could be a public carpool coordinated through a website.

Collaboration and Leadership

- Participants expressed that they would like to see the community being more collaborative and open to supporting local businesses. Currently, the communities across the region are perceived as territorial – they are seen as being more concerned about items happening in their own municipality than the collective good.
- It was expressed that there needs to be leadership to help residents and business owners overcome government issues. For example, participants identified that Employer Standards are impacting their bottom lines. One participant shared that “we’re seeing \$40,000 of paid sick days; however, we have no way of controlling this.”
- Participants shared that when thinking about customer service, Burks Fall’s is not perceived as a welcoming or positive community. A participant shared an example of being able to order delivery from Sundridge, but not from Burks Falls (food, hardware store, etc.). It was expressed that there is a missed opportunity, as “a lot of our money goes to Sundridge” because it is challenging to order catering for staff functions when local sources will not deliver.
- Powassan was described as very supportive of their community, businesses, and residents. There are often celebrations, etc.

“Collectively, you can better than by yourself. We need more unity – there is more opportunity. The challenge is breaking down that territorial mentality.”

Economic Development

- When thinking about broad economic development priorities, participants suggested that “keeping us competitive with our neighbours” should be a big consideration.
- One participant expressed that manufacturing should not be marketed for the region. The concern is that by attracting more manufacturers to the region, there will be more competition when attracting and retaining skilled workers.
- It is perceived that employees only come when “there isn’t anything better” – Toronto seems to take employment more seriously.
- Not everyone agreed with this view. Some participants thought that if an economic development strategy only focuses on tourism, then it will continue to be difficult to attract younger, skilled workers to the area.
- All participants agree that promoting tourism in the region and focusing on positioning the area for retirement are great opportunities.
- The challenge identified with positioning the region for retirement is that there would then be fewer young people for employment.
- Ideally, an economic strategy would encourage people to come and live and enjoy the region.

Professional Organizations Session

Date: June 25, 2018

Attendance: 5

Sectors

- Participants agree that the natural environment is beautiful and a unique asset. “There is an opportunity to manage the growth and maintain our beauty.”
- When discussing the region’s retail sector, it was described as “not providing much,” from fresh vegetables to hardware.
- Participants acknowledged that customer service locally is a challenge, and it is perceived that there is limited effort put forward to accommodate customers.
- Some participants expressed that the availability of product is reasonable for the population.
- When discussing local foods as an example, participants said that local farms are more successful at retailing in North Bay and Huntsville; however, local foods are not available in the local grocer.
- Participants agree that there is an opportunity for a vibrant local food movement, and that younger people are generally more interested in supporting this.
- In terms of service, it was shared that “there is a long way to go” to be positive service providers.
- In addition, it was expressed that it is difficult to bring “the seasonal segment” into the communities across the region. They often visit the region and “stay at the dock.”

Infrastructure

- Participants agree that the existing web-based infrastructure and access to high-speed internet is an issue for young entrepreneurs who have clients/customers in urban centres.

Housing

- Participants agree that access to affordable housing is an issue for young couples and families, specifically for those who are seeking rental accommodations or require access to transportation. This creates a challenge for businesses when attracting new employees.
- A benefit and opportunity is that it is less expensive to purchase rural property.

- It was noted that there are opportunities to establish small scale building for affordable housing, such as duplexes and triplexes.
- Participants also believe there is an opportunity for life cycle housing, for between leaving a family home but prior to entering a retirement home. This can be seen in Parry Sound, where they are building apartments for adults who are 70 years and older. There are units being built that have a 95% occupancy rate, when they originally only expected 60% occupancy to date.
- Some participants expressed that there is a lack of effort that “comes down to how individuals maintain their homes and personal properties.” There was a shared perception that there may be an overall lack of pride, and if there was more maintenance it would help people to want to live next door. Property values are not increasing as a result of other properties not being maintained.
- It was noted that there may not be enough property available to sell.

Labour Market and Employment

- Participants agree that younger people are creating their jobs, and then figuring out where they want to do that work. Historically, it was about finding a job and staying there.
- It was noted that many young adults are not interested in living in large centres; they want a balance between work and lifestyle. They appreciate the flexibility of setting their own hours and are seeking somewhere to raise their children.
- Participants commented that businesses need to be creative as they tend to have fewer markets available to them. The region needs to support these innovative business models.
- On the other hand, there is a significant outmigration of youth, and the region is seeing a decline in school enrollments.

Families and Children

- Some participants believe that there is a lack of programming for children older than 10 years old; however, not all participants agree. They noted that there are many opportunities available, but you need to seek them out, and there are few options. If there is interest in competing, then they will need to go outside the community.
- The region may have the programs; however, it was discussed that if you are moving to the region from larger centres, there is a different expectation. Children who get bored with what is offered then quit and look elsewhere.
- Some participants noted that some children will make their own fun.
- They noted that there needs to be some focus on building successful programming for children of all ages to help attract and retain families in the area.

Collaboration and Leadership

- Participants agree that local residents have pride in their own communities; however, there is a perception that there is little commitment to working on community development.
- It was acknowledged that communities are starting to work together. A great example is that municipal governments are creating a concrete regional plan. This is a strong indicator of future regional success.
- There was discussion about a lack of engagement throughout the region. “Trying to get people out to anything is a real challenge.”
- Participants agree that “we need to ‘turn the culture around.’ If we want to pull our communities together, we need to offer ‘incentives’ or strongly encourage some sort of shift in terms of overall engagement in our community events.”
- It was also agreement that people will need to buy-in to the future direction. They will need to see a plan, a defined commitment, and a conclusion.

- Some participants expressed that the language for this needs to change. “It’s about collaboration as opposed to volunteerism.” Others believe that this is only one component, and that they need to offer incentives to get people out to support their community.
- Participants described the need to develop an “ecosystem” for regional success. They noted that it has begun with municipalities intentionally getting on the same page and demonstrating leadership to work together.
- Participants commented that the region is starting to develop a more trusting partnership at the strategic level.
- It was suggested that the next step is to get professional organizations engaged in the process and then businesses will naturally join the movement.

Economic Development

- All participants agree that it’s important not to duplicate what other communities have, but to build on the assets of East Parry Sound.
- Participants shared that having a clearer understanding of what services and programs are offered across all organizations would be beneficial. It was acknowledged that services get diluted across the region because there are overlaps in service (i.e. Employment Centre, iion, NICO, etc.). It was suggested that resources could be used more efficiently by having a clearer understanding about what is available. It was also suggested that sometimes organizations require more focus.
- Participants noted that, fortunately, communications across agencies are improving, and increasingly they are working together to support youth, employment, economic development, etc.

Community Organizations Session

Date: June 26, 2018

Attendance: 5

Sectors

- Participants agree that the main draw to the region draw has always been our lakes, rivers, etc. All participants value the region’s accessible natural beauty.
- They noted that an impressive recent event is the RCMP Ride, which has attracted people from all over.
- Participants noted that the Almaguin Highlands is well positioned – with close proximity to Toronto, Sudbury, etc. – to become an events destination.
- It was discussed that there is a lack of accommodations in the region. Many participants expressed an interest in hosting more multi-day events; however, without hotels for accommodating visitors there is a limit to the size and frequency of events.
- One participant expressed that the region “is the community in the middle of two larger communities – who each enjoy growth – and it is remaining stagnant locally.”
- Participants noted that the healthcare sector presents a problem for the aging population. There currently is no hospital, and many participants explained that residents often go to the pharmacy in Sundridge, and that there is a minimum wait of six months to a year for a doctor if you are new to the community.
- It was noted that there is a gap in retail offerings in the area. If seniors want to buy “a pair of underwear” or a needle and thread, they need to go to Huntsville.
- When discussing why residents choose to purchase outside of the region, it was explained that price is the biggest inhibitor. It was explained that local prices tend to increase

seasonally, and they don't go back down. In addition, if people need something that isn't available locally, then they go to Huntsville. Once there, they typically will spend some time and buy everything that they need in one convenient location at a lower price.

- All participants agreed that the number of seasonal residents presents an opportunity to have a positive economic impact on the downtown centres.
- They noted that it would be of great benefit to the region to develop more winter tourism to round out the seasonality of the economy. Ideally there would be winter attractions and activities established to draw people to the region year-round.

Infrastructure

- All participants agree that access to high speed internet is often a challenge.
- When discussing alternatives to building roofed accommodations, participants thought that Airbnb would be a great idea; however, access to internet is paramount to attracting people.
- It was acknowledged that to attract large businesses, such as Lofthouse, and to attract younger families, the region needs to establish the right infrastructure, such as internet, a strong labour force, and housing.

Housing

- Participants shared that there are housing concerns across the areas, as there are no newer housing developments that will attract new families.
- In addition, they noted that there is a lack of accessible housing available for the aging population.
- It was suggested that the region needs to bring in developers to understand how to move ahead. The land is available; however, the available water and sewer services cannot accommodate growth.

Labour Market and Employment

- When discussing the available labour force, the participants noted that there is available work over the summer months and that it's the winter time when residents need employment.
- It is perceived that many unemployed workers won't take on jobs as they are on disability or ODSB.
- In addition, participants expressed concern that students are not being educated for employment that is available in the region and that as a result they leave for employment in other communities. An example was shared about a new high school with great shops that is now closing because of little interest from the students.

Families and Children

- Participants expressed that there is a general lack of children's programming, and that many families go to Huntsville or North Bay for regular lessons and recreational programming.

Communications and Branding

- Participants shared that the region would benefit from more consistent and visible communications. Ideally, there would be a "board" that can highlight everything so that permanent and seasonal residents and visitors can learn about what is taking place in each community across the region.

Collaboration and Leadership

- When discussing community engagement, participants expressed a significant lack of volunteerism. It is perceived that the student population is unmotivated to volunteer, and even though their high school programs require volunteer hours, they seem get employers to sign-off and then don't complete their hours.

Economic Development

- It was suggested that the region develop an inventory of commercial properties for new potential businesses and developments.
- Participants suggested that an initiative for the beautification of the downtown cores would be a great first step in encourage pride and attracting people to the area. It is understood that these types of initiatives can be expensive because of the age of the downtown infrastructures; however, there may need to be demolition and new spaces built.

Municipal Councils Session

Date: June 26, 2018

Attendance: 10

Sectors

- Participants noted that the region has easy accessibility to surrounding regions, plenty of available land, and many restaurants, shops, and tourism attractions.
- The region's natural environment was identified as the main attraction in the region. Algonquin Park attracts visitors from across the world, and there are many beautiful amenities to build upon, such as the Magnetawan River.
- Another suggested opportunity to pursue is the proximity to larger marketplaces. The Almaguin Highlands are close to more populated areas, with great access to peaceful lakefronts, which can attract new residents, both permanent and seasonal, as well as bring visitors, to ensure a growing tourism industry.
- It was noted that Kearney has three access points to Algonquin Park. As a result of this opportunity, the community is expanding trails and updating their strategic plan.
- Participants commented that the region is mapping out trails for active transportation, such as biking, hiking, kayaking, boating, etc. Groups, such as Almaguin in Motion, are actively setting up bike stations. Participants agree that there may be other opportunities to do this for others.
- Participants agree that the lack of medical facilities will cause concerns for the aging population. Currently, OTN is available in Burks Falls for the region, and in Sundridge for mental health needs. Recently, an accessible vehicle service was established to transport people to care, which is available for all of Almaguin.
- There was a collective interest in supporting manufacturers, and better understanding what holds them back.

Infrastructure

- Participants described the Highway 11 through to Powassan as core infrastructure, which has helped connect the communities across the Almaguin Highlands.
- Participants noted that despite previous investments in fibre optics and broadband across the region, there is still a significant need for access to reliable and affordable high-speed internet. There is concern that the region lacks the industry to support investment into fibre infrastructure.

Housing

- Participants agree that the value of the region's land is starting to increase, but noted that it is still affordable.
- It was expressed that there is a need to address the housing gaps for transitional living for the aging populations.

- A model was shared that could be replicated throughout the area: Kearney’s recently developed fourplexes. They have been established right on the main strip with close access to trails, etc. Each unit is 700 square feet with access to a little backyard with a water view.

Economic Development

- It was noted that the collaboration of local governments will be important to increase capacity, ensure efficiency with resources, and ensure value for rate payers.
- Participants generally agree that investments in each community will impact the broader region. An example was the implementation of the Burk’s Falls Community Improvement Plan. These improvements will impact the surrounding areas.
- Some participants agreed that the municipalities can all benefit from contributing to regional economic development.
- A challenge that was identified by participants will be the need to show the benefit to the rate payers. There will need to be demonstrated regional impact to gain support from residents.
- It was suggested that whatever is designed for economic development, it needs to be measurable and have some early wins.
- It was also noted that early wins include the overall collaboration of the region, proving to the rate payers that something is happening.
- Another obstacle raised by the group was ensuring that expectations are managed and the importance of ensuring this is considered through each step of the process.

Retail Session

Date: June 26, 2018

Attendance: 3

Sectors

- It was noted that, currently, communities are investing in beautification to enhance downtown business traffic and attract more visitors to the region.
- Participants commented that the natural, untouched environment, with access to lakes, is a great asset for the region that will help support future economic development, specifically through tourism.
- They noted that as time passes, it would seem that the Almaguin Highlands region is gaining more visitors from Huntsville.
- There is a perception that there are no businesses locally, but “you just have to look.” It was suggested that if residents and visitors search on the internet or ask around (word of mouth), that they will find plenty of unique small businesses.
- Participants identified a general lack of accommodations for visitors across the region. This was discussed as a high priority as they are needed by everyone, including short-term visitors for local weddings and for festivals and events.
- An opportunity was presented to enhance the quiet winter season. In recent years, snowmobiling has been limited by trail closures and increasing liability concerns. The challenge identified with this is that once snowmobilers head to other areas that are reliable, it will be more difficult to attract them back. They noted that it would be beneficial for the region to have a strategy to enhance winter activities that draw people to the area.
- It was noted that looking at trails that can support both winter and summer tourism and active transportation is a great opportunity for development.

- When speaking about small business and retail, it was discussed that the low population cannot support multiple businesses with similar offerings. This becomes a barrier for entrepreneurs interested in starting their own retail business.
- There is a lack of information among locals about what is available to them in the region. When discussing the challenges of running small businesses, it was suggested that local businesses have to work hard to advertise and promote themselves, and sometimes businesses aren't offering what their customers want. It was noted that business owners really need to think about ways to be efficient with their marketing, as well as staying in contact with the needs and demands of the communities.
- A participant noted that there is an opportunity to shift the region's culture to have more of a customer service focus. With a more entrepreneurial culture and a focus on exceptional customer service, the region will better address the needs and demands of all residents and visitors.
- It was shared that a great opportunity for the region would be to further develop eco and adventure tourism, by building on the Magnetawan waterways and investments into the waterfront, developing park-to-park trails from Algonquin to Killbear provincial parks, and creating experiences like white water rafting when the water levels are high.
- It would be in the region's best interest to encourage pop-up shops for high traffic seasons. This way, entrepreneurs don't have to remain open during slower times of the year.
- There is a perceived disconnect between the retail and tourism community. Most retail and business front-line staff don't see themselves as a tourism 'attraction,' and therefore do not believe they have any responsibility to provide tourism information to customers.
- Some risks identified for the retail sector in the Almaguin Highlands include big box stores, the internet, the American dollar, shipping costs, and a lack of cost-effective wholesalers. It was shared that there is a "bleed" of people leaving the community to conduct economic activity elsewhere; for example, when people head to Huntsville for one reason, many will do their shopping and get services there at the same time.
- Fortunately, consumer trends are starting to shift back to the local experience and customer service, including local online orders (so they don't have to spend the time shopping in store). These are opportunities to take advantage of and ensure that they're done well.
- There is a changing demographic – as more young people move into town, shopping looks different – they don't want to spend as much time in the stores, and they need cheaper items because they are shopping for a family.

Infrastructure

- There are challenges when looking for available sites for a new business, as there is limited space in downtown areas, concerns with proper zoning and by-laws, and absentee landlords.
- It was noted that absentee landlords seem to let buildings go into disrepair when they're waiting for money to come. This drives the standard down; however, landlords are still expecting top dollar for these subpar properties. This is viewed as unreasonable, as many buildings might not be fire safe or accessible. This poses a challenge for new business owners as they cannot afford the lease hold improvements, maintenance, and liability.
- There is a perception that there is a lack of parking in the downtown cores of some communities, which dissuades residents from shopping at the downtown businesses. Despite there being plenty of available parking, there are often accessibility issues to address.
- Participants expressed that the lack of internet presence for businesses is a concern; however, they acknowledged that the Digital MainStreet is coming, which will be a great opportunity for small, downtown businesses.

Housing

- It was noted that the affordability of the land and overall living expenses provide an opportunity to position the area as a place to live; however, there needs to be consideration given to ensuring there are homes for people to purchase.
- Another reason that people would want to live in the area is that it is “easier to ‘exist here’ compared to the city,” meaning that there is a slower pace of life and there are less pressures and competition.

Seniors, Families and Children

- Participants expressed that there are vibrant seniors’ communities in each town, with lots of available recreational activities (cards, gardens, games, etc.).

Transportation

- Participants felt that access to the four-lane highway is a great asset that connects the region and creates a sense of community.

Communications and Branding

- Participants noted that there is a general lack of available information about public assets, such as beaches and lake access. By increasing awareness about what is available, it will become easier to ensure that both permanent and seasonal residents, as well as visitors, can ‘experience’ the region more fully.
- It was also suggested that although having increased access to the internet and having regional support in creating an online presence would be appreciated, business owners are ultimately responsible for ensuring they create an online strategy for engaging customers.
- There is a perception that regional businesses don’t “believe in advertising;” however, participants explained that the current businesses who are successful do advertise locally.

Collaboration and Leadership

- Participants expressed that the more collaborative regional approach that has begun will be a turning point for the region’s economic success.

Economic Development

- It was noted that through economic development, a strategy should be developed to help “breed” entrepreneurs. Creating spaces like the Hub in Huntsville, hosting events like “Bears Lair,, or even offering more informal office space for budding entrepreneurs, would support small businesses and start-ups.
- Participants commented that economic prosperity would be supported by positioning the region as a “destination” through communications, branding, and strategic support and enhancement of areas such as specialized retail that cater to the experiential tourism market; having seasonal pop-up shops; and strengthening the culinary experiences with great restaurants.
- It was suggested that packaging the various experiences into day-trips, bus tours, and mapped out itineraries would help make it easier for visitors to maximize their time in the area.
 - In addition, offering familiarization tours for local business owners/workers/tourism front-line staff to see what other offerings exist in the community would be a strategy to inspire local pride and knowledge of what is available.

Public Meetings

Dates: June 21st and 26th, 2018

Attendance: 28

Sectors

- Participants noted that more needs to be done to support businesses so that they can remain competitive, and to ensure that wealth generated in the community stays in the community.
- Some noted that businesses need “a hands up, not a hand out,” and that there are opportunities to use data to create better business opportunities.
- It was noted that many businesses lack the ability to access dollars, and therefore are not able to grow.
- They discussed how businesses need to be able to extend services beyond the summer months, but that the critical mass isn’t present for year round service.
- The disbursement of few people across large regions makes it difficult to sustain businesses.
- Participants noted that the region has a good mix of small and medium businesses, and diverse businesses. Participants discussed how entrepreneurship is alive and well in the region – “They’re the backbone of the community.”
- Highlander Brewery was discussed as a successful new business start-up. Many feel there needs to be more support for start-ups that support the tourism industry and cottagers, as well as residents
- Participants discussed the importance of being open to everything, and bringing together the old and the history with the new, to create something that’s unique to the region.
- They noted that there needs to be openness to technology, innovation, and new ideas
- It was noted that there is great art in the area, but that it needs to be better promoted.
- Some commented that few locals know about the Burk’s Falls Art Club.
- Others noted that they feel there is growing momentum in this sector, with several art galleries and shows.
- Concern was expressed about the lack of healthcare and hospitals, and a need to maintain the medical infrastructure.
- They noted that there’s talk of amalgamation of hospitals, and there’s concerns that this will affect the community’s ability to attract people and businesses.
- Regarding agriculture, it was noted that there’s an opportunity to explore niche market agricultural opportunities, such as yeast production for brewing or wine making, beer hops, hazelnut farms, etc.
- Some participants commented that land is being subdivided and sold, seeing this and the loss of farming land as a major threat moving forward: “Once those lands are gone, they’re gone.”
- One participant noted that although this is a challenge, there could be opportunities for innovative farming (vertical, hydroponic, etc.).
- Another noted that, although many younger people are selling their family/parents properties because they don’t want to continue a farming lifestyle, she is seeing some young people who are developing an interest in farming.
- Participants discussed how there is untapped and underutilized potential in certain sectors, such as agriculture, equestrian, eco-tourism, renewable energy and culinary tourism.

- The local food movement was mentioned, with comments that the local market supports 100 jobs and attracts 150,000 annually, with almost \$3 million in sales.
- It was noted that there is a lack of accommodation providers who can support events of certain sizes, as well as tourists in general.
- Several participants agreed that Powassan has survived because of its “cute” and “vibrant” downtown, but that few other towns have downtowns.
- Participants discussed how nature – green space, rivers, lakes, clean air – is one of their greatest strengths, and there are opportunities to build more outdoor recreation opportunities.
 - Additional trails and routes for cycling tourism were suggested.
- They noted that local tourism events have had high attendance – “If you built it, they will come.”

Infrastructure

- Concerns were expressed about water quality, from the First Nation perspective and from others who noted that the salinity of the water is resulting in health concerns.
- It was noted that while there is abundant land, there is a lack of serviced land for new potential businesses.
- Internet was a significant point of discussion. One participant noted that there are areas with no service. It was discussed that businesses need high speed internet, and not having it is limiting the growth potential of the area.
 - However, some communities don’t mind as much, or have less issues with it, such as Chisolm.
- One participant discussed the importance of creating a more accessible community for those with disabilities, children, elderly, etc.
- One participant noted that while Powassan wants to expand (residentially, industrially), the message has been that the community doesn’t have the water infrastructure to support this growth.
 - One participant responded that there is a by-law that says you must have municipal services as opposed to a well. So the legislation is limiting the potential for growth. If zoning definition was changed, there would be more accessibility for people to come and build.
 - A discussion about the zoning regulations and municipal services took place.
- It was noted that in areas where infrastructure does exist, it may not be accessible. One participant gave the example of certain municipal resources being less than 1 km away from his property, but not having access to them.
- It was discussed that there’s a lack of revenue generation / diversified income in some municipalities to support any more than basic infrastructure (i.e. roads).
 - It was noted that some communities are selling prime agriculture land to cover basic infrastructure costs.
 - One participant noted that basic operating costs are increasing while the number of people and quality of infrastructure is decreasing.
 - Another participant noted that “the government perceives that we don’t have the population to support investment.”

- Additional infrastructure needs and concerns discussed included: natural gas, the cost of hydro, shipping, transportation.
 - There was concern expressed about losing the infrastructure that currently exists.

Housing

- Housing was discussed as a challenge – “If there’s nowhere for anyone to live, how are we going to attract people?”
- Participants noted that there is a need for more affordable housing, and that builders should be encouraged to develop the lands.
- It was noted that in many of the communities, zoning regulations make it easier for people to build and do renovations (cheaper than other places, such as North Bay)
 - Some noted that they are happy to be a bedroom community to North Bay.

Labour Market and Employment

- Participants discussed that there are few permanent full-time jobs in the region.
 - They noted that there need to be more jobs for recent graduates, to increase youth retention, noting that it’s hard for them to find meaningful, well-paying work. Youth out-migration is seen as a significant concern.
 - They noted that many people have multiple jobs to make ends meet
 - The high unemployment rate was discussed, with comments that the region needs to do more to get them back to work.
- It was also discussed that there is a labour and skills shortage, and an aging demographic, with a lack of people to replace those who are retiring
- One participant noted that while it would be ideal to hire local students, the local school does not have computer programs. They commented that there need to be educational opportunities that can set the local kids on more of a technical path and help them stay here.
- The importance of attracting professionals to the region was discussed, and of creating an environment that will entice them to stay here.
- Participants discussed how Almaguin is a lower socio-economic region, and that the municipalities don’t have the tax base to generate revenue to reinvest and fund the great ideas that come to the region. The need to have partnerships with senior levels of government.

Families and Children

- It was noted that there’s a lack of rainy day activities, and that cottagers go to Huntsville or North Bay for restaurants or shopping.
 - The lack of competitive pricing and variety (groceries, gas, etc.) was discussed.
- Some participants noted that there are few places for kids to play or ride bikes, and that they’d like to see something that brings kids together in the community, such as recreational opportunities.
 - They noted that often there are wait lists for activities.
- The region’s aging population was discussed, and that there’s a need for housing, healthcare, and succession planning for seniors.

- Participants discussed that volunteerism, and finding people willing to invest their time to volunteer, is an issue.
- One participant noted that with the aging population, some younger people are coming back to the region to take care of their aging family members.
 - However, there are concerns that there is nothing to keep the younger people here. “They’re just going to sell the property and leave.”
- The decreasing number of students in Almaguin was discussed, and that residents don’t want to lose schools.

Transportation

- Participants spoke positively about the four-lane highway, and that it creates an easy commute and helps bring people into the region.
- Transportation was noted as an issue for the elderly and those who do not have access to a vehicle, as there’s a lack of public transportation.
- One participant noted that there is a feeling among many residents that events and attractions are not close enough to travel to.
 - One participant disagreed and felt that this point is context-dependent.

Communications and Branding

- The importance of marketing the region and communicating what is available here was discussed.
- It was noted that many people who live in the area, especially those new to it, don’t know what services / organizations / businesses are available.
 - They noted that some efforts have been made to address this, such as with a welcome package, but that a lack of capacity is a barrier.
- An Almaguin Highlands Community Guide was suggested.

Collaboration and Leadership

- Participants noted that there has been a lot of progress in the last 5-6 years in terms of working together.
 - They discussed that there is willingness to collaborate, and an understanding from many that “we can achieve more if we work together.”
 - It was noted that it’s encouraging to see councils working together, and that they want this to continue to grow.
 - They noted that regional representation is an opportunity.
- It was also noted that there has been a lot of pushback from different areas, whether from councils or mayors or residents – there needs to be more communication about the benefits of working together.
 - Keeping everyone moving ahead together was noted as a challenge when municipal councils are focused on their own regions as opposed to the broader region – “It’s like herding cats.”
- Some discussed that there is too much duplication – “too many things” – across the region, and room for more cohesion.
- Participants discussed the need to build a sense of community at the regional level, getting people out to the events, music, etc.
 - Some noted that they do not feel connected to the region as a whole.

- It was noted that there needs to be policy development that inspires focus and reflects the region.

Economic Development

- It was noted that from an economic development perspective, not all communities have capacity.
- One participant noted that there is friction between the “old” way of economic development thinking, and the new way. They commented that the region is going through a shift between a local-only “protect our own” approach, and a regional approach, and that there are some tensions between the two approaches.
- Shop Local Campaign:
 - Several participants were frustrated that many shoppers don’t factor local into their purchase decisions, commenting that “these companies [i.e. Costco, Vistaprint] are not employing our kids,” and “buying isn’t a moral decision for a lot of these people.”
 - Some feel the problem is a lack of awareness of what’s available in the area – “The younger people think that it [products, services] doesn’t exist here; they’re oblivious.”
 - There was a conversation about restaurants not buying locally, and that for some it’s because of convenience, while for others it’s an issue of cost.
 - “Is there really no opportunity ... for our restaurants to buy local in the summer?”
 - “They want me to come to their restaurant to support local, but they don’t support local [by buying local produce].”
- There was agreement from all that partnerships, on multiple levels, are an opportunity for growth (business to business, and communities sharing EDO’s).
 - Regional partnership ideas: culinary tours, brewery tours, tour packages, etc.
- One participant noted that employers in the region are not aware of the services and funding available, and that there’s a disconnect between communications and people looking for information.
- When asked how to measure the success of a regional economic development strategy, participants suggested:
 - The retention and growth of existing businesses (most participants in agreement)
 - Metrics:
 - Participants agreed on the importance of local intel on demographics (population, unemployment rate, housing, etc.).
 - It was suggested that the points/metrics identified in the BRE could be used as a starting point.
 - UN sustainable development indicators
 - Full engagement from the municipalities
- Regarding new initiatives, it was noted that “We should have guidelines about how long we try things before we give up.”

- One participant shared an example of a program [the Ignite Program] offered through the Chamber of Commerce, where 10 – 15 business owners are brought to different businesses in the area, to build up their businesses and share knowledge.
- The importance of multipronged capacity building was discussed, with the following suggestions:
 - Cohesive support for local businesses by linking them to resources, providing knowledge, and assisting with funding and resource applications.
 - Making education linkages to try to address skilled labour shortages; mentoring.
 - Taking a regional approach to infrastructure, using the Almaguin strategic plan as a strategic document to leverage the infrastructure we need in our communities.

Key Informant Interviews

Byron Simmons, Ahmic Lake Cottage Association (ALCA)

Date: June 20, 2018

Sectors

- Tourism
 - ALCA's role is to provide communication, environmental stewardship and fee management.
 - The association celebrated its centennial last year, and a number of the original families (7-8 generation families) are still on the lake and in the region – they have been there since prior to when the association was formed.
 - 35% of the membership is American (Baltimore, Georgia), and they are more vocal than the Canadian members.
 - There are 220-230-member properties, and most of the cottagers are members. A large majority of the membership is seasonal.
 - The cottager perspective, from many, is that they don't want development and they want the area to stay the same. They are happy as long as they can get gas, eat out, and buy groceries.
 - They noted that it's important that there's continued support for local business, to ensure they're still there for the cottagers.
 - The cottagers have limited connection with the resident population.
- Retail
 - In Magnetawan, it was noted that there's a nice general store and restaurant, and that most of them seem to shop at the general store. They added that the Saturday morning market at the community centre is a nice focal point for social interaction.
 - One main issue heard from members is that there's still a vacant lot in Magnetawan where the main store burnt down, and they see it as an eye sore and would love to see it developed.

Infrastructure

- Communications
 - It was noted that there could be better internet access, and that American residents may have issues with not being able to access the internet.
- Serviced Land
 - It was noted that the Magnetawan Watershed Land Trust is buying up land to preserve it from development.
- Healthcare
 - Healthcare was noted as an area for focus, commenting that coordination could be improved.
 - It was noted that the closest hospital is now in Huntsville/Parry Sound as the one in Burk's Falls closed.
 - Many of the members are water access only, and they are trying to determine where to go when there is a problem (sometimes the 911 call gets directed up to North Bay).

Transportation

- When asked about transit, the participant was not certain what transportation was currently available. They noted that there could be an opportunity in the summer for improved transit, as some cottagers fly in and don't have access to a car (ALCA runs a car pool throughout the summer, coordinated through their Facebook page).

Bob Atwell, Lake Bernard Property Association

Date: June 28, 2018

Sectors

- Tourism
 - The participant noted that the region is close to Toronto, particularly with the new highway, and that they can offer cheaper prices.
 - However, it was noted that there's a false perception that the region is far from Toronto.
 - The region's natural beauty and outdoors were noted as strengths, and that there is lots of opportunity with untapped land and lakes.
 - There was concern expressed about the health of Bernard Lake - algae, water levels, pollution – noting that it is a big part of Sundridge and that it keeps the community going.
 - It was noted that the population almost doubles in the summer, and that cottagers bring a lot of money to the town.
 - Referencing the changes in Huntsville over the years, with new tourists and businesses, the participant noted that they don't see why this couldn't also happen with the towns in Almaguin
- Manufacturing
 - The participant has heard from members of the association that the area hasn't changed business wise/growth wise in 40 years.

Housing

- It was noted that there is an aging population (the participant is currently building a retirement residence), and that this will pose new challenges to the region. They noted that Sundridge is seemingly becoming a retirement community.

Labour Market and Employment

- They noted that they don't know what would have to be done to get new industry and businesses, but that something has to be done. It was noted that there's no work for youth.
- When asked about new opportunities for growth, it was noted that there's an opportunity to build up existing businesses: Sundridge Home Hardware, Trust Company, car dealerships.
- The participant added that people like the region because it's quiet, but economic growth is necessary to keep people there.

Communications and Branding

- It was noted that while the area has always been known as the Almaguin Highlands, people from outside the region don't know about "Almaguin."

- They noted that there is real worry about what is going to keep the small towns going, and that there needs to be work to strengthen the region's brand and market the region.

Collaboration and Leadership

- The participant thought a regional approach to economic development was a great idea.
 - It was noted that everyone knows what is going on in their specific area, but not with the lakes and communities around them.
 - For example, the participant was wondering if other communities are dealing with blue-green algae.
 - They added that it's good to speak with one voice.
- The participant interacts with two mayors in the region, and noted that both seem to be on board with shared goals (health of the lake, concerns of those in town and on the lake).

Stacie Fiddler, Labour Market Group

Date: June 26, 2018

Sectors

- It was noted that the region has a different brand of tourism from Muskoka - more rustic, more remote, not fancy - and that if someone is from Toronto and wants their needs to be met, they will stay in the larger communities.
- It was noted that many of the region's strengths are also its weaknesses: geographic location, land, cottages.

Infrastructure

- Improved internet access was noted as an important area of focus moving forward.

Labour Market and Employment

- The participant stated that, "The reason that Burk's Falls still exists is the businesses that have stayed," adding that the region needs to work with existing businesses to keep them there, such as helping them with businesses retention and expansion
- They added that businesses, like Lofthouse, are having trouble attracting skilled labour because people don't know about the region.
- It was noted that many businesses are leaving and there's a limited workforce and, increasingly, an aging, seasonal population.

Families and Children

- It was noted that many schools in the area are closing.

Transportation

- It was noted that there is limited transportation, and that people can't get to work if they don't have a vehicle.

Collaboration and Leadership

- When asked if a regional approach to economic development would be more likely to achieve results than an individualized approach, the participant strongly emphasized that yes, regional is better, and the municipalities can't do it on their own.

- They added that there are many elected officials in the Parry Sound district, representing very small municipalities with competing factors, and that this is not good for a deprived region that is losing people.
- They noted that right now, there seems to be a bit of a turf war between municipalities (i.e. attracting businesses).

Economic Development

- Structure
 - It was noted that there needs to be a one-point agency with staff, that knows all the issues for the region, has a profile of the region, can sell the region and be the point person for potential investors, can locate new businesses in the best locations, can navigate between municipalities, and has access to different funding opportunities and government agencies.
 - They emphasized that over the past 15 years, they've never seen the will that currently exists for establishing a regional point person.
 - Currently, there are many municipalities and no one point-person or group to make it easy for a stranger to determine who best to connect with.
 - They noted that this is of particular importance considering the sizeable amount of red tape between municipalities, which is difficult to navigate.
 - A noted limitation is that municipalities have zero or limited funding for economic development.
- Approaches
 - When asked about measurements for success, they noted that success means something different than in the past. They said that if the report takes off and produces results – instead of sitting on a shelf – that's a win. And if an agency is created that does economic development for the region, that would also be a win.
 - It was noted that a key objective should be a communications strategy, to get money from the municipalities to support the agency and to work together, to see the return on investment and how such an agency would benefit the region, etc.
 - They noted that they would need to sell the concept to the long-time elected officials who don't want change.

