Oct 6, 2026
12.1

District of Parry Sound
Social Services
Administration Board

Chief Administrative Officer's Report

September 2026

Mission Statement

To foster healthier communities by economically providing caring human services that empower and enable the people we serve to improve their quality of life.

Association of Municipalities of Ontario Conference (Ottawa, Aug 16-19, 2026)

At the recent Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) Conference, the Northern Ontario Service Deliverers Association (NOSDA) held several key meetings with provincial ministries to advocate for priorities affecting Northern communities, with our CAO Tammy MacKenzie joining the delegation to ensure a strong voice for the North.

NOSDA's delegation met with the Honourable Raymond Cho, Minister for Seniors and Accessibility to highlight the importance of creating a Northern Ontario Aging in Place Strategy, bringing together affordable housing, accessibility, transportation, health care, and community supports. NOSDA also shared how its proposed Housing Portfolio Project, which includes approximately 1,200 affordable housing units across Northern Ontario, presents an opportunity to incorporate accessibility and age-friendly design from the outset and support seniors in remaining connected to their communities.



Pictured: Charene Gilles (CAO, Rainy River DSB), Fern Dominelli (NOSDA Executive Director), Lynn Watson (NOSDA Vice-Chair), the Honourable Raymond Cho (Minister for Seniors and Accessibility), Michelle Boileau (NOSDA Chair), Tammy MacKenzie (CAO, Parry Sound DSSAB), Ken Ranta (CEO, Thunder Bay DSSAB).

NOSDA had the opportunity to meet with representatives from Ontario's Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) to discuss the important connection between income stability, housing stability, and workforce participation. The discussion reinforced the importance of ensuring people have the stability and supports they need to secure housing, and build stronger futures. We appreciate the opportunity to share Northern Ontario's priorities and look forward to continued collaboration.





'Everyday Impact' – August 2026
Jessica Cargill



Jessica is a valuable member of our Esprit Team. She brings a background of working knowledge and applies it to her new role as a Residential Program Worker. She provides expectational support to the residents through her compassion and kindness.

If a resident is struggling or just wants to chat, Jessica will take the time to make a cup of tea for them and sit down in a warm and caring atmosphere and just listen and provide sound supportive guidance.

When not in the shelter working, residents will always ask when her next shift is. She takes the time to make a meaningful difference in the lives of each resident. She is not only supportive to the residents but also to her coworkers and is an all-around team player!

Inclusion Support Services – July 2026

Age Group	EarlyON	Licensed ELCC	Monthly Total	Discharges	Referrals	Waitlist
Infant (0–18 months)	0	1	1	0	1	0
Toddler (18–30 months)	2	5	7	0	1	0
Preschool (30–47 months)	8	43	51	0	0	0
JK/SK (48 months–6 years)		21	21	2	0	0
School Age (6 years+)	1	1	2	0	0	0
Monthly Total	11	71	82	2	2	0
Year to Date	***15***	***77***	***94***	***8***	***31***	***0***

Active Caseload: 82 Children

Referrals: 2 *(children may be referred for more than one reason)*

- **2 Speech and Language Delays,**

Resource Consultants **5** → Site Visits **94** → Hours in Program **220**

EarlyON Child and Family Centre Reporting Month: July 2026		
Activity	**Monthly Total**	**Year to Date**
Number of Child Visits	769	5983
Number of Unique Children - monthly	259	878
Number of Adult Visits	537	4339
Number of Unique Adults - monthly	187	742
Number of Professionals	19	202
Number of Virtual Programming Events	9	15
Number of engagements - social media	888	2829
Number of views - social media	29771	157376

EarlyON Literacy Program, July 2026

The goal for promoting literacy in the early stages/years of life is to support continued communication, and language development. This includes encouraging talking, listening, singing, storytelling, reading, and building vocabulary through play. Early literacy skills and experiences help prepare/set children up for success with writing and reading as they enter school.

July Summary	
Total Visits	14
Total Programs/Centres	14
Total Hours	33.50
Total Children	111
Total Professionals	38
Total Adults	85
Total Families	71

The ways that we help to build these skills are through a multitude of hands-on activities, learning through environment and play, and interactions among peers and trusted adults. By making literacy/learning fun and engaging it helps young children remember experiences and connect new information to what they already know.

When children learn through play, stories, songs, movement, hands-on activities, and positive interactions, they are more likely to stay interested, participate, and recall what they learned. These types of learning experiences not only support language, but they encourage confidence, creativity, and overall development

Funding Sources for District Wide Childcare Spaces

Child Care Service Management

Total Children by Funding Source – July 2026

ACTIVE		
Funding Source	**# of Children**	**# of Families**
CWELCC	46	45
CWELCC Full Fee	233	229
Extended Day Fee Subsidy	4	4
Fee Subsidy	59	49
Full Fee	1	1
Ontario Works	1	1
Total Active:	**344**	**329**

NEW		
Funding Source	**# of Children**	**# of Families**
CWELCC	2	2
CWELCC Full Fee	6	6
Extended Day Fee Subsidy	1	1
Fee Subsidy	33	27
Full Fee	0	0
Ontario Works	0	0
Total New:	**42**	**36**

EXITS		
Funding Source	**# of Children**	**# of Families**
CWELCC	0	0
CWELCC Full Fee	0	0
Extended Day Fee Subsidy	0	0
Fee Subsidy	5	5
Full Fee	0	0
Ontario Works	0	0
Total Exits:	**5**	**5**

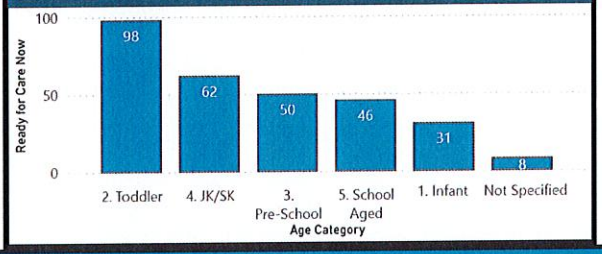
The District of Parry Sound Child Care Application Portal was launched on July 24, 2024. Since implementation, operators and child care service management staff have been working to "clean" the Application Portal by removing duplicates, training staff and assisting families with updating their profiles.

Registry and Waitlist Data for July 2026

Children Waiting for Primary Care

295

Children Waiting for Primary Care by Age Category



Unique Children Waiting for Care

518

Children who Identify as Indigenous	Children Identifying Francophone Relatives
74	49

Waiting for Care - This number represents the unique children who are currently applied for care. This includes children who may already be placed in a program and have applied to another. This also includes the number of children pre-registered for future care.

Additions to Application Portal

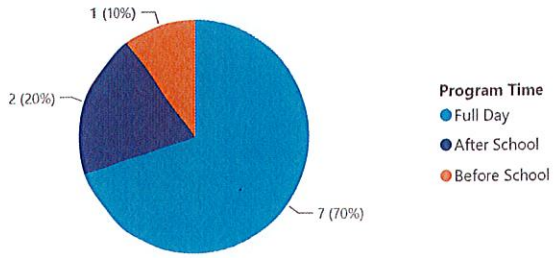
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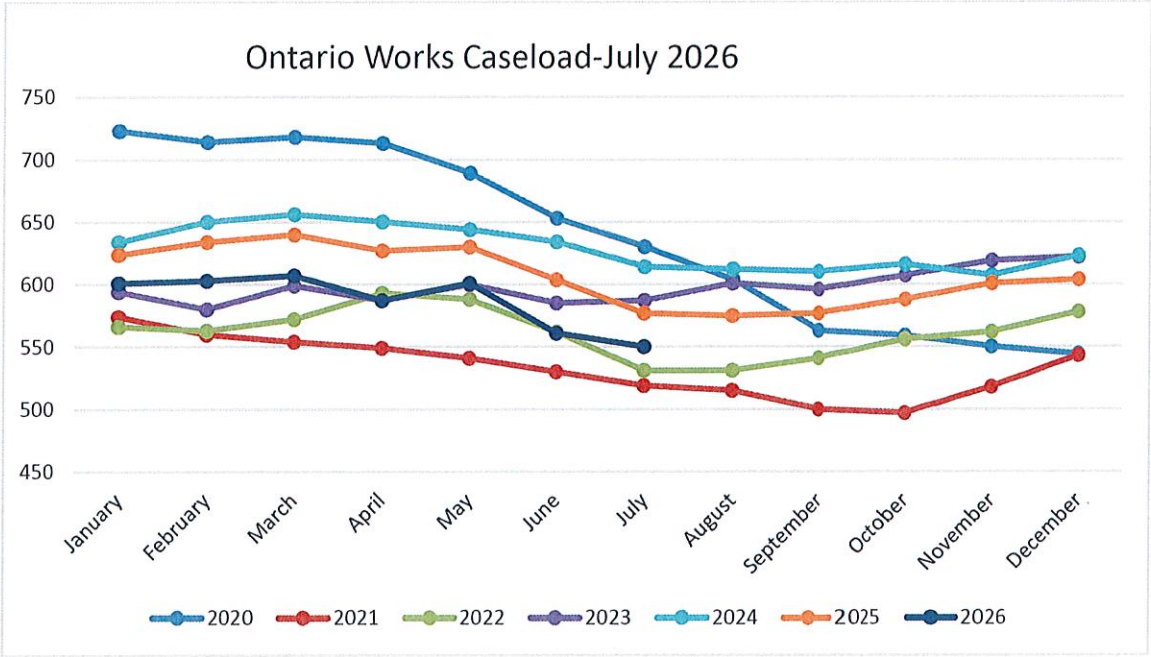
Children Placed	Spaces Filled
10	10

Children Placed - The number of unique children placed in a program.

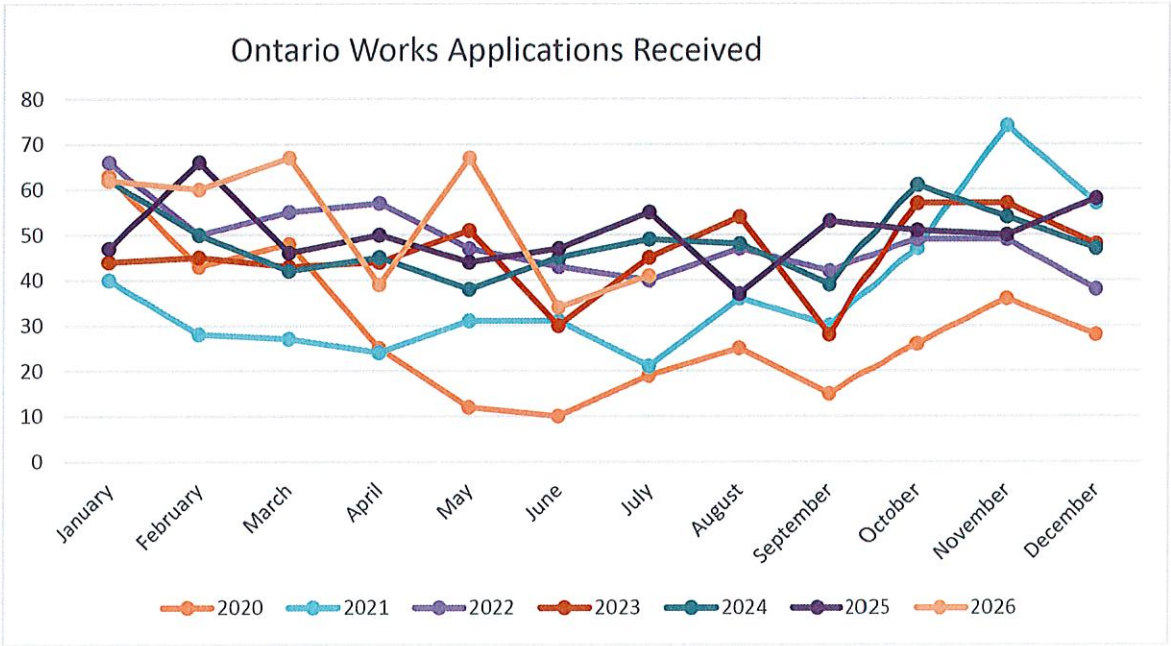
Spaces Filled - The number of spaces filled by a child. A child may be placed in more than one space, ie: before school space and after school space.

Spaces Filled by Program Time

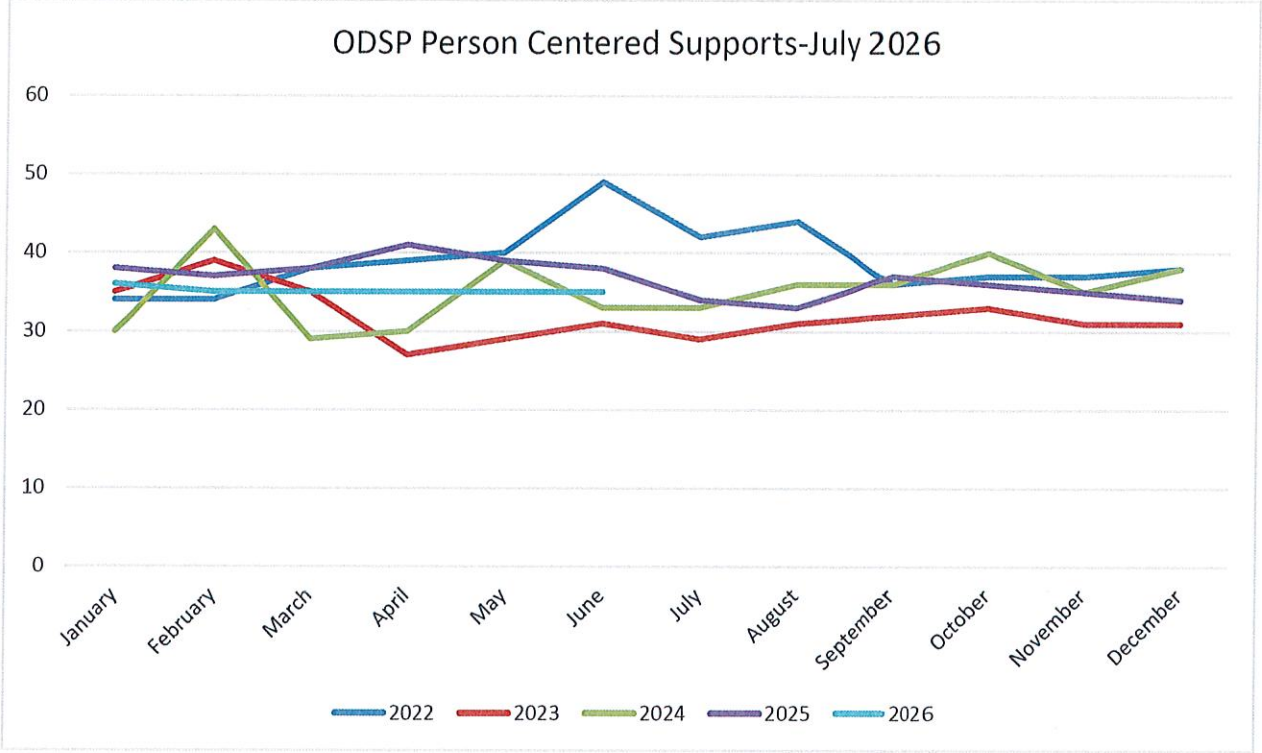




Ontario Works Intake - Social Assistance Digital Application (SADA) & Local Office Ontario Works Applications Received



ODSP Participants in Ontario Works Employment Assistance



The OW Caseload continue to hold steady at **550** cases. We are providing **35** ODSP participants Person-Centred Supports. We also have **56** Temporary Care Assistance cases. **41** applications were received through the province's Ontario Works Intake Unit (OWIU).

Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services
Integrated Employment Services

District of Parry Sound Social Services Administration Board

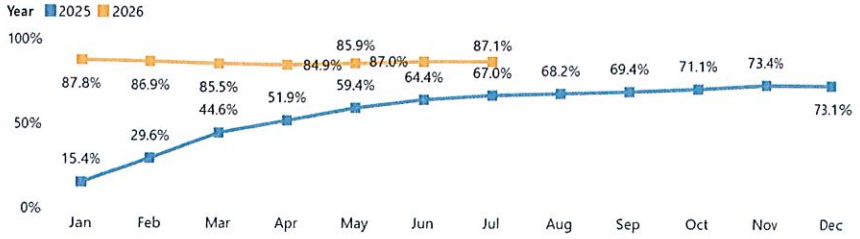
Ontario Works (OW) Performance Measures

On March 1st, 2025, as part of the province's Employment Services Transformation, we officially entered Integrated Employment Services model (IES) along with our Northeast DSSAB partners with our new Service System Manager College Boreal. This means that employment assistance for Social Assistance recipients now moves under the Employment Ontario umbrella. We are responsible for providing Person Centered Supports to SA Recipients in 4 Support Pillars.

- Crisis & Safety-homelessness, personal safety
- Health-medical, mental health counselling, addiction treatment
- Life Skills-Literacy and Basic Skills such as budgeting, time management
- Community Supports-Housing, transportation and legal support

*NDA-Non-Disabled Adult

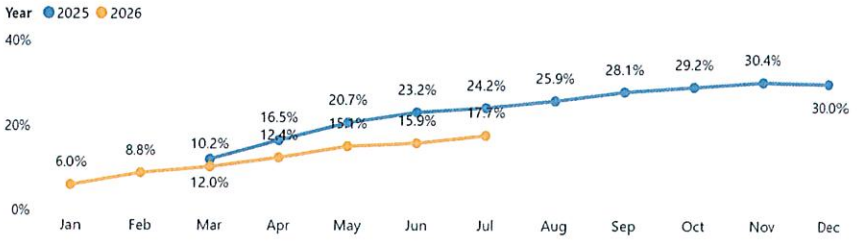
Percentage of OW + NDA Members with mandatory participation requirements that have created a Social Assistance Action Plan (Cumulative Year-to-Date)*



Provincial Value for Latest Month in Selected Range



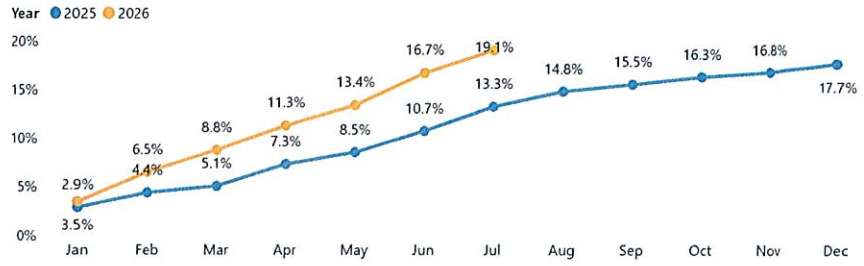
Percentage of OW + NDA Members with mandatory participation requirements that are referred to EO (Cumulative Year-to-Date)



Provincial Value for Latest Month in Selected Range



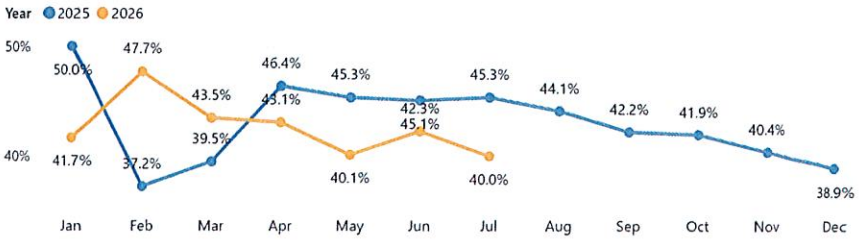
Percentage of Ontario Works cases exiting to employment (Cumulative Year-to-Date)



Provincial Value for Latest Month in Selected Range



Percentage of Ontario Works cases who exit the program and return within one year (Cumulative Year-to-Date)

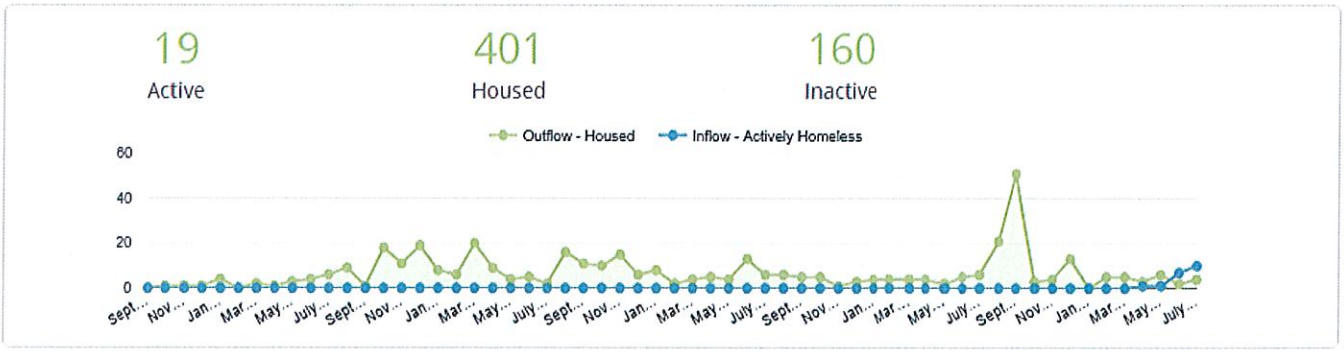


Provincial Value for Latest Month in Selected Range



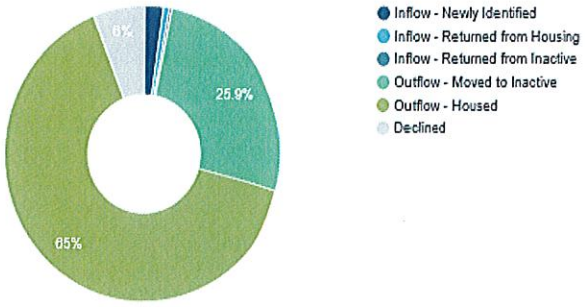
By Name List

The By Name List is real-time list of all known people who are experiencing homelessness in our community that are willing to participate in being on the list and connecting with our agency for ongoing support to obtain affordable and sustainable housing. The individuals who are connected to this program are provided Intense Case Management supports with the foundations from Coordinated Access towards housing focused solutions.



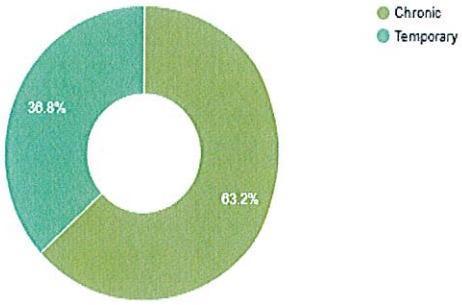
BNL INFLOW & OUTFLOW Print

Type	Clients
Inflow - Newly Identified	13
Inflow - Returned from Housing	4
Inflow - Returned from Inactive	2
Outflow - Moved to Inactive	160
Outflow - Housed	401
Declined	37

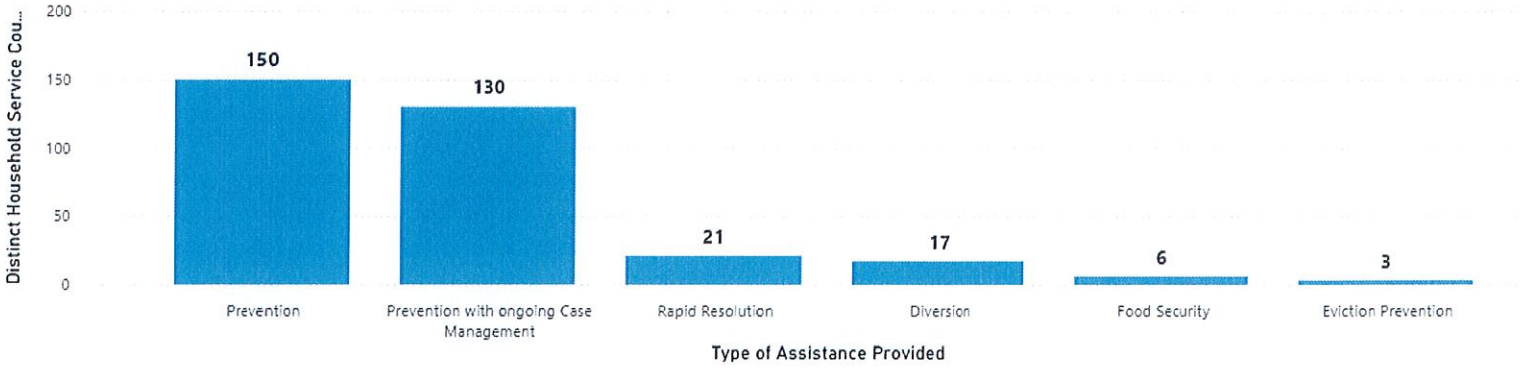


ACTIVE CLIENTS BY HOMELESS PRIORITY Print

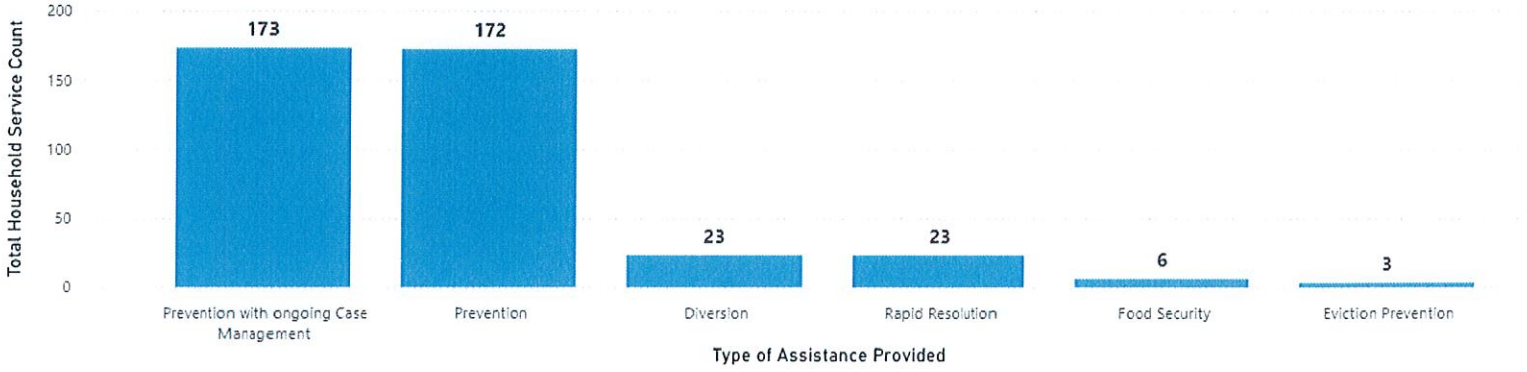
Type	Clients
Chronic	12
Approaching Chronic	0
Temporary	7
N/A	0



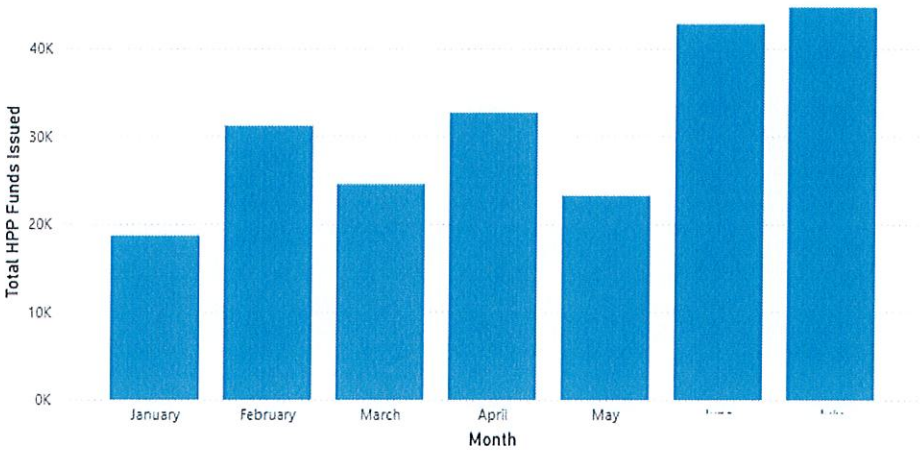
Distinct Household Service Count by Type of Assistance Provided



Total Household Service Count by Type of Assistance Provided



Total HPP Funds Issued by Month



Type of Assistance - HPP

All

Year, Month

Multiple selections

217,668.07

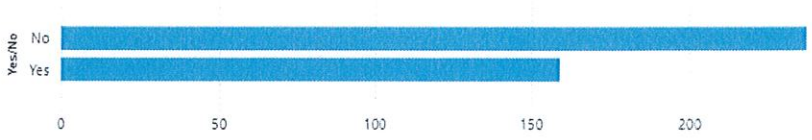
Total HPP Funds Issued

Provincial Priority Groups	Unique Households Served
Chronic Homelessness	13
Indigenous	13
Transitioning from Provincial Institution	4
Youth aged 16-25	18
Total	**47**

	iseholds Served	Total HPP Funds Issued
	115	105,680.44
	82	75,184.78
Low Income Non Senior	64	16,798.45
Low Income Senior	43	20,004.40
Total	**294**	**217,668.07**

Housing Status	Unique Households Served
At Risk of Homelessness	267
Experiencing Homelessness (and not currently on BNL)	24
On BNL	15
Total	**294**

Has the client been issued HPP in the past?



