

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Parry Sound Municipalities Seek Public Consultation in District Wide Transportation Needs Survey

May 25th, 2021 – District of Parry. Municipalities across the District of Parry Sound have partnered with the Labour Market Group and Parry Sound YMCA Employment and Learning Services to launch a district wide transportation needs survey which will gather information regarding the transportation needs of residents throughout the district. The district-wide research initiative will seek the input from the 42 000 residents residing within more than 30 municipalities and seven first nations communities.

“This survey marks a critical step in the pursuit of overcoming the barriers faced by many residents due to the lack of availability of public or private sector transportation options” said Ann MacDiarmid, Mayor of Seguin Township. The District of Parry Sound covers more than 9300 square kilometers of Northern Ontario and is home to many unique, historic, and vibrant communities. *“As a resident of Seguin, I personally enjoy and appreciate many aspects of the communities throughout the region, however I know that getting around to many of these communities requires a vehicle.”* MacDiarmid continues.

In December of 2020, the Government of Ontario released Connecting the North – A draft transportation plan for Northern Ontario. The plan outlined many considerations regarding transportation challenges in Northern Ontario and focused in on six key goals including getting people moving, enabling economic opportunities, keeping people safe and providing reliable transportation options, maintaining a sustainable transportation system, and preparing for the future. The plan also noted considerations related to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The plan also made specific mention of funding public transit projects and other critical projects.

“The need for more transportation options has been reflected in numerous reports, studies and consultation projects throughout the district” noted David Gray, Director of Economic Development from the Almaguin Community Economic Development Department. *“The feedback we have received reflects impacts to local businesses, residents and visitors in areas such as access to job opportunities, access to health care and getting basic goods available in neighbouring communities that are often over 20KM away”* Gray added.

The Parry Sound District Transportation Needs Survey will support municipalities and partnering organizations in gaining a clear understanding of specific transportation needs and opportunities throughout the district, which is critical in planning for sustainable transportation solutions.

“For many years now, transportation throughout the Parry Sound district has been identified as a key barrier to accessing and maintaining employment in the region.” Confirms Stacie Fiddler, Executive Director from The Labour Market Group. *“The results of this survey will hopefully become a platform and guide for partners to begin discussions regarding a transportation solution throughout the district.”*

Residents throughout the region are being encouraged to fill out the survey online via SurveyMonkey. Access the survey by following this link: <https://surveymonkey.com/r/JQTSMRD>. The survey will be live on June 1st, 2020 and run until June 18th.

“Transportation is one of the top barriers to employment in the region. Our data confirms that 44% of job seekers, representing all ages and communities within the West Parry Sound region have cited

transportation as an obstacle to securing a job. This statistic is even higher for students who rely on school buses during the week, and during the school year, and are unable to get to a job in town after school and on weekends. This in turn has an enormous impact on Parry Sound's seasonal economy as employers struggle to hire a summer workforce." adds Lisa Cook, Team Leader, YMCA Employment and Learning Services

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About the Labour Market Group

The Labour Market Group (LMG) is the workforce planning board for the Nipissing and Parry Sound Districts. It is one of 26 such agencies across the province funded by the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development. LMG works with stakeholders and employers throughout the region to identify local workforce development challenges. LMG is the region's key source of local labour market information and works with community partners to find solutions to the challenges faced by employers and job seekers to find, retain and sustain regional employment. For more information, please visit <https://www.thelabourmarketgroup.ca/>.

About Parry Sound YMCA Employment and Learning Services

YMCA Employment and Learning Services, a branch of YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka, is a community-focused organization supporting job seekers through one-on-one support and skills upgrading. Employers in both the private and public sector are provided with assistance in job matching, and financial supports for training. This Employment Ontario service is funded in part by the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario. For more information, please visit www.ymcaofsimcoemuskoka.ca.

About Almaguin Community Economic Development

Almaguin Community Economic Development (ACED) is a cooperative partnership involving municipalities throughout the East Parry Sound District and the Almaguin Highlands Chamber of Commerce. The ACED Board and Department is committed to ensuring the economic and social prosperity of all communities throughout the region. Guided by the Almaguin Highlands Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan, ACED works to support business growth and development, ensure investment readiness, promote regional features, and support community development initiatives throughout the region. For more information, please visit <https://investalmaguin.ca>