Rob Ward, Three Mile Lake Association

Date: June 27, 2018

Sectors

- The need for accommodations was discussed, and that if there's a focus on driving traffic up to the region, there needs to be sufficient accommodations.
- It was suggested that things could be done to the downtown areas to make them more of a destination, instead of a space to drive through, such as revitalizing the small villages.

- It was noted that there should be support for existing businesses, and not a drive for big box stores.

Infrastructure

- The participant commented that the broadband isn't bad in the towns, but it's hit or miss on the lake and spotty across the region. In general, it was noted that the internet is not good for those who work remotely, and that it should be a priority.

Housing

- Tax assessments and taxes going up were noted as an issue that's been raised.
- The participant is part of the Three Mile Lake Association, which is part of Armour Township.
 - There are 200 landowners on the lake, and 110-120 are part of the association.
 - Goals:
 - Localized focus: water testing, etc.
 - To keep an eye on the official plan and to be involved from a community standpoint on issues that are important to both full-time and seasonal residents.

Labour Market and Employment

- Finding sufficient work for young adults - such as part-time and recreational jobs - was noted as a challenge.
- It was noted that from a financial standpoint, the region is affordable and still in reach of southern Ontario.

Families and Children

- An outmigration of youth from the region was noted as a challenge.
- Healthcare was noted as a key objective, with the idea that if people were to know that healthcare was in a decent shape in Almaguin, and that they'd have access to services, more people would be driven to move to the region.
- The aging population was noted as a challenge for the region.
- Recreation was noted as a key objective looking forward.
- The importance of building sustainable communities, and creating hubs where people feel they are part of a community (know people, feel comfortable and safe, have the services they need, etc.), was suggested as a potential benefit for the region.

Communications and Branding

- The participant noted that a key objective should be marketing the region and branding, getting the name out there and taking advantage of the region's current strengths, in a way that people can quickly relate to.
 - They noted that right now, Almaguin region is not well branded and not well understood by others.

Collaboration and Leadership

- The participant agreed that a regional approach to economic development is more likely to achieve results than an individualized one, as there's power in numbers. They noted that the region really changed when Highway 11 went through, and that smaller towns were impacted by not having the main highway go through their towns. Over the past years, they noted that there has been a change of attitude to be more about the region than individual towns.

- A plan for the whole area, which takes everyone – seasonal, rural, in town, etc. – into account, and is inclusive of everyone, was suggested as better for the whole area.

Economic Development

- It was noted that if there was to be a major change in direction from a plan point of view, it would raise questions.

Lewis Hodgson, Founding Member of BACED, Councilor – Burk’s Falls

Date: June 27, 2018

Sectors

- It was noted that a key objective needs to be growth of the tourism market.
- Making a plan for downtown revitalization was emphasized, with Burk's Falls given as a successful example. They noted that the dollars aren't there for this right now, but having the plan and being shovel ready will be helpful.

Labour Market and Employment

- The participant noted that a focus should be on the growth and retention of key industries.
 - Development of the Almaguin Highlands Chamber of Commerce (AHCC) was mentioned, noting that there have been multiple meetings and attempts to establish chambers of commerce, but in the last 3-5 years, everyone has become engaged and realized they need to be active to make it happen.

Communications and Branding

- Marketing of the region (for business and tourism) and establishing Almaguin as a region were noted as important priorities. One idea was to have one central area for everyone to go to find out about businesses across the region, and another was to combine efforts at trade shows, with one table instead of one for each of the 14 regions.
 - It was noted that it's important for the region to carve out its identity and be known.

Collaboration and Leadership

- The participant was in complete agreement that a regional approach to economic development is more likely to achieve results, noting that the small population centres of 1000 or less don't have the funds available to properly finance economic development, and considering the rural, spread out nature of the population.
- They noted that there are some turf wars between municipalities, with each asking what they'll get out of the plan. But, if an economic development organization takes off and pays dividends, it will improve relationships between municipalities.
- It was noted that it will take “gentle handling” to get everyone around the table, and that it's a bit like “herding cats.”

Economic Development

- Structure
 - The participant explained that a regional economic development office would need to be an umbrella office, and that each municipality would still be able to

have autonomy and uniqueness in their region (i.e. develop their own municipal community improvement / economic development plan).

- It was noted that the office should be staffed by two economic development professionals. Interns could be involved in the office, as each municipality currently funds and hires an intern for a year / year-and-a-half contract, providing them with access to expertise.
- The organization would be a key touchpoint for finding funding resources.
- It was noted that the AHCC BR+E plan will feed into this plan, and that there will need to be decisions about what is regional and what is municipal – not everything will fit into the regional economic development office (i.e. downtown improvement will only and always be completely owned by each municipality).
- Approaches
 - The participant emphasized that a communications strategy will be needed to sell the economic development organization and its benefits, as some municipalities are not entirely convinced of the value, some are not fully aware of what the region is trying to achieve, and some are keeping their cards close.
 - Municipalities are uncertain about what the financial ask will be, and resources differ depending on the municipality.
 - It was noted that there is a core group that has moved the plan forward, who understand the issues, and who would be willing to pay a bit extra to see it move forward. Some municipalities, however, will not want to pay for another's benefit.
 - A simple way of informing councils about the plan would help when there's turnover of councilors, preventing a situation where new councilors don't see the value and detail the process.
 - There are many across the region who do have interest and buy-in in the plan, and who see value in joining forces to put this office together – for financial reasons and for long-range goals.
 - When asked what success would look like, the participant commented that it would be successful as long as we keep moving forward and as long as some municipalities remain engaged.
 - It was noted that while businesses are highly engaged with this proposal and process, residents seem to be fairly unengaged. However, they added that once feet are on the ground, they'll probably start to hear from more people.
 - It was noted that there currently is a funding application in to NAOHC for three-year funding for the RED plan. At the end of three years, they will hopefully be in a position to take over. But after three years, may need to go back to apply for more.
- Early successes

- It was noted that a key element in the short term is to invest government funding to build sustainability, by establishing offices and infrastructure and setting a foundation.

Norm Cameron, Cecebe Waterways Association

Date: June 28, 2018

Sectors

- It was noted that the cottagers have little contact or common activity with the resident population, and that they form a self-contained society. In general, they do not know the locals. However, they added that there is increasingly more interaction with old families on the lake.
- The participant commented that there could be recreation developments, such as a large canoeable water route, better routes to access points for ATVs and canoes, and better signage.
- A good quality golf course was also suggested as a potential development, adding that there's only one good one, in Magnetawan, and a few smaller ones.
- It was noted that there is a thriving cottage rental business, with some through Airbnb, but most rented privately.
- They added that one of the roads is past saturation point for cottages, noting that renters are not as considerate as those who live in the area.
- The participant has heard from cottagers that people go to Burk's Falls and Magnetawan to shop, or Huntsville for larger shopping trips.

Infrastructure

- It was noted that the lake has benefitted from the new owner of the marina, and that the change in ownership has made an enormous difference.
- Developing the waterfront was emphasized as an opportunity, and that a good waterfront would be valued by tourists from Toronto.

Labour Market and Employment

- It was noted that a good strategy would be to help businesses expand and to help entrepreneurs. Highlander Brewery, which received money to expand, was noted as a positive example for South River.
- The participant added that there's an opportunity to develop year-round business, including tourism-based winter businesses, noting Huntsville as an example.
- They noted that the economy is increasingly similar to northern Vermont, with locals servicing weekend cottagers (maintenance, construction), who are the mainstay of the region.

Communications and Branding

- The participant noted that an important priority should be raising the profile of the region.

Collaboration and Leadership

- The participant agreed that a regional approach to economic development would help interface with the provincial government, by ensuring a more united voice.

- They did note that they're underwhelmed by the current collaboration with Burk's Falls, Armour and Ryerson for the ice arena in Burk's Falls, noting that it's costing too much money and that the township of Ryerson has a very small tax base.
- Magnetawan's amalgamation was mentioned as "a roaring success," with the participant noting that it's now a "happening place" with shopping and local business owners purchasing the general store property. They added that there is a group in Magnetawan who are real "go getters."

Louisa Moffatt, Real Estate

Date: June 29, 2018

Sectors

- The participant noted that manufacturing is limited, and that they can't get funding because of a lack of cash flow and high levels of red tape.

Infrastructure

- It was noted that the region needs better internet, and that they have clients who want to move to the area but can't without internet.

Housing

- It was noted that there are housing gaps, including spaces that aren't serviced - developers don't want to take on the costs, and the municipalities would have to invest to expand the infrastructure.
 - Additionally, Ontario has identified much of Ryerson as a wetland, and as such, development can't take place.
- They mentioned that there is an influx of families relocating and retiring to the area, and that there is a need for more developers to build spec houses.
 - However, it was noted that the process of getting permits, and the building codes, are prohibitive, and that there needs to be a way of working together to move these ahead.

Labour Market and Employment

- The participant noted that the business sector is changing somewhat, and that in recent years it has become more open to change and is embracing improvement.
 - It was noted, however, that this is not happening consistently across all the communities.

Transportation

- It was noted positively that there are great roads to get to all of the lakes, which is helpful for the tourist industry and those living in the area.
 - They noted that Burk's Falls is in need of a truck route, as the only way to get to the logistics plant is through the community.

Communications and Branding

- It was noted that the municipalities will need help to market themselves.

Collaboration and Leadership

- It was noted that the municipalities are segregated and don't have common goals, and that success is dependent on them working together.

- However, they noted positively that it is good to see them starting to move forward as a region.
- They commented that when one municipality gets "more money," they don't feel they need to collaborate – they begin to focus internally as opposed to seeing the bigger picture.
- They noted that amalgamation is crucial, with a unified view of economic development, and that this wouldn't cause each municipality to lose its unique characteristics.

Economic Development

- It was noted that the region is exploring avenues for economic development, and that they really are trying. They added that a few years ago there was nothing, but now there are many initiatives.

Rob Begin, FedNor

Date: July 4, 2018

Sectors

- It was noted by the participant that there is room for more camping, and that there's increased demand for camping, biking, kayaking, hiking, etc.
 - They added that there are limited costs to promote biking, and opportunities to create signage to know that areas are bike friendly zones.
 - There was a note that more campers could be attracted through private partnerships. Sturgeon Falls, for example, has a festival where trailers could pull up on the grass areas, and people come from all over.
 - Music downtown and open patios were also mentioned.
- It was noted that Powassan invested in an industrial park, but that several MOUs didn't materialize. They commented that if other communities were to come to them with an anchor tenant, then they could support the infrastructure.

Infrastructure

- Lack of infrastructure
 - The participant noted that the municipalities don't have deep enough pockets to address the lack of infrastructure, and that there is a poor tax base, few large employers and limited sustainable businesses.
 - They added that a couple areas might have higher taxes (Lake Bernard, Eagle Lake).
 - They noted that FedNor assisted infrastructure development through an extension water line to Burk's Falls for fire safety for Lofthouse, and that there was an extension for the Tim Hortons.
 - They added that for housing, they could rely on septic and wells, noting that the airport in Parry Sound is well and septic.
- Serviced Land
 - It was noted that it is important to really understand and inventory the lands that are available for businesses, houses, cottages, etc., and to be ready to respond to inquiries.

Housing

- It was noted that there are two to three serviceable industrial parks in the region, but that people can't find places to live.

- They added that there is an opportunity to attract people to Almaguin for rent and housing, to support the Muskoka region, noting that it would only be a 20 - 30-minute drive.

Labour Market and Employment

- The participant noted that the region needs to be more investment ready.
- There was an idea that youth in the region wanted to learn more about the trades, but government cuts created challenges.
- The participant discussed how there is an opportunity to celebrate what is in the area, to look at the opportunities as driven by the market, and determine what is in a critical stage and how to support, sustain and grow it.
 - There was a question about how to address the closing of banks, grocery stores, etc.

Families and Children

- It was noted that it's important to be well-versed on the population, and to keep young people in the area. They added that there needs to be a focus on the primary schools, and recognition that parents aren't wanting to send their 5-year-old on a 30-minute bus ride.
 - They added that the region is losing schools, banks, etc., and that people don't want to move to communities that don't have anything.

Transportation

- It was noted that there is a perception that it's "hard" to get off the highway into the communities.

Communications and Branding

- Positioning the area as "Muskoka North" was suggested as a way to encourage growth, with messaging about it being more affordable.
- It was noted that communications should be ongoing and in plain English.

Collaboration and Leadership

- The participant discussed how there needs to be buy-in from Powassan, to show the government that everyone is on one side and to leverage additional dollars.
- One challenge is the upcoming election – the participant noted that the time for lobbying is now, and the region “needs to start working with those running to ‘work together.’”
- It was discussed that there is strength in numbers, and that it’s easier and more powerful to lobby government when there is full, collaborative buy-in.
 - “Put a circle around the Almaguin Highlands to show a population of 20-30,000, instead of 1500 here, 500 there”
- It was noted that FedNor has always wanted the municipalities to work together. 20 years ago, the province put them all under one umbrella, but funding ran out, the communities lacked connectivity, there was a lot of protectionism, and communication and internet were not present.
 - However, over time they’ve seen pockets of communities starting to work together, understanding that they’re stronger together, and the new highway started to open opportunities.
 - It was noted that Burk’s Falls, Armour and Ryerson work together for services (arena, etc.). Additionally, the Chamber of Commerce, which was initially for Burk’s Falls, is now for the region.

Economic Development

- Structure
 - When asked about who would fund a permanent economic development office, it was noted that FedNor is prepared to entertain an ask for part of the funding, but that it should be shared with the province and the partner municipalities. They commented that discussions need to start now.
- Approaches
 - It was noted that there need to continue to be meetings with Council to demonstrate progress.

Stephen Darling, President – Stan Darling Insurance

Date: July 4, 2018

Infrastructure

- While the participant noted that there are pockets in the region without a strong internet connection or any internet at all, they felt there were enough areas with a strong connection to be able to sell the idea of people living in the region and telecommuting to work. They felt this to be an additional selling feature of the region.

Housing

- The participant felt that the lower property values in the region, compared to communities further south, is a key selling feature and an economic strength.

Labour Market and Employment

- The participant noted that the "best and the brightest" from the region tend to leave to go to pursue post-secondary education in larger centres and then they don't come back, which has a negative impact on the available workforce.
- When recruiting for their business, they have to cast a very wide net and tend to have to go to provincial databases to get the right kind of help.
- They also noted that when they do advertise positions locally, it can be tricky because if someone isn't hired, there can be hurt feelings – this can be hard to deal with in such small communities. In one instance, they actually lost a client because they did not hire someone local.

Communications and Branding

- The participant noted that the Muskoka name has been well-branded and has developed a certain cachet. They would love it if the Villages of Almaguin were able to develop the same kind of following. In particular, they felt this could be developed through communications that emphasized the lower home prices in the region (e.g. if you want to buy a home in Bracebridge, you can buy the same thing in Burk's Falls for half the price).

Economic Development

- Structure
 - The participant felt that funding for economic development and/or an economic development office should come from the municipalities, while a business tax could

also play a role. This was in part because they believe that the closer the money is to the community, the less they worry about it ending up elsewhere.

- Approaches
 - The participant felt that it would be better for the municipalities to band together to work on economic development, but that the challenge would be that it can be “like herding cats” to get everyone on the same page.
 - The participant wanted to see the strategy focus on increasing awareness of the area and the relatively low cost of real estate, in order to attract people to the area. They believe this has to happen first – attract the people – before any significant number of new businesses will be able to be successful.
 - They felt that the gross population would be a measure of success – though it would be important to look at the number of people employed in the area, not just the base numbers themselves. Mean income could be another way to measure success.

Andrew Farnsworth, Steering Committee Member, Clerk-Administrator – Municipality of Magnetawan

Date: July 4, 2018

Sectors

- Tourism
 - The participant sees transient tourism accommodation as an issue. They noted that Magnetawan looked at bylaws that would engage cottage owners in contemporary accommodations, but it went nowhere as there wasn't a will for it.
 - It was noted that there isn't an appetite for large or medium-sized rental accommodations. There's a motel, and the rest are small cottage resorts, many of which are in transition and require a lot of work.
 - Several potential accommodations have been turned down because of zoning bylaws.
 - There's a recognition that the region is missing out on many opportunities, with tourists leaving at the end of the day instead of staying the night.
- Recreation
 - Recreation was noted as an opportunity for drawing in tourists.
 - They noted that it would be fairly easy to put in trails for ATVs and 4-wheelers, and then there's an opportunity to rent them out.
 - Snowmobiling is currently in decline – many must cross lakes and swamps to get into the village, and freeze up delays are having an impact.
 - In 2015, the majority of attendees for Drag at the Mag came by snowmobile, but there have been warmer winters since then.
 - It was noted that while the recreation program has many economic development components, its funded by the parks department.
- Agriculture

- The participant noted that agriculture is a real possibility, but that it would require a three season greenhouse to make anything work, and added that much of the land in the region requires a lot of work.
- There is no natural gas in Magnetawan – told it would cost \$38 million to bring it from Sundridge – making it inefficient to heat greenhouses.
- Retail
 - It was noted that many do most of their shopping in North Bay or Huntsville, as there is better quality and variety of offerings, and gas is significantly cheaper. Many also shop online.
 - The participant noted that they need to offer more to welcome those who may want to open a small store - currently there's nothing for people to walk around and look at downtown.
 - That being said, they added that it would be very difficult for a specialty retail store to develop a viable business plan.

Infrastructure

- Communications
 - It was noted that there needs to be an investment in the quality and quantity of internet.
 - There may be fibre that's dark in town, but the municipality is unsure who owns it. Despite this, the possibility has impacted funding applications.
- Serviced Land
 - Rural lands – large acreages away from the waterfront – were noted as one of the biggest opportunities, similar to the frontier lands: "You have an idea, we have the lands and supports."
 - Lakefront shoreline residential lands have seen a revival, with people rebuilding 60 to 70-year-old cottages and splitting up large lots. But it was noted that these areas will develop on their own.
 - Improved communications are needed
 - It was noted that the municipality is still trying to communicate zoning bylaw amendments, wherein it costs only \$1700 and takes three months to convert a residential to a commercial property.
 - There is need for procedures, and a path-finding document.

Housing

- There was agreement that there's a market for transitional homes for seniors. Currently there are 40 lots for sale in the village, and it's been suggested many times that this would be a good idea for the aging population - 55% are over the age of 55 in Magnetawan.
 - It was noted that there are many community supports for the aging population.
 - The participant noted that they would like to see more innovative models proposed.

Labour Market and Employment

- The participant commented that employment will always be a problem in the region, and most travel for work. It was noted that the region is looking at building an industrial park.

Communications and Branding

- It was noted that there's a very limited online presence in the region.

Economic Development

- Structure
 - The participant noted that the organization should be arms-length, with a board composed of a combination of municipal staff and elected officials (ideally the former) from each municipality.
 - This would be an interim solution to ensure buy-in.
 - A cost-sharing formula was noted as a potential challenge, suggesting equal shares instead.
 - It was noted that a challenge will be with metrics, and showing how the initiative has been successful.
- Approaches
 - It was noted that significant coordination will be required to pull it together, and that there's a limited budget.
 - Staff will have to show how ways in which the municipalities have been investing in economic development already, and convince them to buy in.
 - It was suggested that economic development could also support recreation, through recommendations, planning and coordination across municipalities, for initiatives such as a trail system.

Mike Mitchell, President - Eagle Lake Conservation Association

Date: July 4, 2018

Sectors

- Tourism
 - The participant noted that environmental threats may have a harmful effect on both tourism in the area and the propensity of seasonal residents to turn their cottages into year-round residences. Those threats include invasive phragmites, which have established a good hold in Eagle Lake and a stronger one in Bernard Lake, and blue-green algae, which has appeared a number of times in Bernard Lake and appeared last year in Eagle Lake for the first time.
- Construction and Trades
 - As seasonal residents start to turn their cottages into year-round homes, the participant noted the need for construction and skilled trade labourers. They also noted that these new year-round residents often have access to resources and capital that current residents may not.
 - The participant also noted that some businesses, such as the home hardware in Sundridge, have done a good job at expanding over the years to cater to those looking to do renovations to their homes and/or cottages.

Housing

- The participant felt that there is an opportunity for developers to build condominiums that would afford residents the quality of life they seek in the region, without having to own and maintain a full home and/or year-round cottage.
- Additionally, they felt that if such builds included an assisted living component, it could help people move through the housing continuum and make more spaces available to younger families.

Collaboration and Leadership

- The participant felt that local councils are receptive to working together with lake associations to address growing environmental threats to local lakes, which is positive as these threats have the capacity to negatively impact property values.

Economic Development

- Structure
 - The participant felt that it would be far more economical for each municipality to work together on economic development, rather than each trying to come up with strategies and funding on their own. They noted that the budget of each municipality is extremely limited, so pooling resources would make sense.
 - The participant believed strongly that any funding given to potential or growing businesses should only be granted if there is a very solid business case presented in advance. They mentioned some examples of where this had not been the case in the past, and the businesses failed quickly.
 - They did feel that the majority of funding for economic development should come from the municipalities or through one shared economic development office, which could then request funding from the provincial and federal levels of government.
- Approaches
 - The participant felt that any economic development approaches should take into consideration the infrastructure limitations in each of the municipalities. For instance, South River has municipal water but no sewage, while Sundridge has sewage but no water. This limits the type of economic growth each can pursue, so recommendations should be reasonable and achievable within these limitations.
 - As more and more people are retiring to the lake and turning their cottages into year-round residences, the participant felt there is an opportunity to orient economic activity towards the needs and preferences of this demographic. This could include:
 - Restaurants that provide a better-quality meal, rather than a lower priced meal
 - Outdoor activities such as curling clubs
 - The participant felt that an objective of the strategic plan should be to create a substantial number of well-paid jobs that don't have a negative impact on the environment, as the region cannot afford to denigrate "the biggest thing we have going for us" (i.e. the natural environment)

MPP Vic Fideli, Nipissing

Date: July 4, 2018

Sectors

- It was noted that fishing restrictions have crippled the industry in Lake Nipissing.
- The participant noted that the tourism information centre closed in North Bay, and that without internet access, these centres are more important.

- It was noted that there has been a real resurgence in agriculture in Powassan, as Amish communities have moved into the region and are revitalizing former family farms. They noted that family farms have been reopened by Amish and Mennonite communities in other municipalities as well, such as Chisholm.
- The participant noted that they don't believe there'd ever be enough money to do a main street revitalization in any of the small communities.

Infrastructure

- Communications
 - The lack of high speed internet is seen as one of the more serious impediments for smaller communities across the region. It was noted that businesses don't want to be there as they can't compete without internet, and families don't want to move there as they won't be connected. They noted that this issue is top of mind for rural mayors.
 - They noted that both government and the private sector have to be part of the solution, as major investment will be required.
 - The current Provincial government has pledged an investment of \$100 million in broadband internet across the province, and the participant recommended that the region try to form a partnership with government to access these funds.
- Serviced Land
 - The participant noted that the region's most significant asset is that it has fully-serviced land that is available for a fraction of the cost of the Greater Golden Horseshoe Region.
 - It was noted that many companies are currently doing work in the most expensive real estate in Toronto, but that many of their staff don't have any need to be in downtown Toronto. It was suggested that the back offices could be moved outside of the region, keeping the downtown office buildings for the executives and leasing out the other floors. They emphasized that staff would appreciate not having a long commute, being able to buy a house, and having a relaxed lifestyle, all at a fraction of the cost of Toronto living.

Communications and Branding

- The participant noted that they don't see individual communities having the capacity for marketing on their own, but that they should take a more cohesive approach.

Economic Development

- Structure:
 - It was noted that the leadership for economic development has to come from the municipalities, instead of other levels of government, as this is "where the rubber meets the road."
 - They emphasized that there needs to be genuine commitment for all 14 municipalities to come together, and that the real challenge will be keeping them together.
 - Noting that they have to start somewhere, the participant agreed that equal financial contributions would be good. The potential concern will be that some communities say, "how come you get everything?"

- It was suggested that the largest community could pull everyone in, and demonstrate that they're ready to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the smaller communities.

Darwin Dunn, General Manager – Lofthouse Manufacturing

Date: July 4, 2018

Sectors

- The participant felt that tourism is very important for the economic development of the region.
- The participant noted that agriculture used to be a big part of the economy, but the smaller farms are struggling. Barns are being torn down but not put back up. They thought that the legalization of cannabis might create some new opportunities for the region.
- The participant felt that manufacturing was an important part of the economic strength of the region, but there needed to be balance - they felt that manufacturing couldn't really expand any more due to a lack of workers.

Infrastructure

- The participant felt that the push to create an industrial park with serviced land should come at the end of an economic development exercise, rather than the beginning. Other projects, like cleaning up the main street in Burk's Falls and housing should come first.

Housing

- The participant felt that the lack of housing was a deterrent to attracting people to the area, which then threatens economic development. The housing that does exist in Almaguin often needs a lot of work or is too expensive, especially as people look to live in Muskoka and work in Almaguin.

Labour Market and Employment

- The participant noted, at various times, how challenging it was to find good labour in the region. Those brought in from elsewhere struggle to find housing or employment for their spouses.

Collaboration and Leadership

- They believed that while a regional approach was preferred, it would be hard to get some people on board, such as individual mayors or reeves who don't want to invest in other villages.
- Generally, they felt that new people and newer organizations like the Chamber of Commerce are doing a lot to lead and support the region, but that they face a fear of change among the older population.

Economic Development

- Approaches
 - The participant did believe that a regional approach to economic development would be more likely to be successful, as they felt that it would be hard to attract investment if each town or municipality was advertising on their own.

- The participant wanted to see an initial focus on making the Almaguin Highlands an attractive place to live, one that has villages with ‘the basics’ such as grocery, convenience, and gas stores. That said, they also felt that the villages should each specialize in their area of strength – e.g. the Home Hardware in Sundridge is doing very well, but to have one in every village likely won’t work.
- They felt that one of the problems has been that the region/communities keep trying to do the same thing over and over, while expecting a different result – they need to look for innovative approaches and try new things. The participant believes it will take something “more drastic” or “out of the box” to change the mentality and to get the towns really working together.
- NOTE: This participant felt quite strongly that they have not seen enough/any real results from previous consultants brought in to do economic development work. They noted that, while always willing to participate and help the community, they “just don’t want to be telling another consultant the same thing in two years”.
 - One way to guard against this would be to circulate the results of these conversations and primary research. They felt it was useful to see the full reports and hear what follow-up will happen as a result of the project.

Peter McIssac, Mayor – Municipality of Powassan

Date: July 5, 2018

Sectors

- Tourism
 - The participant believes tourism is the biggest opportunity for the region, but that the region has not been successful in promoting itself. It was noted that there are many smaller operators who do a good job at attracting tourists, but that there needs to be a concerted effort.
 - It was noted that Powassan has the advantage of being close to North Bay, with regard to hotels and motels, and that they're lucky compared to many of the other communities.
 - The participant shared that an Aboriginal TV show is currently being filmed at one of their hockey arenas. They were looking to film in North Bay, but they didn't have any ice available, so they sent the film company to Powassan.
- Agriculture
 - It was noted that there are opportunities for increased agricultural production, and that this might pick up over the next decade or so, with climate change creating a longer, warmer growing season.
 - They noted that the dairy industry has shifted out of the area, but that there's still lots of farmland.
- Retail
 - It was noted that Powassan has a fairly vibrant downtown business core, that is well supported by the community and has a variety of businesses (grocery stores, hardware, post office, banking, salon, restaurants, convenience stores, pharmacies, and a medical centre that is currently being built).

Infrastructure

- Communications
 - The participant agreed that the lack of high-speed internet is an inhibitor for the provision of services, operating small businesses, and attracting families to the region.
 - It was noted that some areas get "half speed" internet, but that it is marketed as high speed.
 - It was noted that internet is one of the first things businesses ask for when they're looking to relocate, and the same with those looking at residential properties.
 - The participant believes that the responsibility for investment in internet belongs to the senior levels of government.
 - Some community areas in Powassan, such as 250 Clarke St., offer open internet access.

Labour Market and Employment

- The participant noted that the labour market is not a real big issue for Powassan, as North Bay is very close and a good proportion of the population travels there for work.

Families and Children

- The municipality developed a community hub at 250 Clarke Street, based on an idea from the Mayor and with full support from Council. The area was owned by a private company, and if someone didn't step in, it would have left an abandoned building in the central area.
 - The municipality sold off 4 - 5 properties to come up with the capital, and did not receive any support from senior levels of government.
 - It was noted that the hub turned out how it was envisioned, and that it has strong community support.

Communications and Branding

- It was noted that an accessible regional portal or web base, that provides information for the whole region, would be incredibly helpful.
 - Currently, information is spread across each municipality's separate websites.

Collaboration and Leadership

- The participant noted that a regional economic development strategy is a great idea, and that while they want everything in their own community to build local capacity and the tax base, if someone else gets something, that's great.
 - They noted that despite competition, one person's victory should be seen as a regional victory, and that everyone needs to support a regional outlook.
 - For example, Highlander Brewery has created a positive economic impact throughout the community, not just in the one municipality.

Economic Development

- The participant commented that councillors will want to see a return for their investments. Powassan is comfortable with their representative being a staff person instead of a councillor, as the staff person will represent the views of the community as a whole.

Randy Cox, Swift Leadership

Date: July 5, 2018

Sectors

- Tourism

- The participant felt that tourism is the sector that will be most sustainable for the region and that there is a lot of room for new businesses, especially those geared towards outdoor adventure tourism.
- They provided an example of someone who ran a store just outside Arrowhead Provincial Park and was able to make it a very successful venture as a hub for equipment rentals and gear. A hub like this could cater to tourists and help them plan for trips such as fishing or camping, which could be four-season.
- The participant also believes that tourism-related businesses, such as Swift Canoe and The Bear Chair, should continue to push boundaries and be supported by the local municipalities.
- They also suggested that a possible tourism business could be bringing back a steamship or boat that could do dinner cruises on the Magnetawan River out to the lakes and back. They noted that there used to be steamships that came into Burk's Falls, and that this is popular in other areas.
- Manufacturing
 - The participant felt that it was challenging to attract more manufacturing to the area because of the location.
- Retail sector
 - The participant felt that there is room for a Mariposa Market (Orillia) type business in the region that could become a destination for those coming from out of town.

Infrastructure

- The participant felt that the downtown areas of each municipality are suffering, and that a change in mindset is needed to attract people to those areas again, along with improvements in infrastructure to draw in visitors and business.

Families and Children

- The participant noted that there is not a lot for young families to do in the community after about 6 PM, which encourages them to just come into town for work and do their shopping and socializing elsewhere.

Collaboration and Leadership

- The participant felt that there is a mindset that limits growth in the region, but that the people who are currently leading economic development need to continue doing so. They felt that those leaders need to keep pushing barriers, stay out in front, and keep going - when people see successful changes, they will follow.
- They noted that the community could “plan until we are blue in the face,” but until there are changes made, the mindset won’t shift.
- The participant believes that the current economic development leadership are the right people to lead the changes that need to happen, and that they just need to bring the right people around them to keep moving ahead.

Economic Development

- Structure
 - Whatever structure is developed, this participant felt that there is too much red tape and bureaucracy at every level of government, and that the economic development strategic plan should seek to reduce those barriers instead of erecting new ones.
- Approaches
 - Part of the change the participant envisions involves clear results from re-investing tax dollars into the community, for example in the downtown cores of the municipalities. If the economic development plan can help upgrade the downtowns,

they felt that would help people move from “poverty thinking into prosperity thinking.”

- The participant felt that a regional approach to economic development was “absolutely” more likely to achieve results, because each of the communities is too small to have the necessary dollars to invest.
- The participant felt that the strategic plan should also seek to maintain what currently exists in the communities but should look for what investments can be made to grow those assets.

Dwayne Wanner, President – Highlander Brew Co.

Date: July 5, 2018

Sectors

- The participant was surprised there isn't more farming in the area, as there are many vacant fields around the region.
- The participant felt that any further development of manufacturing will be very hard to do. If there are light manufacturers who want to come into the Almaguin region, they should locate in Novar or Powassan, where they will be able to attract people from Huntsville or North Bay to work.
- The participant felt that the cultural life of the community needs to be strengthened in order to make the region a more attractive place to live. There are many things happening - plays and art shows, etc. - but there need to be more and they need to be sustainable.

Sectors

- The participant felt that the availability of cheap land is a benefit for the region. Often the question is whether you build it and they come, or they come and you build it - the participant felt that government funders have to intervene and ensure the infrastructure is in place before more entrepreneurs and businesses will be willing to invest.

Housing

- The participant identified a lack of housing as a barrier to economic development. "Even when you can find employees, there is no place to put them."
- What housing does exist is very poor, in the participant's opinion.
- They noted that a recent review of the economic development history of the Almaguin Highlands pointed to the opportunity to make the region a retirement community, much like Elliott Lake.

Labour Market and Employment

- The participant felt that there are too few people in the region to really grow businesses.
- They noted that young people tend to leave the community, and those who are older and/or retired are only looking for part-time work, if at all.

Transportation

- This participant felt that the highway is one of the greatest strengths of the region, though many people see it as a curse. But this has to come with capital investments to draw people in off the highway and into the towns.
- They find that freight rates are actually not that bad, whether going up to Sudbury or to the GTA. Distance to market is an issue for businesses, but the cheaper transport costs help.

Collaboration and Leadership

- This participant had a very good interaction with both FedNor and the Community Futures Development Corporation. They felt very supported, and that both teams are staffed by people who are keen to see businesses grow in the region.
- They also noted that the Mayor and Council were supportive of the business, and they helped to drive a recent expansion project forward.
- The participant felt that the “most dynamic things” being done in the region are being done by the Chamber of Commerce.

Economic Development

- Structure
 - The participant is concerned that this process will end up justifying another bureaucracy when there is already enough of that in the region. They believe a unified approach is the right one, but that there will need to be very dynamic people who are tasked with economic development – those who can operate without a large bureaucracy.
 - They would like to see perhaps two economic development staff, who are down to earth, realistic about what is achievable, and ready to “show up with funding” and make the offer to help businesses.
- Approaches
 - One area that the participant feels hasn’t been well explored is with the people who have cottages and/or summer homes in the area. For example, when Kent Truss went out of business, a few people from Toronto came up with a quick network of people who were concerned about the possible closure. They put together a rescue package, and while it wasn’t enough to save the business, it was still significant.
 - Networking into this area (seasonal residents) needs to be done much better in order to capitalize on the strengths they bring to the region.