Type of Assistance Provided	Low Income Non Senior	Low Income Senior	ODSP	OW	**Total**
Diversion	3	4	5	5	**17**
Eviction Prevention			2	1	**3**
Food Security			2	4	**6**
Prevention	41	33	58	20	**150**
Prevention with ongoing Case Management	17	9	19	88	**130**
Rapid Resolution	7		8	6	**21**
Total	**68**	**4**			

Year, Month

Multiple selections

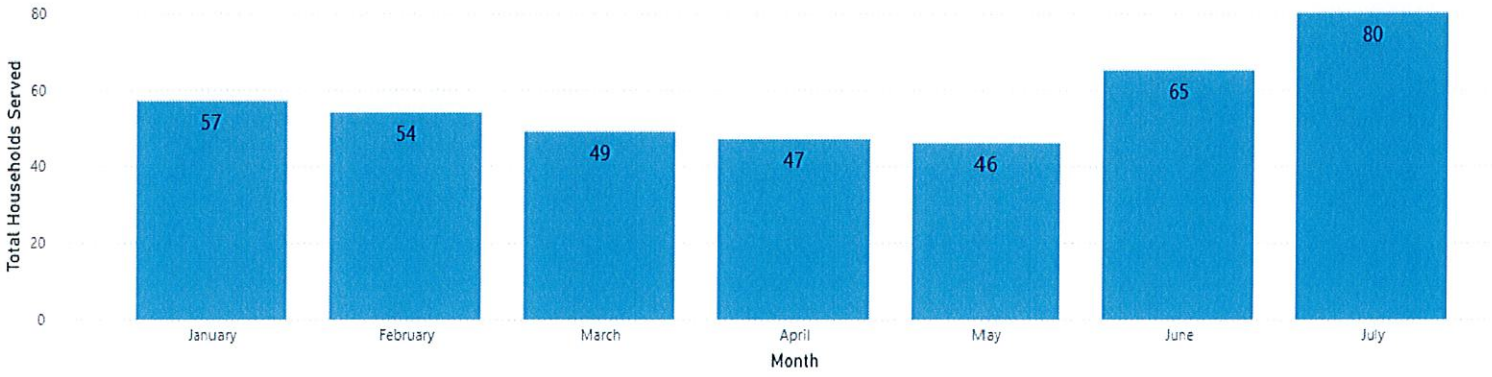
294

Unique Households Served

398

Total Households Served

Total Households Supported through HPP by Month-All



Housing Programs Update—July 2026

Social Housing Centralized Wait List Report			
	East	West	TOTAL
July 2026	Parry Sound	Parry Sound	
Seniors	58	155	**213**
Families	189	503	**692**
Individuals	699	190	**889**
TOTAL	**946**	**848**	**1794**
Total Wait List Unduplicated			**489**

Social Housing Centralized Wait List (CWL) 2025-2026 Comparison Applications and Households Housed from the CWL											
Month 2025	New APP	New SPP	Cancelled	Housed	SPP Housed	Month 2026	New App	New SPP	Cancelled	Housed	SPP Housed
Jan	9			2		Jan	6	0	9		
Feb	8		2	3		Feb	11	2	5	1	
Mar	9	1	4	1		Mar	9		5	3	1
Apr	6	1	10			Apr	4			1	1
May	11		1	2		May	21	1			
June	12	2	1	2		June	14		8	3	
Jul	14			2	1	Jul	15			4	3
Aug	9	1	1	2	1	Aug					
Sept	7	4	1	2	2	Sept					
Oct	8		1	1		Oct					
Nov	1	1	1			Nov					
Dec	7		5	2	1	Dec					
Total	101	10	27	19	5	Total	80	3	27	12	5
						SPP = Special Priority Placement					

Summary:

- There were fifteen new approved applications to the centralized waitlist in the month of July. Two applications received were ineligible – one due to arrears with a social housing provider and another due to assets in excess.
- Four applicants were housed from the waitlist, with three of them holding special priority status.
- No applications were cancelled in July.
- Three Special Priority applications were in progress, with another two sent out at the request of the applicant and/or community partner.
- Two new rent supplements started July 1, with another four anticipated to start August 1

HOUSING OPERATIONS AND SERVICE MANAGEMENT

July 2026 Statistical Information

Activity for Tenant Services

	CURRENT MONTH	YEAR TO DATE
Move-Outs	3	20
Move In (Centralized Waitlist along with Internal transfers)	4	14
L1/L2 Hearings	1	5
N4 Delivered to tenant or filed with the LTB– Notice of eviction for non-payment of rent	1	5
N5 Filed with the LTB– notice of eviction disturbing the quiet enjoyment of the other occupants	3	15
N6 Filed with the LTB –notice of eviction for illegal acts or misrepresenting income for RGI housing	0	1
N7 Filed with the LTB – notice of eviction for willful damage to unit	0	0
Repayment Agreements (new) (Formal & informal)	1	6
No Trespass Order	0	0
Mediation/Negotiation/Referrals	46	246
Tenant Home Visits/Wellness checks	173	419
Tenant Engagements/Education	18	69

Activity for Property Maintenance

Pest Control		Monthly pest control inspections were completed at 8 buildings. 38 units were inspected. Of the 38 units, 2 units required treatment.
Vacant LHC units	12	Vacancy includes units requiring capital repairs
Vacant units: TMV	3	
After Hours Calls	9	monitoring station offline, Fridge repairs required
Work Orders Purchase Orders	200 186	Work orders are created for our staff to complete routine maintenance repairs for all DSSAB/LHC Buildings Purchase Orders are for services, and materials required outside of the Housing Operations Department scope of work for the LHC/DSSAB properties
Fire Inspections	3	Fire inspections completed on properties in July with Huronia Alarms/FPO's. Monthly inspections continue at every building.
Annual Inspections	127	Annual inspections completed in July.
Inspections (Other)	10	Housing keeping, Fire Prevention Officer follow up, pests, and preconstruction/postconstruction
Incident Reports	0	

Capital Projects Monthly Report - July 2026

Monthly Board Report

This monthly report provides an overview of capital project activities undertaken during July 2026. The month focused on continued advancement of the approved 2026 capital program through completion, deficiency review, quotation recommendations, scheduling, contractor coordination, and progression of building envelope and site infrastructure priorities. Key activity included completion of a generator repair item, continued final inspection tracking for generator-related work, completion of one siding phase and commencement of the next phase, deficiency review for a large driveway and concrete scope, preparation of quote recommendations for several asphalt and concrete locations, continued tracking of mechanical and backflow items, and further coordination of remediation, roofing, eavestrough, exterior door, fencing, lighting, and ceiling items requiring pricing, scheduling, or final direction.

Hazardous Material Remediation and Water Damage Repairs

Remediation and water-damage-related activity continued during July through budget review, quotation tracking, and coordination with associated repair work. One remediation scope involving interior ceiling and flooring removals remained active through budget review and further direction. An attic remediation scope remained quoted and continued to require roofing review before related decking, re-shingling, and abatement follow-up can be finalized. Additional remediation-related repair items, including interior restoration, exterior wall repair, and kitchen replacement priorities, remained pending further quotation, scope confirmation, or implementation direction. These items continued to require coordination between investigation, abatement, construction repair, maintenance turnover, and final close-out requirements.

Plumbing, HVAC, and Duct Maintenance

Plumbing and mechanical work progressed during July primarily through tracking of previously completed and awarded scopes. One domestic hot water heater replacement had been completed, while another domestic hot water heater scope had advanced through quotation and award coordination and remained subject to scheduling and close-out requirements. Backflow preventor work remained complete for the previously closed scope, with no major new backflow completion recorded during the reporting period. No major new district-wide HVAC project was otherwise mobilized in July. Mechanical priorities will continue to be tracked through quotation, award, scheduling, completion, inspection, and future building-performance review as required.

Doors, Siding, Painting, and Cosmetic Upgrades

Exterior finish-related scopes advanced during July through siding completion, next-phase start-up, quotation, and site review. One siding phase was completed late in the month and remained subject to deficiency verification before final payment. A subsequent siding phase commenced near the end of July, while another approved siding scope remained scheduled for future start-up. Exterior door quotation activity continued for another building-envelope item, and a fencing-related scope advanced through site review with quotation still required. Several additional exterior and cosmetic repair priorities, including sealants, beam refinishing, exterior wall repairs, and kitchen replacement work, remained pending quotation, re-pricing, or final direction before proceeding.

Generator and Electrical Work

Generator and electrical activity continued during July through completion, final inspection tracking, and close-out coordination. One generator repair scope was completed on July 7th following prior inspection and deficiency follow-up. A separate backup-generator connection remained operational and continued through final inspection and close-out tracking. Lighting and ceiling-related items remained active across the portfolio, with previously completed work in place, one ceiling-related phase still outstanding, and another lighting and ceiling scope remaining at the quotation review stage. No major new electrical panel replacement was completed during July. Electrical and generator scopes will continue to be tracked through inspection, deficiency correction, quotation, approval, and final close-out as required.

Roofing and Eavestrough Projects

Roofing and eavestrough activity remained active during July through quotation, re-quotation, and coordination with remediation requirements. An attic remediation scope continued to require roofing review before related decking and re-shingling requirements can be confirmed. Shed shingling work remained pending quotation. Eavestrough work also continued through re-quotation and emergency quote activity, with one scope requiring additional pricing review due to budget pressure and contractor capacity concerns, and another scope progressing through emergency quotation. Roofing and eavestrough priorities remain connected to broader building envelope planning where drainage, remediation, exterior renewal, budget availability, and contractor scheduling overlap.

Structural Repairs, Infrastructure and Foundation Assessments

Structural and site infrastructure work advanced during July through deficiency review, quote recommendation preparation, and continued assessment of remaining paving and concrete priorities. A large driveway and concrete scope remained active, with work having commenced earlier and a July site meeting held to review deficiencies and confirm follow-up requirements. Several asphalt and concrete quote recommendations were prepared for submission in July, while other locations remained pending quotation or further review. Additional family-unit driveway locations had not yet been fully assessed or quoted. Masonry work that had previously commenced continued to be tracked through implementation and completion coordination. Remaining infrastructure priorities, including driveways, concrete, exterior wall repairs, sealants, beams, and related site work, continued to require quotation, review, deficiency follow-up, or final direction.

Security Enhancements

No new security enhancement projects were undertaken during July. Existing measures remained in place and operational, with ongoing monitoring continuing to support building safety and access control across the portfolio. Any future security-related work will continue to be coordinated through the approved capital plan and reported as procurement, scheduling, or implementation milestones occur.

Consulting and Engineering Contracts

Consultant, contractor, and engineering coordination remained a significant component of the capital program during July. Quotation review and recommendation preparation continued to support asphalt, concrete, driveway, siding, eavestrough, roofing, remediation, exterior door, fencing, lighting, and ceiling-related work. Site review activity supported both deficiency follow-up and quotation preparation, while several items remained pending contractor pricing, revised pricing, scheduling confirmation, or supervisory direction. These activities continue to support procurement discipline, budget validation, and appropriate implementation sequencing before additional work proceeds.

Childcare Capital Acceleration

Childcare-related capital activity remained selective during July. A backup-generator connection serving a childcare-related facility remained operational and continued through final inspection and close-out tracking. No major new childcare-specific capital project was otherwise completed during the reporting period. Childcare-related priorities remained subject to the approved capital plan and will continue to be reported as procurement, inspection, scheduling, access, tenant communication, or implementation milestones occur.

Completion Highlights (July 2026)

July was defined by continued movement of the 2026 capital program through completion, deficiency review, quotation recommendation, site review, scheduling, and close-out tracking. Key accomplishments included completion of one generator repair scope, completion of one siding phase subject to final deficiency verification, commencement of the next siding phase, a deficiency review meeting for a large driveway and concrete scope, preparation of several asphalt and concrete quote recommendations for submission, continued tracking of a backup-generator final inspection, and advancement of a fencing-related item through site review. The month also clarified several items requiring continued quotation, re-quotation, repair coordination, or final direction, including remediation and roofing follow-up, shed shingling, eavestrough pricing, exterior door quotation, lighting and ceiling work, exterior wall repairs, sealants, beams, kitchen replacement work, and remaining asphalt, concrete, and driveway locations.

In summary, July demonstrated continued progress across the approved 2026 capital program, with several scopes advancing through completion, start-up, deficiency review, quote recommendation, and close-out coordination. The next reporting period will focus on siding deficiency verification and continued siding implementation, follow-up on driveway and concrete deficiencies, submission and review of asphalt and concrete quote recommendations, generator final inspection close-out, eavestrough re-pricing, remediation and roofing coordination, exterior door and fencing quotations, and continued implementation of mechanical, electrical, structural, building envelope, and infrastructure priorities.

Social Media Stats

Facebook –District of Parry Sound Social Services Administration	FEB 2026	MAR 2026	APR 2026	MAY 2026	JUN 2026	JULY 2026
Total Page Followers	837	841	849	865	884	893
Post Reach this Period (# of people who saw post)	56,115	16,807	9473	10,273	9353	10,827
Post Engagement this Period (# of reactions, comments, shares)	1,760	847	261	743	391	383

Facebook -Esprit Place Family Resource Centre	FEB 2026	MAR 2026	APR 2026	MAY 2026	JUN 2026	JUL 2026
Total Page Followers	251	251	251	252	252	253
Post Reach this Period (# of people who saw post)	308	1972	275	354	186	706
Post Engagement this Period (# of reactions, comments, shares)	3	15	2	8	11	6

DSSAB LinkedIN Stats https://bit.ly/2YyFHlE	FEB 2026	MAR 2026	APR 2026	MAY 2026	JUNE 2026	JULY 2026
Total Followers	598	601	604	609	612	612
Search Appearances (in last 7 days)	80	60	35	51	37	17
Total Page Views	50	33	9	32	31	5
Post Impressions	1735	1465	666	1282	1024	677
Total Unique Visitors	20	16	7	12	20	4

Instagram - Esprit Place Family Resource Centre https://www.instagram.com/espritplace/	FEB 2026	MAR 2026	APR 2026	MAY 2026	JUN 2026	JULY 2026
Total Followers	120	122	122	123	124	125
# of accumulated posts	81	82	82	83	84	85

Oct 6, 2026

12.2

John Britten

3491A Axe Lake Rd.

Sprucedale, ON

September 19,2026

Mayor and Council,

I hereby tender my resignation as the representive of McMurrich Monteith on the Park2Park board, effective immediately.

In the past I've spoken to this Council, through delegation and by correspondence about the "Seguin Trail" in our Township. I have also sat down for a 2 hour meeting with Terry Sararas regarding this. At that meeting with Terry, I handed over all the documentation that I have accumulated since being appointed to Park2 Park.

I have read Terry's report to this Council. While I understand his reasoning, I don't agree with his approach of not taking a Land Use Agreement with the MNRF for our portion of the Trail. I have advocated many times to Park2Park, that this trail should be funded Provincially and or Federally, but administered by the local Townships. Our local community is so lucky to have this "gem" of a trail in our Township and I think that its future use should be looked after by our local citizens and community members.

In closing I have enjoyed my work on the Park2Park board immensely and I hope the next elected Council will pursue this futher.

Yours truly,

John Britten

Oct 6 2026 12.3

705-382-2900
www.almaguin-health.org

ALMAGUIN HIGHLANDS HEALTH COUNCIL AGENDA
Thursday, September 4, 2026, 10:00 am in person
at the Township of Perry Municipal Office and
via Zoom | Meeting ID: 984 1255 3124 | Passcode: 165417

1. **CIRCULATION OF MINUTES – RESOLUTION TO ADOPT MINUTES**
   a) Regular minutes of August 6, 2026.
2. **DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY OF INTEREST**
3. **DELEGATIONS**
4. **RESOLUTIONS TO BE PASSED**
   a) 2026-21: Approve AHHC minutes from August 6, 2026.
   c) 2026-22: Adjourn the meeting.
5. **ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

   a) Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) Conference – Discussion

   b) Update – Physician Recruitment – David Gravelle

   c) Update – Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare – Cheryl Harrison

   d) Update – Almaguin Highlands Family Health Team – Shelly van den Heuvel

   f) Progress Report

   g) Other Business

6. **ADJOURNMENT**

705-382-2900
www.almaguin-health.org

Minutes: August 6, 2026, 10:00 am via Zoom and at the Township of Perry Municipal Office

Present: Rod Ward (Chair), Delynne Patterson, Margaret Ann MacPhail, Vicky Roeder-Martin (Vice-Chair), Sean Cotton, Brad Kneller, Norm Hofstetter, Jim Ronholm, Cheryl Philip.

Regrets: Tom Bryson, Luke Preston

Guests: Cheryl Harrison, Deb Raynard, Sandy Zurbrigg, Courtney Metcalfe

Called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Chair R. Ward

1. 2026-19 Moved by Jim Ronholm - Seconded by Sean Cotton
   THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Almaguin Highlands Health Council adopt the minutes from the regular meeting of June 4, 2026, as circulated. Carried.
2. **DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY OF INTEREST**: None
3. **DELEGATIONS**: None
4. **RESOLUTIONS PASSED**: None
5. **ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION:**

   a) Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare (MAHC) Update | Cheryl Harrison

   MAHC has yet to receive notification from the province on capital redevelopment. MAHC is one of five (5) hospitals to be proposed affiliates of the new York University School of Medicine and is working with Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM) to build a program in a community that residents with to work, life, and stay.

   MAHC has met with Austin & Leah Toth regarding the move of the cancer clinic. Another patient has also reached out. No changes underfoot at present but they are continuing to listen to patient voices. MAHC is also a part of two regional cancer programs and is engaged in conversations around referrals.

   b) MAOHT PFCPAC Update | Sandy Zurbrigg

   Diane Lloyd and Jim Lawrie were re-elected as PFCPAC co-chairs and engagement is an important goal of the group. One PFCPAC partner will server on the MAOHT Indigenous Engagement Advisory Committee.

Sandy shared a patient experience story that demonstrated how important it is to be attached to a primary care provider. Her son suffered a fracture in his hand, and through Almaguin Highlands FHT received excellent and collaborative care.

c) Almaguin Highlands FHT (AHFHT)Update | Deb Raynard

A nurse will be leaving to attend medical school, and it is hoped that she will return to AHFHT one day. There have been discussions on the mobile cancer clinic and the unit will be in Sundridge in 2027.

A councillor shared another positive patient experience at AHFHT.

d) Activities Related to Catchment Area for Kearney & McMurrich-Monteith Update | Rod Ward

The annual AMO conference is in Ottawa from August 16th to 19th and there will be delegations with the Ministry of Health. One item for discussion is the adding Kearney & McMurrich-Monteith to the physician catchment list.

R. Ward contacted Dr. J. Philpott who responded quickly that one of her team will address this concern. R. Ward and V. Roeder-Martin will be part of an OMA delegation with the MOH on August 17th to discuss this item. It was agreed to keep the message simple but with a big impact; a map of Almaguin Highlands will be created/printed with crayons/markers to draw and show issues.

In another delegation, it was agreed to highlight the work of the AHHC to support physicians and successes it has had. The AHHC Infographic will be shared. This reinforces the work being lead by Dr. J. Philpott, the importance of attachment, and the need for primary care providers.

e) Petition Regarding Cancer Care Services in Huntsville & Bracebridge Update | Rod Ward

Councils are addressing the situation positively. Austin & Leah Toth continue to present to councils and share the petition. Discussion on the plan for future development of services for cancer care. C. Harrison shared that MAHC is engaging with groups to understand patient need and the regional program from a clinical perspective.

f) Future X-Ray Update in Burk's Falls – Update – Rod Ward.

Discussion on the Almaguin Highlands resolution that capital development funds were to be set aside for items in the area (80/20% split) and potential use of those funds for items such as oncology facilities.

It was noted that the x-ray equipment has a limited lifespan, there will not be a new build in Armour, and the municipalities must come together regarding equipment plans.

The Armour Township EOI for development of the wellness clinic was extended to 12 weeks. No funding/support opportunities were put forward. The EOI will be released at a later date.

6. ADJOURNMENT

2026-20 Moved by Vicky Roeder-Martin - Seconded by Sean Cotton
THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Almaguin Highlands Health Council adjourn at 10:45 a.m. to meet again on September 3, 2006, at 10:00 am at Perry Township.
Carried.

Agenda

705-382-2900
www.almaguin-health.org

ALMAGUIN HIGHLANDS HEALTH COUNCIL AGENDA
Thursday, October 1, 2026, 10:00 am in person
at the Township of Perry Municipal Office and via Zoom

1. **CIRCULATION OF MINUTES – RESOLUTION TO ADOPT MINUTES**
   a) Regular minutes of September 3, 2026.

2. **DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY OF INTEREST**

3. **DELEGATIONS**

4. **RESOLUTIONS TO BE PASSED**
   a) 2026-23 Minutes from the meeting of September 3, 2026
   b) 2026-24 Adjournment of meeting of October 1, 2026

5. **ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

   a) Physician Recruitment | Burk's Falls RNPGA – Rod Ward

   b) Updates
      I. Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare – Cheryl Harrison
      II. Almaguin Highlands Family Health Team – Shelly van den Heuvel
      III. MAOHT PFCPAC – Sandy Zurbrigg

   c) Progress Report

   d) Other Business

705-382-2900
www.almaguin-health.org

Minutes: September 3, 2026, 10:00 am via Zoom and at the Township of Perry Municipal Office

Present: Rod Ward (Chair), Delynne Patterson, Margaret Ann MacPhail, Vicky Roeder-Martin (Vice- Chair), Sean Cotton, Cheryl Philip, Tom Bryson, Shawn Jackson, Deb Duce (Secretary)

Regrets: Brad Kneller, Norm Hofstetter, Jim Ronholm, Luke Preston

Guests: David Gravelle, Cheryl Harrison, Sandy Zurbrigg

Called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Chair R. Ward

1. 2026-21 Moved by Margaret Ann MacPhail - Seconded by Tom Bryson
   THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Almaguin Highlands Health Council adopt the minutes from the regular meeting of August 8, 2026, as circulated. Carried.
2. **DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY OF INTEREST**: None
3. **DELEGATIONS**: None
4. **RESOLUTIONS PASSED**:
   a. 2026-21 Minutes from the meeting of August 8, 2026
   b. 2026-22 Adjournment of meeting of September 3, 2026
5. **ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION:**

a) **Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) Conference Update**

Overview of meeting with the Minister of Health and direction to support primary care provider recruitment on a case-by-case basis in areas oof Almaguin Highlands in need.
ACTION: Will connection with Almaguin Highlands FHT leads for information sharing and discussion.
ACTION: Will create a report for presentation to the AHHC.

Overview of meeting with Ontario Medical Association who noted they are aware of the mapping issue and will look into it.

b) **Physician Recruitment | David Gravelle**

Highlighted upcoming recruitment events (Buffalo, FMX, McMaster Recruitment Fair), connections with physicians wishing to visit Muskoka Almaguin, the launch of the OPRA Compass module, and discussion with Dr. J. Philpott on additional funding for physician recruitment in Caribbean medical school and outreach in countries such as Australia. He

also shared he is actively working with Dr. S. MacKinnon for recruitment of a PRO candidate including creation of a business case to CPSO.

c) **Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare | Cheryl Harrison**

It was shared that the expected announcement of capital redevelopment funding will follow the October election, and there will be upcoming announcements on large philanthropic donations. A much-loved community member, Bob Hutchison, recently passed away.

d) **MAOHT Patient, Family, Caregiver AC | Sandy Zurbrigg**

Upcoming events PFCPAC members will be attending included the Muskoka Healthy Living Expo (Nov. 5th) and the Integrated Care Action Summit (Nov. 25/26), and the group has received five applications for the role of PFC partners.

e) **Information Update**

Deb Raynard has left the Almaguin Highlands FHT and during the recruitment process Shelly van den Heuvel will provide support.

Enliven Cancer is having a family caregiver event on September 25th from 10 am to 3 pm in Bracebridge at the Muskoka Lumber Community Centre.

6. ADJOURNMENT

2026-22 Moved by Cheryl Philip - Seconded by Vicky Roeder-Martin
THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Almaguin Highlands Health Council adjourns at 10:35 am to meet again on October 1, 2026, at 10:00 am at Perry Township. Carried.

Oct 6, 2026
12.4

Burk's Falls and District Food Bank
Serving Almaguin South
P.O. Box 694
Burk's Falls, ON P0A 1C0

Since 1992

Serving

Township of Armour

Village of Burk's Falls

Town of Kearney

Municipality of *Magnetawan*

Township of McMurrich/ Monteith

Township of Perry

Township of *Ryerson*

Memberships

Feed Ontario

Food Banks Canada

September 18, 2026

Township of McMurrich/Monteith
31 William Street
Sprucedale, ON P0A 1Y0

To whom it may concern,

The Burk's Falls and District Food Bank is extremely grateful for your generous donation, it will help us to continue our mission to relieve hunger in Almaguin South.

Many thanks for your financial assistance, we could not do what we do without the support of our community.