Willy Hollett, Steering Committee Member, Almaguin Campground

Date: July 5, 2018

Sectors

- The participant noted that there has been limited investment in accommodations, but that "you can pretty much open anything and you'll fill it."
- They noted that it is worth determining whether there has been an attempt by festivals/events, such as the Musical Ride, to fill local accommodations.
- While the participant noted that there's a lack of a basic retail sector, they commented that this statement needs to be balanced with reality. They commented that there's an efficient and competitive sector for hardware and groceries, but that it's hard to develop a business plan for stores that sell non-everyday items, like clothing and shoes.

Housing

- The participant noted that they hear many comments in the community about a lack of housing and community infrastructure.

Labour Market and Employment

- The participant heard that it's hard to find reliable workers and many simply don't show up for shifts, but they also know many people who are looking for work. They added that part of the issue may be in finding people with particular skill sets.
- They noted that there's an opportunity to provide entrepreneurial training, to professionalize small business in the region.
 - Previously, the line was: "We're cheaper than Muskoka."
 - The Chamber of Commerce is looking to drive this cultural change, but they added that many businesses don't see the point of a Chamber membership.
 - They noted that high calibre speakers would be required to pull in attendees.

Families and Children

- The participant noted that there's been an attempt to develop sports teams, but with volunteer coaches, there's a lack of structure and discipline that has limited people from becoming involved.

Economic Development

- Structure
 - It was emphasized that it's essential to the initiative to maintain the economic development officer positions, as most municipal staff don't have time and don't see the big picture.
 - It was noted that the Chamber can help the municipalities to move forward on the initiative, and serve as a catalyst to push action, while saying things that the Councils can't say.
 - Currently, the Chamber pays into economic development committees, just like municipalities.
- Approaches
 - They noted that they don't think the regional economic development initiative will be a hard sell, but only because of a lack of engagement – “sold through indifference instead of enthusiasm.” It will need to be sold with a sense of confidence and leadership, and marketed at any and all opportunities.
 - However, they mentioned that the regional model is catching on very quickly.
 - The participant made an additional note that it's important to create a succession plan for Dave and Courtney, as they are key to this initiative being successful.
 - They noted that one challenge will be ensuring that councillors aren't micromanaging the initiative.
 - With regard to financial contributions, they commented that it'll be important for the municipalities to know what they'll be paying over the next few years, for expenses to be relatively stable, and for there to be a financial strategy that ensures they can commit to it.

John Finley, Business Owner

Date: July 5, 2018

Sectors

- Tourism
 - The participant noted that there's an opportunity to revisit the advantages of the four-lane highway by getting people off of it and into some of the communities.
 - They noted that there's a great marketing opportunity in that they have several entrances to Algonquin Park - "If you want the true wilderness experience, access it through Almaguin, not Huntsville."
 - The participant believes that there should be a first class tourism centre in the Township of Perry.
 - The idea of an app for tourists in the region was discussed.
 - It was noted that there is a huge demand for tourist accommodations, and that Burk's Falls is the only community between Huntsville and North Bay with water and sewer.
 - There's a possibility of an investment in accommodations in Burk's Falls.
 - They noted that there are opportunities in Burk's Falls along the waterfront.
- Agriculture
 - The participant noted that they don't believe small scale farming is a reality as there's no distribution system, nowhere to sell it, and it's not profitable to sell at Farmers Markets.
 - It was also noted that the growing season is very short, and that there's a high cost to heat a greenhouse.

Infrastructure

- The participant commented that while the federal government has said they have lots of money for high speed, it's only a small percentage of what they need to invest.

Labour Market and Employment

- The participant noted that there's a thriving base in manufacturing, but it's a challenge to attract people.
 - They made a note that Stuart Morley, a consultant based out of Gravenhurst, is working on a regional plan to solve some larger issues like communications, labour issues, etc.

Families and Children

- It was noted that there is an opportunity to turn the closed school in Burk's Falls into a location for seniors, or a hub for community-based programming.

Collaboration and Leadership

- The participant noted that in order to do anything with a larger dollar amount for infrastructure or employment supports, the municipalities will have to work together and take a regional approach, and that new and returning council members should really support working together.
- They noted that at the moment, there is insufficient community cohesion to successfully pursue a regional economic development initiative, and that it'll really have to be sold.

- They believe it's necessary to get all the municipalities together and let them conclude that the only way forward is to work together.
 - It was noted that there are some regional initiatives, such as fire departments and landfill services.

Economic Development

- The participant emphasized that those who want to stay the same won't be too successful in the future, as making money requires spending money.

Tim Brunton, Deputy Mayor, Magnetawan

Date: July 6, 2018

Sectors

- Tourism:
 - The participant noted that tourism is the biggest opportunity for the region, and that they need to market the region itself: the communities, lakes, rivers, etc.
 - They said that the focus needs to be primarily on transient tourists, as the lakes are becoming well-filled by cottages and homes, but there's a need to bring in people for short-term trips. It was noted that the focus should be not only on the summer, but also the shoulder seasons and the winter months.
 - It was noted that tourist accommodations are a chicken and egg situation, as businesses won't build unless they see a market, but it's tough to develop a market when you can't stay here. They noted that the focus of the municipalities should be on enticing businesses to invest in motels and hotels.
 - The participant agreed that the Airbnb model has great potential for the region.
 - One limiting factor is that there are already many cottage rental sites for longer-term rentals.
 - There has also been pushback from residents because of the short rental times.
 - It was noted that an education process is needed, and that development committees need to educate the public on the need for economic development.
 - There was a note that a number of locals find change very daunting - one resident said to them, "Magnetawan isn't broken, why are you trying to fix it?"
 - Biking was suggested as a tourism opportunity. It was noted that a major proponent of biking came to Magnetawan asking about bike routes, and they're starting to see more bicyclists in the region. In turn, Council is starting to see the economic opportunities that stem from investing in bike paths, and that the bicyclists spend money at restaurants and shops when they're in town.
- Agriculture
 - Greenhouse operations heated by propane were noted as a possible development, as the land is very inexpensive - but there are higher costs for shipping products to market.
- Retail
 - While it was noted that there is a lack of a robust retail sector, the participant commented that it will be very tough to develop a business plan, given the small year-round population.

- A suggested opportunity was the development of pop-up stores using converted storage containers, that could be leased out for 4 - 6 months. The participant commented that they believe a planner would approve of such a development.
 - Muskoka has a pop-up market in Minett: <https://www.discovermuskoka.ca/things-to-do/shopping/summer-water-sports/>

Housing

- With regards to transitional housing for seniors, in Magnetawan, individual seniors have significant support from their neighbours, the Lions Club, etc. so it is not a major issue in their particular municipality. The participant noted that on a larger scale across the region, they could see investment in this as advantageous.
- Affordable housing was mentioned as a challenge, as there are few new home builds occurring, and few available family homes.
 - There are many local contractors and very affordable lots of land, but builders are not willing to build on spec.
- Council was asked by a local contractor, who owns lots that aren't accessible, if they would be willing to open the road so that he could sell the lots and build homes.
 - Council agreed to enter into a cost-sharing agreement.
 - There was some pushback, with people asking why he wasn't paying for it by himself. But the participant noted that the municipality has to be willing to invest some of its own money to entice developers.

Families and Children

- It was noted that Magnetawan has a small public school, and that every couple years, it's a target for closure.
 - The participant commented that economic development is more all-encompassing than many community members realize, and that it includes things like attracting young families to the area, so that schools like this can thrive and stay open.

Communications and Branding

- The participant noted that creating cohesive collective marketing, that promotes the region as a whole, would be extremely beneficial and give the region more credibility.
 - The participant noted that Magnetawan doesn't have the attractions that'll make a tourist bypass all other regions, so they need to work with other municipalities.
 - They shared that they would love to see the private sector more involved in marketing.
 - It was noted that the Chamber is willing to put some money in, but their funds are limited. The participant commented that the municipalities have to step forward and put funds together, while keeping an eye open for grants or support from the provinces or the federal government.
 - The challenge with collective marketing, they noted, will be to obtain buy-in from the 14 municipalities, and all the individual councillors.
- There was a note that Burk's Falls has created standard signage, and that this is a great initiative in that it's inexpensive, but it starts to send a message that the municipalities are all part of the same group.

Economic Development

- Structure
 - It was noted that a regional economic initiative is a stepping stone towards a complete regional approach.
 - They commented that the initiative has to be on a full-time basis, funded by the municipalities, with provincial and federal funding for additional special projects.
 - They noted that each municipality will have to have someone sitting on the Board, but then there could be a much smaller group responsible for much of the work.
 - With regard to costing, it was suggested that there be an equal share agreement, as cost sharing agreements are too messy and complicated.
 - The participant noted that “there are as many people beating the drum for a regional approach as those who are skeptical or defeatist.”
 - It was noted that many councillors believe that the current state of the region is as good as it’ll ever be.
- Early successes
 - The participant noted the importance of an early initiative to build the cohesiveness of municipalities in the region.

Derek Miller, Developer

Date: July 6, 2018

Sectors

- The participant noted that the biggest strength is the land, and that if it was developed correctly, Almaguin Region could become similar to Muskoka.
 - They added that Muskoka prices have been quite high, and Almaguin has an opportunity to catch the “overflow.”
- They noted that there needs to be a focus on experiential tourism and learning, and that what is missing in Almaguin is a focus on the unique experience. They emphasized that the region should focus on this instead of manufacturing and more traditional economic development.

Sectors

- The participant noted that they have significant challenges as a developer with one of the townships, in how the processes are conducted, as well as the costs involved.
 - They noted that Armour Township appears to not be open for business, and that it was extremely challenging to bring in the Tim Horton's.
 - It was explained that to make an application for a site development plan, the fee is \$6000 (Perry Township: \$200, Huntsville: \$1,500, Toronto: \$2,600).
 - It was suggested that the municipality often does not trust your engineer, so they will peer review the process, which you have to pay for.
 - They expressed that it would seem there is an idea that developers are "flush with money," but that they are actually thinly financed at best.

- They commented that they have a property they won't develop, as it is cheaper to simply pay property taxes.
- They commented that the politicians need to be "bending over backwards" to grow the region.

Labour Market and Employment

- The participant noted that there are few jobs, and many people leave the area, but that there is also a shortage of employees in the area.
- It was also mentioned that it is hard to get the right people.

Communications and Branding

- The participant noted that the region needs a cohesive brand in place, such as 'Muskoka North,' and that the region needs to work together and create a 'buzz.' For example, Elliot Lake, as a retirement community, was noted as a successful campaign.

Collaboration and Leadership

- It was emphasized that there needs to be a cohesive approach to economic development and coordination across the region, with a joint vision and consistent branding and messaging.

Carole Manta, Northern Development Advisor, North Bay Area Team – Ministry of Energy, Northern Development and Mines

Date: July 6, 2018

Sectors

- Innovation Initiatives Ontario North is a network of strategic regional and provincial partners that deliver programs and services to help entrepreneurs and established businesses succeed, serving the districts of Nipissing, Timiskaming, Parry Sound and Muskoka (<https://iion.ca/>). It was noted that they have one program geared towards manufacturers and newly graduated students.

Infrastructure

- High speed internet access was identified as a gap that needs to be filled in certain areas in Almaguin, for businesses and quality of life. However, it was noted that certain townships are good with where they're currently at.

Labour Market and Employment

- It was noted that the lack of a labour force is a reality in the region. It was suggested that there could be a focus on making the region more welcoming to immigration and particular communities, by creating marketing materials in specific languages.
- An additional suggestion was to create an opportunity for the alumni of Almaguin region to return, for talks about entrepreneurship, innovation, etc.

Communications and Branding

- It was noted that it would be practical for the communities to come together for joint marketing, and that they can do so in a way that preserves their individual identities. Muskoka was provided as an example.
- It was noted that there's a bike route that involves several communities, which could be better marketed.

Collaboration and Leadership

- The participant noted that right now, there is leadership for a collective basis for economic development moving forward, but that there will soon be municipal elections. There was a note that the collective focus will require a certain level of internal marketing.
- It was noted that funding applications – especially for marketing – would have more strength if they came from Almaguin Highlands as opposed to one particular community, particularly if they're combined with studies, reports, and data.
- It was suggested that a win for one community should be seen as a win for the region as a whole, and that mayors from across the region should be invited to celebrations in different municipalities to show solidarity, support, and partnership.

Economic Development

- The participant noted that they are a firm believer in asset-based community development, and that this is what the communities need to focus on.
- Approaches
 - It was noted that implementation could be challenging, considering the new government, and that the suite of provincial programs going into the future may be different.
 - Capacity in the region was mentioned as a limitation, as municipalities are already stretched thin.
- Early successes
 - It was noted that the region used to have a trade show, for businesses to get to know each other and for potential customers, which rotated through different municipalities. It was not financially successful at the time, but it could be revisited.

Courtney Metcalf, Steering Committee Member, Economic Development Officer (CAEDA)

Date: July 6, 2018

Sectors

- Tourism
 - The participant noted that most of the events and fairs in the region have been lacking in recent years, as they have largely stayed the same, despite a decrease in volunteers and attendance.
 - It was noted that there's an opportunity for businesses to partner with each other, but that efforts to push that idea forward have had minimal traction.
 - Self-guided or organized tours in the region were a suggested opportunity, but it was emphasized that they would need to be supported by resources (an app, maps, etc.)
 - Almaguin Highlands Arts Council tried to set up an art tour, but it had limited success.
 - It was noted that there need to be more resources to support people in taking advantage of the outdoor environment, such as canoe rentals.
- Community Service Organizations

- The participant noted that there is a real challenge with volunteerism in the region, and a need to change how organizations engage volunteers.
 - It was noted that the organizations aren't usually approachable, and that it's hard to find a contact number, let alone a person to answer your call.
 - There's an elitist or closed door policy for many of the groups.
 - Many available volunteer opportunities are for management roles, not everyday opportunities.

Infrastructure

- Exploring partnerships with the private sector, to purchase towers or satellite or fibre, was suggested as an opportunity, as currently it is necessary to be located right in town to get internet access, if your town has internet at all.
 - Blue Sky was playing an active role, and had submitted grant applications with the province and FedNor to put more towers up in the area. They needed both sides of funding - the province approved the project but it didn't move forward with FedNor.

Housing

- Rental housing was identified as a significant issue, as there's a lack of good quality rentals, with high costs for what they're offering as there's limited availability.
 - It was noted that it'd be valuable to have incentives for first time home buyers, such as in Muskoka: <https://www.muskoka.on.ca/en/community-and-social-services/Affordable-Home-Ownership-Programs.aspx>
 - Parry Sound received money that could have gone towards this program, but they invested it elsewhere.
 - More people buying would free up rental space.

Labour Market and Employment

- It was noted that employers in the area are very old fashioned, and rarely accept online applications. While they want employees to be fully trained, they generally provide low wages and have high expectations.
 - Employee retention, as a result, is quite low, as employees realize they can make more and have better job conditions elsewhere, with many working in Huntsville.
 - It was noted that employers need to take a 21st century approach to attracting and retaining employees.

Transportation

- Carpool Almaguin was mentioned as a former initiative that was not successful, but it was suggested that it could be revitalized. It was described as a good idea in essence, managed by Almaguin Highlands Economic Development, but that it didn't catch on.
 - A larger or more frequent community bus was also suggested. There currently is a pilot project in the region.
 - For those without licenses or for travelers to the region, there's no public transportation, rental cars, taxis, or Uber.

Communications and Branding

- It was suggested that messaging could be crafted to explain what makes Almaguin unique, and that it could be shared – in the form of a written product – with retailers, grocery stores, etc. so they know how to respond when people ask what there is to do in the area.
- A regional approach to marketing was noted as the only way forward.
 - A regional web strategy would support the marketing and coordination of events in the region.

Collaboration and Leadership

- Coordination was identified as a place for improvement, among municipalities but also with community organizations and groups.
 - Each municipality has a recreation committee, and there's extensive overlap, given that they're often drawing from the same pool of people.
 - Interest has been expressed in developing a coordinated approach, but there has been no leadership to move that forward.
 - A regional economic body could assist with or facilitate a meeting or sit-down.

Economic Development

- With regards to governance, it was suggested that the initiative have a separate Board, with councilors sitting on it, but it not being tied directly to the municipal structure.
 - There could be quarterly meetings with the 14-member Board (one councillor from each municipality), and regular meetings with sub-committees, with key people or staff/clerks.

MP Anthony Rota, Nipissing - Timiskaming

Date: July 10, 2018

Sectors

- The participant noted that with tourism accommodations, it's a situation of "build it and they will come."
 - They acknowledged that many developers don't want to build out of fear that they will bury the market, but the participant believes that as you build more, more business will come into the area.
- The participant commented that there are many cash crops, and that the beef industry is fairly robust, but those in agriculture are clinging on. They noted that some in the new generation are trying to keep up the family farms, but that the numbers aren't overwhelming.
- One area of growth is with the Mennonites and Amish who are moving to the area and engaging in agriculture.

Infrastructure

- The participant noted that they have heard about the lack of reliable high speed internet throughout the riding, and that as soon as you are away from the main highways, internet access is limited.

- An example was shared about a resident who was told by a local telecommunications company that he would have service, but then had to spend \$4000 on a tower to get a signal.
- When asked about federal funding for communications infrastructure, it was noted that Industry Canada will have another phase of funding shortly, likely in the spring.
 - It was noted that Industry Canada's stance is that the private sector will come in and cover the "last mile" of internet, but that this hasn't been happening as it isn't profitable. They noted that there is need for more funding, or subsidization at a greater rate.
- Citing an example from Alberta, it was suggested that the communities could come together and form a corporation to fund it, noting that this is something North Bay is looking into with Hydro One.
 - It was noted that there needs to be ownership on the ground to prevent funding from going into a vacuum.

Housing

- The participant noted that there is a surplus of housing, and an abundance of building lots, but that few want to build on spec out of fear that they will sit on the properties for a long time before selling them.
 - It was noted that Marcel Degagne and Rick Champagne have succeeded in putting in subdivisions and houses on design builds.
 - The housing prices in the area, it was noted, are quite stable.
- It was discussed that there is interest in the area for seniors' residences.

Labour Market and Employment

- It was noted that efforts should be concentrated not on “trying to land the next Toyota,” but on the promising small companies that are already in the area and encouraging them to grow and develop.
 - It was noted that there’s an opportunity to sell the region to Toronto, to companies who may want to move, or people who may want to get back to where their roots are
 - Employees could operate remotely from the region – it was noted that for many jobs, there’s no need to be at King and Bay, and that they could simply go to the office once or twice a month.
- Concern was shared about comments from larger employers that they do not have access to the necessary supply of skilled labour in the region.
 - They added that attracting skilled labour is a “chicken and the egg” challenge – if you don’t have a labour force, the companies won’t come, and vice versa.
 - It was suggested that using the local university and college to get people trained could be a solution.
 - They added that many of the new startups in the area are by students who went to university/college locally and decided to stay.

Communications and Branding

- It was noted that a significant focus should be on selling the lifestyle – that you can live and work in the Almaguin Highlands and not worry about the traffic and big city challenges.

- They added that the focus for the region should not just be to show it as a tourist destination, but also as an economic venue.

Brenda Frasier, Home Hardware Magnetawan

Date: July 13, 2018

Sectors

- The participant noted that the lack of accessible services – banks, doctors, post offices, grocery stores, etc. – is a significant concern.

Infrastructure

- Internet was noted as an ongoing challenge, as outside of the township limits it is either really expensive or nonexistent.

Housing

- The participant noted that affordable housing is one of the most important areas to consider with regard to the region and its ability to sustain jobs and economic activity.
 - They noted that if there were nice, affordable rentals, younger people could live here and commute to work, and that this would keep the local schools full, etc.

Labour Market and Employment

- As a business owner, the participant noted that it is challenging to find people who can and want to work. They mentioned that it would help if it was easier for people to start businesses, and if there was less government involvement in the process.

Families and Children

- With regard to strengths in the region, the participant noted that the area is quite nice to live in and family oriented, with friendly people and less stress than the city.

Transportation

- It was noted that for seniors who don't drive, transportation and accessing services is a challenge.

Collaboration and Leadership

- The participant noted that a regional approach to economic development is important, with partnership instead of competition across the region, and that a focus on growing the entire region will benefit all.

Tony Clement, Member of Parliament, Parry Sound - Muskoka

Date: July 26, 2018

Sectors

- The participant noted that the lack of quality accommodation for visitors negatively impacts tourism across the region.
- The participant commented that the local growing movement is strong, and getting stronger, as people want local food and natural products that aren't industrialized.

- They noted that there are opportunities for small manufacturing because of the land and the transportation linkages.

Housing

- The participant noted that the most critical issue is that of affordability - of housing and living - and that this is limiting business growth and negatively affecting businesses' abilities to retain employees.
- They commented that the region should use the general affordability of the region as a marketing tool, and support business in finding lodging for workers or potential workers.
- They noted that they are not aware of any initiatives to help with this.

Families and Children

- The participant emphasized the importance of maintaining the hospital in the region.

Labour Market and Employment

- They noted that employers are having a hard time finding skilled workers and retaining them.
- The participant also noted that local businesses have been negatively impacted by federal taxation policies and the handling of the trade file.

Norm Miller, Member of Provincial Parliament, Parry Sound

Date: August 17, 2018

Sectors

- Participant expressed that active transportation tourism is a great opportunity for the region. It was noted that there are highways that are paving shoulders to support cycling, and it could be expanded across the region.
- An example that was shared of a best practice for trail development was the Province of Quebec. It was noted that they do a great job on ensuring clean, accessible trails for cycling, ATVs, and snowmobiling. This ensures year-round use of the trail systems.
- Highland Brewery in South River was identified as a great success, as it provides space for multiple uses.
- Some challenges for regional businesses that were identified were items like high hydro costs, regulatory issues, and “red tape.” Examples shared included seasonal shut downs as a result of hydro costing upwards of \$14,000 per month, and the environmental regulations around updating septic systems. These become inhibitors for business growth and retention.
- It was noted that there are also regulations that are creating challenges for recreation, such as tagging systems for hunters.
- The retail and service sectors are also experiencing challenges. Banks and grocery stores are leaving rural communities, and gas stations are finding it difficult to maintain service as a result of regulations.
- A large aspect to address across the area will be access to health services, with concerns around the potential of losing the hospital.

Infrastructure

- It was noted that the four-lane highway has brought great opportunity to the region. This will be instrumental in defending the need for the regional hospital.

- Communications infrastructure is an issue in northern regions and remote areas. It was explained that there is a lack of consistency for cell, landline, and internet access, and this was described as a very large issue. An example was shared that the participant has been contacted by cabin resorts in the area with complaints about the lack of cell service and how it is hurting their business. Visitors would like access to and expect consistent communications services.

Communications and Branding

- It was recommended that a centralized digital presence, for residents and visitors alike, would benefit the region as a whole.

Collaboration and Leadership

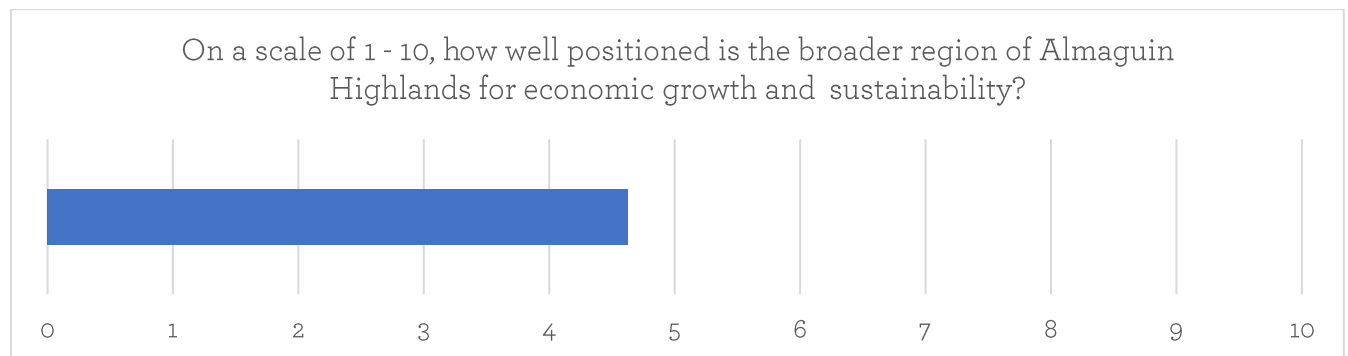
- The participant expressed that the municipalities working together to bring economic development forward is a positive approach to build upon. Cooperation amongst municipalities would benefit the region.
- It was noted that amalgamation would be an opportunity that would build capacity for strategic direction, perspective, and capacity.

Online Survey

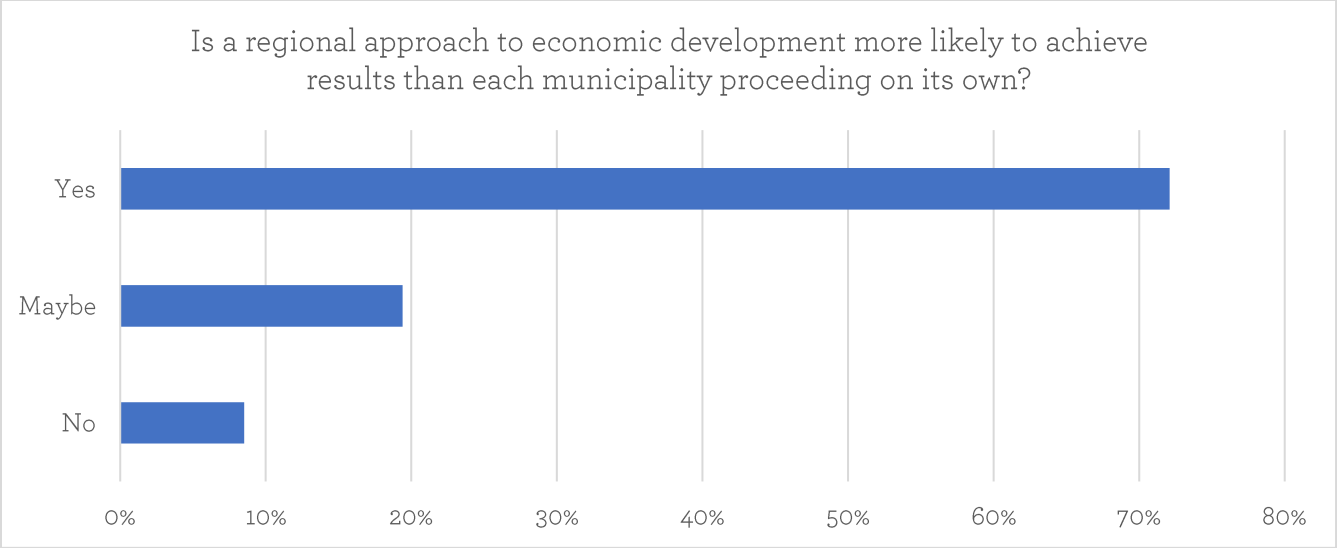
The online survey was designed to receive high level perceptions from a variety of stakeholders. The intent was to engage a wide range of interested people, including residents and seasonal residents, as well as other internal and external stakeholders from across the region.

The results of the online survey are on the following pages.

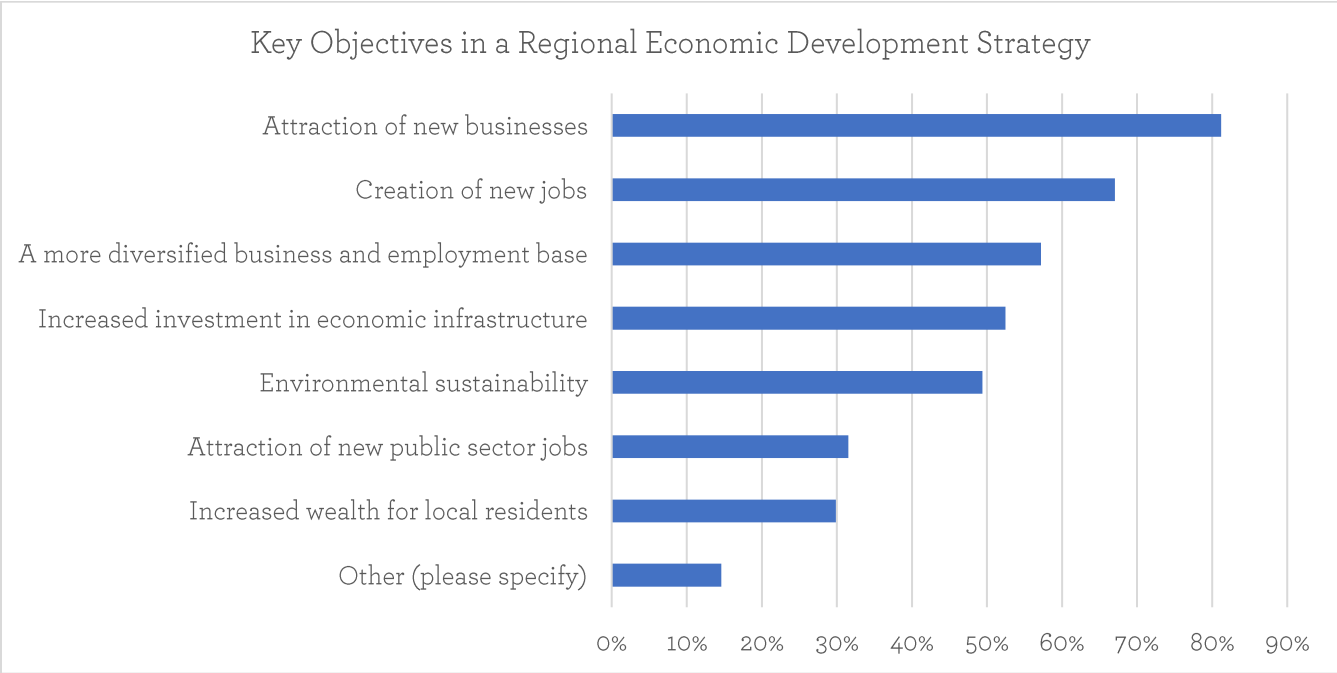
1. How well positioned is the broader region of Almaguin Highlands for economic growth and sustainability? Please answer on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being excellently positioned and 1 being very poorly positioned.



2. Knowing that the Almaguin Region includes 14 municipalities, do you agree that a regional approach to economic development is more likely to achieve results than each municipality proceeding on its own?



3. Which of the following key objectives should be included in a regional economic development strategy?



○ Other (please specify):

BUSINESSES AND EMPLOYMENT
Provide tax incentives for businesses.
A reason for businesses to come, people/youth to stay and work.
Factories.
Retention & growth of current businesses.

Filling empty businesses in the town cores. Not letting outside people buy properties on main streets and allowing those properties to sit vacant.
Retention and expansion of current businesses.
Attraction of new residents looking for work.
Giving a better support system to already established businesses (especially those with under 5 employees).
Two things to attract skilled workers: affordable living for people, and invest in what is already working.
Supporting existing small businesses and providing reasonable opportunities for expansion.
Increased investment in education and skills training of local population.
Property tax breaks for businesses that employ more than ??? people.
More training and opportunities for trades i.e. electricians, plumbers, framers, etc.
A solutions team to help established businesses with complex issues to prevent closure and promote growth.

AGRICULTURE
Reinstate (encourage) farming activities; upgrade the rail systems.
Promote rural farmers.
Help for those in rural farming.
Agriculture.

ACCOMODATIONS
Residential development and hotels/motels.
Hotels.
Housing.
Affordable rentals and ownership.
Affordable housing.
The area needs a larger population base. What are the issues with regards to attracting more people/families? Housing, education, development charges. How easy is it to move to Almaguin? How easy is it to find a house?
Housing initiatives; serviced residential subdivisions.
Natural gas line expansion to more service lots.

HEALTHCARE
Medical care, i.e. walk-in clinic.
Sustaining accessible health care services.
Local healthcare.
Access to healthcare.
Local healthcare services.

INTERNET
High speed data in all areas.
Affordable high speed internet.
High speed internet.
Focus on technology infrastructure such as fiber optics.

Internet infrastructure.

SENIORS

Help for senior residents in the area.

We need to find a way to maximize existing assets that dovetails with *real* analysis of what the future holds. E.g. ageing population? Invest in independent retirement living opportunities, or age-in-place opportunities. We live in a beautiful area, and people might find this a lovely place to retire (do research, don't assume!). We're a LOT closer to the Golden Horseshoe than Elliot Lake, for example. If you create opportunities, jobs will follow such as nursing, social work, administrative, and all the secondary job impacts that go along with a growing population.

Employee turnover (retirement).

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Showcasing the lakes.

Preservation and development of our natural assets that does not include exploitation by outside opportunists.

Environmental protection.

MARKETING

All of the above by bringing in more films to film in our area.

Marketing the region for tourism.

I think they need to look at branding the Almaguin area better. We live in an amazing place and we shouldn't be second fiddle to other areas like Muskoka or the Kawarthas. They just brand themselves better! Bring in tourists and summer cottagers and more jobs will come.

Marketing, funding.

Don't wait for business to come to Sundridge. Actively approach businesses!!! Sell Sundridge; we have a lot to offer. Approach the computer industry for instance. I'd be more than happy to help in that area.

TOURISM

Tourism strategy.

Tourism.

Look at tourism for more economic growth.

Investment in tourism attractions, particularly non-motorized recreation.

Tourism industry.

Enriching our offerings to seed a robust visitor economy.

More tourism for all areas, plan for more area-centric groups instead of groups for only certain towns (CAEDA being too specific).

Better ways to get to the region.

FAMILIES, YOUTH AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

More things for children to do .

Recreational center, swimming, etc. Activities for a younger crowd.

Safe, crime-free communities.

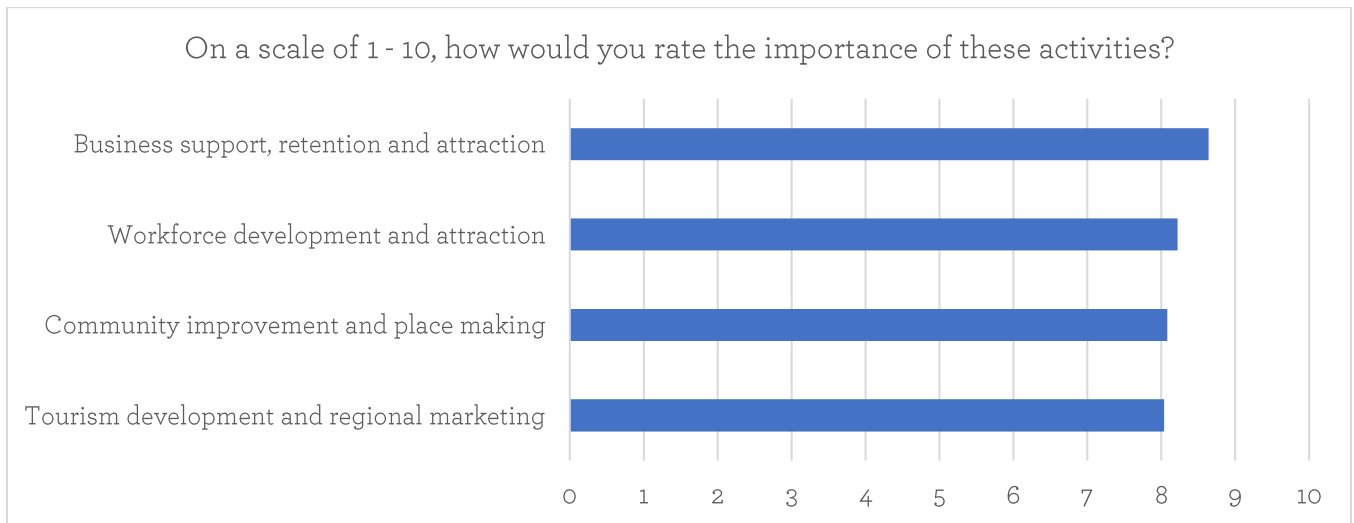
Community improvement (beautification, community organization improvement).