Yours truly,

Jan Lake

Jan Lake
Executive Director/Treasurer
Burk's Falls and District Food Bank

Oct 6, 2026
12.5

Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Office of the Deputy Minister

777 Bay Street, 17th Floor
Toronto ON M7A 2J3
Tel.: 416 585-7100

Ministère des Affaires Municipales et du Logement

Bureau du sous-ministre

777, rue Bay, 17e étage
Toronto (Ontario) M7A 2J3
Tél. : 416 585-7100

Ontario

242-2026-2

September 17, 2026

SUBJECT: Supporting Ontario and Canadian Suppliers Through Municipal Procurement

Dear Chief Administrative Officer,

I am writing to share information on Ontario's ongoing efforts to strengthen domestic supply chains and to ensure our expectations are aligned regarding municipal public sector procurement.

Ontario has introduced several procurement measures, including the Buy Ontario Act (Public Sector Procurement), 2025, and the Municipal Buy Ontario Procurement Directive, to increase participation by Ontario and Canadian suppliers in public sector purchasing. Looking ahead, the government is also considering additional actions that would strengthen these policies to expand domestic procurement, protect jobs, and maximize the economic benefits of public sector spending, such as extending the Building Ontario Business Initiative (BOBI) to municipalities for the procurement of goods and services.

Municipal Heads of Council have also received letters outlining these measures and the government's expectations regarding compliance with Buy Ontario procurement policies.

Municipalities play an important role in supporting Ontario's economy, strengthening supply chain resilience and ensuring that public spending delivers maximum economic benefit for Ontario businesses and workers. While municipal procurement decisions are made independently and within local governance frameworks, municipalities are expected to ensure that applicable Ontario legislation, directives and policies are understood and appropriately reflected in procurement practices.

Given the current economic environment and ongoing trade uncertainties, municipalities should review upcoming procurement activities, sourcing practices and supply chains to identify every opportunity to increase consideration of Ontario and Canadian goods, services and suppliers.

.../2

To align with the Directive, please remind all those involved at the municipal level about their responsibilities and obligations under Ontario's domestic procurement framework and ensure that these requirements are incorporated into procurement planning and decision-making

Thank you for your continued collaboration and leadership. By ensuring that procurement obligations are understood and consistently applied, municipalities and the province can work together to support Ontario businesses and build a more resilient and competitive Ontario economy.

Sincerely,

Martha Greenberg
Deputy Minister, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

c: Samantha Poisson, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement

Oct 6 2026 12.6

FONOM
Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities

noma
Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association

Representing the Districts of Kenora, Rainy River and Thunder Bay
P.O. Box 10308, Thunder Bay, ON P7B 6T8
www.noma.on.ca
p. 807.683.6662 e. admin@noma.on.ca

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FONOM and NOMA Call for Federal-Provincial Partnership to Four-Lane Highways 11 and 17

September 14, 2026 - Northern Ontario - The Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities (FONOM) and the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association (NOMA) are calling on the Ontario and federal governments to establish a jointly funded, phased plan to upgrade Highways 11 and 17 to four lanes.

In a joint letter to Premier Doug Ford, the organizations noted that both the Premier and Prime Minister Mark Carney have recognized the importance of these critical east-west corridors. NOMA and FONOM are asking the Province to begin formal discussions with the federal government and develop a plan with clear priorities, timelines and measurable progress.

"Northern communities have waited too long for a comprehensive solution to the safety, reliability and capacity challenges along these highways," **said FONOM President Dave Plourde.** "With both governments recognizing their importance, now is the time to move from discussion to action and establish four-laning as the long-term objective."

Highways 11 and 17 connect communities and industries across Northern Ontario while supporting mining, forestry, manufacturing, tourism and the movement of essential goods. The corridors are also important to Canada's economic and national security, including the movement of military personnel, equipment and supplies.

"These are not simply Northern Ontario highways. They are vital parts of Canada's national transportation and supply chain network," **said NOMA President Rick Dumas.** "A federal-provincial partnership would improve safety for Northern residents while strengthening trade, resource development and the movement of goods across the country."

NOMA and FONOM, representing 154 municipalities, are also requesting that Northern municipalities be included in developing the phased plan. The organizations have offered to meet jointly with Premier Ford and Prime Minister Carney to discuss the next steps.

-30-

Media Contacts:
Dave Plourde, President, FONOM
705-335-1615 | fonom.info@gmail.com

Rick Dumas, President, NOMA
(807) 229-6842 | admin@noma.on.ca

FONOM
Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FONOM Welcomes Prime Minister's Commitment to Work with Ontario on Northern Highways

September 3, 2026

KAPUSKASING, ONTARIO — The Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities (FONOM) welcomes Prime Minister Mark Carney's commitment to working with the Province of Ontario to make the safety and expansion of Northern Ontario's highways a priority.

While in Thunder Bay, Prime Minister Carney was asked about the federal government's position on four-laning Highways 11 and 17. The Prime Minister recognized the importance of these highways as critical east-west transportation connections and stated that their multi-laning is a priority for the federal government.

FONOM President Dave Plourde says the Prime Minister's comments are encouraging and represent an important opportunity for the federal and provincial governments to work together.

"We are pleased to hear the Prime Minister recognize what Northern municipalities have been saying for years: that Highways 11 and 17 are not simply provincial roads. They are vital east-west connections that serve Northern Ontario, the rest of Ontario and Canada," said Plourde.

"If four-laning is a priority for the federal government, we need to see it become an equally clear priority for the Province of Ontario. Where four-laning is not immediately practical, we need a comprehensive plan to improve safety and mobility."

Prime Minister Carney indicated that he will be speaking with Premier Doug Ford. FONOM believes those discussions provide an important opportunity for both governments to establish a coordinated plan for Northern Ontario's transportation infrastructure.

"The Prime Minister and Premier have a lot of work to do together, and Northern highways need to be part of that conversation," said Plourde. "We need the federal and provincial governments sitting at the same table, identifying the priorities, committing the resources and working together to rectify the longstanding highway safety and transportation challenges facing Northern Ontario."

FONOM has consistently advocated for increased investment in Highways 11 and 17, including

four-laning, highway safety improvements, passing lanes and other measures that will improve the movement of people and goods across Northern Ontario.

"Northern Ontario is growing, and our transportation infrastructure needs to keep pace," added Plourde. "These highways are essential to our communities, our economy, tourism, resource development and national supply chains. We appreciate the Prime Minister's recognition of their importance, and we now look forward to seeing that commitment translated into action with the Province."

Media Contact:

Dave Plourde, President

Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities

705-335-1615 | fonom.info@gmail.com

About FONOM

The Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities represents 110 municipalities across Northeastern Ontario. FONOM works to improve residents' quality of life and ensure Northern Ontario's future prosperity by advocating on behalf of its member municipalities.

Oct 6 2026
12.7

North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit
Bureau de santé du district de North Bay Parry Sound

September 2, 2026

Re: Municipal Candidate Public Health Primer

Dear Municipal Candidate,

The North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit is committed to protecting and promoting the health and well-being of our communities while working to reduce health inequities. The Health Unit collaborates with municipalities and other community partners to create healthier, more resilient communities. As an elected municipal representative, you will have a role in shaping policies and decisions that impact the health of residents every day.

We are pleased to share this Municipal Candidate Primer to highlight six priority areas of public health that are relevant to municipalities across the North Bay Parry Sound district: Social Connection, Substance Use Prevention, Community Safety and Well-Being, Housing and Homelessness, Early Adversity and Resilience, and Community Design and Transportation.

Each section outlines why the topic matters and practical actions municipalities can take to support healthier communities.

The Health Unit is available to provide local population health data, evidence-informed guidance, and support in applying a health lens to municipal policies, programs, services, planning initiatives, and advocacy efforts. We look forward to working collaboratively with municipal leaders to build communities where everyone has the opportunity to achieve their best possible health.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please do not hesitate to contact us at MOH.Office@healthunit.ca.

Sincerely,

Dr. Carol Zimbalatti, CCFP, MPH
Medical Officer of Health/Executive Officer

THE ISSUE AND WHY IT MATTERS

Social Connection Across the Lifespan

Social connection helps people stay healthy, active, and involved in their communities. Everyone should have opportunities to participate in community life, build relationships, and feel welcomed and included.

This is especially important in Nipissing and Parry Sound, where the population is aging. Nearly one in four residents in the Nipissing District and one in three residents in the Parry Sound District are aged 65 or older.

Municipal policies can help reduce social isolation by supporting accessible public spaces, affordable transportation, inclusive recreation programs, community events, civic participation, and a range of housing options.

When people feel connected, communities become stronger.

Social connection improves mental and physical health, supports volunteering and civic engagement, and helps create places where everyone feels valued and able to contribute.

Substance Use Prevention

Substance use continues to affect individuals, families, and communities across Ontario.

The impacts are especially significant in Northern Ontario.

Substance use contributes to preventable illness, injury, and death. It also increases pressure on health care, emergency services, and community supports.

Substance use is influenced by many factors, including housing, income, education, employment, access to health care and community support services, and experiences of discrimination. These factors often affect people already facing social and economic challenges.

Communities often see the impacts of substance use through increased pressure on emergency services, housing systems, local businesses, and community organizations.

WHAT MUNICIPALITIES CAN DO

Embed Social Inclusion and Healthy Aging in Municipal Planning

- Include social connection, inclusion, accessibility, and healthy aging in municipal plans, policies, budgets, and community development initiatives.
- Work with public health and community partners to become an Age-Friendly Community.
- Invest in public spaces and programs that bring people together, including parks, trails, libraries, plazas, and community centres.

Strengthen Community Engagement and Partnerships

- Create opportunities for residents to participate in municipal decision-making.
- Consider advisory committees, such as youth or seniors' committees, to help guide local priorities.

WHAT MUNICIPALITIES CAN DO

Incorporate Substance Use Prevention into Municipal Planning

- Consider substance use prevention and harm reduction when planning for housing, recreation, mental health, youth programming, and community safety.

Support Collaboration and Advocacy

- Work with local organizations on stigma reduction, prevention, treatment, harm reduction, and recovery initiatives.
- Advocate for services and resources that address local needs.

Support Policies and By-laws

- Create by-laws and policies for reducing access to alcohol, cannabis, vape, and tobacco.
- Reduce the number of retailers allowed within municipality limits.

THE ISSUE AND WHY IT MATTERS

Community Safety and Well-Being

Community safety and well-being means that people feel safe, have their basic needs met, and can access the opportunities and supports they need to thrive.

Health, safety, and well-being are influenced by many factors, including housing, income, transportation, mental health, substance use, and social inclusion. People who experience hardships in these areas are more likely to experience poorer health outcomes.

Investing in prevention, strong social support, and community partnerships can improve health outcomes while reducing demand on community and crisis services.

Housing and Homelessness

Housing is a key factor that influences health. Homelessness is a growing challenge across Northern Ontario. It is driven by factors such as poverty, a shortage of affordable housing, inadequate income supports, discrimination, and barriers to services.

People experiencing homelessness are more likely to face poor physical and mental health, difficulty accessing services, and shorter life expectancy.

These challenges can be even greater in rural and northern communities because of transportation barriers and limited housing options.

Research shows that investing in affordable housing, supportive services, income security, and homelessness prevention improves health outcomes and reduces long-term pressure on municipal and social service systems.

WHAT MUNICIPALITIES CAN DO

- Engage communities, people with living and lived experience, community organizations, and health partners in planning and decision-making related to Community Safety and Well-Being.
- Review Community Safety and Well-Being Plans and outputs/outcomes regularly to identify local priorities and guide municipal investments and actions.
- Support partnerships that improve access to housing, food, transportation, mental health services, and emergency preparedness.

WHAT MUNICIPALITIES CAN DO

Collaborate with Housing Partners

- Work with the District Social Services Administration Board (DSSAB) and community partners to prevent homelessness and improve access to housing.

Support Housing Affordability

- Support affordable, accessible, and adaptable housing through planning, zoning, and development policies.
- Invest in maintaining and renewing existing social and affordable housing.

THE ISSUE AND WHY IT MATTERS

Early Adversity and Reslience

Children are more likely to thrive when they grow up in safe, supportive, and stable environments.

Municipal decisions about housing, parks, transportation, recreation, and community spaces all influence child development and family well-being.

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), such as poverty, housing instability, violence, discrimination, and neglect, can affect health and well-being throughout life. These experiences are linked to higher rates of mental illness, substance use, chronic disease, and homelessness.

Many local families face challenges. About one in ten families experiences substandard housing and many children grow up in low-income households. Local data also shows higher rates of childhood adversity and developmental vulnerability than the provincial average.

Building supportive environments for children and families helps create healthier and more resilient communities now and in the future.

Community Design and Transportation

The design of a community influences how people move, interact, and access services.

Municipal decisions about roads, sidewalks, trails, parks, public transit, and neighbourhood design affect health, safety, and quality of life. Well-designed communities make it easier for people to be active, connect with others, access healthy food, and travel safely.

Not everyone travels the same way. Children, older adults, people with disabilities, and many lower-income residents may walk, cycle, use mobility devices, or rely on public transit.

Safe, accessible, and affordable transportation options help people participate in community life and support healthier, more connected communities.

WHAT MUNICIPALITIES CAN DO

Invest in Supportive Environments for Children, Youth, and Families

- Support affordable housing, accessible childcare, safe recreation spaces, active transportation, and affordable transit.
- Promote policies and programs that help families connect with services and community support.

References to support information in this primer are available upon request.

WHAT MUNICIPALITIES CAN DO

Plan and Invest in Safe and Accessible Communities

- Develop and implement policies such as active transportation plans, complete streets policies, and traffic safety measures.
- Invest in sidewalks, trails, bike lanes, safe crossings, lighting, shade, seating, and accessible transit.

Strengthen Community Engagement and Partnerships

- Work with public health and community partners to design safer and more accessible neighbourhoods.
- Engage community organizations and residents throughout planning and decision-making.
- Advocate for provincial and federal investments in transportation and community design.

Oct 6
2026
12.8

TOWNSHIP OF
McNab/Braeside
Where nature awaits.

September 10, 2026

The Honourable Michael S. Kerzner
Office of the Solicitor General
25 Grosvenor Street, 18th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 1Y6

Re: Request for Review of the OPP Municipal Policing Cost Model

Dear Minister Kerzner:

The Township of McNab/Braeside is writing to express its strong opposition to the current Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) municipal policing cost model and the significant cost increases being imposed on small rural municipalities. While the Province has limited the increase in OPP policing costs for 2027 to a maximum of 11 per cent, an increase of up to 11 per cent is not reasonable or sustainable for a small rural municipality. This level of increase places significant pressure on municipal budgets and local taxpayers, particularly at a time when communities are already facing substantial economic pressures.

The issue is not the importance of effective policing or the services provided by the OPP. The Township recognizes and values the OPP's role in keeping our community safe. Our concern is that the current funding model does not fairly reflect the financial realities and policing circumstances of small rural municipalities.

Municipalities with populations of 10,000 or less can have substantially different circumstances than larger urban communities, including smaller tax bases, larger geographic areas and different policing demands. These factors should be meaningfully reflected in how policing costs are allocated.

The Township therefore respectfully requests that the Province undertake a comprehensive review of the OPP municipal policing cost model and consider factors including population, geographic area, policing demand, calls for service and municipal financial capacity when determining municipal policing costs.

Small rural municipalities should not be expected to absorb increases of this magnitude under a funding model that does not adequately recognize the differences between rural and urban communities.

The Township urges the Province to re-evaluate the OPP municipal policing cost model and develop a more equitable, predictable and sustainable approach to policing costs for small rural municipalities.

The Township invites recipient municipalities to consider passing a resolution of support at an upcoming council meeting. Please forward any supporting motions to the Office of the Solicitor General to amplify this vital advocacy for rural communities.

Sincerely,

Mandy Cannon
CAO, Interim Clerk
Township of McNab/Braeside

cc:
MPP Billy Denault, Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke
All Ontario Municipalities

Township of McNab/Braeside • 2473 Russett Drive, Arnprior, ON K7S 3G8
Tel: 613-623-5756 • Fax: 613-623-9138 • Toll Free: 1-800-957-4621
mcnabbraeside.com

Oct 6
2026
12.9

FONOM
Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FONOM Calls for Federal-Provincial Cooperation on Bail Reform

September 2, 2026

NORTH BAY, ON – The Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities (FONOM) is calling on the federal and provincial governments to use the temporary suspension of Ontario's new cash bail requirements as an opportunity to work together on a coordinated and constitutionally sound approach to bail reform.

An Ontario Superior Court judge has granted an injunction placing the Province's new cash bail requirements on hold while the court considers a constitutional challenge. The new rules would have required an accused person or their surety to provide the full cash security deposit ordered by the court within two business days of release.

FONOM respects the judicial process and recognizes that the injunction is temporary and does not represent a final ruling on the constitutionality of the Province's measures. However, the public-safety concerns that led to these reforms remain unresolved.

"The constitutional questions surrounding Ontario's new requirements must be taken seriously, but so must the concerns being raised by municipalities, police services and victims," said FONOM President Dave Plourde. "During this pause, the federal and provincial governments should work together to develop a bail-reform solution that respects the responsibilities of both levels of government and can withstand a constitutional challenge."

Northern municipalities continue to experience the effects of violent and repeat offenders cycling through the justice system. FONOM is particularly concerned about the lack of accountability within the current surety system.

FONOM has been made aware of a troubling situation in Sault Ste. Marie where the same surety was reportedly used seven times in one day for the same accused person, who was arrested seven times.

"A surety is supposed to accept responsibility for supervising an accused person and helping ensure that bail conditions are followed," Plourde said. "When the same surety can reportedly be used repeatedly without meaningful consequences following additional arrests, it raises serious questions about whether the current system is working as intended."

FONOM has consistently supported reforms that strengthen accountability for sureties and better address violent and repeat offenders. This includes more consistent enforcement and the forfeiture of pledged funds when bail conditions are breached.

"Being a surety must involve more than signing a document or making a promise that is rarely enforced," Plourde added. "There must be clear responsibilities and meaningful consequences when those responsibilities are not fulfilled."

FONOM believes the federal government, which is responsible for Canada's criminal law, and the provincial government, which administers the justice system in Ontario, must collaborate on reforms that are effective, enforceable and constitutionally sound.

"This should not become another jurisdictional dispute between governments," Plourde concluded. "Both levels of government share a responsibility to protect the public and maintain confidence in the justice system. FONOM is asking them to use this time to find a lasting solution that protects the rights of accused persons while providing greater accountability and better protection for victims, police officers and communities."

FONOM represents 110 municipalities across Northeastern Ontario and works to improve the economic and social quality of life for all Northerners.

-30-

Media Contact:

Dave Plourde, President

Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities

705-335-1615 | fonom.info@gmail.com

About FONOM

The Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities represents 110 municipalities across Northeastern Ontario. FONOM works to improve residents' quality of life and ensure Northern Ontario's future prosperity by advocating on behalf of its member municipalities.

Oct 6
2026
12.10

TOWNSHIP OF
BRUDENELL, LYNDOCH AND RAGLAN

42 Burnt Bridge Road, PO Box 40
Palmer Rapids, Ontario K0J 2E0
TEL: (613) 758-2061 · FAX: (613) 758-2235

September 2, 2026

The Honourable Sylvia Jones, Deputy Premier
Constituency Office
Suite A, 3rd Floor
180 Broadway Ave
Orangeville, ON L9W 1K3

Dear Deputy Premier Jones

RE: Request for Review of Extended Producer Responsibilities for One-Pound Single-Use Propane Cylinders

Please be advised that at the Regular Council Meeting on September 2nd, 2026, Council for the Corporation of the Township of Brudenell, Lyndoch and Raglan passed the following resolution, supporting the resolution from the Township of Tudor & Cashel.

Resolution No: 2026-09-02-04
Moved by: Councillor Kauffledt
Seconded by: Councillor Banks

"Be It resolved that the Council for the Corporation of the Township of Brudenell, Lyndoch and Raglan support the Township of Tudor & Cashel's resolution regarding a request for review of extended producer responsibility for one-pound single-use propane cylinders.

And further that this resolution be forwarded to the Premier of Ontario, the Resource Productivity & Recovery Authority (RPRA) and all municipalities in Ontario."

Carried.

Sincerely,

Tammy Thompson
Deputy Clerk
Township of Brudenell, Lyndoch and Raglan

TUDOR & CASHEL
SECLUDED BEAUTY & CONNECTED COMMUNITY

Via: minister.mecp@ontario.ca

Honorable Todd McCarthy

Subject: Request for Review of Extended Producer Responsibility for One-Pound Single-Use Propane Cylinders

Dear Sir,

I am writing to request that the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks and the Resource Productivity & Recovery Authority (RPRA) undertake a review of the current regulatory framework governing one-pound single-use propane cylinders sold in Ontario.

Consumers purchasing these cylinders pay environmental stewardship or producer responsibility costs at the point of sale with the expectation that an appropriate end-of-life management system exists. In practice, however, accessible return and recycling opportunities for these cylinders are extremely limited across many parts of the province. Most retail locations that sell the cylinders do not accept them back, and consumers are often left with few or no practical disposal options.

As a result, municipalities have become the default managers of these products. Municipal waste facilities bear the responsibility, cost, and safety risks associated with collecting, storing, and managing these pressurized cylinders despite not being the producers or distributors of the product. Improper disposal also creates significant operational hazards at material recovery facilities, transfer stations, and landfills, including the risk of fires and equipment damage.

This situation appears inconsistent with the principles of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), which are intended to shift the financial and operational responsibility for post-consumer products from municipalities and taxpayers to producers. When consumers contribute to environmental handling costs at the time of purchase, there should be a convenient, accessible, and effective collection system available to ensure the product is managed responsibly at the end of its useful life.

I respectfully request that the Ministry and RPRA review the current requirements applicable to one-pound propane cylinders and consider the following:

- Assess whether the existing producer responsibility system provides sufficient and accessible return opportunities for consumers throughout Ontario.
- Evaluate whether the fees collected from consumers are being used to establish an effective province-wide collection and recycling network.

www.tudorandcashel.com 613-474-2583 clerk@tudorandcashel.com
613-474-0664 Fax

- Require producers and retailers to provide convenient and publicly accessible take-back locations wherever these products are sold.
- Review whether municipalities are being unfairly burdened with the costs and liabilities associated with managing these products.
- Consider regulatory amendments to strengthen producer accountability and ensure the objectives of Ontario's circular economy and waste diversion policies are being achieved.

Municipalities should not be left to absorb the financial costs, operational challenges, and public safety risks associated with products for which producers have collected environmental stewardship fees. A well-functioning producer responsibility system should ensure that consumers have practical disposal options and that municipalities are not forced to subsidize the end-of-life management of these products.

I appreciate your consideration of this matter and would welcome the opportunity to discuss this issue further or provide examples of the challenges municipalities continue to face regarding the management of one-pound propane cylinders.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

Nancy Carrol
CAO/Clerk-Treasurer
Tudor and Cashel Township

Cc: Resource Productivity & Recovery Authority (RPRA): registry@rpra.ca
Premier Doug Ford: Premier@ontario.ca
All municipalities

9.5.4.
Oct 6 2026
12.11

TOWN OF Parry Sound

THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF PARRY SOUND
RESOLUTION IN COUNCIL

NO. 2026 –

DIVISION LIST	**YES**	**NO**
Councillor **G. ASHFORD**	___	___
Councillor **J. BELESKEY**	___	___
Councillor **P. BORNEMAN**	___	___
Councillor **B. KEITH**	___	___
Councillor **D. McCANN**	___	___
Councillor **C. McDONALD**	___	___
Mayor **J. McGARVEY**	___	___

DATE: September 1, 2026

MOVED BY: _____

SECONDED BY: _____

CARRIED: ✓ **DEFEATED:** _____ **Postponed to:** _____

WHEREAS electric kick-style scooters (e-scooters) have become an increasingly popular and affordable form of transportation in Parry Sound and across Ontario; and

WHEREAS e-scooters can provide an accessible, low-emission transportation option and help address transportation needs in communities such as Parry Sound that do not have conventional public transit; and

WHEREAS Ontario's current e-scooter pilot program places responsibility on individual municipalities to determine how e-scooters may operate locally, creating administrative and enforcement challenges, particularly for smaller municipalities with limited resources; and

WHEREAS the continued use of a pilot framework has resulted in uncertainty and inconsistent approaches to e-scooter regulation across the Province.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Council of the Town of Parry Sound requests that the Province of Ontario establish a province-wide regulatory framework for e-scooters that recognizes their unique operating characteristics, maintains appropriate safety standards, and provides municipalities with authority to address local needs; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the Town of Parry Sound requests the support of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) and the Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) in advocating for a framework that reduces unnecessary administrative and enforcement burdens on local municipalities; and

FINALLY BE IT RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be circulated to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), the Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA), the Premier of Ontario, Doug Ford, the Minister of Transportation, Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria, Parry Sound–Muskoka MPP, Graydon Smith, and all municipalities across Ontario.

Mayor Jamie McGarvey

Oct 6
2026
12.12

28 Midlothian Road, R.R. No. 1, BURK'S FALLS, ONTARIO P0A 1C0
705-382-3232 • Fax 705-382-3286 • www.ryersontownship.ca

NOTICE OF THE ADOPTION OF AN OFFICIAL PLAN AND PASSING OF A ZONING BY-LAW

for the Township of Ryerson

Take Notice that the Council of the Corporation of the Township of Ryerson passed By-law 32-26 to approve a new Zoning By-law and adopted By-law 31-26 to adopt a new Official plan subject to approval by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, pursuant to Section 17(22) of the Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, as amended, on August 19th, 2026, under provisions of Sections 17, 21 and 34 of the Planning Act. This Notice of Adoption is issued pursuant to Section 17(23) of the Planning Act.

Prior to the Adoption of the Official Plan, a statutory Public Meeting was held on August 4th, 2026, in accordance with the Planning Act. Prior to that, Council convened an Open House under section 17 of the Planning Act on July 24th, 2026, and a non-statutory Public Meeting on March 23rd, 2026, to review potential changes to the Official Plan, and considered revisions to the Official Plan at various council meetings between 2025 and 2026.

Purpose and Effect

The new Official Plan is intended to provide guidance for the physical development of the Township while having regard for social, economic and environmental matters, and will replace the existing Official Plan that has been in effect since August 2003. The Plan provides goals, objectives and policies related to population and household growth, supporting and facilitating local economic development, protecting and enhancing natural heritage features and resources, and providing updated guidance and standards for development. The Official Plan contains policies that implement legislation, regulations and policies from the Province, while reflecting the priorities of the Township.

The new Official Plan has been developed following extensive discussions with Council and members of the public.

Available for Review

A complete copy of the newly adopted Official Plan is available for inspection at the Township of Ryerson municipal offices between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. (Monday-Tuesday and Thursday-Friday), and on the Municipal website at Official Plan Review & Zoning By-law Update - Township of Ryerson.

Written and Oral Submissions

All statutory written and oral submissions made on the new Official Plan have been reviewed and suggestions incorporated, where appropriate.

Notice of Appeal of Zoning By-law

That an appeal to the Ontario Land Tribunal in respect to all or part of the Zoning By-law Amendment (By-law 32-26) may be made by filing a notice of appeal with the Clerk of the Corporation of the Township of Ryerson either via the Ontario Land Tribunal e-file service (first-time users will need to register for a My Ontario Account) a https://olt.gov.on.ca/e-file-service by selecting the Corporation of the Township of Ryerson as the Approval Authority or at the mailing address provided below no later than 4:30 p.m. on September 22, 2026. The filing of an appeal after 4:30 p.m., in person or electronically, will be deemed to have been received the next business day. The appeal fee of $1,100 can be paid online through e-file or by certified cheque/money order to the Minister of Finance, Province of Ontario. If you wish to appeal to the Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT) or request a fee reduction for an appeal, forms are available from the OLT website at

www.olt.gov.on.ca. If the e-file portal is down, you can submit your appeal to OLT.Registrar@ontario.ca (email).

No person or public body shall be added as a party to the hearing of the appeal unless, before the by-law was passed, the person or public body made oral submissions at a public meeting or written submissions to the council or, in the opinion of the Ontario Land Tribunal, there are reasonable grounds to add the person or public body as a party.

Further Notice or Appeal of Official Plan

Under the provisions of Section 17(1) of the Planning Act, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is the approval authority for a new Official Plan adopted under Section 17(22) of the Planning Act. As such, the adopted Official Plan has been forward to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for review and approval, as required by Section 17(31) of the Planning Act.

Any person or public body will be entitled to receive notice of the decision of the approval authority with respect to the new Official Plan, if a written request to be notified of the decision (including the person's or public body's address, fax number or email address) to be notified of the decision is made to the approval authority at:

Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Northern Municipal Services Office
159 Cedar Street, Suite 401
Sudbury, Ontario, P3E 6A5
Tel: 705-564-6852 or Toll-free: 1-800-461-1193
E-Mail: Blaine.Yatabe@ontario.ca or
E-Mail: Anna.Little@ontario.ca

Dated at the Township of Ryerson on the 2nd day of September, 2026

Nancy Field, CAO/Clerk
Township of Ryerson
RR#1, 28 Midlothian Road
Burk's Falls, ON P0A 1C0
(705) 382-3232
clerk@ryersontownship.ca

Oct 6
2026
12.13

ALMAGUIN COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Board Meeting Agenda

Date: Thursday, September 24, 2026

Time: 6:00PM

Location: Strong Township Office – 28 Municipal Ln, Sundridge

Zoom Meeting Details Below:

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85614488328?pwd=67HaMCurM7Vkc3cpA9qiTf0z2qaCGb.1

Meeting ID: 856 1448 8328 Passcode: 722737

One tap mobile

+13602095623, 85614488328#, *722737#

AGENDA

1. Call to Order
2. Acceptance of the August 27th, 2026 ACED Meeting Minutes (Resolution 2026-25)
3. Round Table Introductions (if required)
4. FedNor Updates
5. MND Updates
6. Staff Report
    a. Discussion Items
        i. Almaguin Trade Show Update
        ii. RED Plan Update –
            1. Approval of plan visual enhancements – (Resolution 2026-26)
            2. Acceptance of the Draft Strategic Plan – (Resolution 2026-27)
        iii. Almaguin Star Party Update
7. Round table comments or updates from Board Members
8. Next Meeting Date: October 22, 2026
9. Adjournment (Resolution 2026-28)

Attachments:

- Final Draft Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan Update

ALMAGUIN COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (ACED)

MINUTES
August 27, 2026

A regular meeting of the ACED Board was held at the Strong Township on August 27, 2026 at 6:00 pm.

Present: Chris Nicholson, Township of Joly
Vicki Roeder-Martin, Township of McMurrich/Monteith
Margaret Ann MacPhail, Township of Perry
Luke Preston, Village of Sundridge
Wendy Whitwell, Township of Armour
Tim Bryson, Township of Strong
Dan Robertson, Ryerson Township
Rod Ward, Township of Armour
Sheri Norman, AHCC Representative
Noel Walker, FedNor
Trista Porter, MND

Staff: Courtney Metcalf, Director of Economic Development
Megan Yemm, Communications and Marketing Officer
Dave Gray, CAO Armour Township

Call to Order
The meeting was called to order at 6:01 pm.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of Thursday, June 25, 2026 were adopted as presented.

Video Recording Disclaimer:
Participants were informed that the meeting will be recorded to provide a record of discussions and agreements held within the meeting. By staying in the meeting, virtually or in-person, participants consented to being recorded.

FedNor Update
Additional tariff support is on the way, including up to $1M in non-repayable funding for targeted sectors, with further details expected next week. A $2M operational "top-up" is also being introduced to help Canadian businesses not only navigate this challenging period, but continue to grow and thrive.

MND Update

No formal updates were provided, but a key change was noted: while the programs themselves remain the same, the way eligibility is assessed is shifting, with certain projects (such as fire halls, arenas, and splash pads) no longer qualifying as the focus moves toward core infrastructure and job-growth initiatives.

Director's Report

ACED Staff covered the following items from the report:

1. An update on core activity tracking, which lists what the department has done over the past month. These included business assistance, organization meetings, marketing, ACED website updates, social media activities, and communications.
2. Some of the updates in the report included:
   A. Regional Expo update – Staff reported that the Labour Market Group and NECO will be participating, and Community Living has expressed interest in partnering. A recent update noted that the Township of Magnetawan is hosting a business symposium.
   B. Strategic Plan update – ACED staff met with Karen Jones to review key themes from interviews and surveys. Staff recommend making the final RED Plan more visual and easier to digest and requested a quote from KJCO for this additional design work. The draft is expected for the September meeting with emphasis on KPI's, implementation and improved visual communication. The board agreed to proceed with the additional work.
   C. Signage Plan Update - ROD did not approve the signage project, placing it on hold, though municipalities may continue independently using existing background work. Members emphasized the importance of gateway signage.
   D. CINNO Funding Update: Funding ends March 15, and staff will request an extension to August. ACED has reserves set aside for the Trade Show and other upcoming projects and will maintain status-quo operations. Member municipalities will be asked for letters of support.

Resolutions

1. 2026-23– Be it resolved that the Almaguin Community Economic Development Board approve the June 25, 2026 ACED meeting minutes as circulated.
   Moved by Wendy Whitwell; Seconded by Tim Bryson
   Carried

Adjournment

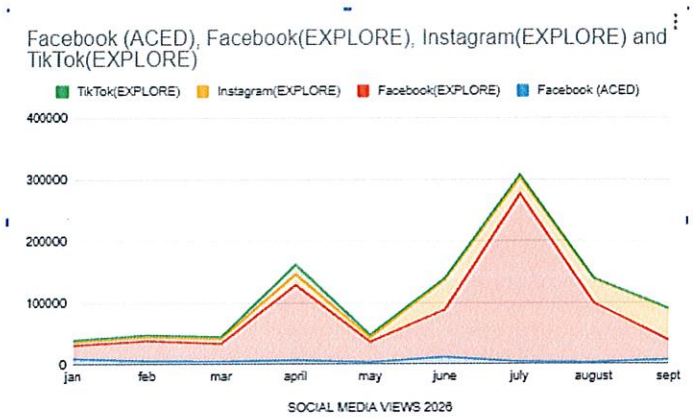
3. 2026-24- Be it resolved that the Almaguin Community Economic Development Board adjourn the August 27th ACED Meeting at 7:22pm.
Moved by Tim Bryson Seconded by Wendy Whitwell
Carried.

The next meeting will be Sept 24th, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. at the Strong Township Office. If this changes, members will be advised.

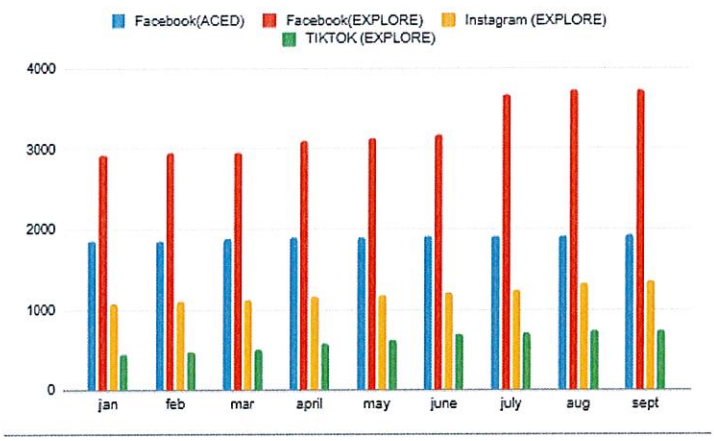
Director of Economic Development (DoED) Report
September 24, 2026

Core Activity Tracking – (Since last report)

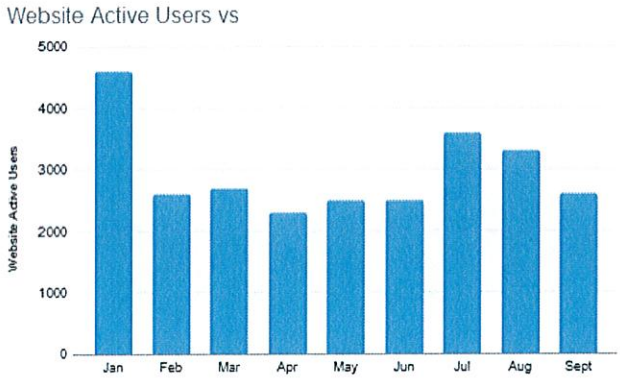
Activity:	Interactions	Description
Business Assistance		
Start Up Files	2	South River (1), Machar (1)
Expansion Files/ Funding Application Support	3	Sundridge (3)
Developer Files		
General Support	3	Sundridge (1), Kearney (1), Powassan (1)
Brand Ambassador	1	Burk's Falls
Business Visits	4	Sundridge (3), Burk's Falls (1)
Program Referrals	5	NOHFC (1), FedNor (3), NECO (1)
Non-Member Support Requests	4	South River (1), Kearney (1), Machar (1), Powassan (1)
Marketing		
ACED Website Updates	19	Events, Tourism & Lifestyle News, Business Directory Business News, Lease & Investment Properties,
Social Media Posting	12	(EXPLORE) 8 (ACED) 4
Facebook/Instagram Reach	20.3k	(EXPLORE) 13.5k (ACED)6.8k
Facebook/Instagram Views	82.1k	(EXPLORE) 82.1k (ACED) 2.8k
Facebook/Instagram Likes/Followers	7680	(EXPLORE FB) 3731 (EXPLORE Instagram) 1347 (EXPLORE TikTok) 729 (ACED Facebook) 1918
Website Tracking		
Total Users / Views	2.6k	
Most viewed pages (besides the landing page)		Events, Screaming Heads, Business Directory,
Communications		
Email Blasts	3	business monthly, Fall quarterly newsletter, Almaguin Star Party
Organization Meetings	4	RCIP, SFEP, AHHC, NECO
Partnership Projects	1	Almaguin Business Expo
Municipal Visits	4	Perry, Armour, Sundridge, McMurrich/Monteith, Strong
Member Interactions / Support Requests	1	McMurrich/Monteith
Media Comment Requests	0	



Social media views peak sharply in July across all platforms, led by Facebook Explore before declining through August and September.



Follower counts rise steadily from January to September across all platforms, with Facebook Explore maintaining the strongest growth throughout the year.



Website activity fluctuates throughout the year, with strong engagement in January and a secondary peak in mid-summer.

Current Files & Projects

Project 1A – Business Support

Almaguin Business Expo

The DoED met with the Business Expo Leadership Team on September 8 to further develop event details. The event is tentatively scheduled for Saturday, May 29, 2027, at the Sundridge Strong Joly Arena. Community Living has expressed interest in partnering on the event's carnival and family entertainment component, with a final event budget to be established once entertainment costs are confirmed.

NECO and the Labour Market Group have indicated they will assist with event funding, with additional revenue anticipated through booth fees and sponsorship packages. Marketing and booth sales to businesses and community organizations will begin in October, with a maximum of 50 vendor booths. Public marketing will begin in March 2027.

Partner responsibilities have been established, with Agilec coordinating the employment fair component, the Chamber of Commerce developing sponsorship packages, and ACED overseeing marketing, booth sales through Eventbrite, and event finances. The Communication and Recreation Coordinator from McMurrich/Monteith has also joined the Leadership Team to support collaboration and cross-promotion between the Sprucedale Business Symposium in February 2027 and the Business Expo in May. All partners have committed to promoting the event to both businesses and the public.

Individual Business Support

Individual business support has been a significant focus for the DoED this month, with considerable time dedicated to supporting three regionally impactful businesses/projects involving substantial private-sector investment. Support has included identifying and assessing funding opportunities, reviewing program eligibility, assisting with funding applications, strengthening project positioning and rationale, and working directly with businesses to address application requirements and information gaps. The DoED has also provided ongoing guidance as projects evolve to help maximize funding opportunities and position them for successful implementation. Collectively, these projects represent significant investment in the Almaguin region and have the potential to support business growth, job creation and retention, increased local economic activity, and longer-term regional economic development.

Project 2A- Community Organization Support

Agricultural Societies Across Almaguin

The CMO supported Agricultural Societies across Almaguin by promoting local fall fair events through multiple communication channels. This included creating a website article and social media posts highlighting a roundup of fall fair activities. A detailed calendar of fall fair events was also included in the Fall Quarterly Newsletter to help residents plan and participate in local events. In addition, the CMO attended the Emsdale Fall Fair and created a promotional social media video to showcase the event and encourage community participation.

Project 2B – Regional Recreation & Municipal Support

McMurrich/Montieth support

McMurrich/Monteith has requested ACED support with funding applications, including application review and Letters of Support. They have also identified opportunities for ACED to support and collaborate on the Sprucedale Business Symposium in February, adding value to the event and strengthening regional business engagement.

Project 3A Almaguin Housing task Force

No updates at this time.

A next meeting will be explored for October.

Project 3D Almaguin RED Strategic Plan Update

The final draft of the 2027RED Strategic Plan has been included in the Agenda Package for Board review. The updated Plan builds on the 2018 RED Plan while establishing a more focused direction for ACED, centred around five strategic priorities: Business Growth & Investment, Tourism & Regional Promotion, Communities Ready for Growth, Local Capacity Through Regional Collaboration, and a Sustainable & Accountable ACED. It also proposes a stronger shared-service model, increased local municipal connection, and greater emphasis on measurable outcomes and demonstrating the value of regional economic development. Board members are encouraged to review the draft in advance and come prepared with questions, feedback, and discussion points for the meeting.

Project 4A – Brand Strategy Implementation

Social Media/Explore Almaguin Website/Email Marketing/Content

The CMO created and shared a variety of digital content to promote Almaguin businesses, attractions, and seasonal activities. This included creating a promotional reel for new local business Terra Venture ATV Tours, as well as developing website articles and social media posts featuring a Fall Guide to Almaguin and a roundup of local fall fairs and events.

Three email marketing campaigns were distributed during the reporting period. The ACED Business Monthly highlighted relevant funding and business support programs, upcoming workshops, and other resources available to local businesses. The Fall Quarterly Newsletter highlighted local events and fall fairs, while also showcasing local businesses and seasonal activities across Almaguin. A dedicated Almaguin Star Party email blast was also sent to ticket holders, providing an overview of the event and a detailed agenda of the evening's activities.

Project 4B – Tourism Promotion

Almaguin Star Party

The Star Party is quickly approaching on Saturday, September 26, and tickets are officially sold out. Communication with event partners and participating businesses is ongoing to help track and assess the economic impact of the event. Leading up to the event, the ACED Team will send a final email to ticket holders highlighting participating businesses offering special promotions and providing important event reminders.

Business collaborators will also be featured through social media promotion during the week leading up to the event.

The CMO supported the promotion of the Almaguin Star Party through targeted social media and email marketing. Social media posts were created to highlight participating Almaguin businesses offering exclusive deals and discounts to Star Party ticket holders, helping to encourage attendees to explore and support local businesses during the event.

A dedicated email blast was also sent to all Star Party ticket holders, outlining the evening's events, activities, and agenda, and providing attendees with key information to help them plan their experience.

ALMAGUIN COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

RESOLUTION

2026-25

Be it resolved that the Almaguin Community Economic Development Board approve the August 27th, 2026 ACED meeting minutes as: (please circle).

CIRCULATED **AMENDED**

MOVED BY: _____

SECONDED BY: _____

CARRIED: Yes No

Comments:

ACED
ALMAGUIN COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

RESOLUTION

2026-26

Be it resolved that the Almaguin Community Economic Development Board has received and approves the recommendation from Karen Jones Consulting to visually enhance the Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan Update, along with the $5,000 fee associated with the enhancements.

.

CIRCULATED **AMENDED**

MOVED BY: _____

SECONDED BY: _____

CARRIED: Yes No

Comments:

ALMAGUIN COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

RESOLUTION

2026-27

Be it resolved that the Almaguin Community Economic Development (ACED) Board receives and reviews the Draft Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan Update and approves the Plan as presented.

Furthermore, be it resolved that the approved Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan be circulated to all municipalities within the Almaguin region for their information and consideration.

CIRCULATED **AMENDED**

MOVED BY: _____

SECONDED BY: _____

CARRIED: Yes No

Comments:

ALMAGUIN COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

RESOLUTION

2026-28

Be it resolved that the Almaguin Community Economic Development Board adjourn the September 24th, 2026 ACED Meeting at _____

CIRCULATED **AMENDED**

MOVED BY: _____

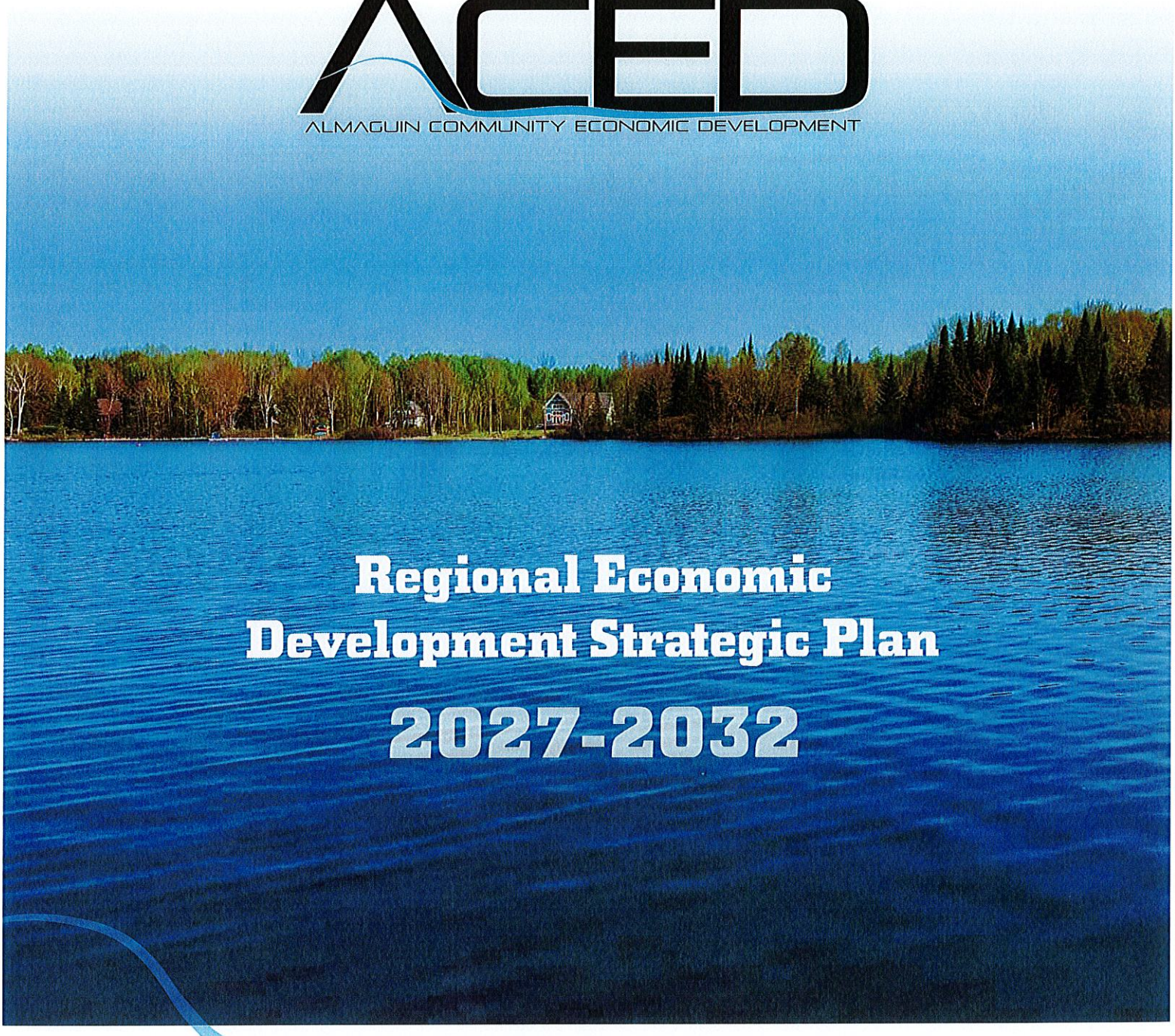
SECONDED BY: _____

CARRIED: Yes No

Comments:

ACED

ALMAGUIN COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan

2027-2032

Prepared by:

KJ CO. KAREN JONES CONSULTING

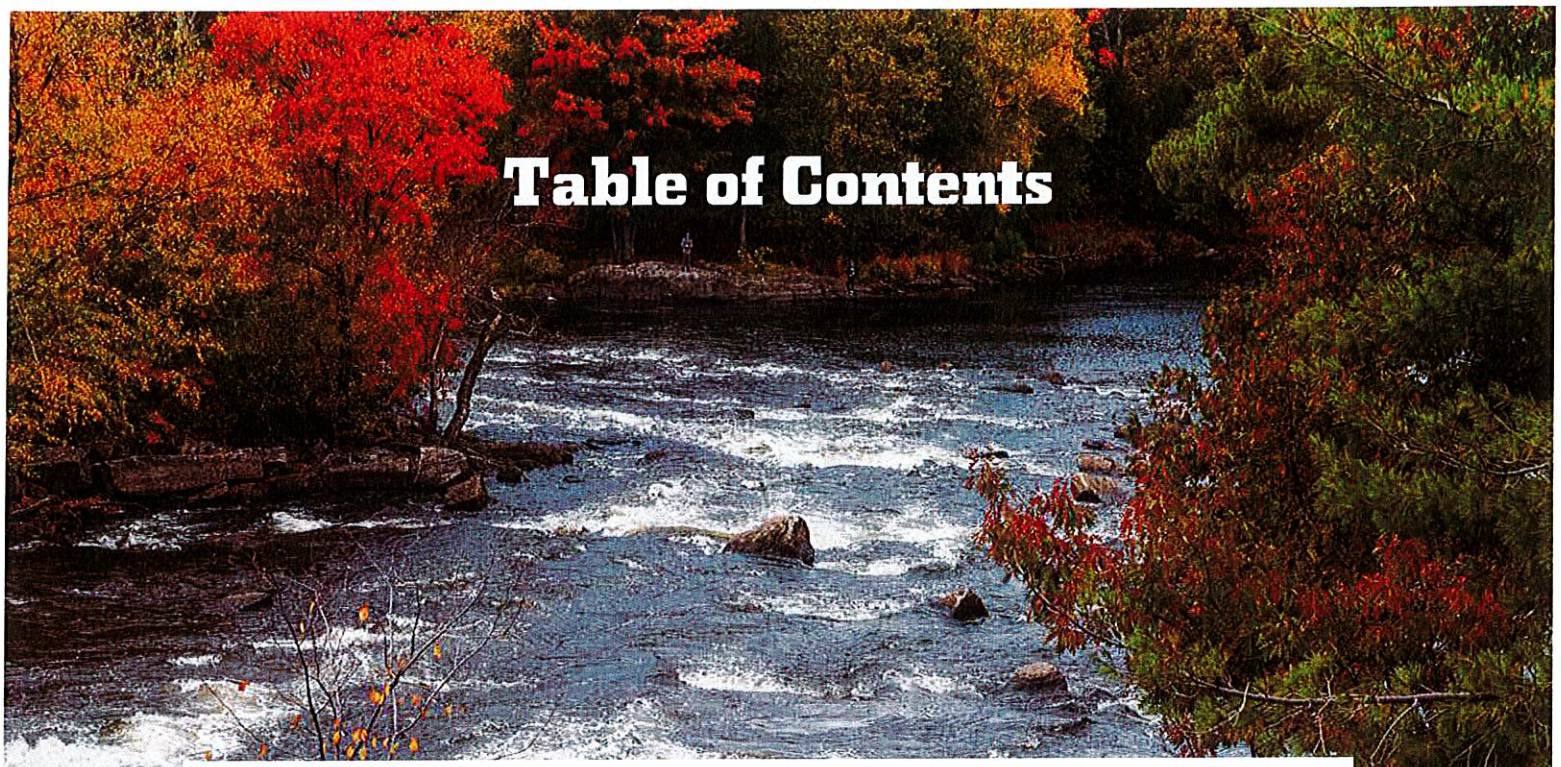


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Executive Summary

The Almaguin region is made up of 14 distinct communities that share many of the same economic opportunities and challenges. Businesses, workers, visitors and investors move across municipal boundaries, while issues such as workforce availability, housing, healthcare, transportation, tourism development, investment readiness and business growth increasingly require collaboration beyond any single municipality.

Regional economic development provides an opportunity to respond collectively to these challenges while giving municipalities access to professional economic development capacity that may be difficult to maintain independently.

The 2027-2032 Almaguin Regional Economic Development Plan establishes a focused direction for advancing economic development across the region over the next five years. It builds on the foundation established through the 2018 Regional Economic Development Plan and the creation of Almaguin Community Economic Development (ACED), while responding to changing economic conditions, municipal capacity, business needs and lessons learned through implementation of the previous Plan.

The updated Plan is not intended to replace the principles established in 2018. Rather, it moves the regional model into its next stage of development. This involves transitioning from establishing regional economic development capacity to delivering a more focused, locally connected, business-facing and accountable regional economic development service.

What We Heard

The development of the Plan was informed by regional economic and demographic analysis, a review of existing municipal and organizational strategic plans, consultations with member and non-member municipalities, business and stakeholder engagement, and an online community survey.

Across the engagement process, there was continued recognition of the value of regional economic development. At the same time, participants identified opportunities to strengthen how regional economic development is delivered and how its value is demonstrated.

Through this process, four overarching messages emerged:

Protect the regional model. Regional collaboration provides professional capacity, coordination and opportunities that individual municipalities cannot efficiently replicate on their own.

Strengthen the local connection. Regional economic development must translate into visible value within individual communities. Municipalities, Councils and businesses need regular relationships with ACED and a clearer understanding of the services available to them.

Focus the mandate. ACED cannot and should not attempt to address every challenge facing the region. Resources should be concentrated on areas where economic development expertise and regional coordination can create the greatest value, while ACED partners, convenes, supports or advocates where other organizations are better positioned to lead.