Culture and community are key to attracting people, which leads to economic growth.

Funding to support community infrastructure and capacity building, e.g. YMCA facility.
 Community building/engagement activities.

GENERAL / OTHER
 All of the above are important.
 A strategic plan needs to have a focus: is it jobs, is it resource based development, is it to be promoted as an ideal retirement area? Set your focus.
 I believe all of the objectives listed are important but it might be more advantageous to try and rank them and then give higher ranked objectives more priority.
 Collaboration, recognizing, and building on existing assets.
 Funding.
 By-law enforcement and respect for Provincial and Federal statutes are key to growth.
 Work with municipal government to not bog people down with petty red tape.
 Reasonable municipal taxes.
 Base measurements, demographics, etc. "What gets measured, gets improved."

4. Thinking about possible actions to assist in economic development, on a scale of 1 to 10 – with 10 being very important and 1 being not important at all – how would you rate the importance of the following activities?



- o Are there other activities you would include?

SENIORS
 Make affordable senior housing, which would employ more people.
 Senior developments.
 A proper gym with weights, a community swimming pool. The arena just houses skating and hockey, which are not appropriate for our current tax base (demographic over 50 years old) or the demographic which brings in the highest tax base, i.e. new homes around the lakes – i.e. returned “young seniors” from the cities. They want to exercise.

HOUSING
 Funding for main street improvements.
 Beautification, preservation, and utilization of existing assets for others to enjoy but not destroy.

Building affordable housing in village centers.
Residential housing developments.
Housing for seniors so they can stay in the area, and free up housing for families.
Housing.
Look into the tiny house movement to help local residents have more affordable housing and attract cottagers to the area as a more affordable alternative.

BUSINESSES AND EMPLOYMENT
Sustainable work.
Assisting businesses with a web presence, raising awareness of the large market potential, and funding programs to help with business growth.
Promoting on-the-job training and blue collar jobs.
Attracting younger workforce (Young Professional Networks, Hubs, etc.).
Until businesses are obliged to follow the by-laws and the regulations in place, who wants to operate a business beside a business that has a rusted freezer and a ton of garbage next to your commercial property.
Training.
Improvement of existing businesses, building attractiveness.
Business sponsorship to make it possible for youth to become involved.
Don't just attract: attract, approach and retain.
Surveying existing businesses and seeing what they require to survive and thrive. Community support of businesses, especially from municipalities.
To attract and retain talent (must have key ingredients: affordable living, good school and competitive recreation centres/ activities). Build it and they will come.
We somehow need to get back jobs that have left the district with provincial government enlarging boundaries for education, policing, MNR, MTO, etc. Many of these workers now start working in Almaguin but live in North Bay or Huntsville and commute until they can bump in to their original communities. We lose the benefit of their buying power while they work here and eventually have to hire new "temporary" workers who once again take their money and community service out of the area.

FAMILIES, YOUTH AND COMMUNITY BUILDING
Open this area for the young!!
Creating communities and opportunities for children.
Recreation for young families.
Community Investment Fund.

TOURISM
Mountain bike trail park, rock climbing, proper docks/boat access in every downtown, more B&B's, and Airbnb.
Festivals and social events planning.
Swimming pool, rec center, and annual events to attract large groups.
Developing the Algonquin Park and Kearney access points for day-use activities.
Gathering and sharing our history, providing signage and interpretation at historical locations, engaging citizens, and creating new community outdoor attractions.

BEAUTIFICATION

Funding for main street improvements.
Beautification, preservation and utilization of existing assets for others to enjoy but not destroy.

INFRASTRUCTURE
Infrastructure improvements, e.g. internet / cell coverage.
Internet.
Infrastructure development/expansion (broadband, etc.).
Internet coverage.
Technology-focused initiatives.
Infrastructure.
Equal placement of infrastructure between villages.

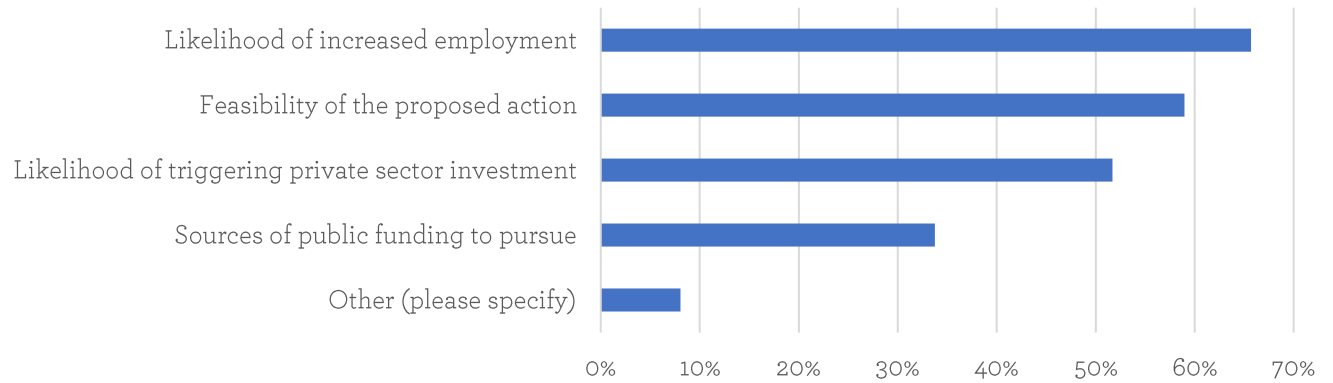
HEALTHCARE
More health services.
Access to healthcare.
Creation and maintenance of services, ex. hospitals, banks, health centres. Communities cannot expect growth without fulfilling local needs.

TRANSPORTATION
Transportation needs.
Finding better ways to work together to help people get to the region by bus and train and perhaps a weekly shuttle.

GENERAL / OTHER
Pursuing a post-secondary school.
All of these things are extremely important. The key is to COORDINATE efforts in all areas. If you're going to invest energy and resources in a particular industry, support that industry with linkages to training so that there is an appropriately trained local workforce to support that industry.
Environmental protection.
Promotion of low living cost, as well as low cost of employees versus the GTA market.
Town water and sewers are the most important elements for attracting diversified development. Communities also need to be prepared to work together for the overall good of the area.

5. What factors did you consider when providing your ratings?

What factors did you consider when providing your ratings?



○ Other (please specify):

ACHIEVABILITY

- Common sense achievable plans and timelines.
- Largest impact for desired results.
- Attainable goal setting.
- Ease of making this happen.

SUSTAINABILITY

- Sustainability and preservation, and the denial of exploitation by business opportunists who see the area as another money pot to be mined.
- Growth while sustaining the way of life of our residents.
- Saving our nature and beauty.
- Policies that have potential to create a lasting impact.

COMMUNITY

- Level of support for current business. Level of support and investment in community, i.e. public spaces, parks, and programs.
- Maintaining or improving the livability of our area. If people have connections here and want to be here, some of them will find ways to make it work (e.g. remote employment, entrepreneurship, telecommuting). Please invest in bettering the internet and other telecom services around here!
- Keys to long-term success in building strong, resilient communities that attract and sustain the local businesses / economy.
- Community development, which is necessary for economic development.
- Stronger communities will support economic growth.

BUSINESS AND EMPLOYMENT

- Encouraging businesses to come to the area and business tax incentives.
- New jobs. We need more people to live and work in the same communities, but many commute.
- How local businesses compare with larger centres, the level of local resources and tools compared with larger centres, i.e. what's lacking in the area to nurture growth and what businesses need to compete in the new world market place.

As an investor, I am walking away from a commercial purchase due to this Village's inability to act and enforce the by-laws.

Making this area attractive for bigger businesses.

We currently do not have an adequate workforce for the existing businesses.

Get those government jobs out of Toronto and into failing communities.

Actions needed to drive local economy and communities.

TOURISM

Possibility for out of region and local regional tourism.

Too many tourism opportunities are seasonal.

We need Almaguin Highlands to become known - like Muskoka. As it is now, no one except those that live here knows where this part of Ontario is.

SUPPORTS

Chronic existing housing shortages restricting workforce and tax base development.

Talented people need the fundamentals plus opportunities for kids (schools must have higher standards, raise the bar).

We have no viable transportation.

OTHER

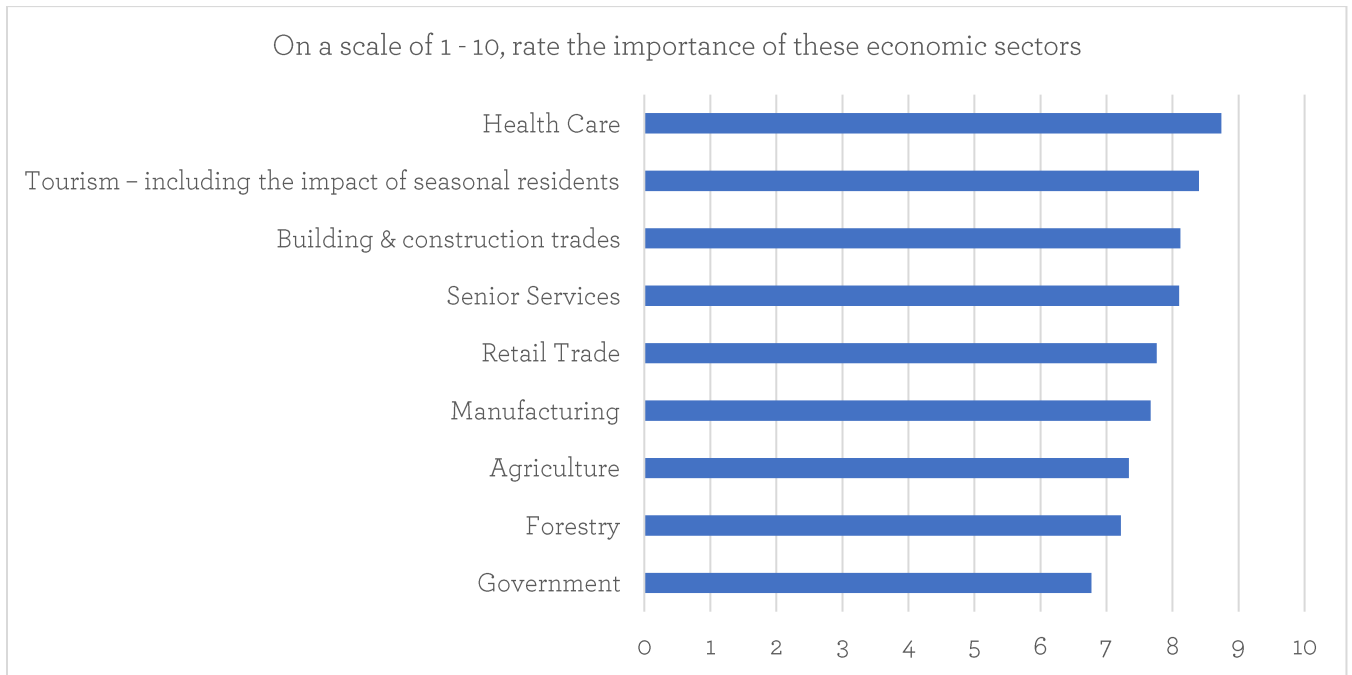
Don't make this area an old people's home!!!

Past practice.

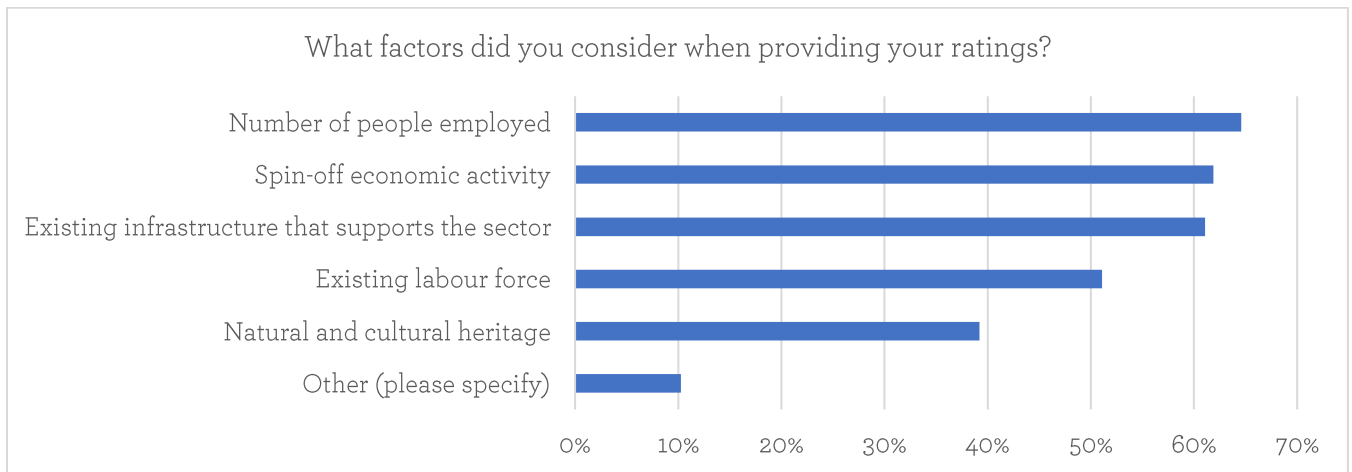
Likelihood of 'another' study being successfully implemented.

Most of this is already here, just not used.

6. On a scale of 1 to 10 – with 10 being very important and 1 not being important at all – how would you rate the importance of each of these economic sectors to the Almaguin Region?



7. What factors did you consider when providing your ratings?



- Other (please specify):

SUSTAINABILITY
Sustainable employment.
How sustainable is the activity and to what extent does it address pollution issues?
What is needed is sustainable support for existing residents in the area.

SENIORS

Overwhelming need for senior support and better access to healthcare in this region.

Distance from existing services, especially for attracting youth/seniors to the area.

Lack of current sectors available (specifically around seniors).

Need for increased services for seniors.

Future requirements with aging population.

Need to keep health care specifically for those who live here now, and senior care is of the utmost importance for our aging population..

ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT

Increased growth needed.

The direction the economy is heading (baby boomer demographics and a decrease in manufacturing).

Lack of jobs, lack of skilled workers, and young people leaving to obtain work.

Everywhere you go, they are advertising for “help wanted.”

Serious shortage (and increasing gap) of skilled trades.

Opportunities for growth.

The percentage of the population that shares in supplying or using each economic sector.

The potential for development.

Demographics, future economy/needs.

All of the above, but unless we get some senior government help in job retention, we won't be seeing a whole lot of people with good paying jobs staying in the area.

SEASONAL VERSUS PERMANENT

Importance doesn't necessarily mean positive. I.e. tourism often means low-paying service jobs.

Seasonal residents do not necessarily have the same priorities as permanent residents.

Helping people that live here.

What the people need to maintain small town life - NO MORE SEASONAL TOURISM EMPLOYMENT.

HEALTHCARE

We need a strong focus on healthcare as, once again, we're a wasteland, with most healthcare services centered in Huntsville, Parry Sound and North Bay. Most of what we have retained has been after long and difficult battles with various Provincial and other Region healthcare agencies.

Availability of strong and modern physical and mental healthcare options is a major attraction for new businesses/residents.

FUTURE

My vision for the future of Almaguin.

Potential over the next 25 years.

Future planning.

SUPPORTS AND SERVICES

Technology requirements of the sectors.

No viable transportation system to support it.

OTHER

I have a belief that we have to zero in on an objective and set goals on how to achieve it. Your list of factors is meaningless unless you have already decided that your goal is economic development. I prefer to think that if we set a focus on something achievable, then we can set a goal, and then list the relevant factors.

Every sector is critical. Whatever you plan to do, please don't inadvertently reduce opportunities in one industry in favour of another. We need a diversified economy. We can't just focus on tourism or senior services. You're never going to be able to do it all. You need to also empower the people who are already here to create change and opportunities. Free meeting space, social and networking opportunities, business incubators, family supports, transportation supports. It's a massive job and efforts in every area need to be coordinated for maximum benefit because I expect there's not a lot of money available to do this important work.

Do-ability.

What is needed.

Practicality.

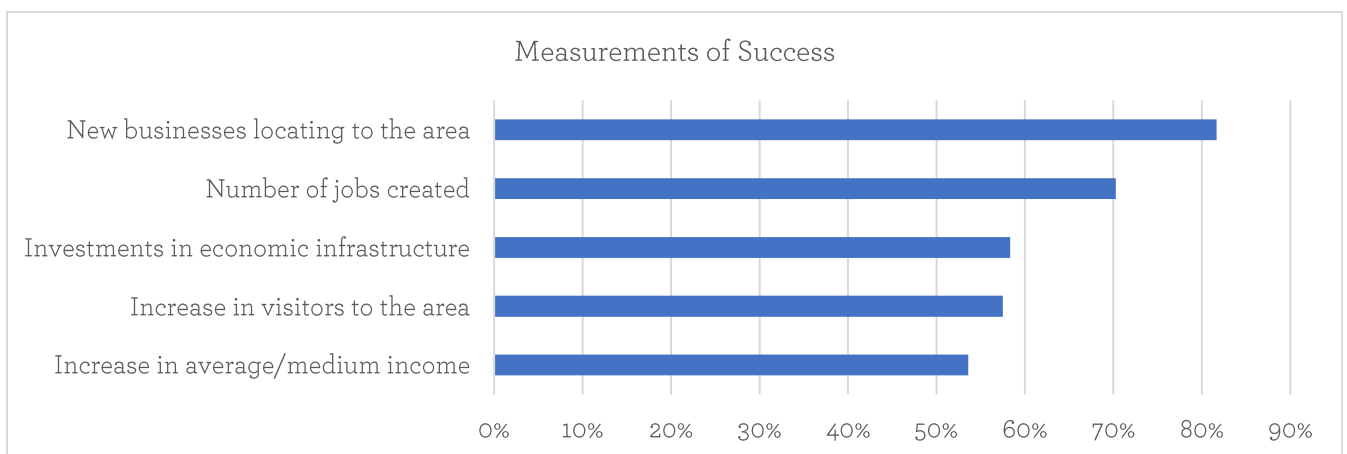
I did not see any boxes for intellectual trade. Pressure the government to work with RPRA to create secondary products or end of life products and packaging to create a circular economy. Look into clean natural gas and tax credits with California (mix waste water with compostables). Three year pay off happening in Quebec!

There is far too much abuse of by-laws and there does not seem to be any kind of enforcement.

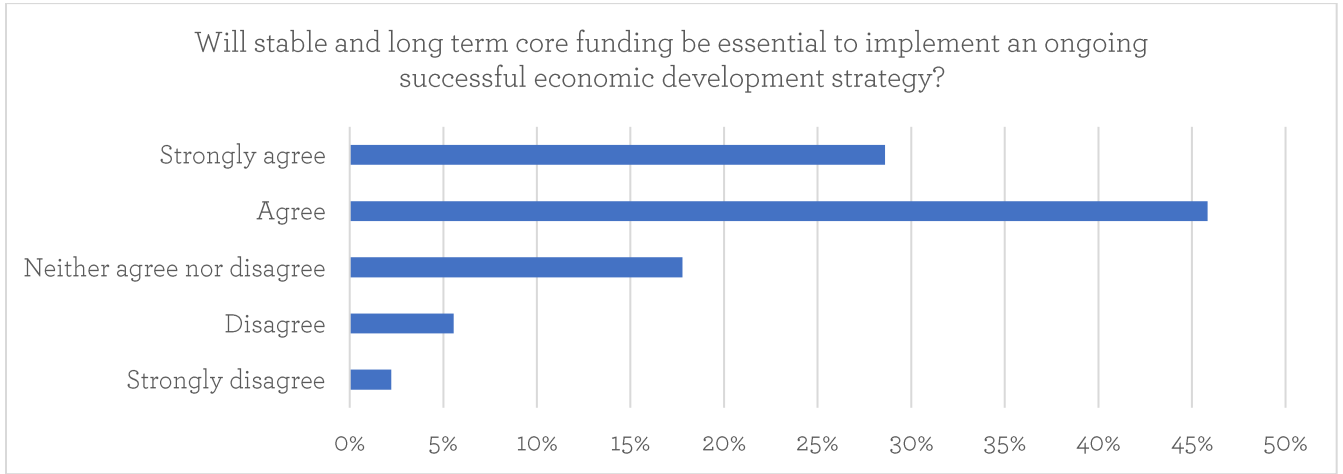
In my mind, I rated what I thought was important, not what services exist. Many order online, so retail is suffering. Agriculture is good food, not fast food. Health care is a stress free labour force and feeding the mind, body and spirit. I considered what I'd like to see, not what really exists.

I know agriculture isn't that important in this area, but it should be. People are looking for local food and this sector should be supported more.

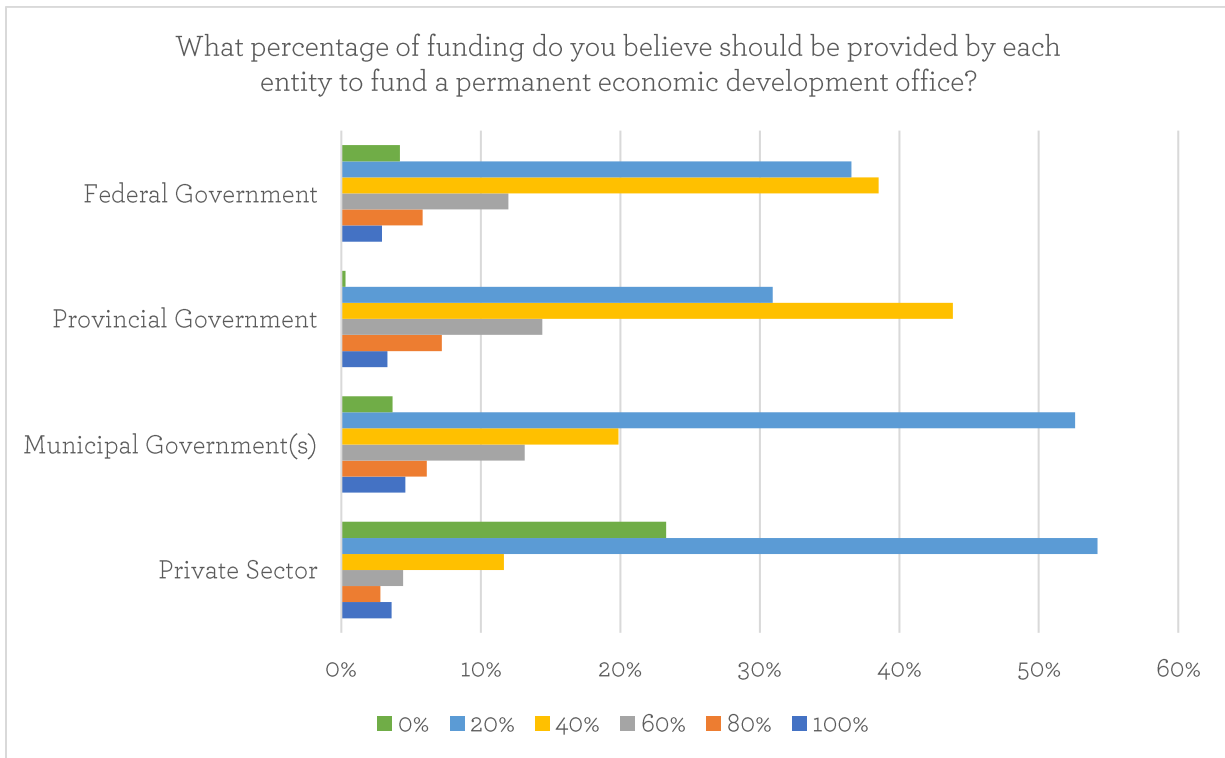
- 8. What type of measurements of success should be included as part of a regional economic development strategy?



9. There is an assumption that stable and long-term core funding will be essential to implement an ongoing successful economic development strategy. Do you agree or disagree with this assumption?



10. In order to establish a long-term stable funding for regional economic development and growth, partnerships are integral. Who do you believe should fund a permanent economic development office? Please indicate the percentage of funding you believe each should provide.



COMMENTS:

EQUAL DIVISION
I think they should all provide equally.
Federal - 33.33%; Provincial - 33.33%; Municipal - 33.33%.
Evenly between the three levels of government (you didn't give a 33% option).
Team effort needed.

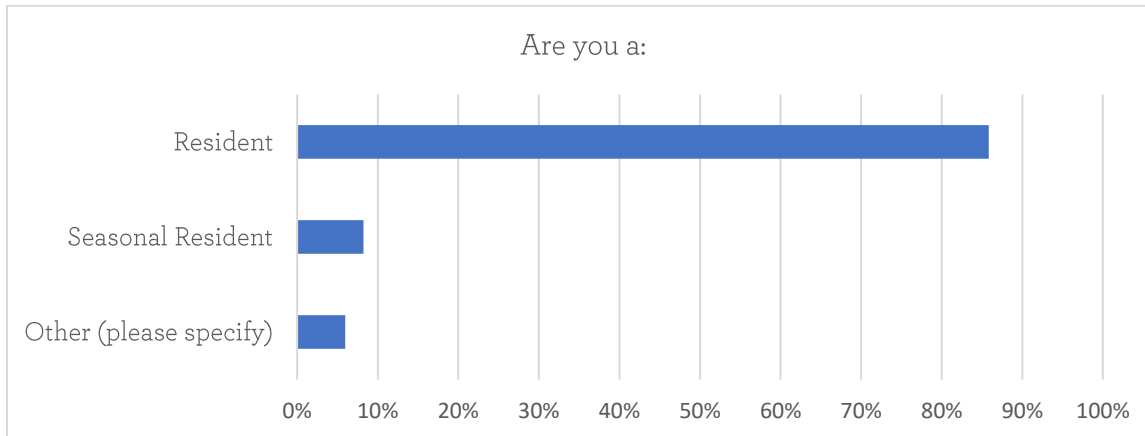
ALTERNATE RATIOS
10% would have been better for municipal government, but it was not an option.
Private should be 10%, municipal 50%.
Private sector and municipal governments should have some impact, but the majority of funding should be shared at the federal and provincial levels.
The long term goal would be to have the majority funded by the municipalities within 4-6 years.
Since it is the private sector who benefits, they should contribute the bulk then share with other levels of government.

ADDITIONAL OPTIONS
Relying on tax payers' money is not the answer. This needs to be organized by a volunteer committee.
Community stakeholders and partners.
Local business groups and fundraising.
I think the private sector should pay something for economic development, such as a Chamber of Commerce payment (have to be paying to advertise within). I don't want to see people burdened with another tax though, so would prefer to see grants. Interns can be used; however, only 1 year is not enough for someone to do the job properly. You have to learn the area and stay in the job for at least 2 years to do any good.
Whoever funds this initiative, make sure you hire someone GREAT to lead it. Someone with a personal investment in and connection to the area. Someone with legitimate training and experience. If you have to pay well to get this person, don't scrimp on salary. You get what you pay for. This question is poorly designed. The funding source should be a blend of sources but should begin with a look at what funding is available vs. an opinion-based approach from people who don't have any idea what's available. Not one of our already over-taxed municipalities is going to say the municipalities should pay. And not one of the under- or appropriately-taxed municipalities that have worked hard to keep taxes low is going to willingly commit to increasing taxes for a long-term initiative like this. Everyone wants to see an immediate ROI and that motivation gets in the way of effective planning.

OTHER COMMENTS
We do not need a permanent economic officer.
This is putting the cart before the horse. Do your brainstorming, see if you can come to an agreement, take it to the public for feedback, then see where you are at.
The benefits should be ultimately to the residents as well as providing fair benefit to the people who will ultimately be using and spending in the area. If this cannot be done, then leave the area as is with no development.
In the end it is coming out of my pocket.
I really do not have knowledge re: funding ... but I do feel that too many individuals milk the system Employees are only part time. I know of 3 industries receiving big grants to establish in a rural area, close, restart, etc.

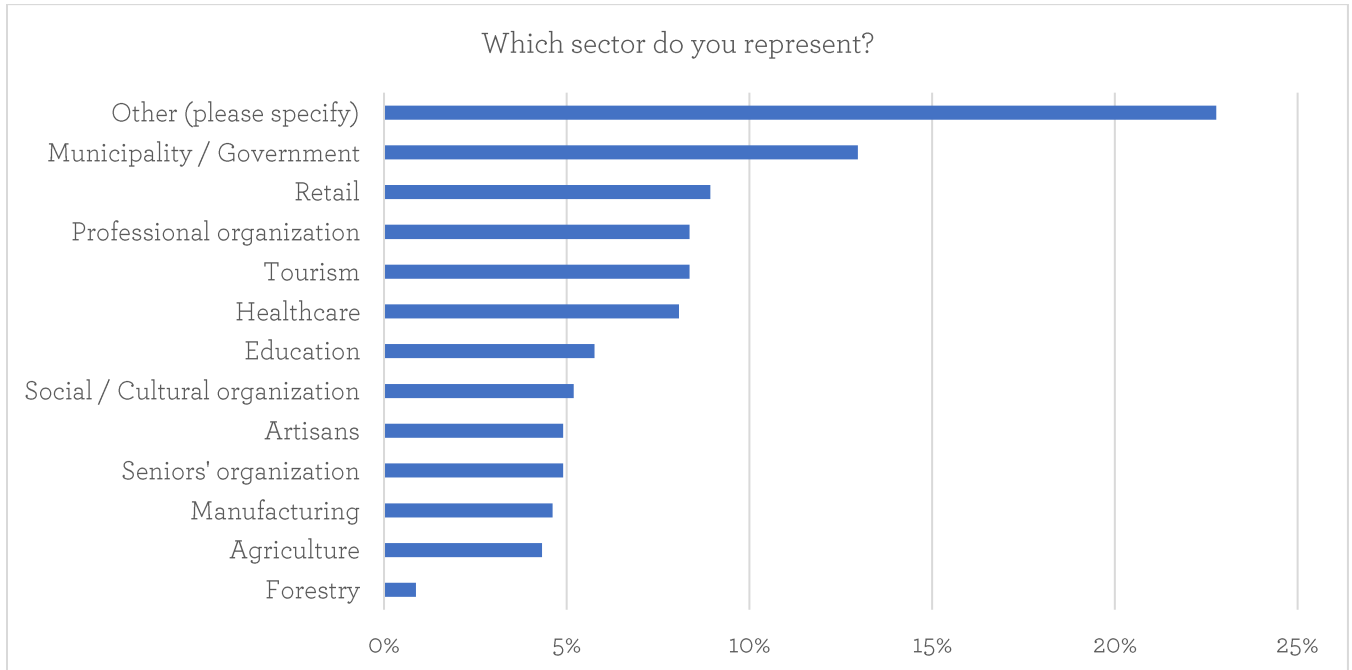
The development of a quality schooling program, competitive recreational centres including provincial and municipal levels, and affordable living from the province and federal governments (this will attract and retain talent).

11. Are you a:



- OTHER
- 4 Business owner
 - 3 Resident and business owner
 - 2 Former resident
 - 2 Municipal employee
 - 1 Government
 - 1 My parents live here! I had to move away because there weren't any jobs, because when the factory closed and the mayor told all new businesses that Burk's Falls is going to be a retirement village!! And we could've had Bombardier
 - 1 Prospective investor
 - 1 Community organization (registered charity)
 - 1 Employee of a not-for-profit that supports businesses in the area
 - 1 Employed in the area
 - 1 Community stakeholder
 - 1 Business consultant
 - 1 Employer

12. Which sector do you represent?

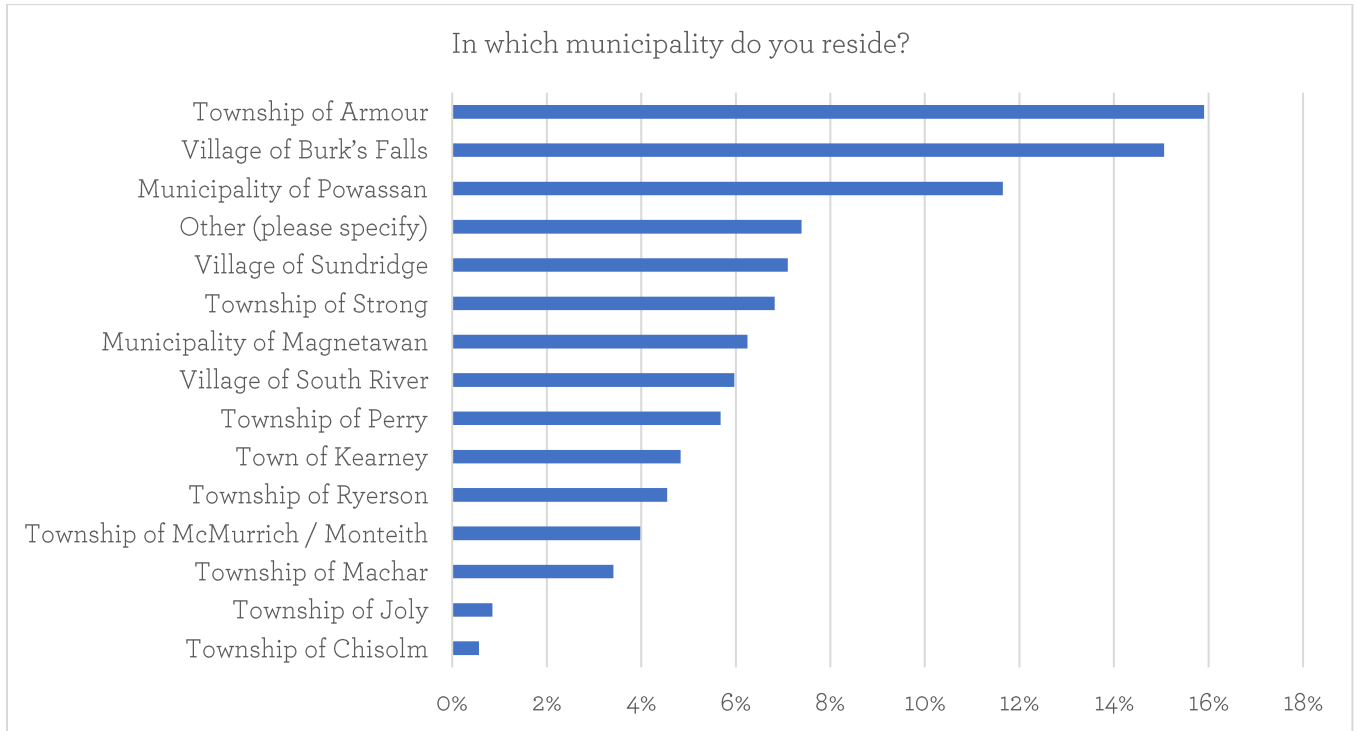


o Other (please specify):

- Sector
- 9 Retired
- 1 Retired and owner of a service building
- 2 Retired resident
- 3 Senior resident
- 2 Resident
- 2 Private citizen
- 1 Tax payer
- 1 Seasonal resident
- 7 Construction
- 1 Tradesperson
- 1 Construction and retail
- 4 Engineering
- 2 Infrastructure
- 1 Engineering and construction
- 1 Surface mining
- 3 Real estate
- 3 Not-for-profit
- 3 Professional services
- 2 Technology
- 2 Disability
- 1 Self employed
- 1 Financial
- 1 Investor
- 1 Education and health services
- 1 Musician

- 1 Stay at home mom
- 1 Business owner / Stay at home parent
- 1 I have a retail store but I try to sell local food to the tourists, so I would say I'm all three categories
- 1 Finance / business owner
- 1 Small business
- 1 Recreation and leisure
- 1 Lake stewardship association
- 1 Healthcare
- 1 Education marketing
- 1 Service
- 1 Retail
- 1 Military
- 1 Public safety
- 1 Transportation
- 1 Agriculture, tourism, social/cultural organization
- 1 Unemployed
- 1 Consumer
- 1 All
- 1 Concerned citizen with economic development background
- 1 An interested resident (senior); looking to my future and wondering whether it is viable for me to stay in a community that seems to be dying
- 1 I have lived in various areas of the Almaguin Highlands my whole life (went to Almaguin Highlands S.S.) and want to see our region work together, rather than separate parts.
- 1 This question is structured poorly. Participants should be able to choose more than one option and also some clarity on what this question means is needed. I represent many things. I'm a young professional who works in North Bay. I work in social services, but I also have a connection to the agricultural community, etc.