Prove and protect the value. The long-term sustainability of regional economic development will depend on ACED's ability to demonstrate measurable results, communicate municipal and regional value, and establish a sustainable operating and funding model.

These findings support a simple operating principle for the next phase of regional economic development:

Think regionally. Deliver locally. Measure results.

A Focused Direction for Regional Economic Development

By 2032, Almaguin should be a more connected, investment-ready and business-supportive region where municipalities work collectively to provide professional economic development capacity, businesses have stronger access to the resources, relationships and opportunities they need to grow, and regional assets are leveraged to generate increased investment, employment, visitation and economic activity.

The Plan establishes five strategic priorities to advance this direction:

1. Business Growth & Investment
2. Tourism & Regional Promotion
3. Communities Ready for Growth
4. Local Capacity Through Regional Collaboration
5. A Sustainable & Accountable ACED

The next phase of ACED's development should formalize the organization as a regional shared economic development service with clearly defined core services, appropriate professional capacity, equitable municipal support, strong governance and transparent reporting. Core operations should become sustainable without reliance on time-limited government operating grants, allowing external funding to be used primarily to leverage strategic projects and increase regional economic impact.

From Strategy to Action

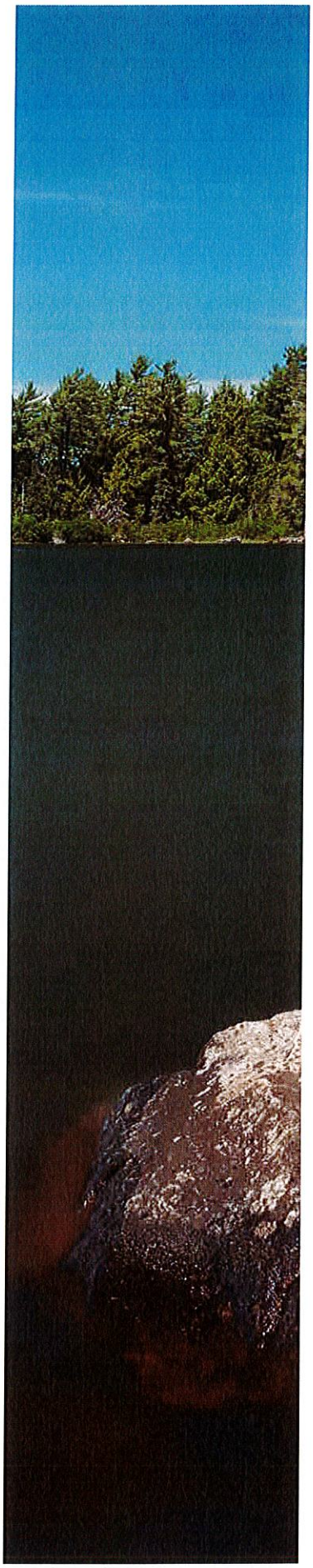
The five priorities establish the direction for the next five years, but successful implementation will require discipline and flexibility. Rather than attempting to undertake every possible initiative, ACED will translate the Regional Economic Development Plan into an Annual Business Plan based on available staff capacity, financial resources, emerging opportunities and the needs of participating municipalities and the regional business community.

Implementation should be guided by four questions:

1. Is this a regional economic development priority?
2. What is ACED's role?
3. What value will participating municipalities and businesses receive?
4. How will the result be measured and communicated?

A Municipal Economic Development Service Commitment will further define what participating municipalities can expect from the shared-service model, including regular access to ACED staff, municipal check-ins, Council engagement, funding and investment support, business outreach, regional research and municipality-specific results reporting.

Business engagement will also become increasingly proactive through a regional BR+E program and continued development of business networks and partnerships. This will allow ACED to better understand what businesses are experiencing and use that intelligence to inform municipal priorities, investment attraction, advocacy and regional initiatives.



Measuring Success

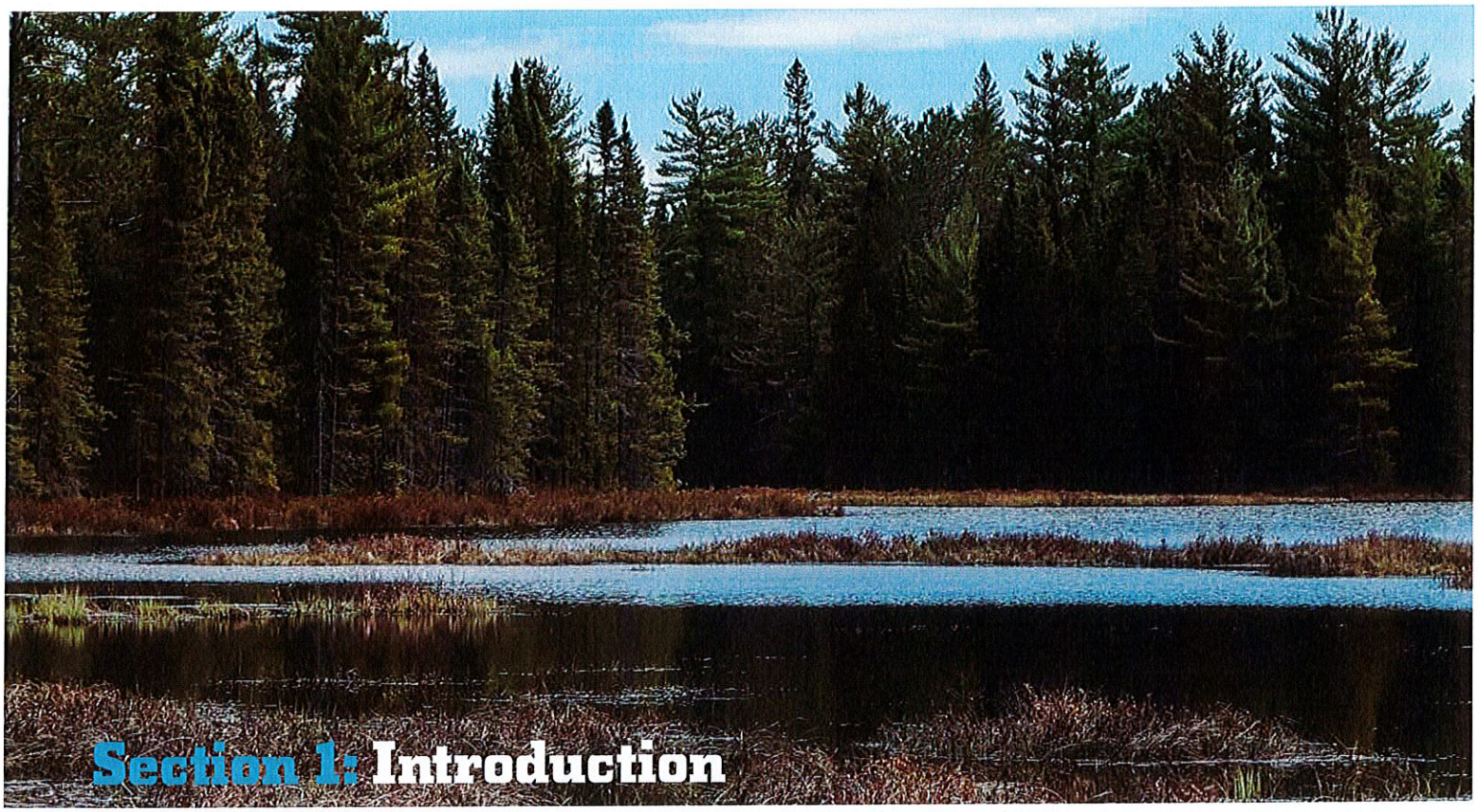
The success of the Plan will ultimately be determined by economic development outcomes rather than the number of activities undertaken. Performance measurement will therefore place greater emphasis on indicators such as businesses engaged and assisted, expansions supported, investment facilitated, funding leveraged, tourism opportunities advanced, municipal priorities supported, partnerships established and progress against the Annual Business Plan.

An Annual Regional Economic Development Report, supported by municipality-specific results summaries and direct reporting to participating Councils, will strengthen transparency and demonstrate how regional investment is creating both regional and local value. By 2032, successful implementation should result in a region where:

- businesses are more connected and better supported;
- Almaguin is better prepared to attract and respond to investment;
- tourism generates greater economic benefit across the region;
- participating municipalities receive visible and consistent professional economic development support; and
- ACED operates as a sustainable, accountable and trusted regional shared service.

The previous Regional Economic Development Plan established the foundation for regional collaboration. The next five years are about building on that foundation with greater focus and discipline. This involves connecting businesses, municipalities and partners; advancing opportunities that benefit the region; strengthening local economic development capacity; and demonstrating the results of working together. **Think regionally. Deliver locally. Measure results.**





Section 1: Introduction

About ACED

Almaguin Community Economic Development (ACED) initiated an update to the Almaguin Regional Economic Development (RED) Plan, originally developed in 2018. ACED, which administers the regional economic development service model under a joint service agreement led by the Township of Armour, engaged Karen Jones Consulting Inc. to lead the update process. This 2026 update to the 2018 Strategic Plan recommends refinements and enhancements, recognizing that it is an update to the plan only. It considers any changes in the landscape in which economic development operates, such as funding models and availability, government shifts, changes in mandate, geographic focus, and labour force and workforce availability, as well as ACED's successes and challenges since the 2018 Strategic Plan and ACED's 2019 inception.

Economic development in Almaguin has long been supported through collaboration between municipalities and regional partners. Over the past decade, municipalities have increasingly recognized the value of working together to advance shared priorities, leverage limited resources, and undertake initiatives that would be difficult to accomplish individually. In 2018, this collaborative approach resulted in the creation of the Almaguin RED Plan, which aligned the priorities of municipalities and regional partners, reduced duplication of effort, and provided a coordinated strategy for economic development activities across the region. Since its completion, the RED Plan has helped guide initiatives related to business support, workforce development, regional marketing, tourism promotion, and investment attraction.

Since the original plan was completed, the region has experienced significant changes in market conditions, municipal capacity, governance models, funding programs, and community priorities. Over this period, several municipalities have chosen to withdraw their participation in ACED while others have joined; while most municipalities continue to see value in collaborative economic development, concerns with contribution formulas, governance and organizational structures have affected ACED's operations over time. While the foundational direction of the 2018 RED Plan remains relevant, an update was required to ensure the strategy continues to be practical, inclusive, and aligned with current realities.

This update is not intended to serve as a full rewrite of the RED Plan. Rather, it builds on the existing framework: updating the analysis, reaffirming shared priorities, and refining actions so that they remain achievable, demonstrate clear and equitable value to municipalities of varying size and capacity, and support the region's economic sustainability over the long term.



Section 2: Project Design & Methodology

Approach

In June 2026, Almaguin Community Economic Development (ACED) engaged Karen Jones Consulting Inc. (KJCo.) to update the Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan.

Recognizing that the intention was to update, not rewrite, the 2018 RED Plan, the approach built directly on the plan's existing framework: reviewing what remains relevant, validating current priorities with municipalities and regional partners, and refining the plan's three pillars, The Land, The People, and The Legacy, so that the resulting document is practical, implementation ready, and provides clear and equitable value to municipalities of varying size and capacity.

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

Phase One: Review and Assessment

In Phase One, KJCo. conducted a thorough review of the 2018 RED Plan and all available supporting materials, including background studies, data reports, and economic development strategies and initiatives completed since 2018. The review assessed each of the plan's three pillars, The Land, The People, and The Legacy, against current conditions to determine what had been implemented, what required recalibration, and what gaps had emerged.

Phase Two: Updated Situational Analysis

In Phase Two, an updated situational analysis was developed addressing updated demographic and population trends, labour force and workforce availability, key economic sectors and drivers, municipal capacity and service delivery, and external factors influencing regional economic development.

Phase Three: Engagement and Validation

In Phase Three, targeted, in person engagement was conducted across the region to validate findings, surface current priorities, and build stakeholder confidence in the updated plan. Activities included engagement sessions, one-on-one interviews with current ACED members and non-member municipalities, and an online survey developed to gather comparative data against 2018 benchmarks. Engagement was focused and purposeful, intended to validate findings and ensure the updated plan reflects lived experience and current priorities rather than broad re-consultation.

Phase Four: Plan Development and Finalization

In Phase Four, KJCo. drew on the situational analysis and engagement findings to develop the updated Regional Economic Development Plan, in consultation with the ACED team. This phase included the review and refinement of strategic pillars, goals, and priorities; updated the strategic direction; and an organizational and governance structure review.

Purpose of the Regional Economic Development Plan

Regional economic development provides Almaguin municipalities with an opportunity to work collectively on economic opportunities and challenges that extend beyond individual municipal boundaries. The Regional Economic Development Plan establishes a shared direction for this work while ensuring that regional collaboration translates into meaningful economic development support and measurable value for individual communities.

The Plan is intended to achieve the following broad goals:

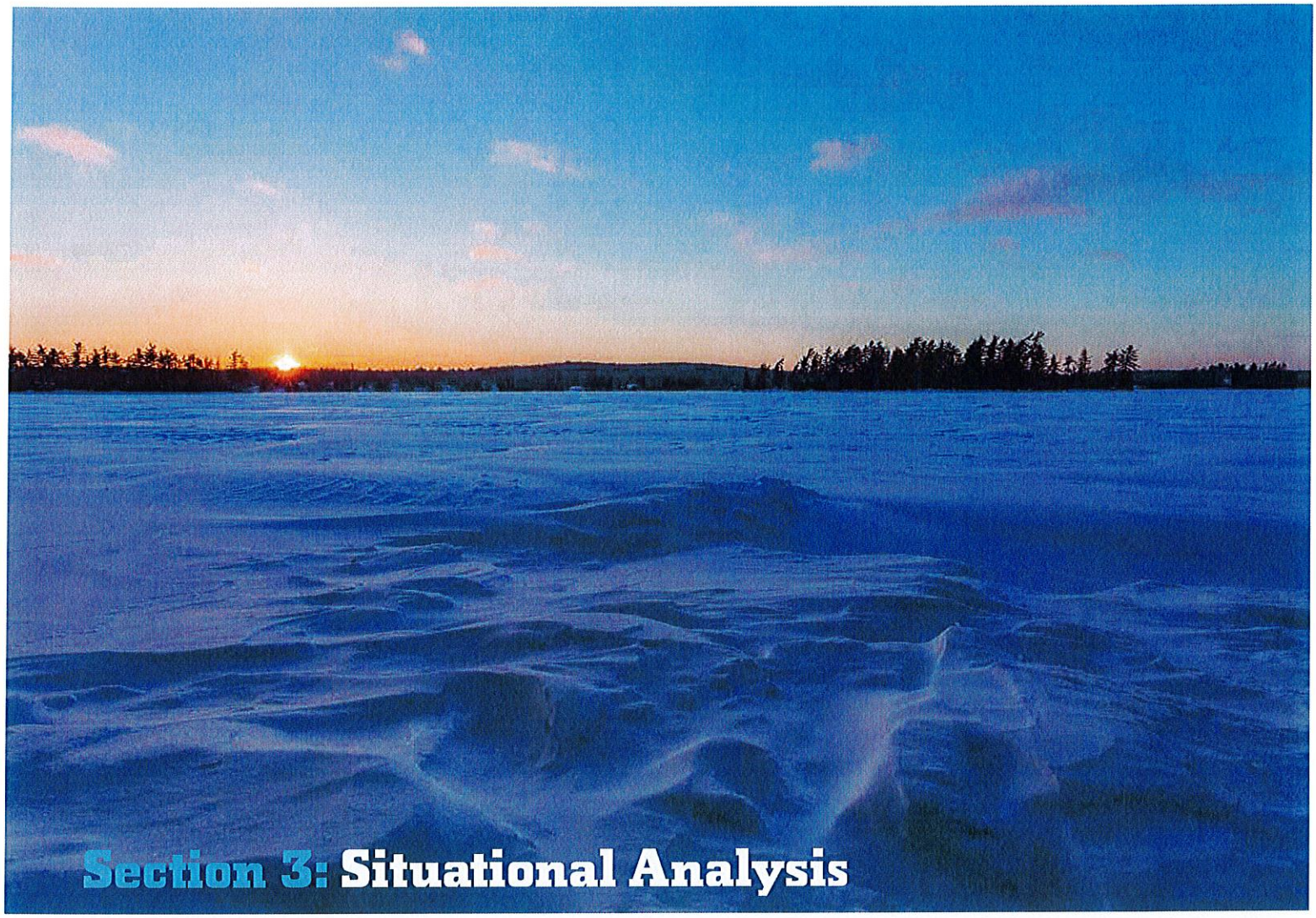
- Establish a focused regional economic development direction that reflects shared municipal, business and regional priorities while recognizing the unique needs and opportunities of individual communities;
- Strengthen business retention and expansion, investment readiness and attraction, tourism development and regional promotion across Almaguin;
- Build regional capacity to address economic conditions that affect business and community growth, including workforce and resident attraction, housing, transportation, infrastructure and connectivity, through appropriate collaboration, coordination and advocacy;
- Provide participating municipalities with consistent access to professional economic development expertise, resources and support through a clearly defined regional shared-service model;
- Clarify where ACED should lead, partner, convene, support or advocate to maximize regional impact and reduce duplication with municipalities, Chambers and other organizations;
- Strengthen regional collaboration while ensuring economic development services remain locally relevant, visible and responsive;
- Establish clear measures of success and strengthen accountability by demonstrating the economic and municipal value generated through regional collaboration; and
- Establish a sustainable organizational, governance and funding model capable of supporting regional economic development over the long term.

Updating the Regional Economic Development Plan

Building on the foundation established through the 2018 Regional Economic Development Plan and the experience gained through ACED's implementation since 2019, this updated Plan provides a more focused framework for regional economic development over the next five years.

The updated Plan:

1. Builds on and refines the strategic foundation established through the 2018 RED Plan, reflecting lessons learned through implementation and the evolution of ACED as a regional economic development organization;
2. Responds to current economic conditions, demographic and workforce trends, business needs, tourism opportunities and the capacity realities of Almaguin municipalities;
3. Focuses regional resources on areas where collaboration can create the greatest economic value, while clearly defining ACED's role in relation to municipalities and regional partners;
4. Strengthens the connection between regional economic development and local municipal and business needs through consistent service commitments, proactive business engagement and regular municipal relationships;
5. Advances business growth, investment, tourism, workforce and resident attraction, and the regional conditions required to support long-term economic development;
6. Establishes a clearer framework for implementation, performance measurement and reporting so that participating municipalities can understand and evaluate the results of their investment; and
7. Provides direction for the evolution of ACED toward a sustainable, accountable and professionally resourced regional shared-service model.



Section 3: Situational Analysis

This situational analysis provides an overview of the demographic, economic, labour market, tourism, and policy environment shaping the Almaguin region. Drawing on Census data, labour market statistics, tourism information, and federal and provincial priorities, the analysis identifies the key trends, opportunities, and challenges that will influence the region's economic development over the coming years.

The analysis shows that the Almaguin region is experiencing several positive trends, including population growth, an increase in permanent residents, rising household incomes, improving educational attainment, and growing confidence within the tourism sector. At the same time, the region faces ongoing challenges related to an aging population, youth outmigration, labour force availability, housing supply and affordability, and the predominance of small businesses. Significant commuting patterns also highlight the interconnected nature of the regional labour market and opportunities to strengthen local employment.

The analysis also considers the broader policy environment. Current federal and provincial priorities, including housing, infrastructure, workforce development, business investment, and Northern Ontario economic growth, present opportunities for communities that are well positioned to pursue funding, partnerships, and investment. Realizing these opportunities, however, requires dedicated economic development capacity and coordinated regional action.

The findings presented in Appendix A provide the detailed data and analysis that helped establish the context for the strategic priorities and actions outlined in this Plan. Together with the situational analysis and feedback received through the engagement process, these findings reinforce the important role of ACED in supporting economic development, strengthening regional collaboration and advancing long-term prosperity across the Almaguin region.

Review of Economic Climate

PESTLE Analysis

FACTOR	KEY TRENDS / ISSUES	POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS FOR ALMAGUIN
Political	• FedNor Community Investment Initiative for Northern Ontario (CIINO) program funding ending • The planned return of the Ontario Northland Passenger Rail Service with a stop in South River • Increased federal/provincial focus on defence planning, critical minerals, and resource development • Amalgamation discussions among Sundridge, Strong, and Joly	• Impacts on ACED's ability to operate and service businesses. Increased importance of municipality membership fees. • Improved regional connectivity could support tourism, workforce mobility, and access to larger employment centres. • Potential opportunities for local businesses, skilled trades, and supply chain participation may create infrastructure, environmental, and community planning considerations. • Initial feedback expresses opposition and concern, but could lead to changes in service delivery, governance, cost-sharing, and municipal capacity.
Economic	• Rising household incomes and narrowing differences between municipalities • Shrinking labour force • Housing affordability and availability pressures • Economic reliance on small businesses and key sectors	• Indicates improving economic conditions, though incomes remain below provincial averages. • Labour shortages may constrain business growth and create pressure to attract new workers. • Housing shortages may limit workforce attraction, population growth, and business expansion. • Creates both resilience through entrepreneurship and vulnerability to labour shortages.
Social	• Aging population and increasing dependency ratio • Youth outmigration • In-migration and population growth linked to remote work and lifestyle migration • Shift from seasonal towards more permanent residency	• Growing demand for healthcare, services, and replacement workers as older workers retire • Challenges retaining skilled workers and maintaining long-term population growth. • Creates opportunities for economic growth but increases pressure on housing and services. • Expands year-round population and local demand but may increase housing competition.
Technological	• Improved broadband and digital connectivity • Growth of remote work opportunities • AI/data centre investment (Armour) • Technology needs related to defence and critical minerals	• Enables remote work, business development, and access to services. • Supports population growth by allowing residents to work outside the region. • Potential economic opportunities and risks through technology-related investment. • Could increase demand for skilled workers and specialized infrastructure.
Legal	• Increasing shared service agreements	• Potential opportunities for cost savings, improved capacity, and coordinated service delivery.
Environmental	• Flooding and climate-related risks	• Impacts infrastructure planning, emergency management, insurance costs, and long-term development decisions.

Federal Government Priorities

The Federal Government is focused on seven priorities:[2]

1. Establishing a new economic and security relationship with the United States and strengthening collaboration with reliable trading partners and allies around the world.
2. Building one Canadian economy by removing barriers to interprovincial trade and identifying and expediting nation-building projects that will connect and transform our country.
3. Bringing down costs for Canadians and helping them to get ahead.
4. Making housing more affordable by unleashing the power of public-private cooperation, catalysing a modern housing industry, and creating new careers in the skilled trades.
5. Protecting Canadian sovereignty and keeping Canadians safe by strengthening the Canadian Armed Forces, securing our borders, and reinforcing law enforcement.
6. Attracting the best talent in the world to help build the economy, while returning overall immigration rates to sustainable levels.
7. Spending less on government operations so that Canadians can invest more in the people and businesses that will build the strongest economy in the G7.

Ontario Provincial Government Priorities

The Ontario Provincial Government is focused on building a resilient economy and protecting essential services. The primary priorities include: [3]

- **Healthcare:** Expanding primary care teams, mental health supports, and community care to reduce wait times.
- **Infrastructure:** Building new roads, highways, and the largest expansion of public transit in North America.
- **Economy & Jobs:** Cutting red tape to attract investment, protecting businesses from trade barriers and tariffs, and investing in workforce training.
- **Critical Minerals & Energy:** Unlocking Northern Ontario's critical mineral wealth for global supply chains and securing a clean, affordable energy supply.
- **Housing:** Supporting policies and infrastructure funding to make it easier to build new homes.

2 *https://www.pm.gc.ca/en/mandate-letters/2025/05/21/mandate-letter*

3 *https://budget.ontario.ca/2026/highlights.html*



Almaguin Economic Development Partnerships

The Almaguin Community Economic Development (ACED) partnership serves as the primary regional economic development partnership, bringing together municipalities and partners to support economic development, investment attraction, business growth, and regional initiatives.

ACED works closely with the Almaguin Highlands Chamber of Commerce [3], which serves as a key connector between local businesses, municipalities, and community organizations. The partnership also collaborates with funding agencies, tourism organizations, and regional partners, including Explorer's Edge (RTO 12) [4], to advance economic development and tourism initiatives across the region.

Other regional partnerships include NECO [5] and the Parry Sound Area Community Business & Development Centre (CBDC) [6], both Community Futures Development Corporations who provide financing and business advisory services to entrepreneurs and small businesses. Additionally, The Business Centre Nipissing Parry Sound [7] offers regional business support. The Joint Building Committee [8], delivers building permit and inspection services for participating municipalities (Machar, Joly, Burk's Falls, Ryerson, South River, Strong, Sundridge). Together, these organizations contribute to business development, tourism, and regional economic growth across the Almaguin region.

Current Municipal and Organizational Strategic Plans

The following strategic plans and regional planning documents were reviewed to identify key priorities, initiatives, and trends relevant to the Almaguin Region:

Township of Perry Strategic Plan (2012)

Town of Kearney Strategic Plan (2026–2030)

Township of McMurrich/Monteith Strategic Plan (2024–2029)

Village of South River Strategic Plan (2025)

Town of Powassan Strategic Plan (2013)

Almaguin Highlands Chamber of Commerce Strategic Plan (2017–2018)

3 *https://ahchamber.ca/*

4 *https://explorersedge.ca/*

5 *https://neco.on.ca/*

6 *https://cbdc.parrysound.on.ca/*

7 *https://tbcnps.ca/*

8 *https://jointbuildingcommittee.ca/*

Plan Comparison

PRIORITY	Perry	Kearney	McMurrich/ Monteith	South River	Powassan	Almaguin Highlands Chamber
Business retention and expansion (BR+E)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Encourage and grow volunteerism	✓	✓	✓			✓
Support local/small business	✓	✓			✓	✓
Recreation, leisure, amenities, and culture (parks, trails, boat launches, etc.)		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Community Services (housing, garbage disposal, snow removal, cemeteries, fire/emergency services)		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Communication, marketing, and signage		✓	✓		✓	✓
Downtown revitalization/ Community Improvement Plan		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Support regional partnerships/collaboration		✓	✓	✓		✓
Preserving the environment	✓		✓	✓		
Asset management and capital planning	✓	✓	✓			
Improvements to infrastructure	✓	✓	✓			
Renewable power generation (hydro-electric, solar)	✓			✓		
Promote tourism		✓		✓		
Expand cellular and internet		✓	✓			
Secure grants and funding			✓			✓
Improve governance or management structure			✓			✓
ACED membership and use of services			✓		✓	
Healthcare and active living			✓	✓		

The strategic plans and regional documents reviewed for the Almaguin region show strong alignment around a small number of core priorities. Across all plans, business retention and expansion (BR+E) is consistently identified as a top priority, highlighting a shared focus on supporting existing businesses as the foundation of local economic development. Other recurring themes include support for small businesses, tourism, community services, infrastructure improvements, downtown revitalization, marketing, and regional collaboration.

Many of these priorities directly align with areas where ACED has existing expertise and capacity, including business support, economic development planning, investment readiness, funding opportunities, tourism development, and regional partnerships. ACED's role provides an opportunity to support municipalities by helping advance shared priorities, coordinate initiatives, and connect communities with resources and external partners.

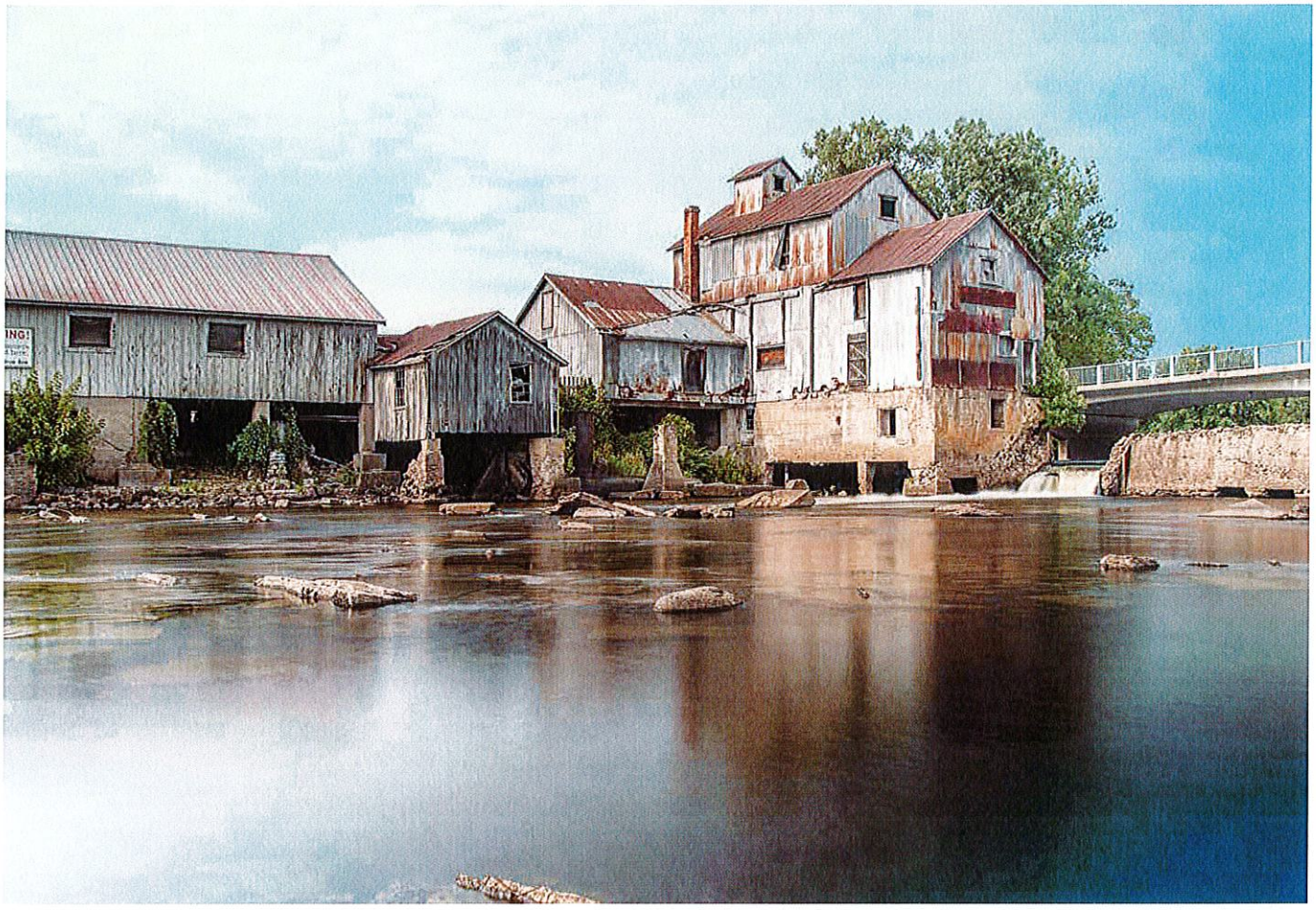
Municipal Capacity and Service Delivery

Municipal staffing across the Almaguin region is generally lean, with most municipalities focusing their in-house capacity on core services such as administration, finance, public works, fire protection, by-law enforcement, and building services. As a result, dedicated economic development capacity is limited across the region.

While only South River employs an in-house Economic Development Officer [9], several municipalities have communication and/or recreation positions who offer economic development support through business services and preparing grant applications. Other municipalities do not have an in-house Economic Development Officer but receive shared economic development services through ACED membership. This shared-service model provides municipalities with access to specialized expertise in areas such as business retention and attraction, investment readiness, funding opportunities, tourism, and strategic economic development without requiring dedicated in-house staff.

In municipalities without dedicated economic development staff or ACED membership, economic development responsibilities are typically absorbed by Chief Administrative Officers, Clerks, or other municipal staff alongside their primary operational duties. While these staff play an important role in supporting local initiatives, competing operational priorities can limit the time and resources available for economic development initiatives, business retention and attraction, grant applications, investment readiness, and tourism development.

The current mix of service delivery models means that economic development capacity varies across the region. Municipalities with dedicated or shared economic development support (ACED) are generally better positioned to pursue funding opportunities, support local businesses, coordinate regional initiatives, and undertake long-term economic development planning, while those without access to these resources may face greater capacity constraints.



9 https://southriver.ca/en/economic-development/village-economic-development-office

Section 4: What We Heard

Stakeholder Engagement Summary

Purpose

As part of the update to the Regional Economic Development (RED) Strategic Plan, ACED and Karen Jones Consulting Inc. (KJCo.) sought input from a diverse range of stakeholders across Almaguin. This process helped ensure the updated plan reflects current experiences, evidence, and widely held perspectives while also assessing and validating the priorities and strategic direction established in 2018.

The engagement phase took place from June 16, 2026 to August 20, 2026. Opportunities to participate were promoted through email, social media, word of mouth, and direct phone outreach.

In-person Roundtables

Two roundtables were held across the region with a variety of businesses and 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 35 individuals participated in the process.

Online Survey

An online survey was conducted to gather input from residents and community members across the Almaguin region. The survey was open from June 2026 to August 2026 and was promoted through engagement sessions, consultations, social media, newsletters and word of mouth. A total of 55 responses were received, providing additional insight into community perspectives, priorities and opportunities for the region.

One-on-One Consultations

Member and non-member interviews were conducted one-on-one to gather key information relevant to each Municipality and the Almgauin Chamber of Commerce. The purpose of these interviews is to collect detailed information from municipal representatives who, with their knowledge, experience, and understanding, provided insight on challenges, opportunities, and potential solutions.

There were 14 municipalities/organizations approached to participate in the process including the Almaguin Chamber of Commerce. The meetings varied, from group sessions with several municipal representatives together, to individual meetings with representatives held separately. This variation was due to municipal preference and scheduling availability.

A total of 12 participated including:

ACED Members

Village of Sundridge

Township of Strong

Township of Joly

Township of Armour

Township of Perry

Township of McMurrich/Monteith

Almaguin Highlands Chamber of Commerce

Non-member Municipalities

Village of South River

Municipality of Magnetawan

Ryerson Township

Village of Burk's Falls

Town of Kearney

Business & Community Engagement Sessions

As part of the strategic planning process, two facilitated engagement sessions were held with businesses representing a range of sectors and communities across the Almaguin region. The first session was held at the Northridge Inn in Strong and the other session was held at the Katrine Community Centre. The discussion explored regional economic opportunities, barriers to business growth, tourism and visitor development, workforce challenges, regional collaboration and the future role of ACED.

Participants expressed optimism about Almaguin's economic potential and the growth of new businesses and entrepreneurs within the region. At the same time, the discussion identified fragmentation between communities and businesses as a barrier to realizing that potential. A recurring message was the need to operate more cohesively as one region while protecting the authenticity, small-business character and quality of place that make Almaguin distinctive.

Through the discussion six core themes emerged.

1. Strengthen Almaguin's Regional Identity

Participants want to continue building and strengthening a unified regional identity that increases recognition of Almaguin while preserving the authenticity and character that differentiate the region. Explore Almaguin should continue to serve as the primary vehicle for building and promoting this regional identity.

2. Make It Easier to "Explore Almaguin"

Businesses identified opportunities for better visitor navigation, regional itineraries, maps and guides, cross-promotion and stronger connections between businesses and attractions.

3. Increase Visitor Spending, Not Just Visitor Volume

Tourism growth should focus on encouraging existing visitors to stay longer, explore more communities, visit more businesses and spend more within the region.

4. Build a More Connected Business Community

Businesses want more opportunities to network, collaborate, cross-promote, share information and develop partnerships. Participants expressed interest in building an active and connected business network rather than simply creating another business directory. The Brand Ambassador Business Network has provided a strong foundation for this approach and represents an opportunity to continue strengthening connections among businesses across the region.

5. Address Barriers to Business Growth

The engagement identified that workforce availability, skills gaps, housing, transportation and affordability are affecting the ability of businesses to hire, retain employees and grow. Participants also identified opportunities to strengthen small-business capacity through funding navigation, skills development, training, referrals and collaboration.

6. Strengthen ACED's Role as a Regional Connector

Participants identified an important role for ACED in connecting businesses, municipalities and partners; facilitating collaboration; promoting the region; connecting businesses to resources; and championing regional economic development.

Almaguin has considerable economic potential, but its businesses and communities need to operate more like one region. The opportunity is to strengthen collaboration, make it easier for visitors and residents to discover what exists throughout Almaguin, and support business growth while protecting the character that makes the region distinctive.

Online Survey Summary

The online survey received 55 responses from community members across the region. It was promoted through engagement sessions, consultations, social media, newsletters, and word of mouth and remained open from June to August 2026. A full summary of the survey results is available in Appendix B.



Member & Non-Member Consultations

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 discussed through the consultation process grouped by member and non-member consultations.

Consultations with ACED member municipalities (including the Almaguin Chamber of Commerce) demonstrated continued support for regional economic development and recognition of the value created by pooling municipal resources, expertise and capacity.

Participants generally viewed many of the region's economic challenges as extending beyond individual municipal boundaries and identified regional collaboration as particularly important for tourism, business development, investment attraction, workforce and resident attraction, healthcare, transportation and regional promotion.

For smaller municipalities, ACED provides access to economic development capacity that would be difficult to replicate independently. The consultations therefore point toward strengthening the regional model rather than moving away from it. At the same time, members identified opportunities to improve the connection between regional activities and individual municipal priorities.

Consultations with non-member municipalities identified both significant regional economic development opportunities and important considerations regarding ACED's future service-delivery model. While experiences and perspectives varied between communities, the consultations did not indicate broad opposition to regional economic development. Instead, respondents consistently emphasized the need for a clearer value proposition, stronger municipal and business relationships, equitable regional service delivery and greater evidence of tangible economic outcomes.

A recurring concern was the ability of municipalities to clearly understand and demonstrate the return generated through participation in a regional organization. Respondents identified the need for greater accountability around municipal contributions, including measurable outcomes related to businesses assisted, jobs supported or created, investment attracted, funding leveraged, tourism development and municipal priorities advanced. Previous activities were sometimes perceived as generating insufficient visible economic impact relative to their cost.

Member Municipality Consultations

Participating municipalities expressed continued support for regional economic development and recognized the value of working collectively on opportunities and challenges that extend beyond municipal boundaries. At the same time, members identified opportunities to strengthen ACED's local presence, business engagement, communication, accountability and ability to demonstrate measurable value within individual communities.

Regional Leadership with Local Relevance

A consistent theme was the importance of balancing regional coordination with visible local presence. Municipalities want ACED to advance initiatives that benefit the broader region while maintaining sufficient knowledge of individual communities, businesses and priorities.

Regular interaction with municipal staff, Councils and businesses was identified as important to maintaining ACED's relevance and ensuring communities understand the services and opportunities available to them. This suggests a model in which ACED thinks regionally while delivering and communicating locally.

Demonstrating Value and Strengthening Municipal Relationships

Members identified a need for clearer and more consistent communication regarding ACED's activities, outcomes, and return on municipal investment.

While municipalities may be aware of individual projects or activities, the cumulative impact of ACED's work is not always sufficiently visible. Future reporting should place greater emphasis on measurable outcomes, including businesses assisted, funding leveraged, investment supported, regional initiatives advanced, partnerships created and municipal benefits generated.

The consultations also identified the importance of maintaining relationships with Councils through municipal election cycles. Regular Council presentations, orientation for incoming Councils and stronger reporting by municipal representatives could help ensure elected officials understand ACED's mandate, services and results.

Business Retention, Expansion and Investment

Supporting existing businesses remains an important expectation of regional economic development. Members identified opportunities for stronger business outreach, business retention and expansion activities, entrepreneurship support, funding navigation, networking and investment attraction.

The consultations also highlighted an opportunity for ACED to strengthen communication between municipalities and businesses. Municipal policies, permitting, bylaws, customer service and development processes can significantly affect the business environment. ACED could help identify common barriers, facilitate dialogue and bring business intelligence into regional and municipal decision-making.

Greater coordination with the Almaguin Chamber of Commerce and other business organizations may also help expand business engagement while reducing duplication.

Tourism and Regional Promotion

Tourism remains an important regional opportunity and an area where collaboration provides clear advantages over fragmented municipal approaches.

Participants identified opportunities associated with destination development, regional marketing, visitor movement, accommodations, transportation, trails, attractions and day-trip development. Feedback generally supports continuing to build recognition of the regional identity while placing increasing emphasis on converting awareness into visitation, spending and economic activity.

Workforce, Resident Attraction and Community Conditions

The consultations demonstrated that economic development in rural communities is closely connected to broader community conditions. Housing, transportation, health care, recreation, internet connectivity, community infrastructure and downtown vitality all influence the region's ability to attract and retain residents, workers and businesses.

ACED cannot directly deliver solutions to all of these challenges. However, it can play an important role in identifying regional economic implications, convening partners, undertaking research, supporting advocacy and connecting municipalities to programs and resources.

A More Focused Regional Mandate

Members recognized that ACED operates with limited capacity relative to the breadth of economic development issues facing the region. The next iteration of the plan should therefore provide greater clarity regarding where ACED will lead, where it will partner or collaborate, and where it will primarily advocate, research or connect.

This would allow resources to be concentrated on areas where regional coordination can produce the greatest economic value while avoiding expectations that ACED will directly address every municipal or community challenge.



Non-Member Municipality Consultations

Consultations with non-member municipalities provided important insight into the factors influencing participation in regional economic development. While individual circumstances varied, the discussions generally demonstrated continued recognition of the value of regional collaboration. The primary concerns related to the visibility of local benefits, municipal service levels, communication, organizational relationships and the ability to demonstrate value for municipal investment.

Municipal Capacity and Local Service Delivery

Non-member consultations highlighted significant economic development capacity constraints within smaller municipalities. Economic development responsibilities may be distributed among municipal administration, elected officials, committees and volunteers rather than dedicated professional staff. In many cases, economic development was identified as one of many responsibilities managed by municipal administration.

This creates an opportunity for ACED to function as a source of shared professional economic development capacity for the region. Potential areas of support identified through consultations included grant and funding navigation, business retention and expansion, investment readiness, tourism development, economic intelligence, resident and workforce attraction, business development and municipal economic development support.

Municipal Relationships, Communication and Regional Equity

The consultations also identified a need for stronger and more consistent relationships between ACED and individual municipalities. Respondents expressed interest in regular communication, greater awareness of ACED activities, direct interaction with municipal administration and increased physical presence throughout the region. Past perceptions of geographic concentration or more support for one municipality over another have affected confidence in the regional model.

As ACED is currently doing, a more structured municipal outreach model should continue. This includes scheduled municipal visits, regular reporting and opportunities for ACED staff to periodically work from different municipal locations to help strengthen relationships and demonstrate equitable regional service delivery.

Business Retention, Development and Investment

Non-members identified a need for more consistent and action-oriented business engagement. This includes regular contact with businesses, identification of barriers to growth, connections to funding and programs, investment attraction, employment-land promotion and follow-up when businesses identify issues. Investment readiness was also identified as an important consideration. Communities may possess employment lands, tourism assets or development opportunities but face infrastructure, servicing, workforce, connectivity or capacity constraints that prevent these assets from being fully market ready.

Tourism, Accommodation and Transportation

Tourism continues to represent an important regional opportunity. Non-member municipalities identified natural assets, trails, outdoor recreation, community events and proximity to major markets as important strengths. However, the consultations also identified significant gaps in accommodation, transportation and visitor infrastructure.

Accommodation emerged as a particularly significant regional constraint, with limited options reducing the region's ability to convert visitors and day-trippers into overnight stays and increased visitor spending.

Transportation was also repeatedly identified as both a challenge and an opportunity. The return of passenger rail creates potential for increased visitation, but realizing its economic benefit will require complementary transportation, first/last-mile solutions, accommodation, visitor experiences and connections to businesses.

Workforce, Housing and Community Attraction

Workforce availability, housing and resident attraction were also identified as interconnected regional economic development challenges. Communities require workers to support existing and new businesses while simultaneously facing barriers related to housing availability, affordability and connectivity. This suggests an opportunity for a coordinated regional approach to promoting Almaguin as a place to live, work, invest and build a business, alongside its established positioning as a visitor destination.

Regional Promotion and Economic Intelligence

Non-members identified continued value in regional promotion but indicated that marketing should be connected more directly to economic development objectives. Opportunities include business and investment attraction, employment-land promotion, tourism marketing, resident attraction and improved awareness of regional businesses and assets.

Shared Municipal Finding

Organizational and Financial Sustainability

Long-term sustainability also emerged as an important consideration. Municipal contributions, external funding and changing Council priorities can create uncertainty for regional economic development delivery.

Participants raised several potential approaches, including municipal service agreements, fee-for-service activities, revenue-generating regional services, and alternative organizational structures. These ideas did not result in consensus around a specific model but demonstrate the need to examine ACED's long-term funding, governance and service-delivery structure as part of implementation planning.

Engagement Summary

Taken collectively, consultations with member and non-member municipalities demonstrated continued recognition of the value of regional economic development. The feedback suggests that the opportunity is not to reduce regional economic development capacity, but to strengthen the model through greater focus, visibility, local connection, business engagement and accountability for results.

1. **Protect the regional model.**

   Regional collaboration provides professional capacity and opportunities that individual municipalities cannot efficiently replicate.

2. **Strengthen the local connection.**

   Regional initiatives and services must remain visibly connected to individual municipalities and their businesses.

3. **Focus the mandate.**

   ACED should concentrate its resources where regional economic development can create the greatest value and clearly define its role on broader regional issues.

4. **Prove and protect the value.**

   ACED must consistently measure and communicate results while developing a sustainable organizational and funding model capable of withstanding political and funding changes.

The future model should be guided by a simple principle:

Think regionally. Deliver locally. Measure results.

Section 5: Building on the Previous Plan

The previous Regional Economic Development Plan established an ambitious agenda for regional collaboration and economic development across Almaguin. Since its adoption, significant progress has been made in establishing a regional economic development model and capacity, strengthening the Almaguin brand through Explore Almaguin, supporting businesses and municipalities, advancing healthcare, housing and transportation initiatives, and building partnerships across the region.

The operating environment has also changed considerably. The COVID-19 pandemic, evolving workforce and housing pressures, changes in government programs, municipal capacity constraints and the emergence of new regional partners have altered both the needs of the region and the role ACED is best positioned to play.

The 2027-2032 Regional Economic Development Plan builds on the work completed to date while refining priorities to reflect current conditions, consultation feedback and ACED's capacity. Rather than carrying forward every action from the previous plan, actions have been assessed based on their continued relevance, regional value, alignment with ACED's mandate and the availability of other organizations better positioned to lead the work.

Previous Themes	Progress & Evolution
Regional Economic Development Capacity	ACED was established, governance structures and policies were developed, staff were hired, municipalities were engaged and partnerships were established.
Regional Branding & Tourism	A regional branding strategy was completed and the Explore Almaguin platform established, creating a foundation for coordinated regional tourism and destination promotion.
Business & Investment Support	ACED has supported businesses, maintained business and commercial information, assisted with funding and investment inquiries, and developed property marketing packages. Some proposed investment attraction and supply-chain initiatives were not completed and may be considered within the new strategy.
Housing & Community Development	The approach evolved from maintaining housing inventories toward addressing systemic housing issues through the Housing Task Force, developer engagement and municipal support.
Transportation & Connectivity	Broadband initiatives progressed through government-led programs, while ACED helped establish the Almaguin Community Transportation Committee and supported regional transportation initiatives.
Workforce & Business Services	Workshops, events and business supports were delivered, while experience demonstrated that some workforce functions are more appropriately led by employment-service organizations and labour-market partners.
Community & Regional Initiatives	ACED supported trails, agriculture, volunteerism, community hubs, recreation infrastructure and municipal funding applications, with varying levels of regional participation and demand.

A key lesson from implementation of the previous RED Plan is that regional economic development requires focus. ACED cannot be responsible for every economic, workforce, housing, infrastructure, tourism and community development issue affecting the Almaguin region.

The 2027-2032 Plan establishes a more focused role for ACED, centred on areas where regional coordination can create the greatest value. This includes providing localized economic development support to member municipalities, supporting business growth and investment, strengthening regional tourism and marketing, facilitating partnerships and funding opportunities, and advancing shared regional priorities.

Where another organization has the mandate, expertise or resources to lead an initiative, ACED will focus on connecting, collaborating, supporting or advocating rather than duplicating existing services. As recognized in the previous Plan, Almaguin's path to economic success must continue to be built on a strong regional foundation and a commitment to collaboration.

The previous plan organized ACED's economic development efforts around three foundational pillars: The Land, The People and The Legacy. These concepts remain relevant and continue to reflect important elements of Almaguin's economic future. However, experience gained through implementation, changing regional conditions and feedback received through the strategic planning process identified the need for a more focused and action-oriented framework.

The previous Plan defined these three foundational principles as follows:



The Land

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



The People

"Almaguin has an existing knowledge base, a strong culture, and a deep-rooted pride complemented 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 region 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."



The Legacy

"The foundation of Almaguin 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, 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."



The 2027-2032 Strategic Direction therefore moves from these three broad pillars to five priority areas that define where ACED should focus its efforts and resources over the next five years. The principles represented by The Land, The People and The Legacy have not been lost; rather, they are integrated throughout the five priority areas and continue to provide an important foundation and translate their intent into a more focused and actionable framework for regional economic development.



Section 6: ACED's Future Operating Model

A Sustainable Regional Economic Development Model

The 2018 Regional Economic Development (RED) Plan established the foundation for a cooperative approach to economic development across the Almaguin region. The Plan recognized that many of the opportunities and challenges affecting economic growth extend beyond individual municipal boundaries and are more effectively addressed through regional collaboration. That principle remains relevant today.

ACED was established in 2019 to provide dedicated professional economic development capacity for the region. Since that time, the organization has built regional partnerships, supported municipalities and businesses, advanced regional initiatives and provided a collective platform for pursuing economic development opportunities.

The experience gained since 2019, together with feedback received through the current engagement process, demonstrates that the regional model continues to offer significant value. However, the way the service is structured, funded and delivered must evolve to ensure it remains sustainable, responsive and accountable.

The 2027-2032 Regional Economic Development Plan therefore recommends that ACED transition toward a clearly defined Regional Economic Development Shared Service Model. ACED's current structure already contains the bones of the right model which includes a multi-municipal shared service, professional staff, regional mandate and municipal administration.

The fundamental rationale identified in the previous Plan remains sound. A cooperative approach provides several advantages that would be difficult for individual municipalities to achieve independently.

Regional Economic Opportunities: Businesses, investors, visitors and prospective residents do not necessarily make decisions based on municipal boundaries. Presenting Almaguin's collective assets, opportunities and workforce strengthens the region's ability to compete for investment, businesses, visitors and residents.

Shared Professional Capacity: Many Almaguin municipalities do not have the resources or need to maintain their own dedicated economic development department. A shared-service model provides participating municipalities with access to professional economic development expertise while distributing the cost across the region.

Greater Financial Capacity: Regional delivery allows municipalities to pool resources to undertake economic development activities that may be financially difficult for one municipality to pursue independently.

Funding and Partnership Leverage: A coordinated regional organization is better positioned to pursue external funding, develop partnerships and demonstrate the regional impact of proposed investments.

Reduced Duplication: Regional delivery reduces the need for municipalities to independently develop similar programs, marketing initiatives, research and economic development resources.

A Stronger Collective Voice: ACED provides a platform through which participating municipalities can collectively advance regional economic development priorities and advocate with provincial and federal governments.

From Regional Organization to Shared Service

The next phase of ACED should strengthen the connection between regional economic development and local municipal value.

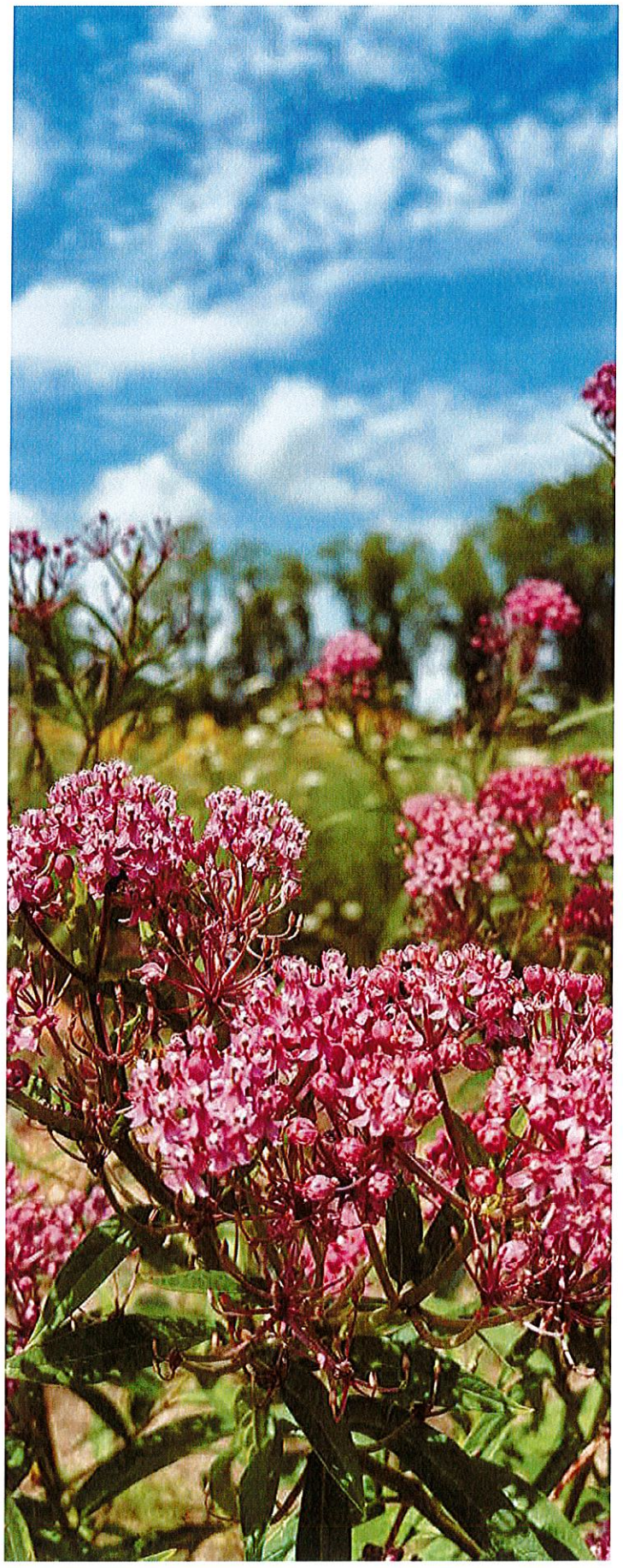
Under the proposed model, ACED would operate as the shared economic development service for participating municipalities. Municipal contributions would support a clearly defined set of core economic development services available to all members.