13. In which municipality do you reside?



o Other (please specify):

- | | MUNICIPALITY |
|---|--|
| 4 | Nipissing Township |
| 1 | Out of province. Formerly Nipissing Township. |
| 3 | Township of Lount |
| 3 | Huntsville |
| 2 | North Bay |
| 2 | Barrie |
| 1 | Barrie (lived in Burk's Falls for over 20 years) |
| 1 | North Bay (formerly Burk's Falls) |
| 1 | Work in the Village of Burk's Falls |
| 1 | Reside in Strong. Business is in Village of Sundridge |
| 1 | I have property in both Sundridge and Strong |
| 1 | Township of Ryerson and Township of McMurrich/Monteith |
| 1 | Township of Laurier |
| 1 | Callander |
| 1 | Dunchurch |
| 1 | West Parry Sound |
| 1 | We cover all these areas in our forestry sector |

14. Now it's your turn! As we work towards a new regional Economic Development Strategic Plan, do you have any comments or suggestions about where we should focus and prioritize our work? (200 words or less)

BUSINESSES AND RETAIL
There seems to be a focus on attracting new business, which I agree is important, but existing business should receive equal support as well. Too often, we celebrate when a business opens but then turn a blind eye when two others have to close down shortly after.
The empty store fronts in many towns reduce the amount of tourism or locals spending money in the area. They all travel to more established communities, since we don't have the same shopping opportunities. Which creates a snowball effect of economic growth: no jobs, and no local sources of income or growth for the community.
Bringing more stores to encourage tourists to come to Burk's Falls. Giant Tiger store. Drug store open on Sat.
Encouraging local businesses to support one another and cross promote. Encourage local residents to shop locally as much as possible. Encourage those who are on unemployment services to find jobs locally or create their own. Provide more information on grants available to individuals wanting to start a business
Remove tax breaks that allow retail space to remain empty. Look at Burks Falls, for example.
Focus on existing businesses. They are here for a reason. Try to keep them and stop them from leaving.
Local businesses. Promote shopping local, making it easier for small businesses to sustain.
Focus on maintaining & retaining the businesses and cultural activities we already have in the area, and try to attract more opportunities.
I would love to see some programs in place to help small businesses take the next steps.
Making it attractive for local residence to succeed and grow in business.
Free or low cost workshops for community organizations to support grant writing, business cases, etc. so organizations can secure funding to sustain the organizations and maintain the economic diversity of the region.
Make monies available to small businesses that they will immediately spend locally.
If a Walmart (or other such business) comes to the area, I will move!
Need to focus on jobs for citizens who are already here. Need year-round work. Tourism jobs are minimum wage and seasonal. Often not enough hours for EI, and people go on welfare while business owner's make \$. Need to help employers to learn how to manage youth and retain employees.
We need to invest in youth employment. Kids are not learning good work ethic and behaviours from school or parents. Employers need to be supported in how to work with this age group. We need to keep young people in the area.
There are lots of jobs here but kids don't see the value in working as they are handed everything and thinks life owes them \$20 an hour in high school. Employers don't care if you need to leave early everyday cause you have anxiety dealing with people. Better coping skills and a reality check need to be invested in youth.
The whole objective should be focused on giving incentives to private businesses to find it economical to create new businesses or grow their businesses in our area. Once business growth takes place, everything else will come together.
Reasonable funding. As a small retail business I have found I am in direct competition with non-profit organizations for funding. I have applied for funding and in one instance found that the group worked to the payment limit not to my needs, therefore, I decided to go it on my own rather

<p>than take on the funding to support another business - website set-up. Currently I have more "away" people supporting my shop – there are not enough locals support small business. Focus on educating government and the municipalities on how hard it is to maintain a stable brick and mortar business in an ongoing online climate. If there is no focus close to home, then make it more reasonable to mail products.</p>
<p>Develop a clear picture of what you want for Sundridge, then go for it. Approach new businesses you want to relocate to Sundridge, and provide much better support for the businesses that are already here.</p>
<p>I don't think there is a place to go buy a pair of socks in this town if needed. Why bring our money to Huntsville when we need it here?</p>
<p>We need incentives for stores with general merchandise retail, like socks and underwear.</p>
<p>Focusing and enhancing or supporting businesses we already have in the area. Perhaps streamlining policies and procedures so any industry looking into this area knows what the rules and regulations are, and hopefully they're fewer than the more urban areas to promote more industry moving north. That would offset the higher cost of trucking and doing business farther north.</p>
<p>Supports and advertising for new small business owners, regular meetings, Evenings and quarterly. I would like to meet all the fibre artists in South River and surrounding areas. A trade show that supports all sectors and advertise culture days. Engage the sectors of all services to come together.</p>
<p>Promote low interest loans and professional advisory input, expansion and improvement of local restaurants, pubs, inns and other places of interest.</p>

<p>JOB CREATION AND ATTRACTING NEW BUSINESSES</p>
<p>We need to make it more attractive for business of all kinds to open in our area and create more jobs.</p>
<p>Encouraging young families to move here by having jobs available and increased opportunities for other forms of income.</p>
<p>Job creation is definitely needed. Be nice to have our younger generation staying in the area instead of leaving to go elsewhere for work.</p>
<p>More jobs.</p>
<p>I think bringing in more businesses to the area and creating more jobs would help the economy and bring more people to the area. I have heard that we import welfare recipients from other areas. This in my opinion is counterproductive if true, as we already have people of our own who need employment.</p>
<p>I strongly believe we need large manufacturing plants up here (like Lofthouse). We have the space and infrastructure in place now, and we definitely need to up the tax base with business, not killing our cottagers and homeowners with an unrealistic tax base. As we are set up now, we're chasing potential owners away due to municipal taxes.</p>
<p>Job creation.</p>
<p>Please help the young people so that they do not have to move to make a living!! I lived here for over 50 years and I see it going to nothing. All the young people have to leave. Please help them!!!</p>
<p>Job creation and retention.</p>
<p>Forget about tourism. Forget about attracting retirees and seniors. They are NOT the future. Get high speed internet everywhere. Attract new relevant business.</p>
<p>The priority should be attracting businesses to the downtown locations in the communities.</p>
<p>Perhaps incentives to attract industry, such as reduced / no property or business taxes for a year, advertising on behalf of the company, co-operation between councils, and support for each other.</p>

We need to entice new businesses, especially manufacturing, to locate here. Something as simple as no taxes for 5 years for new businesses would help. Recycle tax dollars by giving a 10% local preference on municipal tenders. Councils should lead by example re "buy local". See how Bradford accomplished their huge expansion in a few years.
Attract businesses.
Encourage new businesses to come by adding incentives such as no business tax for several years, or lower taxes for several years.
It looks like no one is working in Burks Falls. We need to create jobs here and surrounding area.
Attracting industry.
Encourage private businesses to come in and economic nature will follow. We have rail, airport and highway for transportation.
Investment attraction: look for ways to attract new businesses to the area.
Focus on attracting more jobs. Real estate is currently more affordable than south of us.
Get businesses into Burk's Falls that will be used by the community and make the downtown area viable.
Attracting new businesses to the area.
To promote sustainable, year-round, full-time employment opportunities. Having full-time job opportunities all year round would help to boost the socioeconomic status of the region. To do this, we need to attract more business development.
Industry and jobs.
You should bring more industry and businesses to the regions .
Improved job opportunities to keep young people in the area. More businesses to further tax base.
I believe that there are a few industries that are really starting to make moves (craft beer, marijuana, healthy active living). It would be great to see some of those industries make a move into our area. The world is changing fast and we need to be prepared to keep up.
We are definitely in need of manufacturing in our area. Burks Falls is a perfect example of what can be done to attract this type of business. Without this type of industry, we will always be dependent on government handouts.
Attracting manufacturing industry.
We need to focus on bringing work in. Older people don't like change, but younger people need it to survive. Bring in things that are going to bring people above poverty so that the working class can feel safe in their communities. If young people can't work, they can't stay.
Encourage younger population through job opportunities.
Creating long-term sustainable employment opportunities that are not based on the seasonal nature of tourism .
Need more businesses / employment in the region.
I believe "the plan" should focus on attracting new industry or trades to the area. This will enable more people to earn a livable income and promote young people staying in the area.
Priority one is to bring good paying jobs to the area and bring the median income up to the provincial average, as well as bringing the median age down to the provincial average.
Try to interest small manufacturers and other businesses to come to the area.
Rebuild each town with an eye to outside investment, both in terms of industry and tourism/culture. Each should work out what it wants/needs to be and simply be that.

JOB TRAINING AND EDUCATION
Encourage development of education programs for trades in this area in order to provide skilled workers for businesses willing to locate in the area.

I believe the future lies with our youth. Opportunities for education & training closer to home as well as employers willing to mentor.

Education: Teaching trades jobs for the upcoming youth.

Manufacturing skills through education.

From my experience with friends and family, one of the most important areas we should focus on is a post-secondary school.

Raise the bar in our schools – better test results for standardized testing (this needs to be a full time position, pushing quality education) with targets in place.

SERVICES

It is important to consider banks, which have been moving out of small towns. Maintaining services not only helps create jobs but is important for tourism and infrastructure development.

From my experience with friends and family, one of the most important areas we should focus on is more government offices. To travel an hour to North Bay or Parry Sound or even Bracebridge is ridiculous. Burk's Falls or Sundridge should have government offices.

Better police services.

In order to show that we have a little importance to our elected provincial and federal officials, it would be nice to be able to visit an M.P., M.P.P. or any other official from a Ministry office, in the area, instead of having to travel to North Bay, Huntsville, Bracebridge, Parry Sound, Barrie, Toronto, etc.

ATTRACTING PEOPLE

In this age of high speed internet, there is no reason to put government jobs in large centers. There would be benefits to using smaller centers where rent is cheaper and qualified people are ready and willing to do the work. It would remove some of the pressure on transportation and housing to move these jobs and spread them out.

Please encourage provincial and federal governments to start relocating to Northern Ont. Also, Northern Ontario needs to petition for an immigration policy like the Maritimes.

Look for ways to encourage young families to move to the area to fill job vacancies. Understand the types of jobs/careers young adults are pursuing after graduation, and work on attracting employers/jobs in this field.

I relocated to Kearney while working from home for a GTA engineering & construction company. The local low cost of living provided a large raise (by reducing living expenses), while not raising costs on my employer. This current popularity of the “work from home” model should be promoted to bring additional full-time residents to the area along with the financial benefits to local communities that result from increased population.

There is a serious shortage of skilled trades i.e. electricians, plumbers, framers, etc. Many of the current people employed in these trades are approaching retirement age, with very few people to replace them.

Need to attract skilled workers from the larger cities to manufacturing jobs in the area. Need a better plan to develop a skilled work force in the area from the youth and young adults that are here and want to stay here.

We somehow need to get people with good paying jobs to reside in the area. That way we get the benefit of money they earn here.

AGRICULTURE

Have government subsidize the reinstatement of farming + agriculture.

Agricultural products, agriculture events, and agricultural history.

Farming.
There is a vast number of rural farmers that need support that so far have not been considered in any study of the Almaguin/East Parry Sound area.
Make it easier for farming and selling local products. Advertise this area for agricultural purposes.

INFRASTRUCTURE
Work on the infrastructure within the communities of Almaguin Highlands to improve the aesthetics and attract people to the area to live and work.
Start with a good foundation. I laugh when we spend tax dollars on our roads without fixing where the problem starts, THE FOUNDATION. That also applies to every sector in the municipality. I could go on but my time is more valuable than closed ears
Make sure all involved have proper infrastructure in place, as in up-to-date equipment and services.
Lower hydro rates.
Stop with the red tape. Allow business to flourish. As an example, Burk’s Falls now has a state of the art solar farm ... did that reduce hydro rates? It used to be with the dam in Burk’s that we received a lower rate. That improves business opportunities. Water and sewer rates are disgusting for some small businesses. I understand the ratio if the sewers were more than a lagoon system. How you come up with 3x the water bill is mind boggling.
Currently my taxes have sky rocketed as well as hydro costs. Now this year, even my garbage waste had been reduced by 30% and I may be forced to hire a waste disposal company to keep area clean for tourists.
Incineration of garbage + refuse to produce hydro and lower the rates for business + residents.

HOUSING
Reduce or relax some parts of the building code to advance the number of building permits issued. There are too many hoops to jump through to get the necessary permits.
Affordable housing benefits all sectors and all demographics. Until we address that need and have the population base needed to support businesses and services, outflow will continue and prosperity will suffer.
Expanded services - natural gas, water and sewer - provides impetus for privately funded, much needed new house building in Burk’s Falls. Basically more serviced lots for sale. Build and they will come.
Housing.
Need more rental accommodations for seniors and young adults looking to save for a first home.
Large numbers of low income housing projects in small towns do not support a prosperous community. Bringing low income households and low income seniors together in the same setting only supports the illegal selling of prescription drugs. Bringing large quantities of low income housing into small town puts the town at risk of higher drug and crime rates. Low income households on government assistance are not using their income to supposed local business and promote town prosperity. They go to big cities such as Huntsville and North Bay to Walmart and Fresh Co to do their shopping. Seniors on their own do, however, put money back into the communities. Burk’s Falls does not need more low income housing.
Affordable housing.
Affordable living (mortgage rates, renewal process for older homes, local loans for down payment programs, and get more people owning).
Look for ways to encourage young families to purchase homes.

TRANSPORTATION

Affordable commuting; car pool programs.

The region needs better ways to get here. Ontario Northland, Near North are ok, but we could do more by working together. Look at "parkbus" - we could do something similar and get sponsors like MEC, Trillium Foundation. Imagine on select dates, a bus comes from Toronto to Almaguin, stopping in Burk's Falls, Sundridge, South River and back on Sunday. Long term, we continue to work on the train.

Look for unique ways to address the lack of transportation in the area.

HEALTHCARE

More healthcare funding for social workers for the area.

We should get a pharmacy in Magnetawan or Whitestone as we have the nurses' station in Whitestone and there are a lot of seniors who can't drive to get prescriptions. This would just make sense. Also, we need a nursing home closer, plus it would bring more jobs to the Magnetawan and Dunchurch area. Then the local residents could stay in the area and that would help keep the school open, plus open a daycare building, in Magnetawan.

Encourage government to re-align their funding to at least maintain funding for health care (including hospitals) in rural areas, rather than trying to make people travel so far.

Healthcare.

Health care in the region with a focus on how it will be delivered in the future, either in person or online.

Better healthcare.

As a supporting factor to economic development, retention of the Huntsville Hospital location is key.

Healthcare.

You should bring better health care.

Supporting community development is important for long term economic development. It is therefore important to consider factors like medical care, especially for tourists or those who do not have a family doctor.

Healthcare.

Better health care and disability services.

From my experience with friends and family, one of the most important areas we should focus on is healthcare i.e. hospital or medical clinics.

I believe that there is a growing need for more respite centres for the elderly and the handicapped or disabled.

It will also be important to keep as much health care as possible in the area or at least close to the area (MAHC situation).

INTERNET AND TECHNOLOGY

Area wide broadband is vital, not this pile of **** we have now. No one will come here for business without it. Quit fooling the people with all the reports on the area. After maybe 30 area reports in 20 years, it is now time TO MAKE SOMETHING WORK!!!

Buy more technology and support local nerds.

We need cell towers and high speed internet across the entirety of Almaguin. Younger generations want to live in smaller communities and on lakefront property, but be connected at the same time. This applies to youth retention as well. Connectivity also strengthens local businesses and gives them a wider reach to markets that are further than just local.

Demand infrastructure to support high speed internet expansion in this area.

True high speed will allow businesses to operate in an online global growing specialty market. Internet infrastructure to work and play in this new world.

SENIORS

Focus. What is your phrase to describe the area: Almaguin Highlands, A Great Place to Be? My focus would be to promote the area as a place to retire. Stimulates all types of services, jobs, construction, transportation, services, and creates a great opportunity to involve government to fund housing, transportation, etc. The focus identifies the area of concentration, the rest will follow: jobs, jobs, jobs Choose something the government can get behind.

I feel more emphasis should be put on the senior sectors that represent Almaguin's population. With forward thinking, many economical spin offs and opportunities for investment will present themselves and provide self-sustaining economic opportunities.

Economic development and infrastructure for an aging population.

Senior affordable housing.

Senior programming.

Do something productive with MA Wittick, not low income housing!! Too much of that already and it just drags the community down. If we want growth, make it a seniors' building or long term care facility. This will bring the residents of the building's money to town and their families' money as well, and - poof - money in the town.

It would be amazing to have the old school in Burk's Falls (M.A Wittick) become a long term care facility or retirement home to create jobs. I am a PSW and have to drive to Huntsville to work.

Turn the old school to seniors' housing offering more services to seniors

Encourage one town to build senior small homes for the baby boomers, like they did in Gravenhurst. There is a real need for smaller homes for seniors, not low income, just for the medium income people who want to downsize and don't want to leave the area.

Services for seniors as retired population increases.

More housing for seniors is most important to me. Also more assistance for seniors in their homes until they can access a nursing home.

Our seniors are an intricate and important part of society. They should be treated with respect and we should be focusing on ways we can keep them living a healthy, physically active lifestyle and independent and engaging lives. Easily obtainable transportation to and from appointments and routine daily chores.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION

Focusing on creating environmentally sustainable tourist opportunities is vital. We need to take advantage of the beautiful nature that surrounds us without destroying it.

Almaguin Highlands has much untapped natural resources. I am worried that without a plan, we will experience an influx of new residents who have a different and expanded expectation of the region without a smart, planned way of maintaining and growing our region.

Using our current assets such as waterfronts.

New development in energy, protecting our lakes and rivers.

Need to save green spaces. Give tax breaks to business that don't use plastic or Styrofoam straws and packaging. If this area turns into Huntsville-Muskokas, I will move.

We need to preserve our landscapes and environment. Promote green projects and ideas to local business. Concern over business environmental impacts and development of the natural beauty this area provides.

Focus on green business and business education on how they can make a positive environmental impact. Most of pollution comes from ignorance. Bring in ways to help businesses and they can educate the public. Fix places we have before selling green spaces for development.

Focus should be applied to bringing in or developing existing sustainable activities. Expansion in areas such as renewable energy should be a big component of the plan.

SMALL TOWN ATMOSPHERE

Keep small town feel – that's why people live here. Can't become Muskoka! Don't need to grow-need to maintain.

We do not need to grow. We need to maintain a small town atmosphere and support the people that are here. We do NOT want Smart Centres and big box chains ruining small business and small towns.

People live here to enjoy a small town feel. Overdevelopment and chain stores will ruin this. The world does not need more Walmart's and Home Depots. Support the business that are here before you bring in more garbage. Help employers hire the people that are here before you increase the population.

BEAUTIFICATION AND DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

In the town of Burk's Falls, encourage all the owners to paint the outside of their buildings in historical colours, and promote that.

Beautification, sustainability, and utilizing areas where needs and entertainment can be met without exploitation or devastation of the area or of the existing residents. Development to improve not destroy what exists.

All small towns need a facelift and more attention to historic building to keep them alive and livable for new businesses.

Start by having residents clean up their properties. It's a disgrace when driving through the streets. Continue with fixing the main streets in hopes of attracting new business.

Beautify Main St.

Downtown restoration.

We should first make our villages more attractive in order to attract business and tourists.

A certain few individuals own many vacant properties on the Main Street. People not from our own municipalities shouldn't be allowed to come in and buy up the properties in a town and charge city rent prices, then leave storefronts vacant with zero penalties. They should have to pay higher tax on vacant store fronts, not get tax write offs.

Getting rid of rundown buildings on the main streets.

Support existing town core in reestablishing a main street presence.

Clean up what we have.

Beautification of store fronts and property!

Fixing up the town of Burk's Falls.

MARKETING

Increased advertisement towards the internet technology space.

Exposure of our area.

The strategic plan should be geared towards recommendations that can be achievable. Making a plan to put it on a shelf is counterproductive, you give people hope and nothing happens. We should market our tourism and local businesses better, especially online. Getting municipalities together to develop tourism businesses or attractions may be a good solution to bringing more people and jobs to the area.

I think we have to think bigger!!! It won't happen overnight, but Almaguin has the potential to be a major player in the tourism sector. We are only 3 hours max from Toronto, yet we are a comparative unknown. We need to brand ourselves better.
Focus on promoting this area as a tourist, hunting, and fishing destination. Promote and support local arts and craft facilities and destinations. Promote seasonal eco-friendly tourist facilities: rock climbing, canoe routes, cross country skiing, and hiking trails with overnight, on-site accommodations.
Bring film! Build film infrastructure. Entice producers to film in the North!!
Consider re-branding? What and where is Almaguin? It does not exist on a map. How can someone find it? How about 'Muskoka North?" Everyone knows where Muskoka is – use it to re-position the region.
We should also be promoting ourselves more as a destination for business and recreation across the province.
Regional initiatives (branding).
What we don't need is another level of government. Let's look to partner with the business and municipal partners to strategize and use our existing tools. Social media is powerful, and Explorer's Edge is mastering it. Let's equip key players in the district to send in those photos. Or engage the public to take the quintessential seasonal photos. We need to be talking to tourists in the GTA and abroad. We need to successfully promote the wonders of this region. Let's engage the two tourism boards that are already in place and maximize our exposure.
We need to work diligently to remove the word "ghetto" when people talk about the Village of Burk's Falls.
Promotion of events and sites in the region.
Focus on the comparative advantages of the Almaguin area relative to other parts of the Province.
Advertise the area .
As a take-out restaurant in Kearney right at the Park office, we see every year an increase in East Indian, Vietnam, and Chinese tourism. I know the ethnicity as I ask our visitors where they were born. We need to market to Toronto online and with TV and radio in those languages to come up to our area, not just the Huntsville Muskoka area. It is all word of mouth for these travelers to come to our area. They enjoy the uncrowded areas, the friendly towns, etc. And they come in large groups and spend lots of money. I think a few thousand dollars should be spent on advertising in Toronto in these languages, or at least someone could contact all the social clubs of these cultures in the city and introduce our area to them.
Focus on marketing the area's assets.
Small businesses, seasonal tourists, advertisement of events going on in the area via social media, radio, pamphlets. Work together as one instead of each municipality on their own.

TAXES AND REGULATIONS
Cut red tape.
There is lots of land that could be sold if the cost of severance and application were much less! Economic stimulation and business growth can be encouraged by reducing and/or removing govt restrictions to attract new opportunities that will go elsewhere in this competitive global market. Profitability is the main drive for business success. Canadian govt rules and regulations are very strict, driving business to other regions in the world! Ontario's labour rate is cost prohibitive. Environmental assessments, feasibility studies, and permit processes are costly, and they chase prospective opportunities away! We NEED to get in the game! Reducing govt restrictions and costly "red tape" is the perfect solution to telling businesses "we are open"!!!!

Don't hold back new businesses with unnecessary regulations- i.e., the new distillery in Sundridge told me they were held up in their launch because they couldn't hook up to water - why would you make it difficult for someone to bring business to your town?

Working with small business: eliminating the "red tape".

The village spends money like it's going out of style. People are not going to want to open up a business or medical practice if the taxes they're paying are being spent frivolously. If the village continues like it does now by keeping its residents and business owners in the dark, you won't have a village in 15 years. It will be a desolate wasteland. Something needs to be done now.

TOURISM AND VISITOR ACCOMODATIONS

We need to make sure our tourism industry stays strong.

We need to take the focus off tourism. To build a sustainable economic base, we need better opportunities for ourselves and our families. We need to be more than just somewhere where people spend their "extra" money or their "recreational dollars".

Focus on the residents. Not tourism. They come and they ██████ our stores. They trash our parks. They overfish our lakes. Keep Almaguin self-sufficient by creating a place to call our own.

I believe "the plan" should focus on tourism.

Less tourism, more well paid year round jobs so that the people that actually live here can afford to work and live here.

More big events and activities to draw people to the area.

Tourism is the most important area to me. Our area has a natural beauty to it which draws people from all over the world. We need more accommodations in our towns and more larger events.

Tourism.

One suggestion is a fall fair that encompass all of the area, instead of all the small ones. Have a boat going down the Mag River to attract visitors. Encourage artists to have a large show in the area, and advertise it. Encourage one town to have a restaurant hop, where you go to one for appetizers, another one for entree, and lastly one for dessert, to showcase their restaurants.

Promote the area as a cycling destination.

The surrounding townships need to build infrastructure to bring more visitors all year round to the village of Burk's Falls and areas. Bring in a hotel/ motel for all season visitors, to bring jobs and money into the area. A resort would be great for weddings, events, etc. Got to keep money coming in to support future developments.

Common stops for the average person such as a Tim Hortons draw people into a smaller town, but also gets them to stop and shop at local businesses. A major problem with the small towns is that beside resorts and campsites, we are lacking hotel and motel accommodations. This area needs places for people to stay overnight or they will carry on to North Bay or Huntsville, missing all the good in between. Having accommodations helps people stay and eat and spend locally. As an example, in Sundridge, South River and Burk's Falls, hockey tournament people come to play but have to stay in Huntsville if Caswell resort is full and end up eating dinner and breakfast in Huntsville, not spending here in the small towns.

We need to attract more tourists.

Tourism.

Local tourism.

Tourism should also be looked at to help stimulate the economy and help produce jobs.

Quality tourism and accommodations.

Tourism.

Burk's Falls could be a thriving tourist village but instead it is dying. We need to revitalize little towns like this with interesting retail. The region doesn't give companies the incentive to bring business to us.
Increase the amount of events in the region (look at Powassan with their successful shows). Bring back things like the Festival of Almaguin and have a travelling show for each portion of the region (14 weekend event across the region, highlighting the best of each place).
Innovation... not doubling down on traditional sectors such as tourism and forestry.
Tourism provides a healthy injection into our economy but it does nothing to develop full time living-wage permanent jobs for our residents. The economic gap between the wealthy and the unemployed and low wage earners is profound. The residents of Almaguin deserve to live in dignity not poverty. Economic development should focus on improving our citizens' quality of life and not focus on satisfying transient tourists who spend a fraction of what permanent residents infuse into our economy.
Tourism: community events, eco-tourism, agricultural tourism.
Build on tourism.
Tourism brings people and money into the community.
Let's work towards upgrading our image, housing & accommodations to attract more tourism .
No more tourism funding.
Tourism is very important. Provides lots of jobs.
Marketing the region as a whole for tourism.
It would be nice to see the small towns in the area come back to life from being moved off the highway! Encouraging business for tourism to move in would be beneficial for the area maybe a huge resort with a theme park, trails, etc. to bring in visitors and to boost our economy!

COOPERATION, COORDINATION AND AMALGAMATION
Again, I will reinforce the need for all communities to work together for the good of local development. Past projects have been scrapped when municipalities could not work together. Now it is essential that the future is more important than the past.
The village of Burk's Falls must incorporate Armour Township and other surrounding areas. We don't have the land and resources for large development on our own, nor enough public interest to bring private companies here.
Unify the regions. Have a single inclusive plan.
I strongly suggest that the only solution to any of the area's success is to become regional!!! Less councils for the government to deal with ... faster results!!!
Amalgamation is not a dirty word. The ratio of residents to municipalities is absurd. Currently we have 14 separate entities all vying for funding - granted some are resource sharing, but this notion of autonomy hinders growth.
Get the towns and townships focused on the same goal.
Communities must work together and this area has a tremendous potential for year round tourism.
I feel we should have one municipality not all separate townships, and pool the money together to share in infrastructure and also reduce contract workers from each township and hire full time staff instead for one municipality.
Think to include all areas. This is a very wide diversified area. We are attracting seniors from the south to retire up here in our beautiful area.
Regional development is great but each municipality must have individual input as to what is most important or unique for that village. Much of what is important and great about our region is found in the villages.

Amalgamations.
Cooperation.
Amalgamation of the townships and eliminating the silos created by so many individual councils would eliminate redundant functions and jobs and work for common cause.
You need the north end to feel more included with the Almaguin Highlands as people there feel more connected to North Bay because of our location to it. I went to Almaguin H.S.S. when everyone in the area did - and it was amazing. Now, there are too many disconnects and I think we need to all work together to make Almaguin Highlands a known area and a destination - like the Muskokas are.
We could start with amalgamation, stop with small government, and create one with clout!
Amalgamating small townships would ease the financial burden and give a sustainable plan to benefit the whole of Almaguin. Too many agenda driven representatives do not have a big picture attitude but instead are localized in what they view as beneficial in economic development. The quaint nature of all of the Villages of Almaguin can be better served by a large body promoting the events and activities throughout the region and have better coverage to attract tourists and business people to the area.
It is important that the plan is regional and that all parties participate in the planning. However, it is also important that the regional plan continues to respect and laud the unique differences of each community in the region. It is these differences that help to make the area an interesting and marketable destination for tourism and economic development in manufacturing and retail.
Amalgamation of regional government is necessary but difficult. Getting municipalities to work together is a challenge, almost a cast system. Unorganized townships need to pay into the municipal pool. A few are footing the bills for a large number. There needs to be equality in taxation. There are many unorganized townships in our area that are not paying into the pool, education, etc.
Working all together is the key! Which you are already doing! Business and municipal councils should work together.
Amalgamation of townships to get a lower tax rate for businesses and residents. This is a huge detractor for new businesses and residents to the area... Taxes are too high for businesses to sustain themselves and locals to live.
Getting businesses to work together and promote each other.
Education re: successes of collaborating- are there existing examples of successful stories to draw from? provide evidence - baseline regional demographics - most municipalities already have their own stats - what are the regional stats?
Working with a larger number of municipalities is key .
FAMILIES, YOUTH AND COMMUNITY BUILDING
Decide whether or not we are a getaway for nature enthusiasts or a place/area that you can raise a family and have a career in a great location.
Economic development and infrastructure to keep and attract young families.
Youth programming.
As a newcomer to the north, I think that a prosperous, vibrant community attracts more visitors which then add to the economy. So focusing on the full time residents will spin off attract more tourism.
We need more community services. Ex. A community centre. The old school could be turned into a community centre, to create a place where kids can go, to learn to play. We need a gym, fitness classes, karate, sports, yoga, a public pool – something to bring the community together. We don't need any more old age, affordable housing, etc.

Making the municipality a great place to LIVE will attract many of the economic spins offs asked about here. If people will raise their families here, they will also invest here (residential or commercial tax base).

I feel more emphasis should be put on the family sectors that represent Almaguin's population. With forward thinking, many economical spin offs and opportunities for investment will present themselves and provide self-sustaining economic opportunities.

A sense of community, and community pride, is critical to a sustainable economic and growth plan. The strengths of the area, along with a focus on areas for improvement (revitalization, healthcare, public/private sector partnerships) and engagement with the residents will be critical.

Community service, things for kids to do.

A recreational centre would provide jobs and a place for families to spend time together.

Do not forget to include seasonal residents and visitors- i.e. hold events on the weekend when the greatest number of people are around to spend money.

Create an environment that showcases a vibrant social and cultural community to make our villages appealing to young people and families to locate and/or remain in the area.

Recreation centres and competitive recreational programs (build it they will come). Debt will be required.

Develop separate bike trails; this will attract families with children, and young adults, who in turn will come back because "they know Sundridge" and have an affinity with this area. Also, when on a bike you can't bring a lot, so lunch, dinner, ice cream, drink, you name it, has to be bought.

TRENDS

It is so important to focus this plan around the demographic reality of our area. We have an aging population and out-migration. We need to plan for this, if not there no point to strategize the rest.

Study demographic trends and forecast future trends, so we can anticipate, prioritize and plan for things like: long term work force supply vs. demand; viability of individual municipal programs and recreational infrastructure (decide to develop separately or amalgamate); optimal school system and infrastructure; health care requirements; housing requirements; both residential and retirement/long term care.

Please begin with a thorough, detailed analysis of the current economic picture for our region and compare that information with historical data to see emerging trends. Provide services that can support ALL sectors, but invest in the ones already demonstrating growth in the absence of support. These are the sectors most likely to flourish. Just make sure that social support and enrichment for our communities isn't overlooked. We are not our jobs. Recognize we will never compete with larger centres unless we play to our strengths. I pay the same municipal taxes in Sundridge that I paid for a home worth nearly twice as much in Barrie and I get WAY fewer service and amenities here... but I choose to live here because I have family here and there are aspects of life in Almaguin that are truly wonderful and much harder to find elsewhere... so my family has found a way to make it work, even though there wasn't employment for us in the immediate area (I telecommute and my husband commutes to North Bay). Empower people to build their communities. Provide opportunities for engagement. Identify problems and find solutions. E.g. have we got a childcare shortage? No YMCA running daycare? Hold an info session to see if there are stay-at-home mom's interested in starting a small childcare business. If you have interest, invest in a workshop to help them learn how to make that happen. We and our problems are not unique. Educate yourselves about initiatives that are working elsewhere. Save time and energy by borrowing/modifying good ideas that are already out there and don't be afraid of change. Also remember that if something isn't working, it's okay to admit it and move on to another idea.