These core services would include areas such as:

- regional economic development planning and coordination;
- business retention, expansion and investment support;
- municipal economic development support;
- funding identification and navigation;
- investment attraction and investment readiness;
- regional tourism and destination development;
- regional marketing and promotion;
- economic research, data and intelligence;
- regional partnerships and advocacy; and
- regular municipal engagement, reporting and communication.

Each participating municipality would have access to ACED's professional economic development capacity while also benefiting from regional initiatives that strengthen the broader Almaguin economy.

The over-arching principle underlying the model is: Think regionally. Deliver locally.



Principles for the Future Operating Model

Regionally Focused

ACED will prioritize opportunities and challenges where collaboration creates greater value than individual municipal action and will work to engage as many Almaguin municipalities as possible.

Municipally Supported

Participating municipalities will provide the stable financial foundation required to maintain professional regional economic development capacity, supported by multi-year agreements that provide greater predictability and continuity.

Equitable

Municipal contributions should be based on a transparent and equitable funding formula that recognizes both the shared benefits of regional economic development and differences among participating municipalities.

Locally Responsive

Regional delivery must translate into visible local value. ACED will maintain regular relationships with participating municipalities, businesses and Councils and provide localized economic development support within the regional framework.

Professional

ACED will maintain professional economic development capacity and focus staff resources on activities aligned with its mandate, expertise and strategic priorities.

Collaborative

Where another organization has the mandate, expertise or resources to lead an initiative, ACED will connect, collaborate, support or advocate rather than duplicate existing services.

Transparent & Accountable

ACED will establish clear service expectations and measurable performance indicators and regularly communicate activities, outcomes and the value generated through municipal and regional investment.

Financially Sustainable

Core operations should be sustainable without reliance on time-limited government operating grants. External funding should primarily be used to leverage strategic projects and expand regional economic impact.

Regionally Neutral

Governance, staffing and decision-making structures should reinforce ACED's responsibility to the collective interests of participating municipalities and maintain confidence that services and opportunities are delivered fairly across the region.

Regional Shared Services

To protect the regional model while allowing ACED to respond to municipality-specific needs, the updated model recommends a two-tier service structure: Core Shared Services and Enhanced Municipal Services.

1. **Core Shared Services**
   Core services should be funded collectively by participating municipalities through an annual contribution model based on an established municipal funding formula. These services represent the fundamental economic development functions ACED provides on behalf of its members and include both regional economic development services and a defined level of local municipal support.

   This approach ensures that participating municipalities benefit from regional initiatives while also having direct access to professional economic development capacity within their individual communities.

2. **Enhanced Municipal Services**
   From time to time, an individual member municipality may require support that extends beyond the defined core service level. This may include management of a significant local economic development initiative, preparation of a municipality-specific strategy or study, intensive project coordination, complex funding applications or other specialized work requiring substantial staff capacity.

   Where requested work falls outside the defined core service level, ACED may provide additional support on a fee-for-service or full-cost-recovery basis, subject to organizational capacity. This allows municipalities to access additional professional economic development capacity without requiring all participating municipalities to subsidize projects that primarily benefit one community.

   Fee-for-service activities should complement, rather than compete with, ACED's core regional mandate and should not displace resources required to deliver committed services to participating municipalities.

Municipal Economic Development Service Model

A central objective of the regional shared-service model is to ensure that regional collaboration translates into meaningful local economic development value. Participating municipalities should receive both the benefits of regional initiatives and direct access to a defined level of municipal economic development support through their financial participation in ACED.

Each participating municipality should work with ACED annually to identify locally relevant economic development priorities that align with the Regional Economic Development Plan. ACED can then determine how its expertise, regional relationships and resources can support those priorities within the organization's mandate and available capacity.

Where common priorities are identified across multiple municipalities, ACED should consider opportunities to advance a coordinated regional response. For example, if several municipalities identify accommodation development as a priority, ACED should explore a regional approach rather than undertaking separate initiatives for each municipality.

The intent is to provide municipalities with access to professional economic development capacity without requiring each community to maintain its own economic development department. At the same time, participation in ACED should not represent unlimited consulting capacity for municipality-specific projects. A clear distinction should therefore be established between the regional and local services included through municipal participation and enhanced services requiring additional fees.

Proposed Municipal Service Model

CORE REGIONAL SERVICES

Included in municipal contribution

- Regional economic development planning and coordination
- Regional BR+E, business outreach and core economic development support for businesses within participating municipalities
- Investment attraction and regional investment readiness
- Tourism development and regional promotion
- Regional economic research and data
- Regional partnerships and advocacy
- Regional initiatives and collaborative projects

LOCAL MUNICIPAL SERVICES

Included in municipal contribution

- Regular municipal staff check-ins and access to ACED staff
- Annual identification of local economic development priorities
- Business and investment inquiry support
- Funding identification and navigation
- Economic development advice, research and information
- Support for locally relevant business outreach and connections
- Defined support to advance municipal economic development priorities

ENHANCED SERVICES

Additional fee / cost recovery

- Standalone municipal economic development or strategic plans
- Feasibility studies and specialized research
- Intensive project management or coordination
- Major or complex funding applications
- Specialized consulting or technical assignments
- Significant municipality-specific initiatives requiring substantial staff capacity
- Work exceeding the established member service level

This model recognizes that local economic development support is an important component of ACED membership. A municipality should not be required to pay an additional fee every time it requires locally relevant assistance. Additional fees should apply when the scope, complexity or staff capacity required extends beyond the defined services included through participation in the shared-service model.

Services for Non-Member Municipalities

ACED should also establish a defined Municipal Economic Development Service Package for non-member municipalities seeking access to selected economic development expertise and support.

Services could include economic development advisory support, funding navigation, business and investment assistance, downtown revitalization, BR+E, research, project support and other defined services based on organizational capacity.

Non-member services should be provided at an established fee that reflects the full cost of service delivery. Non-member municipalities would not receive the same level of ongoing access, regional participation, proactive municipal engagement or service commitments provided to municipalities that financially participate in the regional shared-service model.

In addition to generating earned revenue, this approach provides an opportunity to build relationships with non-member municipalities, demonstrate the value of professional regional economic development services and create a potential pathway toward future participation in the regional shared-service model.

The shared-service model should provide meaningful local economic development support as part of municipal participation, while maintaining clear boundaries between included services and enhanced fee-for-service work.

Communication & Awareness

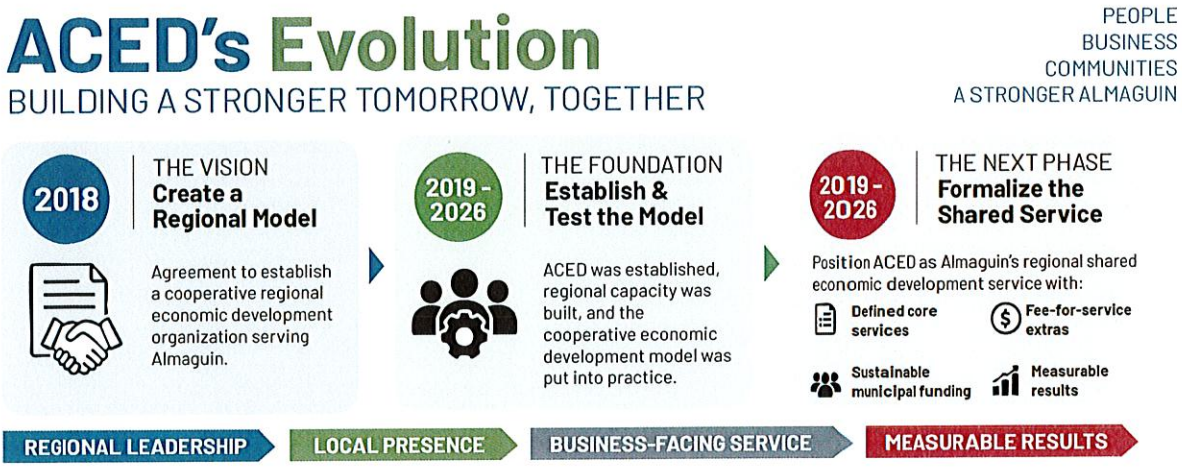
The organization should be highly visible and well understood among member municipal staff, businesses, residents, partners, senior government, and recognized as Almaguin's economic development department, providing regional leadership, local presence, business-facing services and measurable results.

To strengthen awareness and make the organization's purpose immediately clear, the use of the acronym ACED should be reconsidered in external facing communications. While the acronym is familiar to those closely connected to the organization, it does not clearly communicate ACED's role or mandate to the broader business and community audience.

Moving forward, the organization should be publicly positioned as Almaguin Economic Development, providing a clear and easily understood identity that directly communicates both the region it serves and the work it delivers. The existing legal or organizational name should remain where required, while Almaguin Economic Development becomes the primary external identity.

ACED's Evolution

The evolution of ACED reflects a progression from building the regional economic development model to strengthening how it delivers value. With the organizational foundation now established, the next phase will focus on formalizing ACED as Almaguin's shared economic development service, with clearly defined services, a sustainable funding model, strong local connections and measurable results





Section 7: Strategic Direction 2027-2032

The Strategic Direction establishes five priority areas to guide ACED's work over the next five years. These priorities reflect the progress and lessons of the previous plan, changing economic conditions across Almaguin, and feedback received from member and non-member municipalities, businesses and regional partners.

Together, they provide a more focused framework for regional economic development, concentrating ACED's resources where regional collaboration can create the greatest value while strengthening the connection between regional initiatives and local economic outcomes.

Many of the economic challenges and opportunities facing Almaguin cannot be effectively addressed by municipalities working independently. Issues such as business growth, investment readiness, tourism development, accommodations, healthcare, workforce and resident attraction, transportation and regional promotion require varying degrees of regional coordination. ACED's role is not necessarily to lead or deliver each of these areas, but to identify their economic implications and, where appropriate, collaborate with partners, coordinate regional action, undertake research, support investment and advocate for solutions.

Almaguin in 2032

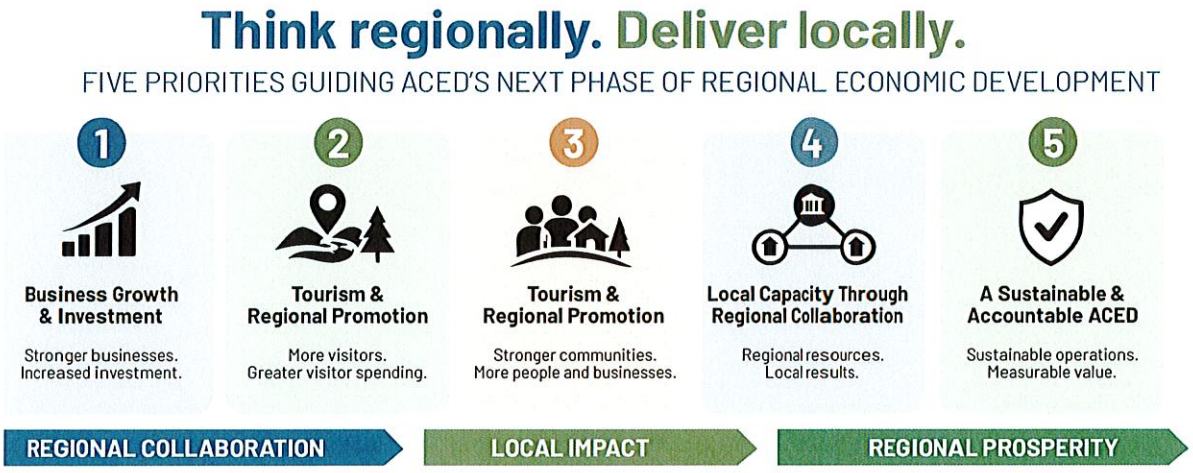
By 2032, Almaguin should be a more connected, investment-ready and business-supportive region where municipalities work collectively to provide professional economic development capacity, businesses have stronger access to the resources, relationships and opportunities they need to grow, and regional assets are leveraged to generate increased investment, employment, visitation and economic activity.

Regional economic development will be delivered through a model that combines regional leadership with meaningful local service. Municipalities will have access to consistent economic development support, businesses will have a clear point of connection for assistance and opportunities, and regional initiatives will be focused on areas where collaboration creates greater value than individual municipalities working independently.

Success will not be defined by growth alone. The objective is to strengthen Almaguin's economy while maintaining the character, quality of place and community attributes that make the region attractive to residents, businesses, workers, investors and visitors.

As ACED evolves over the next five years, the implementation process should result in five significant changes to regional economic development in Almaguin:

1. Businesses are more connected and better supported.
2. A consistent regional BR+E system provides proactive contact with businesses, identifies barriers and opportunities, strengthens referrals and creates an ongoing source of regional business intelligence.
3. Almaguin is better positioned to attract investment.
4. Member municipalities have clearly identified and promoted investment opportunities, stronger investment-readiness information and a coordinated regional response to prospective investors and development opportunities.
5. Tourism generates greater regional economic impact.
6. Explore Almaguin continues to strengthen regional awareness while greater emphasis is placed on visitor dispersal, longer stays, increased spending, tourism product development and addressing regional gaps such as accommodations and transportation.
7. Municipalities receive visible and consistent economic development service.
8. Participating municipalities have clearly defined service commitments, regular access to ACED staff, ongoing Council engagement, business support and municipality-specific reporting that demonstrates both regional and local value.
9. ACED operates as a sustainable and accountable regional shared service.
10. The organization has a clearly defined mandate, appropriate professional capacity, a sustainable municipal funding model, strong governance and measurable performance indicators that demonstrate the value of regional economic development.





Priority Areas

To accomplish success, the following five priority areas will allow ACED to take a regional approach to local economic development as guided by the member municipalities.

Priority 1: Business Growth & Investment

Strengthen Almaguin's business community while creating the conditions to attract new investment and economic activity.

Goal 1.1 – Formalize Business Retention & Expansion Program

ACTIONS

- Establish a consistent regional Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E) approach to proactively engage businesses throughout member municipalities.
- Identify barriers affecting business retention, expansion, succession and investment and connect businesses with appropriate resources and partners.
- Strengthen awareness of available funding, financing, advisory and government programs.
- Use business engagement to identify emerging opportunities, trends and challenges affecting the regional economy and share relevant intelligence with member municipalities and regional partners.
- Utilize support from partner organizations such as Almaguin Highlands Chamber of Commerce, CBDC, NECO, The Business Centre, etc. to execute.

Goal 1.2 – Increase Investment Readiness & Attraction

ACTIONS

- Maintain and promote an inventory of investment-ready commercial, industrial and development opportunities for each member municipality.
- Develop targeted investment profiles and materials for priority opportunities and sectors.
- Strengthen relationships with municipalities, property owners, developers, government and investment partners to respond collaboratively to investment inquiries.
- Identify and pursue sectors and opportunities that align with Almaguin's competitive advantages and provincial and federal areas of focus.

Goal 1.3 – Strengthen Access to Business Support

ACTIONS

- Establish a clear regional business support model that defines how businesses access ACED services through participating municipalities, the Almaguin Highlands Chamber of Commerce and other established service pathways.
- Ensure businesses located within participating municipalities have access to defined core ACED business support services as part of the regional shared-service model.
- Develop a business support partnership with the Almaguin Highlands Chamber of Commerce that provides Chamber members with defined access to ACED services and creates additional value through coordinated outreach, referrals, information, programming and economic development support.
- Clearly define eligibility and service levels for BR+E engagement, funding navigation, referrals, advisory support and participation in regional economic development initiatives.
- Establish coordinated referral and information-sharing processes between ACED, the Chamber, municipalities and other business service organizations to improve access to support and reduce duplication.
- Establish appropriate pathways for businesses outside participating municipalities to access ACED support through Chamber membership, partnerships or fee-for-service arrangements, where appropriate and subject to organizational capacity.



Priority 2: Tourism & Regional Promotion

Strengthen Almaguin's brand and market position as a destination to visit, experience and explore while increasing the economic impact of tourism.

Goal 2.1 – Strengthen Almaguin as a Regional Destination

ACTIONS

- Continue to strengthen and promote the Almaguin regional brand, Explore Almaguin.
- Support the development and promotion of experiences, routes, itineraries and regional tourism products that encourage visitors to explore multiple communities.
- Identify gaps affecting tourism growth, including accommodations, transportation, visitor services and tourism infrastructure and work with member municipalities and partners to mitigate.
- Strengthen collaboration among tourism operators, municipalities and regional tourism partners.

Goal 2.2 – Increase the Economic Impact of Tourism

ACTIONS

- Identify and advance solutions to regional tourism development gaps, including accommodations, transportation, visitor services and tourism infrastructure, working with municipalities, businesses, investors and regional partners where collaborative action is required.
- Support tourism businesses in developing experiences, packages and products that encourage longer stays and increased visitor spending.
- Identify opportunities to strengthen shoulder-season and year-round visitation.
- Use available tourism and visitor data to guide marketing and destination-development decisions.
- Connect tourism development with local businesses, downtowns, arts and culture, outdoor recreation, agriculture and other regional assets.

Priority 3: Communities Ready for Growth

Strengthen the regional conditions necessary to attract and retain businesses, investment, workers and residents.

Goal 3.1 – Support Workforce & Resident Attraction

ACTIONS

- Promote Almaguin as a place to live, work, build a business and invest.
- Collaborate with employment, education and workforce partners rather than duplicating existing workforce services.
- Identify workforce challenges through ongoing business engagement and connect employers with appropriate partners and resources.
- Explore opportunities to attract former residents, skilled workers, entrepreneurs and new residents to the region.

Goal 3.2 – Advance Regional Conditions Supporting Economic Growth

ACTIONS

- Continue to support regional collaboration on housing as an economic-development priority.
- Coordinate, support and advocate around transportation, infrastructure, healthcare, connectivity and other issues where they directly affect economic growth.
- Support member municipalities and partners in identifying funding and investment opportunities related to growth-enabling infrastructure.
- Use regional research and data to strengthen advocacy and support evidence-based decision-making.

Priority 4: Local Capacity Through Regional Collaboration

Deliver regional economic development in a way that creates visible and meaningful value for individual municipalities.

Goal 4.1 – Strengthen Municipal Economic Development Capacity

ACTIONS

- Establish a consistent Municipal Economic Development Service Model that clearly defines the regional and local economic development services included through municipal participation in ACED.
- Provide each participating municipality with regular access to ACED staff and a defined level of locally focused economic development support as part of the regional shared-service model.
- Work with each participating municipality annually to identify local economic development priorities that align with the Regional Economic Development Plan and determine where ACED can provide appropriate support.
- Support participating municipalities with economic development opportunities, business and investment inquiries, funding navigation, research, partnerships and priority initiatives within the defined core service level.
- Establish clear criteria distinguishing services included through municipal participation from enhanced municipality-specific projects requiring additional staff capacity or specialized expertise.
- Develop a fee-for-service Municipal Economic Development Service Package for non-member municipalities seeking access to defined ACED expertise and support.
- Develop an optional fee-for-service Municipal Economic Development Service Package for member municipalities requiring additional support beyond the core services included through ACED membership.
- Facilitate collaboration among municipalities where common local priorities can be advanced more effectively through regional initiatives.

Goal 4.2 – Strengthen Regional Partnerships

ACTIONS

- Clarify the respective roles of ACED, municipalities, Almaguin Highlands Chamber of Commerce, employment organizations, tourism partners and other economic development organizations.
- Establish stronger referral and information-sharing mechanisms among regional partners.
- Convene partners around opportunities and challenges that require a regional response.
- Pursue collaborative projects and funding opportunities where regional participation creates greater impact.
- Strengthen ACED's role as a regional economic development leader and advocate by elevating Almaguin's priorities and opportunities with provincial and federal governments through strategic advocacy, delegations, conferences and speaking opportunities.

Priority 5: A Sustainable & Accountable ACED

Build a focused, financially sustainable and accountable regional economic development organization capable of delivering measurable value over the long term.

Goal 5.1 – Establish a Sustainable Regional Operating Model

ACTIONS

- Transition toward a sustainable shared-service model in which core regional economic development operations are supported by participating municipalities.
- Establish a fair and transparent municipal contribution model that reflects both shared regional benefit and municipal capacity.
- Use government funding primarily to leverage strategic projects and initiatives rather than relying on grants to sustain core operations.
- Explore appropriate fee-for-service, partnership, sponsorship and other earned-revenue opportunities for services outside ACED's core mandate.
- Establish clear service expectations for participating municipalities and full-cost recovery mechanisms for enhanced or non-member services.

Goal 5.2 – Strengthen Accountability & Demonstrate Value

ACTIONS

- Establish a focused set of key performance indicators tied to the Strategic Plan and Annual Business Plan.
- Report regularly on businesses supported, investment facilitated, funding leveraged, partnerships advanced and other measurable outcomes.
- Provide member municipalities with concise, municipality-specific reporting demonstrating both regional and local value.
- Strengthen direct communication with municipal Councils rather than relying exclusively on Board representatives to communicate ACED activities.
- Regularly review priorities and organizational capacity to ensure resources remain focused on the highest-impact economic development activities.

Goal 5.3 – Strengthen Governance & Regional Confidence

ACTIONS

- Review ACED's governance structure, roles and reporting relationships to support transparency, regional neutrality and effective decision-making.
- Clarify the respective roles of the Board, staff, member municipalities and partners.
- Establish appropriate conflict-of-interest and accountability mechanisms.
- Strengthen Council orientation and onboarding following municipal elections to maintain understanding of ACED's mandate and regional value.

Section 8: Implementation & Measurement

The success of this Regional Economic Development Plan will depend not on the number of initiatives undertaken, but on ACED's ability to focus its resources, deliver consistent value to participating municipalities and businesses, and demonstrate measurable economic results.

Implementation should therefore be guided by a disciplined shared-service approach. Before committing resources to an initiative, ACED should consider four questions:

1. Is this a regional economic development priority?
2. What is ACED's role?
3. What value will participating municipalities and businesses receive?
4. How will the result be measured and communicated?

This approach will help ensure that ACED remains focused on its economic development mandate, reduces duplication with other organizations, and directs limited staff and financial resources toward activities where regional coordination can generate the greatest impact.

From Strategy to Annual Action

The five strategic priorities establish the direction for ACED over the next five years. They should be supported by an Annual Business Plan that identifies the specific initiatives, activities and targets to be advanced each year.

The Annual Business Plan should be approved by the Board and reflect available staff capacity, financial resources, emerging opportunities and the needs of participating municipalities and the regional business community.

To maintain focus while retaining the flexibility required in economic development, ACED should consider allocating organizational capacity using the following framework:

Allocation	Focus
60% **Core Economic Development Services**	BR+E, investment inquiries, municipal economic development support, funding navigation, data and research, stakeholder relationships, marketing & communication, tourism and regional coordination.
30% **Strategic Regional Priorities**	Focused initiatives that directly advance the priorities and goals established through this Strategy.
10% **Emerging Opportunities**	Significant investment opportunities, new funding programs, government initiatives or unexpected economic opportunities requiring timely action.

The percentages should be treated as an operating guideline rather than a rigid formula. Their purpose is to prevent the organization from becoming overly reactive and ensure that core economic development responsibilities remain adequately resourced.

Early Implementation Priorities

During the initial implementation period, ACED should focus on establishing the organizational and service foundation required to deliver the Strategy. Initial priorities should include:

- Renew and update the regional shared-service agreement and confirm ACED's mandate, governance and core services.
- Complete the sustainable operating and municipal funding model.
- Review and confirm the organizational structure and staffing capacity required to deliver the Plan.
- Establish the Municipal Economic Development Service Commitment and Municipal Relations Strategy.
- Launch the regional BR+E program and Regional Business Advisory Table.
- Confirm regional KPIs, baseline measures and municipality-specific reporting mechanisms.
- Complete and maintain an inventory of priority investment-ready properties and opportunities.
- Develop the first Annual Business Plan identifying initiatives, responsibilities, targets and available resources.

Establish the Sustainable Funding Model

Historically, FedNor funding has played an important role in supporting ACED's development and activities. As the organization matures, its core operating model should become less dependent on time-limited government funding.

The updated model recommends that core economic development operations be sustainably funded through participating municipalities, with external funding increasingly used to leverage municipal investment and expand regional impact through strategic projects, partnerships and regional initiatives.

The funding model should distinguish between three primary sources:

Core Municipal Investment: Predictable municipal contributions that support ACED's professional staff, core regional services and defined local municipal services.

Strategic Project Funding: Federal, provincial, municipal, partner and private-sector contributions used to advance specific regional priorities and initiatives beyond core operations.

Enhanced Service Revenue: Fee-for-service or cost-recovery revenue generated through municipality-specific work that extends beyond ACED's defined core service level, as well as defined services provided to non-member municipalities.

This approach provides greater stability for ACED's core operations while allowing the organization to leverage external funding and earned revenue to expand its capacity and advance additional economic development opportunities.

The long-term objective should be to establish a financially sustainable regional economic development model in which municipal investment provides the foundation for core service delivery, while external funding and earned revenue are used to leverage that investment and accelerate regional economic development initiatives. The review should identify the actual annual cost of delivering the recommended shared-service model, including professional staffing, administration, municipal service commitments, business outreach, tourism and marketing, technology, travel, research and core programming.

Based on this assessment, ACED should establish a transparent and equitable municipal contribution model that provides sufficient recurring revenue to support core operations without reliance on time-limited senior government operating funding.

The funding model should distinguish between:

- core regional economic development services funded collectively by participating municipalities;
- strategic regional projects supported through municipal, government and partner funding; and
- enhanced or municipality-specific services delivered on a fee-for-service or full-cost-recovery basis where appropriate.

External government funding should primarily be used to leverage municipal investment, advance strategic projects and expand regional economic impact rather than sustain the organization's basic operating capacity.

This review should be completed early enough in the implementation period to inform future municipal budget cycles and any renewal of the regional shared-service agreement.



Municipal Service Commitments

A key measure of implementation will be whether regional economic development translates into visible local value. Economic development is a municipal service. ACED is simply the shared-service model through which participating municipalities deliver it.

As part of the shared-service model, ACED should establish a Municipal Economic Development Service Commitment outlining the core services every participating municipality can expect to receive. This creates greater consistency, transparency and accountability while helping Councils understand the value of their municipal investment.