VISION

Cohesive vision of what you want to create. What, where, why, how and when. Please keep in mind that every decision you make will affect the next SEVEN GENERATIONS. Any developments must also respect our precious environment and advocate for those in our region without voices. Thank you...I'm excited to see the beauty and prosperity unfold. Seek true visionaries and throw them in a room with proven developers and insist they find a way to figure out a way to plan and create the best individual communities. That will invigorate the entire region.

Uniting all the municipalities in this endeavor is a great achievement in itself! Promoting what is here and moving forward with a vision of what could be is important. Create the vision and let us all strive to see it come to be!

Our communities need to have leaders that will embrace change, and work towards growing our communities and increasing jobs and stability for our area.

COST OF LIVING

No one will shop locally for food or gas because of inflated costs. Find a way to get the LOCAL people to support their own communities.

Lowered cost of living.

Have a meeting with the local businesses and encourage them to lower their prices to avoid everyone shopping in Huntsville or North Bay. Maybe give a tax break if needed.

Attracting companies that pay their employees at least a living wage will increase further economic development such as new construction, retail and entertainment.

With the price of gas, people aren't going as far for weekend trips and holidays.

SUSTAINABILITY

The downtown core to attract visitors and locals alike. While tourism is vital to the area, sustainable business is vital for retention. The focus needs to attract business with a realistic future. Empty shops do not attract investors and do not provide motivation to existing owners.

Affordable and sustainable living for residents of our area will encourage and support local economic growth. All industry (social and business) as well as each of the municipalities need to work together to make Almaguin a place people can afford to stay, raise families and grow older in. Our current state (and division) makes that extremely difficult both financially and logistically.

Economic growth is not endlessly achievable. Time and time again it has been proven that a slow and steady economy will outlast a boom or bust.

You need to focus on improving and supporting what the communities have to offer first before spending funding to attract new businesses. Remember that it is the locals who are left to pay for the improvements plus help support the businesses that we currently have. A community is like building a house: start with a solid foundation, build a few walls, add a roof and always leave room for future expansion.

PRACTICAL DETAILS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

If there was to be an office, where would it be and would everyone (even businesses open during business hours) have access to programming and information. Would the office be able to work with the businesses on the business's own terms?

As a current member of CAEDA, I believe a regional ED Dept. is integral to the progressive success of our lovely region of Almaguin Highlands. It would be highly desirable to find a way to get all 14 municipalities committed - strength in numbers, especially for financial sustainability of a Regional ED Dept.

A cohesive, tangible plan will be necessary to create "buy-in" and unify the 14 municipalities. It must also be objective in order that current businesses can see the value of participating in its implementation.
I think every municipality should have one employee who can work even part-time in economic development and all should meet regularly to pool their resources and discuss what work and what doesn't. I think they should be a cohesive group and not work against each other.
Communication of plans and ideas are essential. Not everyone has access to technology so multi-faceted approach is important. Integration where possible.
Getting all of the municipalities on board to support regional economic development financially and in every other aspect. They need to fully understand the importance.
A regional economic plan is awesome and necessary. I suggest we be careful not to dismantle the economic development groups of 3-6 municipalities. Coordination and cooperation among the groups is key but if all of the municipalities try to create a single entity, the competing priorities among municipalities may paralyze the economic development group as a whole.
One of the key elements in progress is the attitude of citizens. If people are discouraged, there will be no one to support growth. A town hall style meeting showing specific steps that are being taken, how they will be taken and what residents can do would be a start. Create a buzz!
Educating local government about the function of economic development and the need for economic development is critical. Economic development needs long term buy in to be successful. While support from senior levels of government is important, municipalities need to have their skin in the game and be prepared to fund economic development as a partnership.
More focus on the southern municipalities and work way up north. We should really be aiming to take advantage of the overflow of people trying to get into the packed Muskoka region. Burk's Falls and Sundridge make the most sense to focus the majority of efforts to start with.
Top notch economic development officers. Norm Miller's commitment and working toward growing this area. Federal buy-in as well.
Our community's general population includes below average income families. Many commute to larger centers to find jobs, plus local people have to drive to Huntsville or North Bay to buy what they need. Having residents' mind-sets lean towards change is the challenge.

CONCERNS
I was surprised and disappointed to hear that Machar was no longer a member of CAEDA.
Do not make this a bloated government entity just to line the pockets of those working in the office and do nothing for the communities that support it. I am afraid that we will also get forgotten being lumped in with 13 other municipalities.
Many, many objectives have been tried in the past. They may last a few years or may pop up in a different format or including different municipalities. Maybe you could consider someone who is already being paid by their municipality for a similar job. People have to realize every time one of these plans start up, it is costing them. I am certainly not against progress and I want businesses to do well but it is not my responsibility to fund them. There is no doubt we need more customers walking through our doors and buying our products. What happened to our new manufacturing jobs that were supposed to come in our industrial park in Powassan? I wish you luck on your endeavors but try to stretch my tax dollars.
It is a tough sell to the communities that another series of consultations with consultants, which will lead to an economic development office staffed by basically intern level personnel, will have much of an impact. When you add up all of the money this costs, you could have probably hired a CEO level person, which is really what this job requires. Participation in the public meetings left me with the impression that the "facilitators" are wildly out of touch and going through the

motions. A comment made by the consultant about how another community engaged seasonal residents by offering 24-hour service revealed a startling level of ignorance and bias. So rather than showcasing the regions unique community and culture, give them the level of service they expect in the city. Appalling! Economic Development in this region will occur because people who love it here build strong, vibrant, supportive and sustainable communities and economies, which will make people want to live here. Businesses that provide unique solutions in a changing world will thrive. Economic Development will occur despite an Economic Development Strategic Plan, not because of it. That said, we can only hope that our elected Municipal Governments utilize the E.D. staff they have to offer a greater level of support to existing business and cultural enterprises. Focus on community building, support for existing small business. Let's face it, you are not equipped to attract major investment to the region. If that is your priority, you should head-hunt someone with a track-record of doing exactly that and pay them what is required. Peace!

We need people who will do what is best for the area and keep personal crap aside.

If I am not mistaken, I believe the existing funding is for one person on a salary less than \$100k to lead this initiative. I think that is a joke. I think that this means that there will be no success so we might as well save those funds by not having such a position. I also found this survey irresponsible as it is tax money spent on what is obvious and wanting to prove the funding support for this one position should be continuous. I found that irritating. We need an aggressive drive which will not take place this way.

What has happened to all of the 'old' plans? Were they implemented? Did they succeed or fail? Is there any measurement at all? For myself, I have been actively involved for more than 20 years participating at local, provincial and federal inquiries, meetings, Prime Minister task force, etc. Most recently a 3-year study on 'gentrification of the north'. So, what's changed? As far as I can see...cost of living/infrastructure is steadily rising and our region is not set to keep up, let alone prosper with its current ideologies. With all the studying that has been done...it saddens me that we still don't have a focus or priority in place. It should be pretty evident by now. What's missing? We are tourism & nature region and we don't have the infrastructure to attract travelers in sufficient numbers to share their wealth. We don't have a trained or available workforce for many of the 'ideas' that are bandied around. We are not near a population of 'millions' as are many other small towns that can attract 'retail shoppers' The almost insurmountable barrier is the unwillingness to embrace the internet, shop the world, sell to the world and of course, the lament from a very tiny group now....we don't have 'high speed' Please stop. Please stop undervaluing what we have. Please stop saying we have to be 'less' to attract 'more'. Thank you again for yet another opportunity to share a few of my concerns.

OTHER

I look forward to seeing an EcDev strategic plan for the area.

Please make Burk's Falls great again!!

History of the region and cultural significance of the area as an economic pull. Support opportunities for securing capital grants to renovate pre-existing places of economic significance (tourism, historically significant sites, community event spaces) .

Local township adding new members who look to actually work with business owners and support them. Not the joke it is now.

Having a council that is educated in running business and communities.

I feel Burk's Falls is the central location and most likely to attract newcomers as it is close to the highway has more to offer. It is central in the Almaguin area with more opportunity for development.

You should consider the economic impact that larger communities outside of the Almaguin Highlands have on the economy of the Almaguin Highlands (ex. Parry Sound/North Bay).

As part of one of our programs, we interviewed community partners. Identified needs or issues were: housing (lack of availability and higher costs because of tourists), transportation (lack of integrated system - transit, cabs, Uber etc.), lack of internet infrastructure and high costs to access. Identified strategies/wishes: promotion of entrepreneurship from within schools - start a FIRST Robotics group or STEM based groups, bylaws around inflated commercial rents, development of social workshops to overcome issues like human trafficking, activities that help youth visualize themselves as prosperous within their community and chosen career - that there is a place for them like an alumni database that prioritizes hiring local people after their studies to bring them back or a strategy to provide stepping stones for life if they come back and practice within the community. Work on inter-community collaboration. Awareness training for older business owners on how to engage millennials, Training for millennials on what's expected as an employee. Platforms to better match skills of workers with skills sought or programs to assist with training on those skills. A platform to promote more B2B activity across the region. Strengthen local partnerships between companies.

POSITIVE COMMENTS

Love living here.

I couldn't begin to suggest how to improve. I think our town is amazing, and the Mayor is doing a fantastic job.

ALMAGUIN HIGHLANDS
REGION SITUATIONAL
ANALYSIS
REPORT REGIONAL
ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
STRATEGIC PLAN
Northwestern Ontario Outreach &

This report was created to support the development of the Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan for the Almaguin Highlands

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1 Introduction

This document provides background demographic and economic analysis for input into the Regional Economic Development Plan for the Almaguin Highlands Partnership, as well as an analysis of past plans and studies completed by separate municipalities within the partnership.

The demographic portion of this document describes where people live, their ages, and skill levels. The Labour Force Analysis provides insight into where the resident population works, their occupations, and industries in which they are employed.

The final section comprises a review of past plans and studies that separate municipalities and/or economic development partnerships have completed and examines similarities in priorities.

The appendix contains community profiles of the 14 municipalities that are involved in the partnership.

1.1 Data Sources

Statistical data is sourced from the 2011 and 2016 Census from Statistics Canada and from the Labour Market Group:

- Canadian Business Counts (June 2017)
- National Household Survey (2011)
- Emsi Analyst Program:

In order to capture a complete picture of industry employment, Emsi combines employment data from Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours (SEPH) with data from the Labour Force Survey (LFS), Census, and Canadian Business Patterns (CBP) to form detailed geographic estimates of employment. Projections are based on the latest available Emsi industry data, 10-year past local trends in each industry, and growth rates from national industry projections from the Canadian Occupational Projection System (COPS) produced by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.”

1.2 Geography

For the purposes of the Regional Economic Development strategic plan, the Almaguin Highlands Partnership is comprised of 14 distinct municipalities. The 14 municipalities will be referred to as the Almaguin Region for the remainder of this document. As of 2016, the population of the region within the Partnership was 18,039. However, the region is home to a large cottage and seasonal population, which increases the overall population by approximately 50,000 in the summer months. Also, many seasonal residents are moving permanently to the region for retirement.

The 14 municipalities cover 2 census divisions (Parry Sound and Nipissing).

Parry Sound District

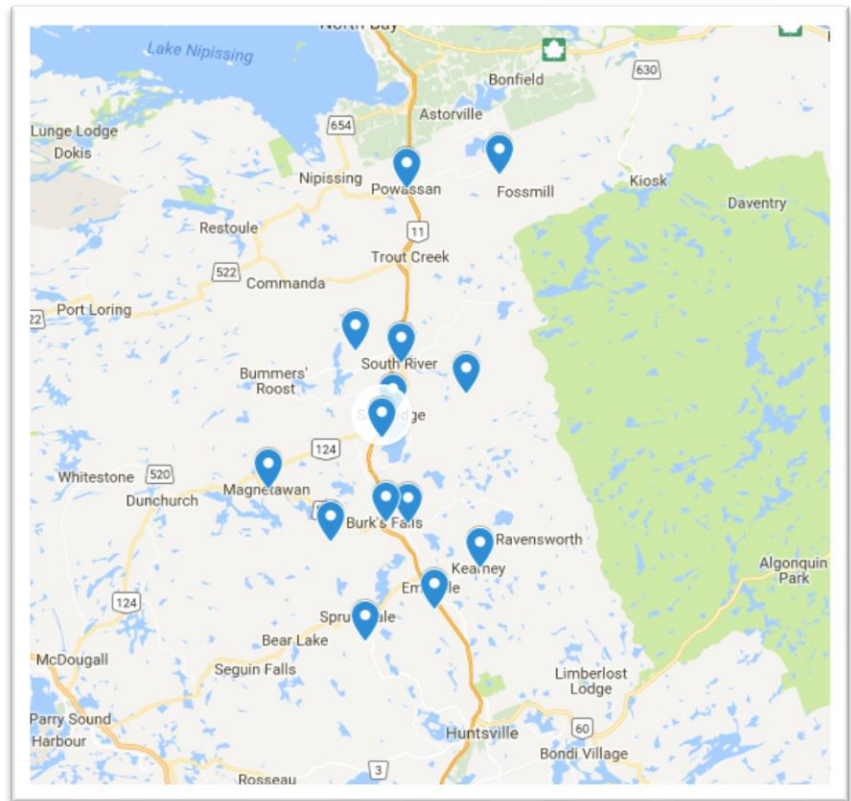
- Municipality of Powassan
- Village of Sundridge
- Township of Strong
- Township of Joly
- Village of South River
- Township of Machar
- Town of Kearney
- Municipality of Magnetawan
- Township of McMurrich/Monteith
- Township of Perry
- Township of Ryerson
- Village of Burk's Falls



Nipissing District

- Township of Chisholm

Located along the Highway 11 corridor, the region spans from north of Huntsville to south of North Bay, and from east of Parry Sound to west of Algonquin Provincial Park.



Source: Google Maps

2. Demographic Characteristics

This section provides a description of the skill level and growth factors that impact the resident labour force.

2.1 Population

According to the 2016 census, the total population for the Almaguin Region in 2016 was 18,039.

The largest municipalities comprised Powassan, Perry, Strong, Armour, Magnetawan, Chisholm, and South River (all with populations > 1000). The population varies widely across the region, from 304 in Joly to 3,455 in Powassan.

TABLE 2: POPULATION, 2016

	Population	% of Almaguin	Population Change 2011-2016
Armour	1,414	7.8%	3.1%
Burk's Falls	981	5.4%	1.4%
Chisholm	1,291	7.2%	2.2%
Joly	304	1.7%	7.0%
Kearney	882	4.9%	4.9%
Machar	882	4.9%	-4.4%
Magnetawan	1,390	7.7%	-4.4%
McMurrich/Monteith	824	4.6%	3.0%
Perry	2,454	13.6%	5.9%
Powassan	3,455	19.2%	2.3%
Ryerson	648	3.6%	2.2%
South River	1,114	6.2%	6.2%
Strong	1,439	8.0%	7.3%
Sundridge	961	5.3%	-2.4%
Total Population	18,039	100%	

The total population for the Region has increased in each census year since 2006, though the amount of change is small. The rate of change is lower compared to Ontario. The municipalities of Strong, Joly, South River, Perry, and McMurrich/Monteith had the most growth (greater than 5%) since 2006. Only Magnetawan, Chisholm, and Ryerson experienced declines in their populations since 2006. Refer to the community profiles in the Appendix for population change for each municipality.

TABLE 3: POPULATION CHANGE COMPARED TO ONTARIO

Census Year	Total Population	% Change	Ontario % Change ³
2006	17,148		
2011	17,587	2.6	5.7
2016	18,039	2.6	4.6

2.1.2 Population by Age

In general, the population of Almaguin Region is much older compared to Ontario. Figure 1 shows the population by age group for the Region compared to Ontario. An older population is characteristic of many rural areas where there is an outmigration of youth, but also where people relocate for retirement. This can present challenges to recruitment and finding skilled labour for jobs. Also, it can indicate the need for additional services and programs that support an older population.

FIGURE 2: POPULATION BY AGE GROUP, 2016 (ALMAGUIN)

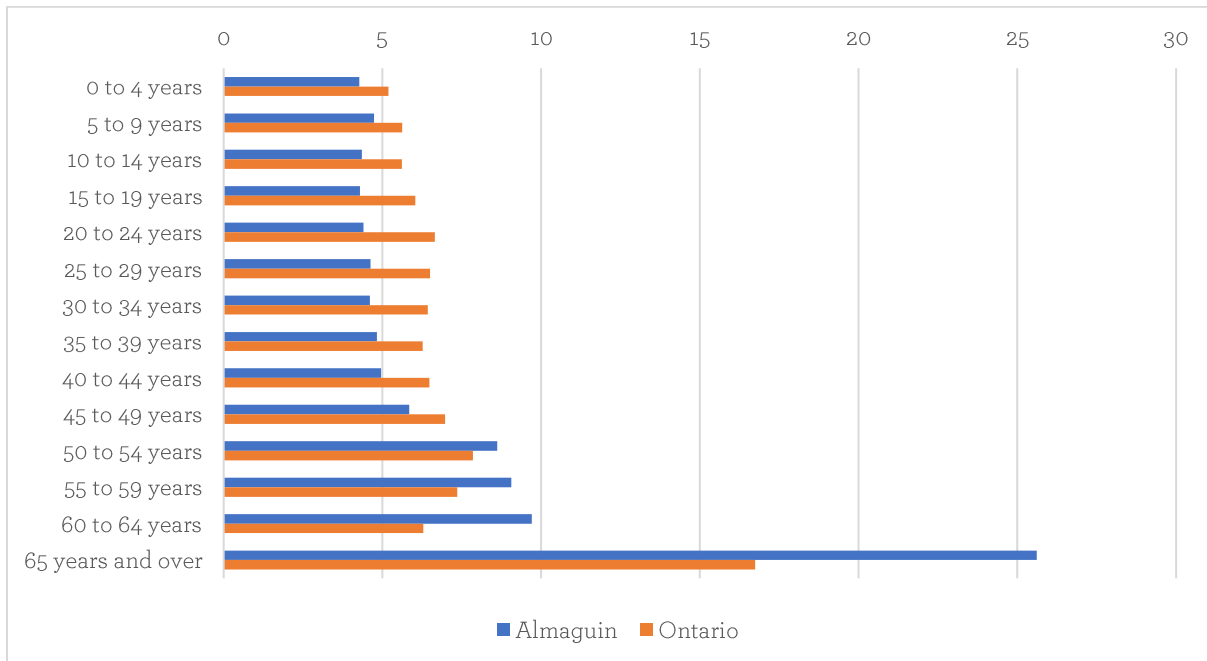


Figure 2 shows the percent of population by age group for each community, and Figure 3 shows the change in population by age group for the Almaguin region between 2006 and 2016. Note that there has been a rise in the number of people aged 65+ and a decrease in the other age groups. Figure 4 shows the median age for each municipality. South River, Chisholm and the Village of Burk’s Falls have the youngest populations.

³ <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/170208/cg-a002-eng.htm>

FIGURE 3: POPULATION BY AGE GROUP BY MUNICIPALITY, 2016

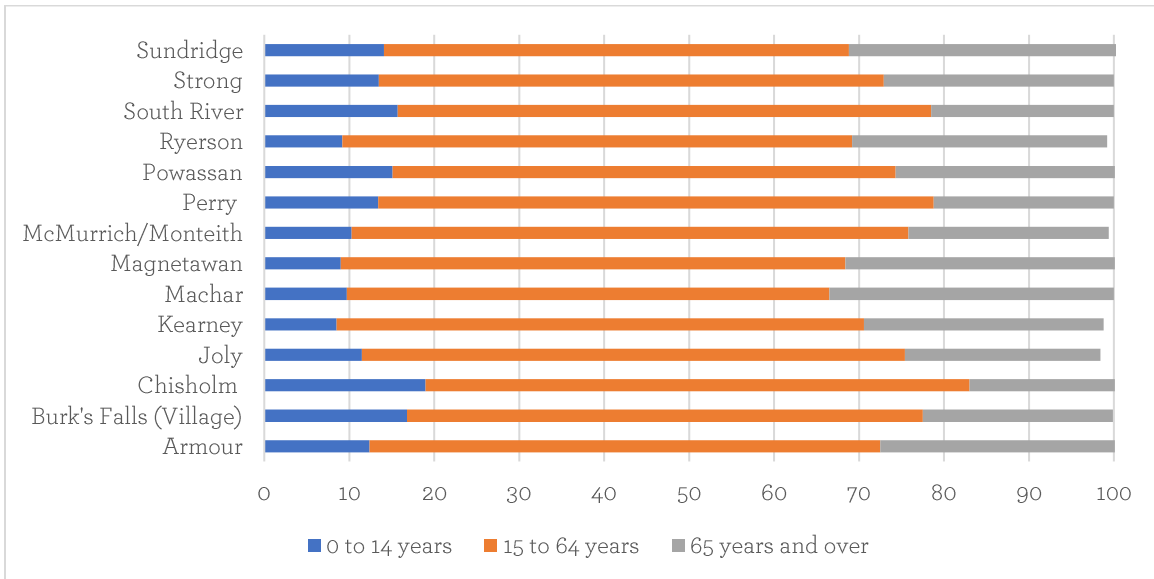


FIGURE 4: POPULATION CHANGE 2006-2016 (ALMAGUIN)

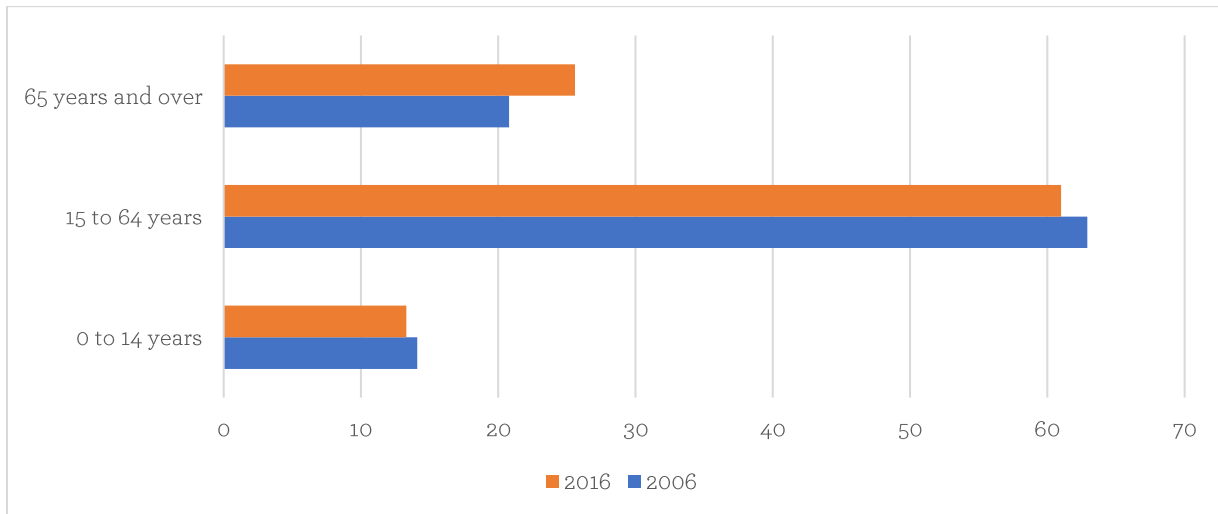
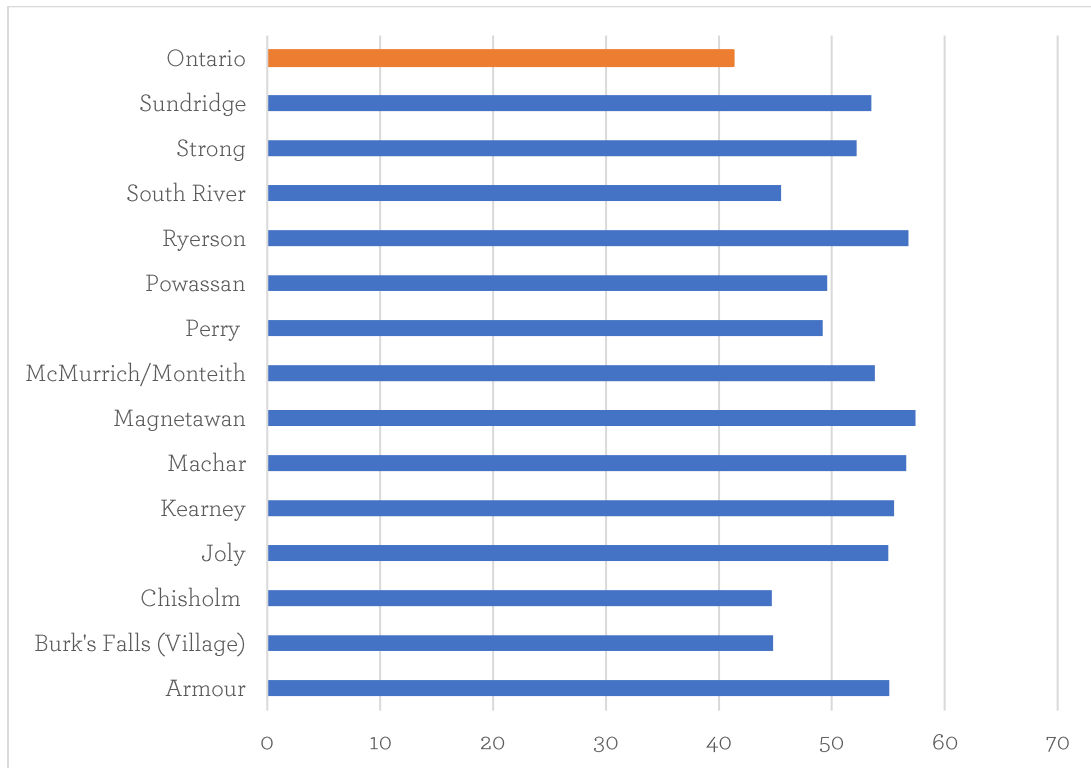


FIGURE 5: MEDIAN AGE BY MUNICIPALITY, 2016



2.1.3 Seasonal Population

The Almaguin Region has a large cottage and seasonal resident population, which is a vital component of the Region’s culture, traditions, and overall economy. Though precise numbers are hard to calculate, estimates indicate the population may increase by upwards of 50,000⁴ residents over the summer months.

According to reported numbers from each municipality, **seasonal dwellings make up 38.5% of the regions overall dwellings.** This represents a significant increase in population, visitors, investment, and economic impact across the region on a seasonal basis. Table 3 demonstrates the percentage of seasonal dwellings by municipality.

⁴ Ontario Provincial Police. Almaguin Highlands Detachment 2017-2019 Action Plan
<http://www.armourtownship.ca/documents/notices/CORPORATE/2017-2019AlmaguinOPP.pdf>

TABLE 4: SEASONAL DWELLINGS BY MUNICIPALITY

Municipality	Permanent	Seasonal	TOTAL	Percentage of Seasonal Dwellings
Perry	1041	635	1676	37.9%
Kearney	410	745	1155	64.5%
McMurrich/Monteith	386	366	752	48.7%
Magnetawan	630	1068	1698	62.9%
Armour	470	610	1080	56.5%
Ryerson	302	278	580	47.9%
Burks Falls	467	43	510	8.4%
Strong	612	310	922	33.6%
Sundridge	429	25	454	5.5%
Machar	438	468	906	51.7%
Joly	135	29	164	17.7%
South River	490	38	528	7.2%
Powassan	1326	55	1381	4.0%
Chisholm	506	117	623	18.8%
TOTALS	7642	4787	12429	38.5%

2.2 Migration

Over the past five years, 67% of Almaguin region residents have not moved. Of those who did, 26% relocated from within their own community (census sub-division) and the remainder (74%) relocated from outside of their community. Table 4 shows mobility status of the Almaguin region compared to Ontario.

TABLE 5: MOBILITY STATUS, 5 YEARS AGO, 2011

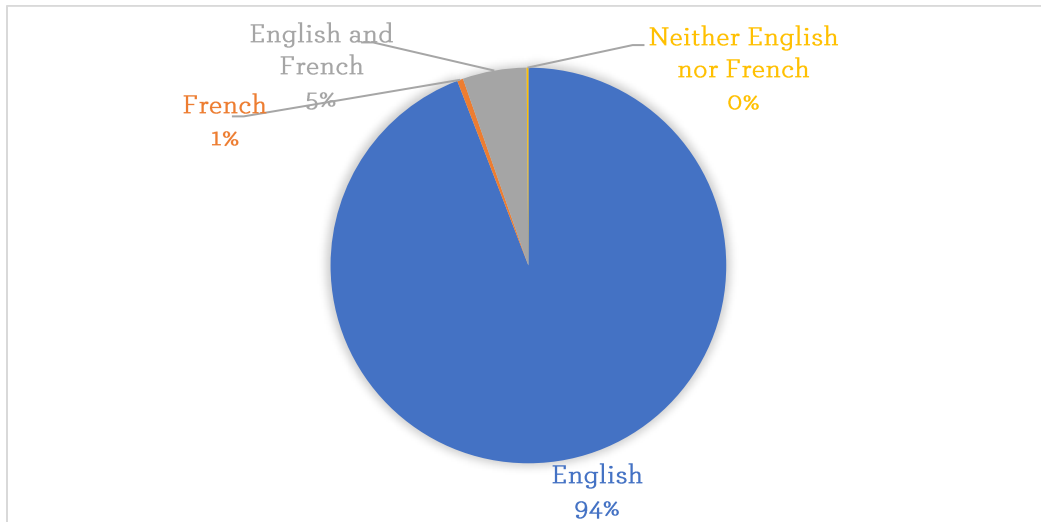
	Almaguin Region	Ontario
<i>Non-movers</i>	67%	63%
<i>Movers</i>	33%	37%
<i>Non-migrants</i>	26%	54%
<i>Migrants</i>	74%	45%
<i>Intraprovincial</i>	94.7%	65.4%
<i>Interprovincial</i>	4.5%	11.6%
<i>From outside Canada</i>	1.0%	39.8%

Of those who did move to the region, almost 95% came from within Ontario (intra-provincial migration) and 4.5% migrated from other provinces. Only 1.0% came from outside Canada.

2.3 Language

Figure 4 shows the languages most often spoken at home. 94% of the population speak only English, 5% speak both official languages, 1% speak French only, and fewer than 1% speak another language.

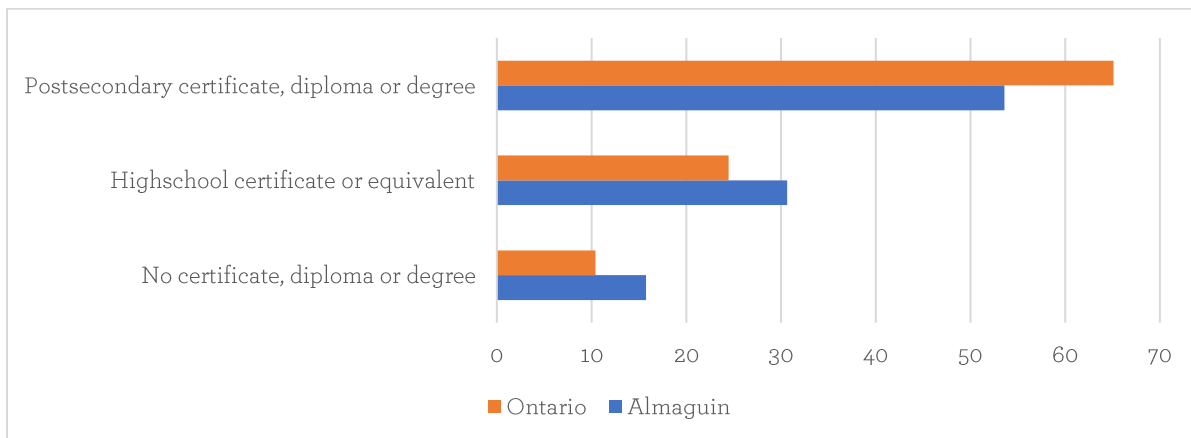
FIGURE 6: LANGUAGES SPOKEN AT HOME, 2016



2.4 Educational Attainment and Field of Study

Based on the 2016 census, the educational attainment level of the population aged 25-64 years of age in the Almaguin Region was lower compared to the Ontario. As shown in Figure 6, out of the population 25-64 years of age, 53.6% have obtained a postsecondary certificate, diploma, or degree (compared to 65% for Ontario).

FIGURE 7: HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION, 2016 (ALMAGUIN VS ONTARIO)



The following figure shows the breakdown of type of post-secondary education obtained. Note that residents are less likely to have a university degree, but are more likely to have a skilled trade, compared to Ontario.

FIGURE 8: TYPE OF EDUCATION, 2016 (ALMAGUIN)

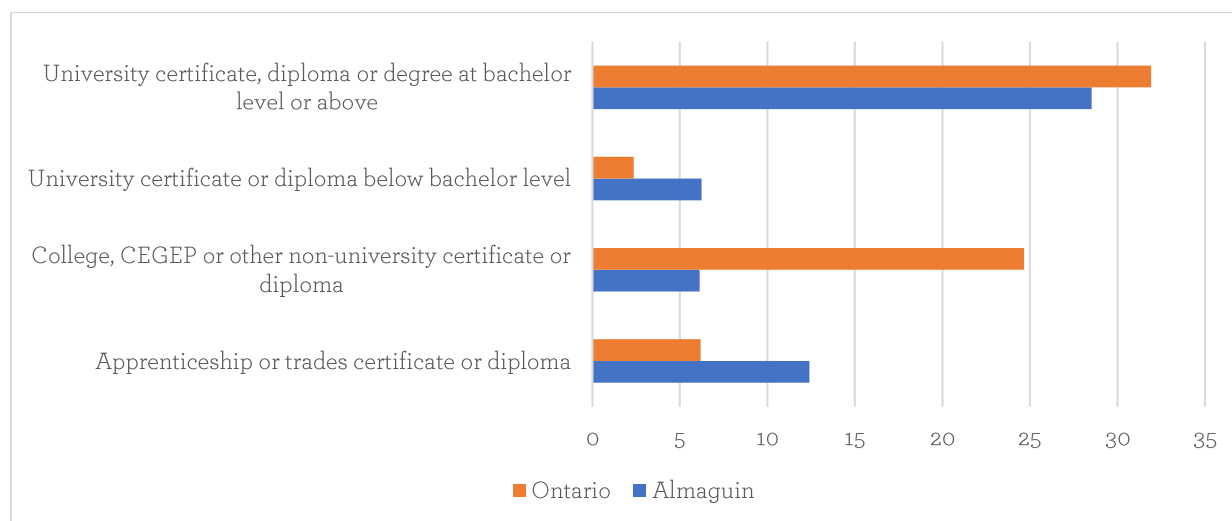


Table 5 shows educational attainment by municipality, compared to Ontario.

TABLE 6: EDUCATION ATTAINMENT BY MUNICIPALITY, 2016

	No certificate, diploma or degree	High school	Post-Secondary
Armour	18.5 %	33.8 %	47.8 %
Burk's Falls	26.8 %	37.1 %	37.1 %
Chisholm	13.2 %	29.2 %	58.3 %
Joly	18.4 %	36.8 %	44.7 %
Kearney	17.6 %	24.7 %	57.6 %
Machar	19.5 %	31.0 %	49.4 %
Magnetawan	17.1 %	24.0 %	59.6 %
McMurrich/Monteith	11.8 %	37.6 %	49.5 %
Perry	14.2 %	32.2 %	53.2 %
Powassan	11.5 %	27.3 %	60.9 %
Ryerson	13.2 %	38.2 %	48.7 %
South River	26.5 %	30.4 %	44.1 %
Strong	14.0 %	33.3 %	52.7 %
Sundridge	10.7 %	22.7 %	65.3 %
Almaguin Region	15.8 %	30.6 %	53.6 %
Ontario	10.4 %	24.5 %	65.1 %

2.5 Household Income

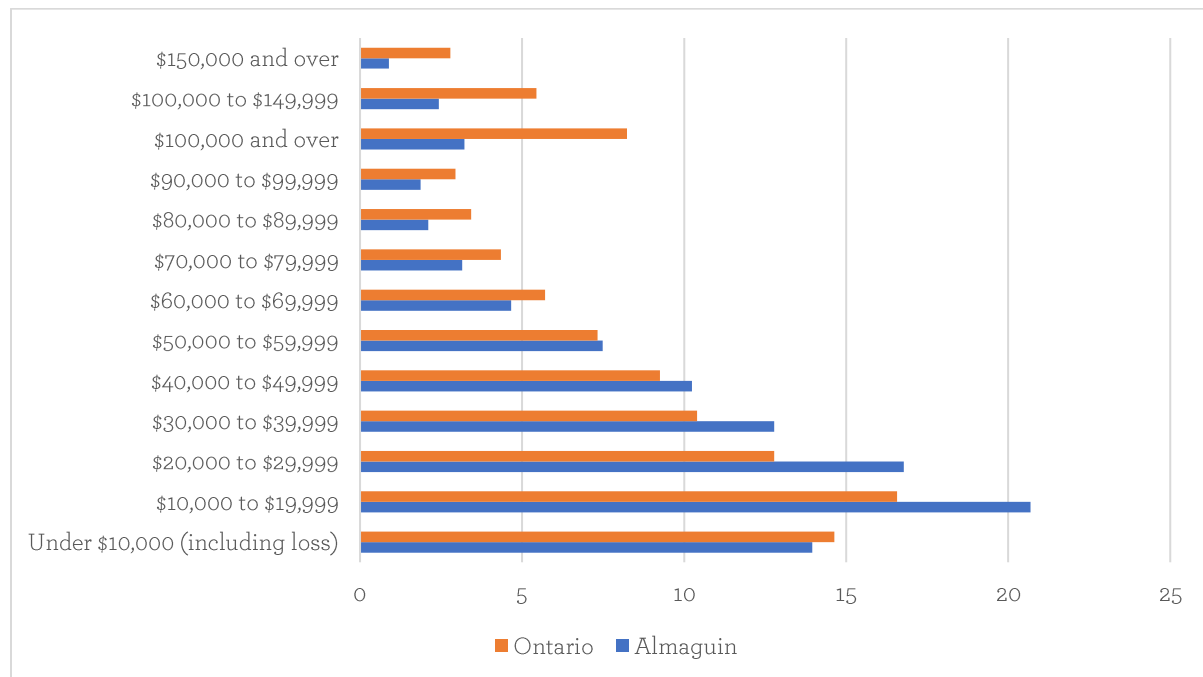
Average household income is another socio-economic indicator used to describe a population. A high average income can indicate a larger amount of disposable income, which has implications for supporting local goods and services producing businesses targeted to the resident population.

Table 6 shows the average total income for private households in 2015. There is a high level of income inequality across the region, as demonstrated by the large difference in average income for each community (range of \$50,158 in South River to \$82,145 in Powassan). Figure 7 shows the distribution of income levels for the Almaguin Region vs Ontario.

TABLE 7: TOTAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME FOR PRIVATE HOUSEHOLDS (2015)

	<i>Average Total Income for Private households in 2015</i>
<i>Armour</i>	\$71,142
<i>Burk's Falls</i>	\$52,625
<i>Chisholm</i>	\$70,720
<i>Joly</i>	\$53,340
<i>Kearney</i>	\$72,863
<i>Machar</i>	\$68,923
<i>Magnetawan</i>	\$71,317
<i>McMurrich/Monteith</i>	\$59,393
<i>Perry</i>	\$69,781
<i>Powassan</i>	\$82,145
<i>Ryerson</i>	\$65,487
<i>South River</i>	\$50,158
<i>Strong</i>	\$68,891
<i>Sundridge</i>	\$64,114

FIGURE 9: INCOME DISTRIBUTION, TOTAL INCOME LEVELS, 2016



3. Labour Force Profile

This section describes labour force characteristics for the total population 15 years and over by labour force activity and provides insight on specific industries where the labour force is employed, and the occupations in which they work. According to the 2016 census, the Region’s labour force was 8,095 people, aged 15 years and over. This reflects a 44.9% participation rate, compared to 64.7% for Ontario.

Definitions:

Participation rate refers to the number of people who are either employed or are actively looking for work.

Employment rate refers to the number of people who worked for pay or profit. It is expressed as a percentage of the working age population.

Unemployment rate is the number of unemployed workers expressed as a percentage of the labour force.

Table 7 shows the labour force profiles for each municipality. Each municipality within the Region has participation and employment rates below those of Ontario. This indicates a lower percentage of the population willing and wanting to work, or looking for work. The rate of employment of the population is one measure of, and an influence on, the region’s ability to support its local business sector.

TABLE 8: LABOUR FORCE PROFILES, 2016 (%)

	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>In the Labour Force</i>	<i>Participation Rate</i>	<i>Employment Rate</i>	<i>Unemployment Rate</i>
<i>Armour</i>	1224	615	50.2	45.3	9.8
<i>Burk’s Falls</i>	820	405	48.8	41.5	17.5
<i>Chisholm</i>	1025	630	61.5	54.6	11.1
<i>Joly</i>	270	140	51.9	42.6	17.9
<i>Kearney</i>	710	360	50.7	45.1	11.1
<i>Machar</i>	820	350	42.7	37.8	10.0
<i>Magnetawan</i>	1240	605	49.2	44.0	10.7
<i>McMurrich/Monteith</i>	740	340	45.3	41.2	10.4
<i>Perry</i>	2105	1220	58.0	53.4	7.8
<i>Powassan</i>	2,725	1600	58.7	53.2	9.1
<i>Ryerson</i>	630	365	57.9	50.0	12.3
<i>South River</i>	905	450	50.3	42.5	15.4
<i>Strong</i>	1220	675	55.3	47.1	14.8
<i>Sundridge</i>	805	340	41.6	39.1	7.5
<i>Ontario</i>			64.7	59.9	7.4

3.1 Labour Force by Industry

Table 8 shows employment by industry in the Region. Note that the data represents the industries in which residents are employed, not the actual jobs present in each municipality.

As shown in Table 8, the industries with the highest proportion of the Region’s overall labour force in 2016 are:

- Retail Trade (13.8%)
- Construction (13.5%)
- Health Care & Social Assistance (13.3%)
- Manufacturing (8.8%)
- Accommodation & Food Services (7.3%)

TABLE 9: TOTAL LABOUR FORCE POPULATION AGED 15 YEARS AND OVER BY INDUSTRY FOR 2016 (NAICS)

	Almaguin	Ontario
11 Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	2.8	1.4
21 Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	1.5	0.5
22 Utilities	1.2	0.7
23 Construction	13.5	6.7
31-33 Manufacturing	8.8	9.6
41 Wholesale trade	2.5	3.8
44-45 Retail trade	13.8	11.0
48-49 Transportation and warehousing	5.1	4.6
51 Information and cultural industries	0.8	2.5
52 Finance and insurance	1.5	5.3
53 Real estate and rental and leasing	1.6	2.0
54 Professional, scientific and technical services	4.4	8.0
55 Management of companies and enterprises	0.0	0.2
56 Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	4.2	4.7
61 Educational services	5.6	7.4
62 Health care and social assistance	13.3	10.6
71 Arts, entertainment and recreation	1.2	2.1
72 Accommodation and food services	7.3	6.7
81 Other services (except public administration)	4.6	4.2
91 Public administration	5.4	5.8

Table 9 shows the top 3 industries in which the resident labour force is employed for each municipality and for the entire region. Except for South River and Sundridge, construction is one of the top 3 for each municipality. In addition to Construction, the greatest number of residents are employed in Retail Trade, Manufacturing, Healthcare, and Accommodation & Food Services.

TABLE 10: TOTAL LABOUR FORCE - TOP 3 INDUSTRIES PER COMMUNITY (%), 2016

<i>Community</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>
Armour	Construction (21)	Health Care (11)	Retail trade (10)
Burk's Falls	Construction (16)	Accommodation & food services (15)	Health Care (14)
Chisholm	Construction (14)	Health Care (14)	Agriculture (9)
Joly	Construction (14)	Accommodation & Food Services (14)	Manufacturing (11)
Kearney	Retail Trade (15)	Construction (13)	Accommodation & Food Services (13)
Machar	Retail Trade (26)	Manufacturing (11)	Construction (10) Transportation (10)
Magnetawan	Construction (17)	Manufacturing (12)	Retail Trade (10) Accommodation & Food Services (10)
McMurrich/Monteith	Construction (15)	Manufacturing (13)	Transportation (10)
Perry	Retail Trade (18)	Construction (15)	Manufacturing (10)
Powassan	Health Care (22)	Construction (10)	Retail Trade (10)
Ryerson	Retail Trade (18)	Construction (16)	Manufacturing (11) Health Care (11)
South River	Manufacturing (17)	Health Care (16)	Retail Trade (14)
Strong	Retail Trade (16)	Health Care (14)	Construction (13)
Sundridge	Retail Trade (31)	Health Care (15)	Accommodation & Food Services (13)
Almaguin Region	Retail Trade (14)	Construction (14)	Health Care (13)
Ontario	Retail Trade (11)	Health Care (11)	Manufacturing (10)

3.2 Labour Force by Occupation

The occupational composition of the resident labour force provides information about the specific competencies and skills of individuals living within the region. Occupations are classified by skill type and level. The data shows the industries in which residents are employed, not the actual jobs that may be present in each municipality.

The occupations in the Region in 2016 with the greatest labour force were:

- Trades, transport, and equipment operators, and related occupations (23%)
- Sales and service occupations (22.8%)
- Business, finance, and administration occupations (11%)
- Management occupations (10.5%)

Compared to Ontario, there is a much greater number of occupations within trades, transport and equipment operators; otherwise, the concentrations are similar. Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations includes trades supervisors and contractors, construction and mechanical tradespersons, operators of transportation and heavy equipment, and trades helpers. These occupations are found in a wide range of industrial sectors, with many in the construction and transportation industries. It also includes most of the apprenticeable trades.

TABLE 11: TOTAL LABOUR FORCE POPULATION AGED 15 YEARS AND OVER BY OCCUPATION IN 2016 (NOC)

	Almaguin	Ontario
0 Management occupations	10.5	11.1
1 Business, finance and administration occupations	11.0	15.7
2 Natural and applied sciences and related occupations	3.6	7.2
3 Health occupations	7.9	6.3
4 Occupations in education, law and social, community and government services	9.0	11.6
5 Occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport	1.9	3.2
6 Sales and service occupations	22.8	22.9
7 Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations	23.0	13
8 Natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations	3.2	1.6
9 Occupations in manufacturing and utilities	5.8	5.1

3.3 Commuting Patterns

Within the Region, approximately 8% of the labour force works at home, 18% work at no fixed workplace (those that move from worksite to worksite), and 73% work at a usual place of business.

Commuting data for the Region is based on place of work data and therefore excludes the portion of residents who work at home, work outside Canada, and those with no fixed place of work. Commuting flow data was reported for 5,305 persons which represents approximately 73% of the Region’s labour force.

The Almaguin Region covers two census divisions (Parry Sound and Nipissing). Overall, 19% of residents commute within their own census subdivision (municipality). 34% commute outside of their municipality (census subdivision), but remain within their census division (Parry Sound or Nipissing District). 47% commute to an entirely different census division. For commuting destination and duration for each municipality, refer to the Community Profiles in the Appendix.

TABLE 12: COMMUTING DESTINATION

Commute within census subdivision (CSD) of residence	19.1%
--	-------

Commute to a different census subdivision (CSD) within census division (CD) of residence	34.0%
Commute to a different census subdivision (CSD)	46.9%
Commute to a different province or territory	0.4%

Table 12 shows the average commuting time for the entire Region.

TABLE 13: COMMUTING DURATION

<i>Less than 15-minute commute</i>	27.6%
<i>15 to 29-minute commute</i>	30.3%
<i>30 to 44-minute commute</i>	22.0%
<i>45 to 59-minute commute</i>	9.9%
<i>60 minutes and over</i>	10.2%

3.4 Industry Sector Analysis / Economic Base Analysis

An economic-based analysis describes how the economy functions compared to a larger region (in this case, Ontario).

3.4.1 Location Quotient Analysis - Industry

Location Quotient Analysis is a tool used to identify the employment concentration of a specific sector or industry within a specific location, compared against the same sector or industry at either the National or Regional level. It provides a snapshot of the year in which the data was collected.

Industries that are producing more than what’s typically needed to support a region are in theory exporting their goods to other regions and bringing money into the community; conversely, industries that are producing less than what is needed to support the community are forced to import goods from other communities.

Location Quotient Analysis is a great tool to identify the relative strength of an industry. A score of greater than 1.0 means that an industry is outperforming its comparator, and a score of below 1.0 means that an industry is underperforming its comparator. Some fluctuations are anticipated, and scores between 0.75 and 1.25 are considered normal. Scores above 1.25 are likely to indicate export and scores below 0.75 are likely to describe import.

- LQ > 1: indicates a local concentration of economic activity as compared to Ontario, and may be an indication of competitive advantage
- LQ = 1: indicates that the concentration of the industry is the same
- LQ < 1: indicates the region/community does not have a strong competitive advantage in the sector.

LQs are calculated by comparing the industry’s share of regional employment with its share of provincial employment. Location Quotients were calculated for the Almaguin Region and compared to Ontario.

TABLE 14: LOCATION QUOTIENTS FOR 2-DIGIT NAICS INDUSTRIES, ALMAGIUN REGION, 2016

<i>Industry (2-digit NAICS)</i>	<i>LQ</i>	<i>Score</i>
<i>11 Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting</i>	1.9	High
<i>21 Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction</i>	3.3	High
<i>22 Utilities</i>	1.7	High
<i>23 Construction</i>	2.0	High
<i>31-33 Manufacturing</i>	0.9	Normal
<i>41 Wholesale trade</i>	0.7	Low
<i>44-45 Retail trade</i>	1.3	High
<i>48-49 Transportation and warehousing</i>	1.1	Normal
<i>51 Information and cultural industries</i>	0.3	Low
<i>52 Finance and insurance</i>	0.3	Low
<i>53 Real estate and rental and leasing</i>	0.8	Normal
<i>54 Professional, scientific and technical services</i>	0.6	Low
<i>55 Management of companies and enterprises</i>	0.0	Low
<i>56 Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services</i>	0.9	Low
<i>61 Educational services</i>	0.8	Normal
<i>62 Health care and social assistance</i>	1.3	High
<i>71 Arts, entertainment and recreation</i>	0.6	Low
<i>72 Accommodation and food services</i>	1.1	Normal
<i>81 Other services (except public administration)</i>	1.1	Normal
<i>91 Public administration</i>	0.9	Normal

The LQs for the Almaguin Region reflect a regional economy that is dependent on the following industries:

- Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting
- Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction
- Utilities
- Construction
- Retail Trade

There is insufficient data at the 3-digit NAICS to accurately determine LQs for industry sub-sectors for the Region. As well, there is insufficient data to calculate LQs for individual municipalities at the 2-digit level, except for the municipalities with larger labour forces, such as Powassan, Sundridge, Burk’s Falls, and Perry. LQs for the individual municipalities vary significantly and indicate that

each municipality has different strengths. LQs between 2011 and 2016 have remained relatively stable.

TABLE 15: INDUSTRIES WITH HIGH LQ'S (MUNICIPAL ECONOMY)

Powassan	Sundridge	Burk's Falls	Perry
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Real Estate, Rental & Leasing • Management of Companies • Health Care & Social Assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retail Trade • Health Care & Social Assistance • Accommodation & Food Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction • Manufacturing • Health Care & Social Assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting • Construction • Retail Trade

3.5 Business Pattern Data

Statistics Canada's Canadian Business Counts data provides information about the number of businesses by industry (NAICS) and size (number of employees).

The following table show the number of businesses within the region by employee size. Note that data is not available for the Municipalities of Joly, Machar, Strong, Ryerson, and Chisholm. The results should, therefore, be used for looking at trends in business size.

TABLE 16: NUMBER OF BUSINESSES BY EMPLOYEE SIZE

<i>Number of Employees</i>	0	1-4	5-9	10-19	20-49	50-99	100-199	200+	Total
<i>No. of Businesses (2017)</i>	1,191	325	99	58	32	4	3	0	1712
<i>% of Total</i>	70%	19.0%	5.8%	3.4%	1.9%	0.2%	0.2%	0	
<i>No. of Businesses (2011)</i>	457*	236	89	52	22	4	3	1	848
<i>Change (2011-2017)</i>		89	10	6	10	0	0	-1	

Source: Statistics Canada, Canada Business Counts

*Methodology for calculating owner operated businesses (indeterminate businesses) has changed between the census years. The two numbers cannot be accurately compared.

Overall, businesses in the Almaguin Region are characterized by small companies that employ fewer than five (5) people. 89% of all businesses within the region have fewer than five (5) employees, and 70% of businesses are considered owner operated (without any employees), though this number is likely unrepresented as the Canadian Business Counts does not include unincorporated businesses that have revenue less than \$30,000 (non-taxable and/or taxable).⁵

⁵ http://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb-bmdi/document/1105_D16_T9_V1-eng.htm

Comparing data from 2011 shows an increase in the number of businesses across all business sizes, except for the loss of a major employer. Also note that methodology for counting owner operated/indeterminate businesses has changed between census years. As a result, the two numbers cannot be compared.

Table 16 shows the number of businesses in each industry by employee size range in 2017 for Almaguin Region.

TABLE 17: NUMBER OF EMPLOYERS BY INDUSTRY FOR ALMAGUIN REGION, 2017

<i>Industry Sector (NAICS Code)</i>		<i>Number of Employees</i>							<i>Total</i>
		0	1-4	5-9	10-19	20-49	50-99	100-199	
11	Agriculture	98	10	1	1	0	0	0	110
21	Mining	3	4	0	0	0	0	0	7
22	Utilities	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
23	Construction	169	94	25	8	1	0	0	297
31-33	Manufacturing	20	11	5	5	3	0	1	45
41	Wholesale Trade	22	4	5	0	1	0	0	32
44-45	Retail Trade	61	29	18	14	6	2	0	130
48-49	Transportation & Warehousing	79	16	0	1	2	0	0	98
51	Information & Cultural	4	5	3	0	1	0	0	13
52	Finance & Insurance	36	4	4	1	0	0	0	45
53	Real Estate, Rental & Leasing	218	10	3	0	0	0	0	231
541	Professional, scientific and technical services	75	21	1	0	0	0	0	97
551	Management of companies	5	2	0	0	0	0	0	7
56	Administrative Support	43	7	5	3	0	0	0	58
61	Educational Services	4	0	1	1	1	0	0	7
62	Health Care & Social Assistance	34	12	6	8	5	1	2	68
71	Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	16	6	4	0	2	0	0	28
72	Accommodation & Food Services	66	19	9	4	4	1	0	103
81	Other Services	86	40	5	1	0	0	0	132
91	Public Administration	1	3	0	10	6	0	0	20
X00	Unclassified	144	28	4	1	0	0	0	177

The following industries have the largest proportion of businesses in the Almaguin Region:

1. Construction (19.3%)
2. Real Estate, Rental & Leasing (15%)
3. Other Services (8.6%)

4. Retail Trade (8.5%)
5. Agriculture (7.2%)

When the self-employed category is removed, the industries with the highest proportion of businesses changes to:

1. Construction (26.2%)
2. Retail Trade (14.1%)
3. Other Services (9.4%)
4. Accommodation & Food Services (7.6%)
5. Health Care & Social Assistance (7.0%)

3.6 Tourism

Tourism is an important driver of economic activity in the Almaguin Region and is a key source of employment. According to the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, 15.3% of employment, 11% of GDP, and 5.7% of taxes were attributed to Ontario's Tourism Receipts in RTO12 (includes Algonquin Park, Almaguin, Muskoka, and Parry Sound) in 2012.⁶ Data specific to the Almaguin Region is not available.

⁶ http://www.occ.ca/wp-content/uploads/Report_Closing-the-Tourism-Gap.pdf

4. Review of Existing Economic Development Efforts

A review of current and past projects and initiatives at the local level and in other economic and community development organizations can inform the direction for a regional economic development strategy.

The economic development landscape in the Almaguin Highlands region has seen many changes over the last five to ten years. Currently, 10 out of the 14 municipalities are included in current partnerships, and the other four municipalities have expressed interest in participating in regional efforts. In addition, many of the region's municipalities have been engaged in some form of economic development programming, regardless of whether or not the community has dedicated staff or resources for economic development.

4.1 Economic Development Partnerships

Municipalities in the Almaguin Highlands have begun to realize the many benefits of working collaboratively to undertake joint economic development projects. Over the last 10-15 years, several economic development partnership organizations have formed throughout the region. As of 2018, the AHCC has joined both the BACED and CAEDA as a paid voting member and has actively promoted the development of a regional economic development department.

Current partnerships include the following:

- **The Central Almaguin Economic Development Association (CAEDA)** - Formed in 2008. Partners include the Township of Strong, Township of Machar, Township of Joly, Village of Sundridge, and Village of South River.
- **The Burk's Falls & Area Community Economic Development Committee (BACED)** - Formed in 2006 as the South Almaguin Highlands Economic Development Committee (SAHED). Original Partners include the Township of Armour, Township of Ryerson, and Village of Burk's Falls. In 2018, BACED partnered with the Township of Perry, Township of McMurrich/Monteith, and Municipality of Magnetawan.
- **EcoDev** - (2015-2017) Dissolved. Consisted of the Township of Perry, Township of McMurrich/Monteith, Municipality of Magnetawan, and the Town of Kearney. EcoDev Merged with BACED in 2018.
- **Almaguin Highlands Economic Development Committee (Dissolved)** - Formerly a regional advocacy committee focused on information sharing and encouraging the implementation of the Almaguin 2000 ED Plan. The group was dissolved as stakeholders began to invest in staff positions and their governing committees.
- **Almaguin Highlands Chamber of Commerce (AHCC)** - Formed in 2013 as the Burk's Falls & Area Chamber of Commerce, the AHCC incorporated federally in 2015. The AHCC has been a strong partner and leader in economic development initiatives throughout the region.

4.2 Current Municipal and Organizational Strategic Plans

Organizations and municipalities have developed their own economic development / strategic plans to guide their current and future efforts. In addition, for some, background research and other reports have been completed. Relevant documents created to date include:

Economic Development Strategic Plans (only active plans):

- 2008 Kearney Strategic Plan (In House)
- 2009 Central Almaguin Strategic Plan
- 2012 Perry Township Strategic Plan (In House)
- 2013 Burk's Falls & Area Economic Development Plan (updated in 2015) (In House)
- 2013 Magnetawan Economic Development Strategy
- 2013 Powassan Strategic Plan
- 2016 EcoDev Strategic Plan (In House)
- 2017-2018 Almaguin Highlands Chamber of Commerce Strategic Plan (In House)

Relevant Studies and Reports (Since 2013)

- 2013 CAEDA Market Study & Needs/Gap Analysis Report
- 2013 Powassan Target Market Study and Business Opportunity Overview
- 2014 BACED Asset Inventory, Gap Analysis and Market Study
- 2016 Almaguin Highlands Business Retention and Expansion Report (BR+E)
- 2018 BACED Target Sector Analysis Final Report

The documents listed above highlight that the member communities and organizations are making economic development a priority. Further, the work illustrates a willingness to invest in drafting and adhering to strong, evidence-based plans for the advancement of individual ED priorities.

When reviewing these plans, there is an abundance of shared priorities, target areas for growth, and desired activities, which have at times contributed towards the duplication of efforts and the unnecessary use of additional funds and resources.

4.3 Plan Comparison

The inventory of projects and initiatives across the Almaguin Region is summarized in Table 17 (following page).

There are a number of regional economic development plans based on partnerships formed through BACED and CAEDA. Also, while some municipalities have created joint strategic plans, others have created plans solely for their own municipality. There has also been background research conducted for the various partnerships to support their planning efforts.

4.3.1 Comparison of Economic Development Strategic Plans

Powassan, Kearney, Magnetawan, McMurrich/Monteith, and Chisholm have each recently developed their own strategic plans. Many of the municipalities have similar priorities, and some priorities are very specific to each community. In addition, AHCC, BACED and CAEDA have each developed regional strategic plans. Table 17 shows where priorities are shared.

TABLE 18: COMPRISON OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Priority	Powassan	Kearney	Magnetawan	McMurrich/ Monteith	Chisholm	AHCC	BACED	CAEDA (2009)
Community Services (incl. housing)	√						√	
Improvements to infrastructure					√	√	√	√
Recreation & Leisure (incl. trails & waterfront)	√	√		√				√
Promote Tourism		√		√		√	√	√
Technology (broadband connectivity)		√	√		√	√	√	
Support local/small business	√		√			√		
Community Improvement Plan/Downtown revitalization		√	√			√		
Study/promote local business park	√							
Business retention & expansion	√		√	√		√	√	√
Communications (incl. signage)	√			√	√		√	√
Economic development (hire, partner)		√					√	√
Support regional partnerships/collaboration				√		√	√	√
Re-brand of region								√
Other			√					√

4.3.2 Business Retention & Expansion Highlights

The Business Retention and Expansion report, 2015-2016, was launched by the AHCC, in June 2015 in an attempt to create a regional plan to help grow existing firms, identify investment attraction opportunities, and gauge the health of the local business community.

Four priority areas were identified for the AHCC and its partner communities to focus their efforts. Each priority area has a number of associated recommendations.

6. Regional Collaboration
7. Expansion Opportunities
8. Succession/Exit planning
9. Workforce Development

In addition, five key areas of growth within the next five years were identified, and include the following:

1. Strategic regional effort to attract residents, businesses, and tourists through increased promotion and the development of enhanced products and services;
2. Formal downtown revitalization efforts;
3. Improved region wide access, dependability and affordability of infrastructure services such as internet, electricity, water, and sewer;
4. Transparency and streamlined services and support of businesses from municipal staff and councils; and
5. Increased collaboration among communities and businesses.

As part of the plan, a survey was conducted and the following key strengths within the Almaguin Region were identified:

9. Demonstrated interest from area businesses in expanding operations;
10. Many businesses are owned by local people who are invested in the area and its success;
11. Business are well supported by other local businesses and residents;
12. Quality of life is favourable (cost of living, landscape, community feel);
13. Proximity to regional centres and larger markets, quality roads, and access to a major highway system;
14. Access to quality services such as parks, roads, libraries, police;
15. Increased willingness for 13 communities to work together as a region; and
16. Demonstrated commitment to partnering on initiatives such as the BR+E study, which was collaborated among, and partly funded by, communities throughout the region.

EcoDev, which merged with BACED in 2018, subsequently created a strategic plan based on the recommendations of the BR+E report. Strategies identified in the EcoDev strategic plan as well as others identified in other municipal and organizational strategic plans are outlined in Table 18, on the following page.

TABLE 19: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS TO DATE

Municipality	Priorities	Municipal Partnerships / Ec Dev Partnerships	Ec Dev Plans/Reports
Municipality of Powassan	<p>Housing & residential growth</p> <p>Promote Fairview Industrial Park & secure funding</p> <p>Support local business & community events, including redevelopment, investment, and promotion</p> <p>Continue to study the need for the 'Road Ahead Business Park'</p> <p>Pursue/promote new (film) and existing business growth (provide training workshops)</p> <p>Communicate opportunity and success</p> <p>Promote recreation and leisure</p>	<p>AHCC</p> <p>Municipality of Powassan Economic Development Committee (MoPED)</p>	<p>2013 Strategic Plan</p> <p>2013 Market Study</p> <p>Community Profile (post 2006)</p> <p>2008 Housing Study</p>
Village of Sundridge	Refer to CAEDA Plan	AHCC CAEDA	
Township of Joly	Refer to CAEDA Plan	AHCC CAEDA	
Village of South River	Refer to CAEDA Plan	AHCC CAEDA	
Township of Machar	Refer to CAEDA Plan	AHCC CAEDA	
Township of Strong	Refer to CAEDA Plan	AHCC CAEDA	
Town of Kearney	<p>Tourism (promote the area, promote existing attractions, and community assets)</p> <p>Technology (connectivity, awareness)</p> <p>Trails, Parks & Waterfront (improve trail system, promote and enhance environmental protection)</p> <p>Downtown Revitalization</p> <p>Recreation & Leisure (enhance & promote, emergency preparedness)</p> <p>Economic Development and Retention (hire, partner)</p>	AHCC	2008 Strategic Economic Development Plan

Municipality	Priorities	Municipal Partnerships / Ec Dev Partnerships	Ec Dev Plans/Reports
Municipality of Magnetawan	Enhance broadband Community Improvement Plan Focus on small business Business retention and expansion First impressions community exchange (research to understand visitor experience)	AHCC BACED EcoDev (merged into BACED)	2013 Economic Development Strategy
Township of McMurrich/Monteith	Community improvement for visitors and residents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop, improve and market municipal parks and trail infrastructure - Encourage volunteer organization development and volunteering in the community - Improve communications and accessibility to information for residents and visitors Support and promote tourism & special events Support business and development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improve communications - Identify opportunities for public/private partnerships for business development - Support regional EDOs to implement BR+E recommendations Support regional partnerships and collaboration	AHCC BACED EcoDev (merged into BACED) Partnership with Perry, Kearney, & Magnetawan	2018 Strategic Plan
Township of Perry	Refer to EcoDev	AHCC BACED EcoDev (merged into BACED)	2012 Strategic Plan
Township of Ryerson	Refer to the BACED	BACED SAHED	
Township of Armour	Refer to the BACED	AHCC BACED	
Village of Burk's Falls	Refer to the BACED	AHCC BACED	

Municipality	Priorities	Municipal Partnerships / Ec Dev Partnerships	Ec Dev Plans/Reports
Township of Chisholm	<p>Priorities have been broken down into ones already started (A), short term (B), long-term (C) and initiatives that will not yet be pursued (D).</p> <p>A: Improvement to infrastructure B: Marketing Plan and signage, drainage study C: Road improvements D: Improve broadband, build a community centre & outdoor skating rink, promote the farmers market</p>	AHCC	2016 Municipal Strategic Plan
Organizational Plans			
AHCC	<p>**Business Expansion and Retention Report:</p> <p>Strategic regional effort to attract residents, businesses and tourists through increased promotion and the development of enhanced products and services</p> <p>Formal downtown revitalization efforts</p> <p>Improved region wide access, dependability and affordability of infrastructure services such as internet, electricity, water and sewer</p> <p>Transparency and streamlined services and support of businesses from municipal staff and councils</p> <p>Increased collaboration among communities and businesses</p>	<p>Chisholm Powassan Sundridge Strong Machar South River McMurrich/Monteith Kearney Magnetawan Perry Armour Burk's Falls Ryerson</p>	<p>2015 Business Retention + Expansion</p> <p>2017 Strategic Plan</p> <p>The Almaguin Highlands Economic Development Initiative (2000 - Present)</p>
BACED	<p>Organization of an Economic Development Committee</p> <p>Create a communications network and collaborate with surrounding municipalities. Explore partnership opportunities, create directional signage, support and update websites</p> <p>Investment readiness and infrastructure (includes fibre-optic)</p>	<p>Burk's Falls Armour Ryerson</p>	<p>2018 Target Sector Report</p> <p>2017 Burk's Falls & Area Situational Analysis</p> <p>2017 Burk's Falls & Area Agricultural Profile</p>

Municipality	Priorities	Municipal Partnerships / Ec Dev Partnerships	Ec Dev Plans/Reports
	<p>Business retention, expansion and attraction (support chamber of commerce, implement a business retention and expansion program, grow and support tourism operators, buy-local initiative, innovative approaches to agriculture, strategies to retain youth)</p> <p>Service enhancements to residents (seniors accommodation, expand active living opportunities, grow medical services, expand municipal trails/recreational areas, promote and support waterfront access and development)</p> <p>Tourism and special events</p> <p>Retain EcDev staff member</p>		<p>2017 Hotel Needs Assessment Report</p> <p>2016 Almaguin Highlands BR&E Report</p> <p>2016 Marketing Plan</p> <p>2015 Burks Falls and Area Economic Development Plan</p> <p>2014 Market Study</p>
CAEDA	<p>Recommendations from the 2013 Market Study:</p> <p>Ensure the sustainability of CAEDA</p> <p>Attract manufacturing/processing industries</p> <p>Grow the tourism sector</p>	<p>South River</p> <p>Sundridge</p> <p>Machar</p> <p>Strong</p>	<p>2013 Market Study</p> <p>2013 Needs/Gap Analysis</p> <p>2013 CAEDA Community Profile</p> <p>2009 Central Almaguin Strategic Plan</p> <p>2009 CAEDA Economic Base Analysis</p> <p>2009 Labour Market Overview</p>
EcoDev (merged with BACED in 2018)	<p>Recommendations from the 2017 Strategic Plan (to facilitate recommendations from the BR+E Plan):</p> <p>Regional Collaboration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - With other EcDev, municipalities and orgs - Work with different levels of government <p>Attract new families, businesses, and visitors through investment attraction</p>	<p>Perry</p> <p>Magnetawan</p> <p>McMurrich/Monteith</p>	<p>2017 Strategic Plan</p>

Municipality	Priorities	Municipal Partnerships / Ec Dev Partnerships	Ec Dev Plans/Reports
	<p>Develop tourism opportunities throughout the 3 communities and the region</p> <p>Encourage business development through support and outreach (start-ups and expansion, workforce development, promotion, succession planning)</p> <p>Be the voice of businesses, visitors and the community (advocacy i.e. cost of electricity)</p> <p>Address various challenges with regards to community services (aging population, youth retention, volunteer recruitment)</p>		
SAHED (merged with BACED)	<p>2014 Asset Inventory, Gap Analysis & Market Study. Recommendations include:</p> <p>Update and maintain infrastructure</p> <p>Downtown revitalization supported by a Community Improvement Plan</p> <p>Develop tourism marketing partnerships</p> <p>Heritage</p> <p>Implement directional signage</p> <p>Update municipal websites</p> <p>Support Chamber of Commerce activities</p> <p>Create great active lifestyle amenities for retirees</p> <p>Create strategies to encourage youth to stay in the region.</p> <p>Study long-term care needs</p> <p>Support local farmers</p> <p>Assess regional transportation needs</p>	Burk's Falls Armour Ryerson	<p>2014 Asset Inventory, Gap Analysis & Market Study</p> <p>2014 Investment Readiness Study</p>

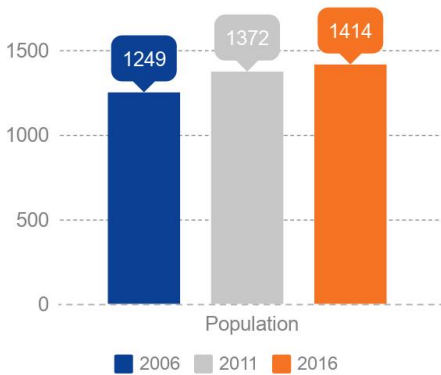
Other initiatives undertaken within the region include the following (the list is not exhaustive):

- Partnership between the municipalities to hire a Community Development Officer (CDO) Intern through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation (NOHFC) youth internship program for 2 years
- The Local Love for the Villages of Almaguin Campaign (Shop Local, 2016 & 2017)
- Support for the Almaguin In Motion (AIM) Cycling Initiative (2016 & 2017)
- The Villages of Almaguin Marketing Partnership (2016 & 2017)
- Almaguin Careers and Trades Day (ACT-2017)
- The 3R Volunteer Recruitment Campaign in partnership with Burk's Falls and Area Community Economic Development (BACED) (2017)
- Business Workshop Series in partnership with BACED (2017)

5. Appendix A: Community Profiles

Armour Township

Population



Education

No certificate, diploma or degree:	18.5%
High School or Equivalent:	33.8%
Post Secondary:	47.8%

Age Profile



Median Age

Armour Township:	55.1 years
Ontario:	41.3 years

Labour Force Indicators

Employment Rate:	45.3%	Participation Rate:	50.2%	Unemployment Rate:	9.8%
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Top 5 Industries

- Construction - 21.1%
- Health Care & Social Assistance - 10.6%
- Retail Trade - 9.8%
- Transportation & Warehousing - 8.1%
- Educational Services - 8.1%

Top 5 Occupations

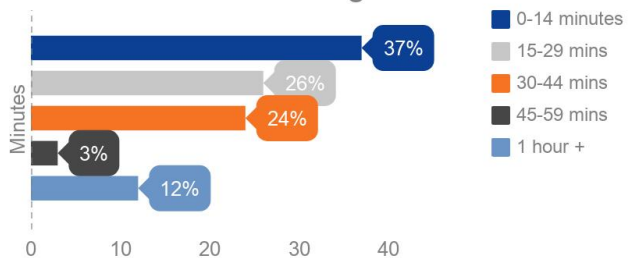
- Sales and Service - 23%
- Trades, Transport and Equipment Operators - 23%
- Management Occupations - 13.9%
- Business, Finance & Administration - 13.9%
- Education, Law and Social Services - 8.2%

Commuting



- Within Armour Township - 12.3%
- Outside Armour, within Parry Sound District - 52.1%
- Outside Parry Sound District - 37%

Commuting Time

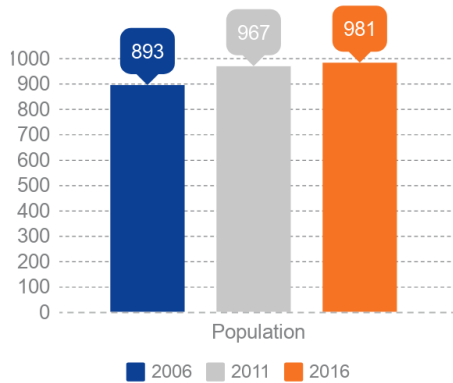


Household Income

Median Total Income:	\$59,648
Average total Income:	\$71,142

Burk's Falls

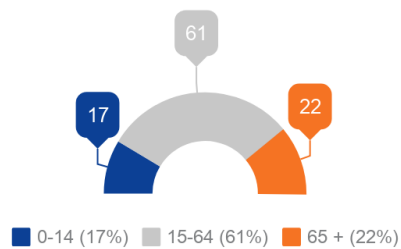
Population



Education

No certificate, diploma or degree:	26.8%
High School or Equivalent:	37.1%
Post Secondary:	37.1%

Age Profile



Median Age

Armour Township:	44.8 years
Ontario:	41.3 years

Labour Force Indicators

Employment Rate:
41.5%

Participation Rate:
48.8%

Unemployment Rate:
17.5%

Top 5 Industries

- Construction - 16%
- Accommodation & Food Services - 14.8%
- Health Care & Social Assistance - 13.6%
- Retail Trade - 12.3%
- Manufacturing - 9.9%

Top 5 Occupations

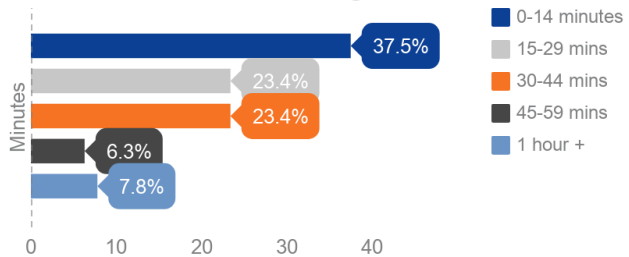
- Sales and Service - 30.9%
- Trades, Transport and Equipment Operators - 21%
- Business, Finance & Administration - 12.3%
- Manufacturing & Utilities - 11.1%
- Management - 8.6%

Commuting



- Within Burk's Falls - 38.2%
- Within Parry Sound District - 53.6%
- Outside Parry Sound District - 38.2%

Commuting Time

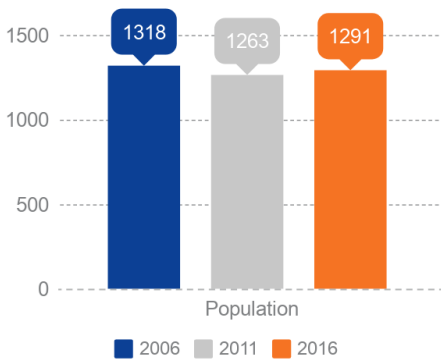


Household Income

Median Total Income:	\$40,288
Average total Income:	\$52,625

Chisholm Township

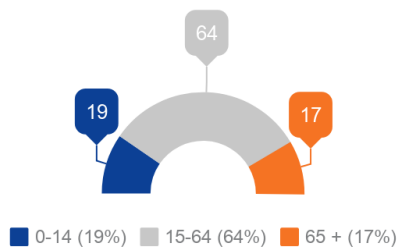
Population



Education

No certificate, diploma or degree:	13.2%
High School or Equivalent:	29.2%
Post Secondary:	58.3%

Age Profile



Median Age

Chisholm Township:	44.7 years
Ontario:	41.3 years

Labour Force Indicators

Employment Rate:
54.6%

Participation Rate:
61.5%

Unemployment Rate:
11.1%

Top 5 Industries

- Construction - 14.3%
- Health Care & Social Assistance - 13.5%
- Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting - 8.7%
- Retail Trade - 7.9%
- Public Administration - 7.9%

Top 5 Occupations

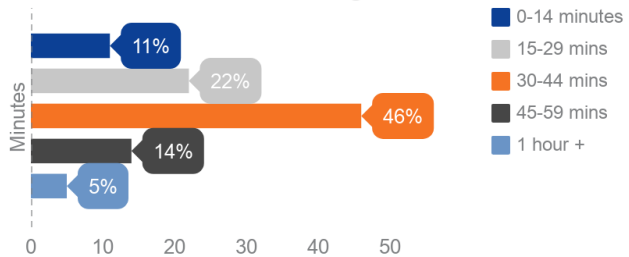
- Sales and Service - 24.8%
- Trades, Transport and Equipment Operators - 22.4%
- Management Occupations - 12%
- Business, Finance & Administration - 11.2%
- Education, Law and Social Services - 7.2%

Commuting



- Within Chisholm Township - 5%
- Outside Chisholm, within Nipissing district - 72.5%
- Outside Nipissing district - 21.3%

Commuting Time

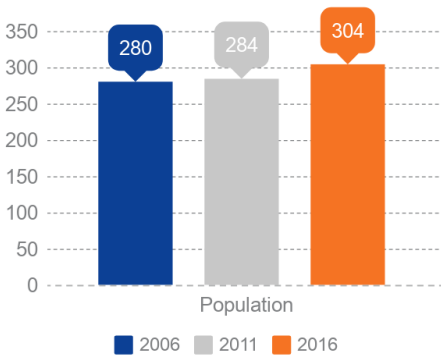


Household Income

Median Total Income:	\$62,720
Average Total Income:	\$70,720

Joly Township

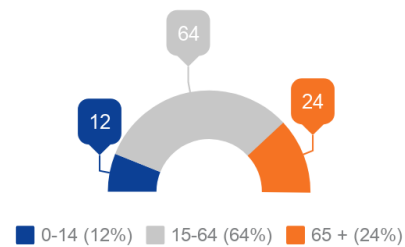
Population



Education

No certificate, diploma or degree:	18.4%
High School or Equivalent:	36.8%
Post Secondary:	44.7%

Age Profile



Median Age

Joly Township:	55 years
Ontario:	41.3 years

Labour Force Indicators

Employment Rate:
42.6%

Participation Rate:
51.9%

Unemployment Rate:
17.9%

Top 5 Industries

- Construction - 14.3%
- Accommodation & Food Services - 14.3%
- Manufacturing - 10.7%
- Education - 10.7%

**The remainder of the workforce is employed in 7 industries tied at 7.1%

Top 5 Occupations

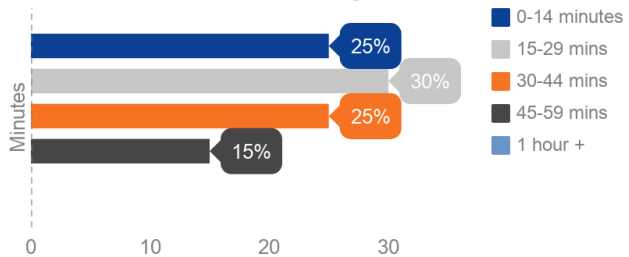
- Trades, Transport and Equipment Operators - 31%
- Sales and Service - 20.7%
- Health - 10.3%
- Education, Law and Social Service - 10.3%
- Manufacturing & Utilities - 10.3%

Commuting



- Within Joly Township - 0%
- Outside Joly, within Parry Sound district - 81.3%
- Outside Parry Sound district - 18.8%

Commuting Time

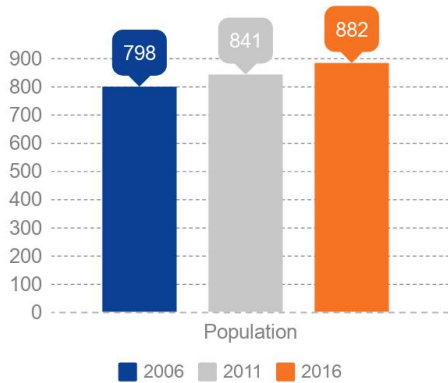


Household Income

Median Total Income:	\$50,816
Average Total Income:	\$53,340

Town of Kearney

Population



Education

No certificate, diploma or degree:	17.6%
High School or Equivalent:	24.7%
Post Secondary:	57.6%

Age Profile



Median Age

Town of Kearney:	55.5 years
Ontario:	41.3 years

Labour Force Indicators

Employment Rate:
45.1%

Participation Rate:
50.7%

Unemployment Rate:
11.1%

Top 5 Industries

- Retail Trade - 15.3%
- Construction - 12.5%
- Accommodation & Food Services - 12.5%
- Health Care & Social Assistance - 11.1%
- Professional, Scientific & Technical / Public Admin - 8.3%

Top 5 Occupations

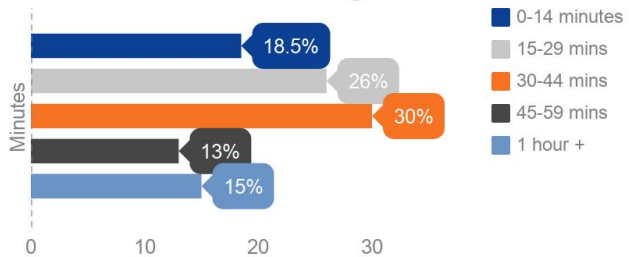
- Trades, Transport and Equipment Operators - 26.8%
- Sales and Service - 19.7%
- Business, Finance & Administration - 11.3%
- Management Occupations - 9.9%
- Education, Law and Social Services - 9.9%

Commuting



- Within the Town of Kearney - 19%
- Outside Kearney, within Parry Sound District - 19%
- Outside Parry Sound District - 64.3%

Commuting Time

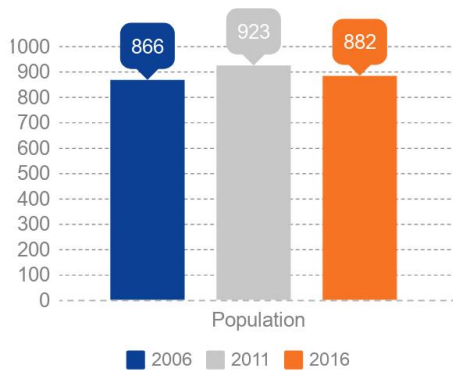


Household Income

Median Total Income:	\$56,661
Average total Income:	\$72,863

Machar Township

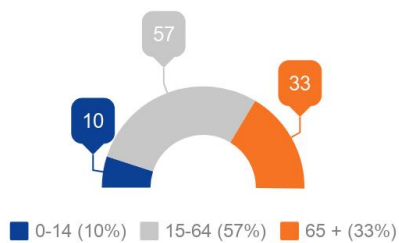
Population



Education

No certificate, diploma or degree:	19.5%
High School or Equivalent:	31.0%
Post Secondary:	49.4%

Age Profile



Median Age

Machar Township:	56.6 years
Ontario:	41.3 years

Labour Force Indicators

Employment Rate:
27.8%

Participation Rate:
42.7%

Unemployment Rate:
10.0%

Top 5 Industries

- Retail Trade - 25.7%
- Manufacturing - 11.4%
- Construction - 10%
- Transportation & Warehousing - 10%
- Public Administration - 8.6%

Top 5 Occupations

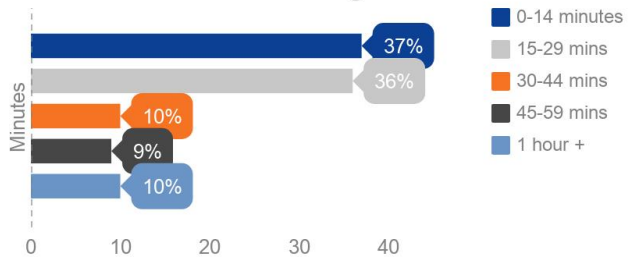
- Trades, Transport and Equipment Operators - 27.1%
- Sales and Service - 24.3%
- Manufacturing & Utilities - 12.9%
- Education, Law and Social Services - 10%
- Management Occupations - 8.6%

Commuting



- Within Machar Township - 4.5%
- Outside Machar, within Parry Sound District - 75%
- Outside Parry Sound District - 20.5%

Commuting Time

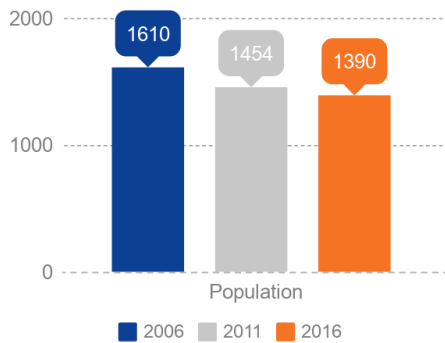


Household Income

Median Total Income:	\$62,464
Average total Income:	\$68,923

Municipality of Magnetawan

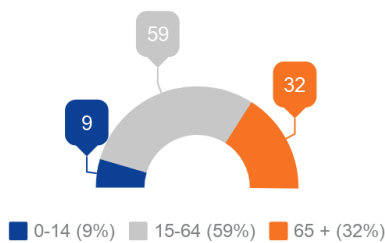
Population



Education

No certificate, diploma or degree:	17.1%
High School or Equivalent:	24.0%
Post Secondary:	59.6%

Age Profile



Median Age

Magnetawan:	57.4 years
Ontario:	41.3 years

Labour Force Indicators

Employment Rate:
44%

Participation Rate:
49.2%

Unemployment Rate:
10.7%

Top 5 Industries

- Construction - 17.4%
- Manufacturing - 11.6%
- Retail Trade - 9.9%
- Accommodation & food services - 9.9%
- Health care & social assistance - 9.1%

Top 5 Occupations

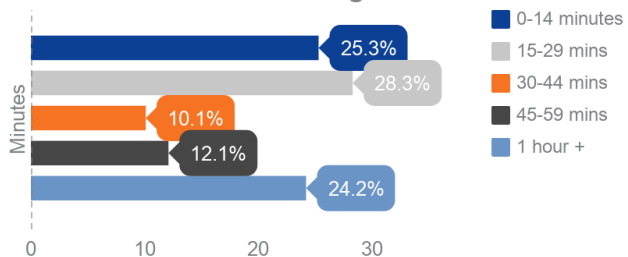
- Trades, Transport and Equipment Operators - 26.2%
- Sales and Service - 19.7%
- Business, finance & administration - 10.7%
- Management Occupations - 9.8%
- Manufacturing & Utilities - 6.6%

Commuting



- Within Magnetawan - 24.3%
- Within Parry Sound District - 40.5%
- Outside Parry Sound District - 37.8%

Commuting Time

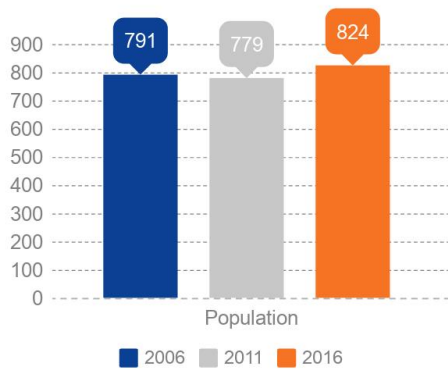


Household Income

Median Total Income:	\$62,464
Average total Income:	\$68,923

Township of McMurrich / Monteith

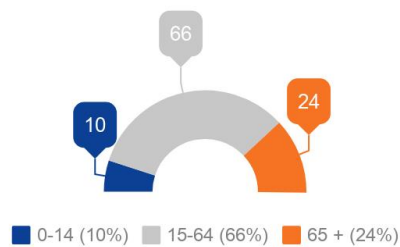
Population



Education

No certificate, diploma or degree: 11.8%
 High School or Equivalent: 37.6%
 Post Secondary: 49.5%

Age Profile



Median Age

McMurrich/Monteith: 53.8 years
 Ontario: 41.3 years

Labour Force Indicators



Top 5 Industries

Construction - 14.7%
 Manufacturing - 13.2%
 Transportation & warehousing - 10.3%
 Retail Trade / Professional, scientific & technical / Health care & social assistance - 8.8%

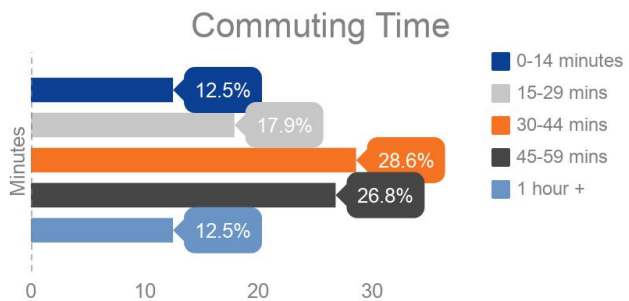
Top 5 Occupations

Trades, Transport and Equipment Operators - 29.4%
 Sales and Service - 16.2%
 Business, finance & administration - 13.2%
 Manufacturing & Utilities - 10.3%
 Management Occupations - 8.8%

Commuting



Within McMurrich/Monteith - 14.3%
 Within Parry Sound District - 14.3%
 Outside Parry Sound District - 71.4%

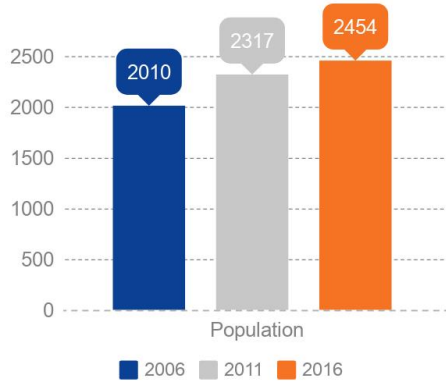


Household Income

Median Total Income: \$54,272
 Average total Income: \$59,393

Perry Township

Population



Education

No certificate, diploma or degree:	14.2%
High School or Equivalent:	32.2%
Post Secondary:	53.2%

Age Profile



Median Age

Perry Township:	49.2 years
Ontario:	41.3 years

Labour Force Indicators

Employment Rate:
53.4%

Participation Rate:
58%

Unemployment Rate:
7.8%

Top 5 Industries

- Retail Trade - 18%
- Construction - 14.8%
- Manufacturing - 10.2%
- Health Care & Social Assistance - 9.4%
- Accommodation & Food Services - 6.6%

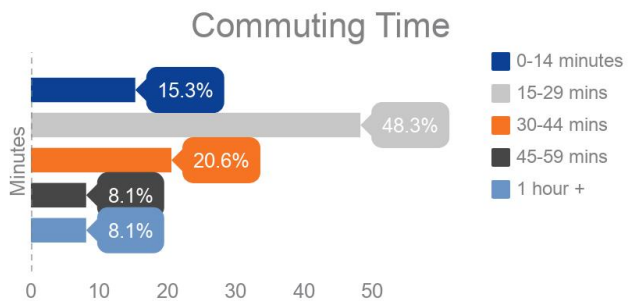
Top 5 Occupations

- Trades, Transport & Equipment Operators - 26.2%
- Sales and service - 24.2%
- Business, Finance & Administration - 10.7%
- Management Occupations - 10.2%
- Manufacturing & Utilities - 7.0%

Commuting



- Within Perry Township - 7.5%
- Outside Perry, within Parry Sound district - 10.1%
- Outside Parry Sound district - 82.4%

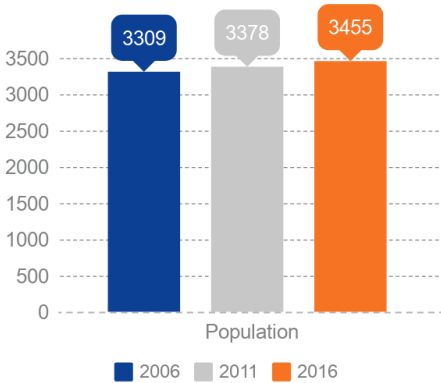


Household Income

Median Total Income:	\$58,069
Average Total Income:	\$69,781

Municipality of Powassan

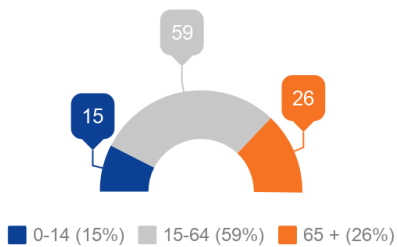
Population



Education

No certificate, diploma or degree:	11.5%
High School or Equivalent:	27.3%
Post Secondary:	60.9%

Age Profile



Median Age

Municipality of Powassan:	49.6 years
Ontario:	41.3 years

Labour Force Indicators

Employment Rate:
53.2%

Participation Rate:
58.7%

Unemployment Rate:
9.1%

Top 5 Industries

- Health Care & Social Assistance - 21.6%
- Construction - 10.3%
- Retail Trade - 9.7%
- Education - 7.5%
- Public Administration - 7.5%

Top 5 Occupations

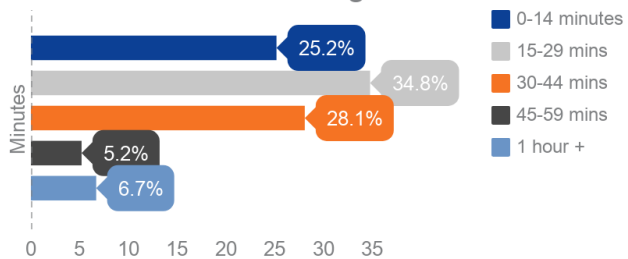
- Trades, Transport & Equipment Operators - 21.9%
- Sales and service - 19.1%
- Business, Finance & Administration - 13.2%
- Health Occupations - 12.2%
- Education, Law & Social Services - 11.6%

Commuting



- Within Powassan - 29.3%
- Within Parry Sound district - 10.9%
- Outside Parry Sound district - 59.4%

Commuting Time

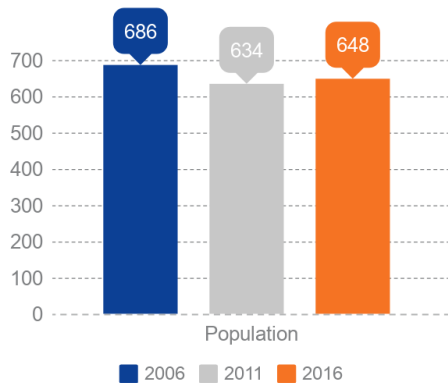


Household Income

Median Total Income:	\$66,133
Average Total Income:	\$82,145

Ryerson Township

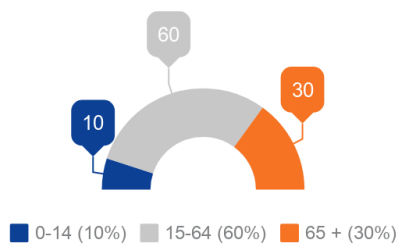
Population



Education

No certificate, diploma or degree: 13.2%
 High School or Equivalent: 38.2%
 Post Secondary: 48.7%

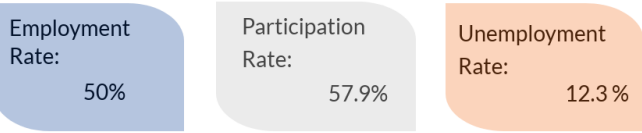
Age Profile



Median Age

Ryerson Township: 56.8 years
 Ontario: 41.3 years

Labour Force Indicators



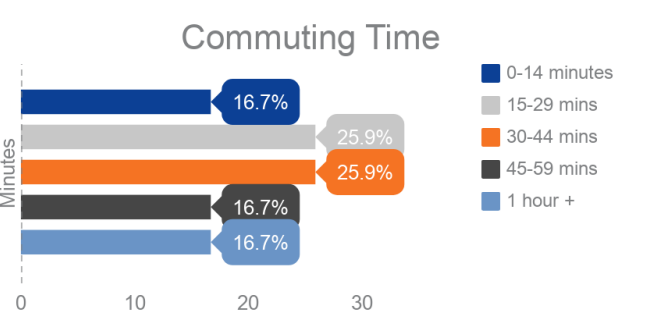
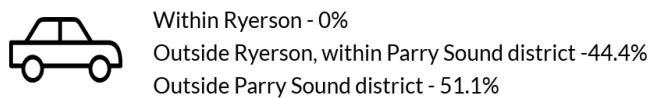
Top 5 Industries

Retail Trade - 17.8%
 Construction - 16.4%
 Manufacturing - 11%
 Health Care & Social Assistance - 11%
 Professional, Scientific & Technical / Accommodation & Food Services - 5.5%

Top 5 Occupations

Trades, Transport & Equipment Operators - 30.1%
 Sales and service - 20.5%
 Management - 15.1%
 Business, Finance & Administration - 9.6%
 Health / Education, Law & Social Services - 6.8%

Commuting

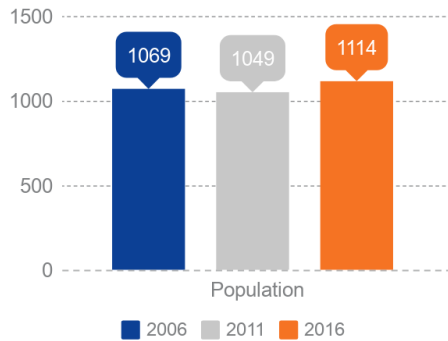


Household Income

Median Total Income: \$57,344
 Average Total Income: \$65,487

Village of South River

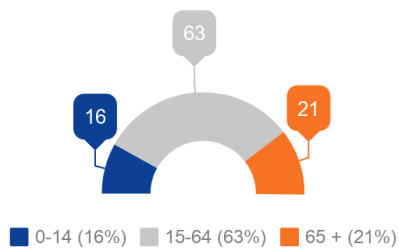
Population



Education

No certificate, diploma or degree:	26.5%
High School or Equivalent:	30.4%
Post Secondary:	44.1%

Age Profile



Median Age

South River:	45.5 years
Ontario:	41.3 years

Labour Force Indicators

Employment Rate:
42.5%

Participation Rate:
50.3%

Unemployment Rate:
15.4%

Top 5 Industries

- Manufacturing - 16.7%
- Health Care & Social Assistance - 15.6%
- Retail Trade - 14.4%
- Accommodation & Food Services - 13.3%
- Construction - 8.9%

Top 5 Occupations

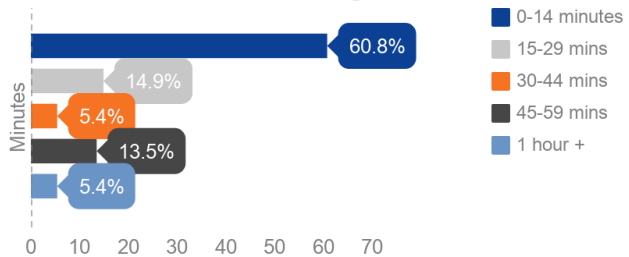
- Sales and service - 28.6%
- Manufacturing & Utilities - 14.3%
- Health - 11%
- Trades, Transport & Equipment Operators - 11%
- Management / Education, Law & Social Services - 9.9%

Commuting



- Within South River - 41.9%
- Within Parry Sound district - 35.5%
- Outside Parry Sound district - 24.2%

Commuting Time

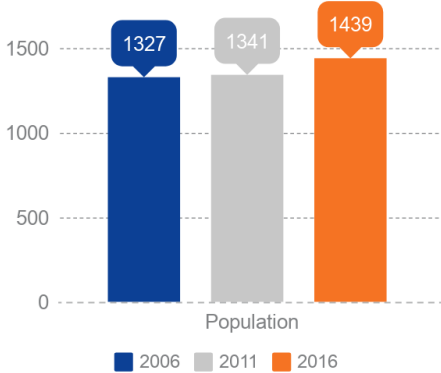


Household Income

Median Total Income:	\$40,576
Average Total Income:	\$50,158

Township of Strong

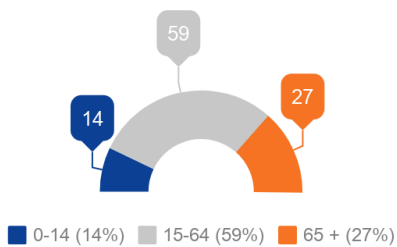
Population



Education

No certificate, diploma or degree:	14%
High School or Equivalent:	33.3%
Post Secondary:	52.7%

Age Profile



Median Age

Strong:	52.2 years
Ontario:	41.3 years

Labour Force Indicators

Employment Rate:
47.1%

Participation Rate:
55.3%

Unemployment Rate:
14.8%

Top 5 Industries

- Retail Trade - 16.3%
- Health Care & Social Assistance - 14.1%
- Construction - 13.3%
- Manufacturing - 9.6%
- Other services - 6.7%

Top 5 Occupations

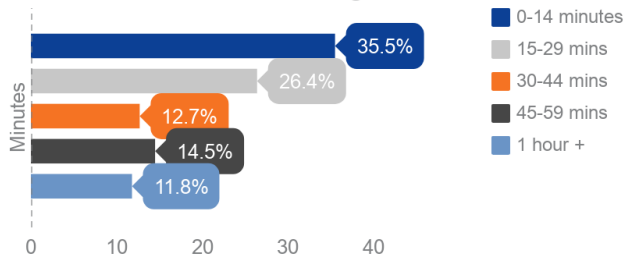
- Sales and service - 22.2%
- Trades, Transport & Equipment Operators - 20%
- Education, Law & Social Services - 14.1%
- Management / Health - 7.4%

Commuting



- Within Strong - 5.6%
- Outside Strong, within Parry Sound district - 67.8%
- Outside Parry Sound district - 25.6%

Commuting Time

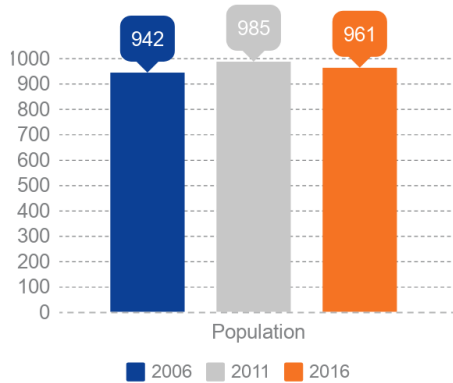


Household Income

Median Total Income:	\$60,672
Average Total Income:	\$58,891

Village of Sundridge

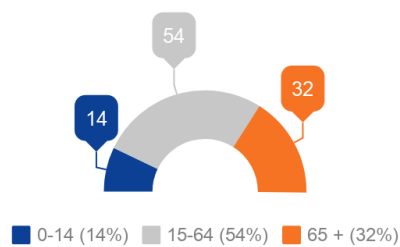
Population



Education

No certificate, diploma or degree:	10.7%
High School or Equivalent:	22.7%
Post Secondary:	65.3%

Age Profile



Median Age

Sundridge:	53.5 years
Ontario:	41.3 years

Labour Force Indicators

Employment Rate:
39.1%

Participation Rate:
41.6%

Unemployment Rate:
7.5%

Top 5 Industries

- Retail Trade - 30.9%
- Health Care & Social Assistance - 14.7%
- Accommodation & Food Services - 13.2%
- Education - 7.4%
- Professional, Scientific & Technical - 5.9%

Top 5 Occupations

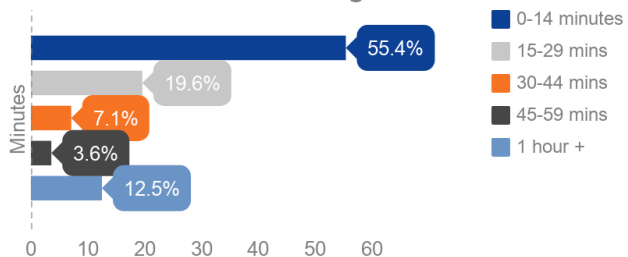
- Sales and service - 31.3%
- Management - 14.9%
- Education, Law & Social Services - 13.4%
- Trades, Transport & Equipment Operators - 10.4%
- Business, Finance & Administration / Health - 9%

Commuting



- Within Sundridge - 48.1%
- Within Parry Sound district - 34.6%
- Outside Parry Sound district - 17.3%

Commuting Time



Household Income

Median Total Income:	\$50,624
Average Total Income:	\$64,114