Core service commitments that every member receives could include:

- a designated ACED staff contact;
- Assigned ACED staff contact;
- Monthly in-office working days;
- Quarterly municipal check-in with senior management;
- Annual Council presentation;
- Council orientation following municipal elections;
- Assistance with economic development funding opportunities;
- Business/investment inquiry support;
- Access to regional economic data and research;
- Business and municipal participation in regional marketing, tourism and investment initiatives;
- Local business outreach through BR+E;
- One annually identified municipal economic development priority; and
- Annual municipality-specific results summary.

Municipal Relations & Council Engagement

The long-term sustainability of regional economic development will depend on strong and consistent relationships between ACED and its members. Municipal staff, ACED staff and Board representatives all have a role in actively championing the organization, communicating its value and ensuring that Councils understand how regional economic development benefits their communities.

Municipal contributions to regional economic development may be viewed as discretionary expenditures, particularly during municipal budget cycles or following changes in Council. ACED should therefore establish a deliberate Municipal Relations Strategy that builds understanding of the organization, maintains relationships throughout the municipal term and demonstrates the value municipalities receive from participating in the regional shared-service model.

The Municipal Relations Strategy should include:

- Council onboarding following each municipal election, introducing ACED's mandate, services, strategic priorities, governance and regional shared-service model;
- Annual presentations to each participating Council outlining regional accomplishments, local results, priorities and upcoming opportunities;
- Regular municipal staff check-ins to identify emerging economic development priorities, business issues and opportunities;
- Municipality-specific reporting demonstrating services delivered, initiatives supported and results achieved within each community;
- Municipal success stories that demonstrate tangible examples of regional economic development creating local impact;
- Clear expectations for municipal Board representatives to maintain communication between ACED and their respective Councils and municipal administrations; and
- Consistent communication throughout the municipal term, rather than concentrating engagement around annual budget discussions or membership decisions.

This approach should complement ACED's broader communications activities but serve a different purpose. A communications strategy will build awareness however, a Municipal Relations Strategy will build understanding, trust, engagement and long-term commitment to the regional model.

Business Support Through Regional Partnerships

The Almaguin Highlands Chamber of Commerce (AHCC) is an important partner in connecting businesses and strengthening the regional business network. As ACED's shared-service model evolves, the relationship between ACED and AHCC should be formalized to clarify roles, strengthen business access to support and create greater value for both organizations and their members.

Businesses located within participating municipalities should continue to have access to defined core ACED business support services through the regional shared-service model. AHCC membership should provide an additional pathway to defined ACED services and enhanced business support opportunities. ACED and AHCC should establish a formal partnership that clearly defines the services, benefits and opportunities available to AHCC and its members through the Chamber's participation in ACED.

Areas for collaboration may include business outreach and referrals, funding and program information, networking and education, business intelligence, cross-promotion and regional economic development initiatives. AHCC should also serve as a key partner in the Regional Business Advisory Table and other mechanisms established to maintain ongoing connections with the regional business community.

The partnership may also provide a pathway for businesses located outside participating municipalities to access defined ACED services through AHCC membership or fee-for-service arrangements. Service levels and eligibility should be clearly established to strengthen the value of AHCC membership while maintaining the value provided to municipalities that financially support the regional shared-service model.

Clarifying Roles

ACED and AHCC should operate as complementary partners within a coordinated regional business support system.

- ACED should focus on regional economic development, including BR+E, investment readiness and attraction, funding navigation, economic research and intelligence, municipal economic development support, tourism and regional development, partnerships and advocacy.
- AHCC should focus on business membership, networking, business-to-business connections, member engagement, promotion, advocacy, education and representing the needs of the regional business community.

Where mandates intersect, ACED and AHCC should coordinate outreach, referrals, information sharing and joint initiatives to maximize business value and reduce duplication. The objective is a connected regional business support system where businesses have a clear pathway to assistance, regardless of which organization they contact first.

Business Retention + Expansion (BR+E)

Business Retention + Expansion (BR+E) should become one of ACED's primary mechanisms for maintaining direct contact with the regional economy. Rather than relying primarily on businesses to approach the organization, ACED should establish a consistent regional BR+E system that proactively engages businesses across participating municipalities, identifies barriers and opportunities, connects businesses with appropriate resources and follows interventions through to outcomes. Recognizing that the number and type of businesses vary across municipalities, business outreach will extend beyond traditional brick-and-mortar businesses to include home-based businesses, agricultural businesses and farms, as well as other priority sectors identified by each municipality. Information gathered through BR+E should also inform municipal priorities, advocacy, investment attraction, workforce initiatives and future regional programming.

This will create a continuous economic intelligence cycle as depicted below.



Measuring What Matters

Key performance indicators (KPI's) should shift the organization's reporting emphasis from activities completed to economic development outcomes achieved. ACED should establish a concise set of regional Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that can be tracked consistently from year to year. Measures should include, where applicable:



KPI's	Examples of Measures
Business Growth	Businesses engaged and assisted; expansions supported; succession opportunities identified; business issues resolved or referred
Investment	Investment inquiries; investment facilitated; development opportunities advanced; businesses attracted
Employment	Jobs created or retained where attributable or reasonably connected to ACED support
Funding	Funding identified, applications supported and dollars leveraged
Tourism	Tourism initiatives advanced; operator participation; new experiences/products; available visitor indicators
Municipal Service	Municipal check-ins; Council presentations; local priorities supported; funding/ project assistance provided
Regional Collaboration	Partnerships established; joint initiatives; funding collaborations; regional advocacy undertaken
Organizational Performance	Progress against annual business plan; municipal participation; funding diversification; delivery of established service commitments

Not every economic outcome can be directly attributed to ACED. Reporting should therefore distinguish between activities delivered, outcomes directly supported, and broader regional economic indicators. This will provide a more credible assessment of organizational impact than attempting to claim responsibility for economic changes influenced by many factors.

The proposed BR+E framework identifies several useful measures, including businesses assisted, expansions supported, jobs retained or created, investment facilitated, funding leveraged, succession issues, development barriers and workforce challenges.



Reporting Results

Measurement only strengthens accountability if the results are regularly communicated. ACED should introduce a simple reporting framework consisting of an Annual Regional Economic Development Report supported by concise municipality-specific results summaries.

Reporting should clearly demonstrate:

1. **What we said we would do**
2. **What we did**
3. **What changed**
4. **What value was created**
5. **What comes next**

The regional report should communicate overall progress against the five strategic priorities and annual business plan, while municipality-specific reporting should demonstrate how the shared regional service is creating value within individual member municipalities.

Results should also be presented directly to Councils annually rather than relying exclusively on municipal Board representatives to communicate ACED's activities and outcomes. The implementation material identifies Council onboarding, annual presentations, regular reporting and municipal success stories as important components of a more deliberate municipal relations strategy.

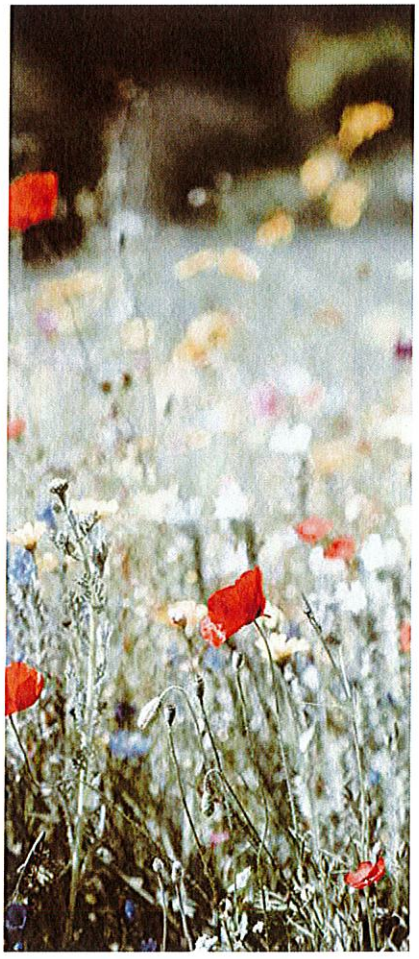
Governance and Accountability

A sustainable regional shared-service model requires clear governance, defined responsibilities and accountability for results. ACED's governance model should balance municipal accountability with professional economic development leadership, while ensuring that decisions and services reflect the collective interests of the Almaguin region.

Participating municipalities should have a clear role in establishing strategic direction, approving the shared-service framework and monitoring the value and performance of the organization. The governance structure should provide municipalities with appropriate oversight while allowing professional staff to manage the day-to-day delivery of economic development services and implementation of the Regional Economic Development Plan.

The Board's primary role should be governance, strategic oversight and accountability. This should include:

- approving the Regional Economic Development Plan and Annual Business Plan;
- establishing organizational priorities and ensuring alignment with ACED's regional economic development mandate;
- monitoring organizational performance and key performance indicators;
- overseeing financial performance and long-term sustainability;
- supporting transparency, accountability and regional neutrality in organizational decision-making; and
- ensuring that the shared-service model continues to provide equitable value to participating municipalities.



Strengthening Municipal Representation and Continuity

Strong connections between ACED, municipal Councils and municipal administration are important to the effectiveness of the regional shared-service model. Participating municipalities should be encouraged to have appropriate municipal staff attend ACED meetings to strengthen information sharing, provide administrative and operational perspectives, and ensure that regional economic development activities remain connected to municipal priorities and activities.

Each participating municipality should also designate a primary and alternate Board representative at the beginning of each year. The alternate representative should be available to participate when the primary representative is unable to attend, helping to maintain continuity in municipal representation, organizational knowledge and communication between ACED and the municipality.

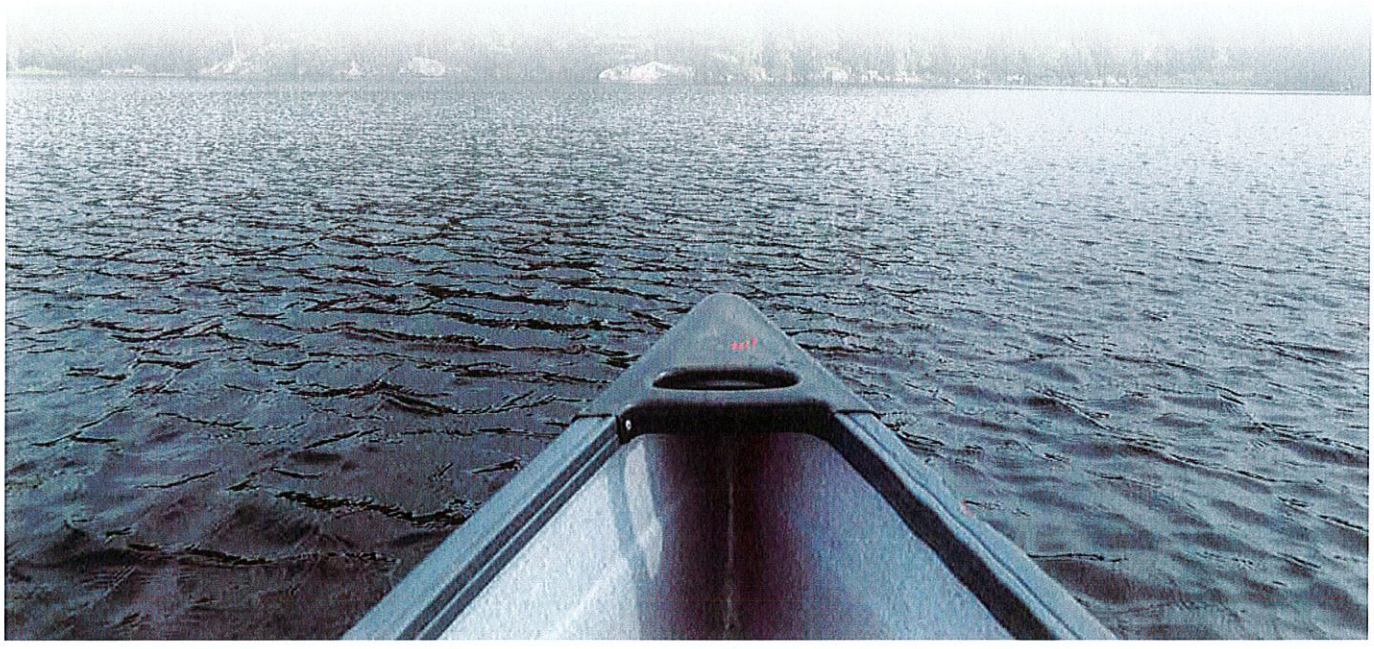
Board representatives, alternate representatives and participating municipal staff should help maintain a consistent two-way flow of information between ACED and their respective municipalities. This should complement ACED's direct relationships with municipal staff and Councils rather than relying solely on Board representatives as the primary communication channel.

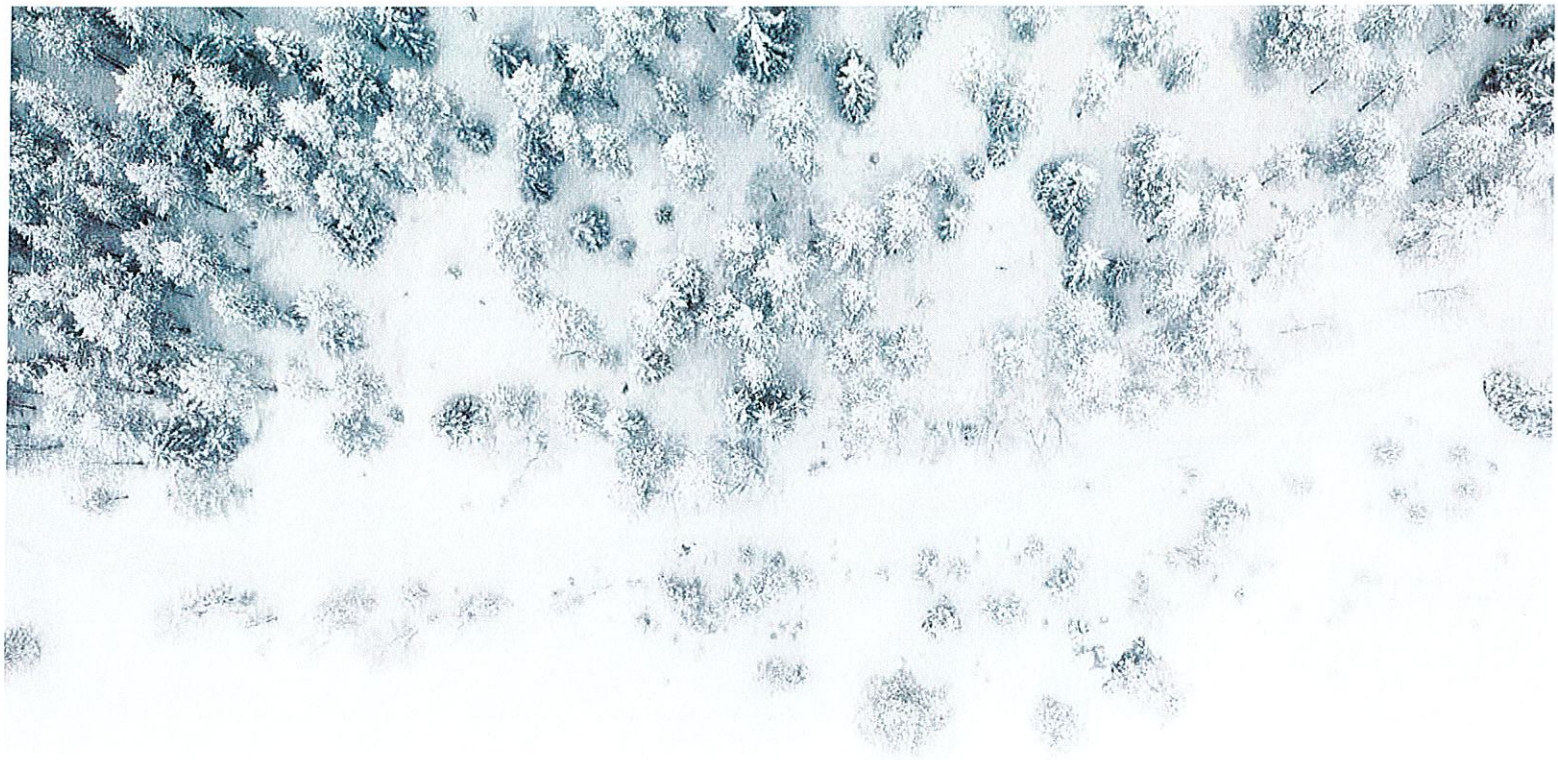
Staff Responsibility and Performance Oversight

ACED staff should be responsible for implementation of the Plan, delivery of core regional and municipal services, management of partnerships and projects, business and stakeholder relationships, and the day-to-day operation of the organization within the direction and resources approved by the Board.

Progress against the Regional Economic Development Plan should be reviewed annually through the Annual Business Plan and performance reporting process. A more comprehensive mid-term review should be undertaken to assess progress, organizational capacity, municipal and business needs, economic conditions and whether priorities, performance measures or implementation approaches require adjustment.

Clear governance, consistent municipal participation and regular performance reporting will help ensure that ACED remains focused on its mandate, connected to participating municipalities and accountable for the resources invested in regional economic development.





Organizational Structure and Capacity

As ACED transitions toward a more clearly defined regional shared-service model, the organizational structure should be reviewed to ensure sufficient capacity and appropriate expertise to deliver the Plan. Consideration should be given to a core organizational structure that includes 3 full-time staff and one funded Intern:

Executive Director

Organizational leadership, Board and member relations, government relations and advocacy, strategic partnerships, funding and financial sustainability, organizational performance, Council presentations, attendance at conferences and delegations, development and oversight of annual Business Plan and implementation of the Regional Economic Development Plan.

Economic Development Officer

BR+E, business support, investment attraction, funding navigation and municipal economic development support.

Tourism & Marketing Officer

Tourism and destination development, Explore Almaguin, tourism operator engagement, regional marketing and promotion, website, social media and digital communications.

Annual Intern

Flexible implementation capacity supporting research, data, outreach, communications, tourism and priority projects.

The specific responsibilities and allocation of staff resources should be reviewed annually based on organizational priorities, available funding and workload. The objective should be to maintain a lean professional team with the capacity to deliver core services consistently while advancing the strategic priorities identified in this Plan.

Regional Business Advisory Table

ACED should establish a small Regional Business Advisory Table that meets quarterly to provide ongoing insight into the experiences, challenges and opportunities facing businesses across Almaguin. The purpose of the Advisory Table should be business intelligence and regional insight rather than governance or decision-making.

The Advisory Table should primarily consist of business owners and leaders representing a cross-section of the Almaguin economy, with consideration given to geographic, sector and business-size diversity.

Representation could include:

- businesses from different communities across the Almaguin region;
- a mix of established businesses, newer businesses and entrepreneurs;
- representation from key sectors such as tourism and hospitality, retail and service, construction and trades, manufacturing, agriculture, professional services and other significant or emerging sectors;
- home-based and rural businesses, recognizing their importance within the regional economy;
- the Almaguin Highlands Chamber of Commerce as a key business partner; and
- ACED staff to facilitate discussions, identify emerging themes and connect business intelligence to regional economic development activities.

Where appropriate, representatives from employment, education, government or other business support organizations could be invited to participate in specific discussions based on the issues being considered.

ACED Board members and municipal representatives may participate periodically where appropriate, but the Advisory Table should remain primarily business-led to ensure that it provides a perspective distinct from ACED's existing governance and municipal engagement structures. Regular discussions with participants should help ACED maintain a current understanding of the regional business environment, identify emerging issues and opportunities, and inform economic development priorities and responses.

Key areas of discussion could include:

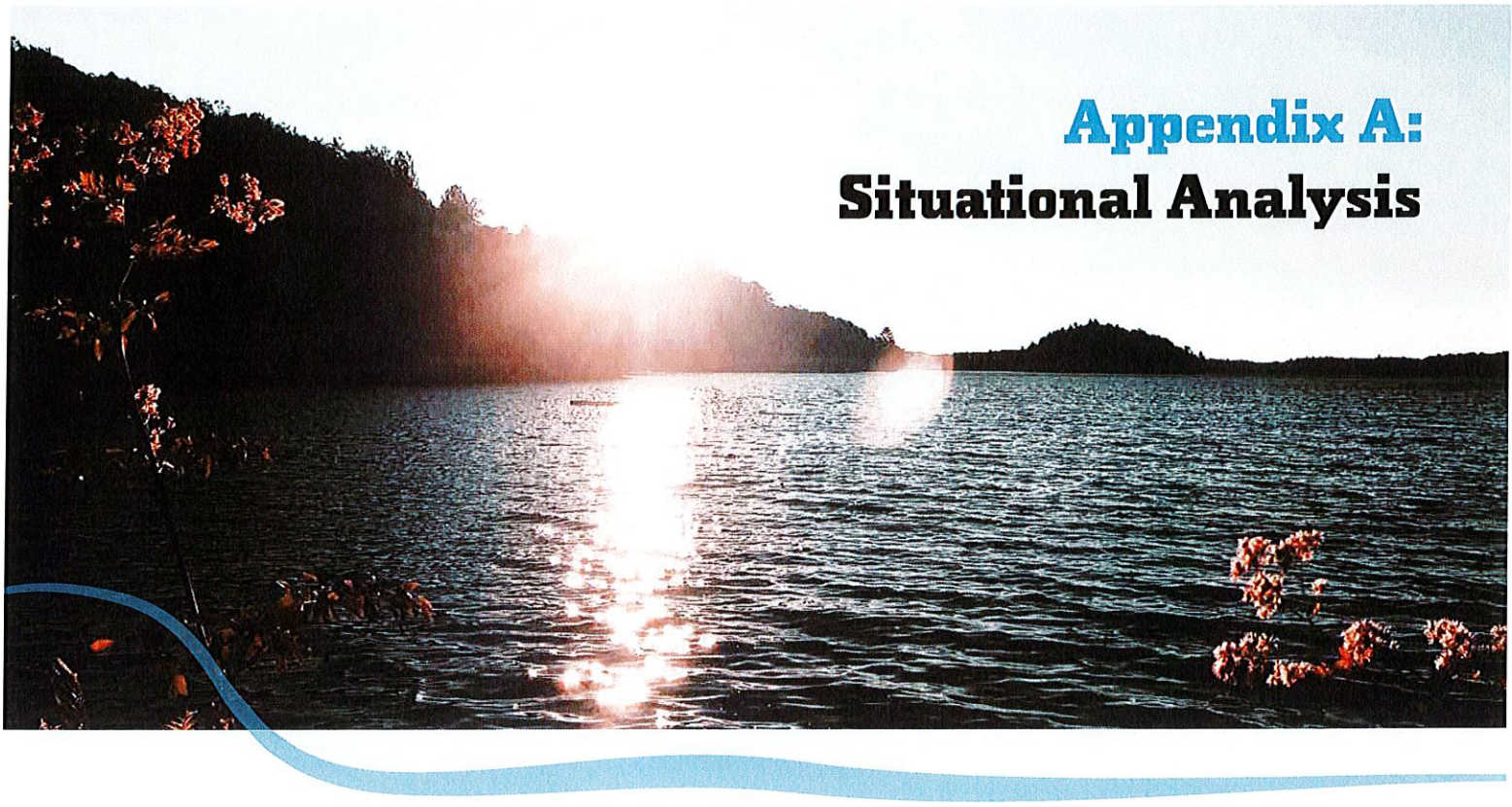
- What are businesses experiencing?
- What barriers are preventing business growth?
- Are businesses hiring, expanding or considering new investment?
- What municipal or regulatory barriers are emerging?
- What workforce skills or occupations are in demand?
- What funding, financing or other supports are needed?
- What new opportunities or trends are emerging within the region?

The Regional Business Advisory Table should create a consistent feedback loop between the business community and regional economic development.

Implementation Principle

Ultimately, the measure of this Strategy will not be how many projects ACED completes. It will be whether businesses are stronger, investment is occurring, municipalities are receiving meaningful economic development support, regional opportunities are advancing, and participating communities can clearly see the value of working together.

Think regionally. Deliver locally. Measure the results.



Appendix A: Situational Analysis

This situational analysis provides an overview of the demographic, economic, labour market, tourism, and policy environment shaping the Almaguin region. Drawing on Census data, labour market statistics, tourism information, and federal and provincial priorities, the analysis identifies the key trends, opportunities, and challenges that will influence the region's economic development over the coming years.

The analysis shows that the Almaguin region is experiencing several positive trends, including population growth, an increase in permanent residents, rising household incomes, improving educational attainment, and growing confidence within the tourism sector. At the same time, the region faces ongoing challenges related to an aging population, youth outmigration, labour force availability, housing supply and affordability, and the predominance of small businesses. Significant commuting patterns also highlight the interconnected nature of the regional labour market and opportunities to strengthen local employment.

The analysis also considers the broader policy environment. Current federal and provincial priorities, including housing, infrastructure, workforce development, business investment, and Northern Ontario economic growth, present opportunities for communities that are well positioned to pursue funding, partnerships, and investment. Realizing these opportunities, however, requires dedicated economic development capacity and coordinated regional action.

The findings presented in this section provide the context for the strategic priorities and actions in this document and highlight the important role ACED plays in supporting economic development, regional collaboration, and long-term prosperity in the Almaguin region.

Data Sources

This analysis uses data from:

- Statistics Canada (2016). Census of Population, 2016 - Census Profile data products.
  https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E
- Statistics Canada (2021). Census of Population, 2021 - Census Profile data products.
  https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E
- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (2022-2025). Canadian Business Counts by Census Subdivision (CSD).
  https://agriculture.canada.ca/atlas/data_donnees/businessesByCSD/data_donnees/csv/
- Destination Canada, Tourism Data Collective (2022). TourismScapes Dashboard.
  https://www.tourismdatacollective.ca/tourismscapes/dashboard
- Government of Ontario, Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming (2022).
  Region 12: Muskoka, Parry Sound and Algonquin Park
  https://www.ontario.ca/document/tourism-regions/region-12-muskoka-parry-sound-and-algonquin-park

The 2016 and 2021 Census data provides comprehensive demographic, social, and economic information at multiple geographic levels, including Census Subdivisions (CSDs), and is used for regional economic and population analysis. The Census data include key variables such as population counts, age, income, dwelling characteristics, language, mobility, labour market outcomes, and other socioeconomic indicators. Data are harmonized at the CSD level to allow for spatial comparison across census years.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Canadian Business Counts data provide information on the number of active business establishments by geography, industry classification (NAICS), and employment size categories, enabling analysis of local economic structure and industrial composition.

Tourism Data Collective's TourismScapes Dashboard is used to assess the role of tourism businesses in the regional economy, including tourism operators and tourism employment.

The Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Gaming's Region 12 Data is used to provide an overview of tourism trends within the broader Muskoka, Parry Sound, and Algonquin Park region. As tourism data are not available specifically for the Almaguin region, the Region 12 profile serves as a proxy for understanding visitor characteristics, travel purposes, accommodation patterns, seasonality, and other regional tourism trends.

Together, these datasets provide a comprehensive overview of Almaguin's demographic trends, economic structure, workforce characteristics, business environment, and tourism sector.



Geography

There are 17 census subdivisions and 2 census divisions that are part of the Almaguin Region. For consistency, the terms census subdivision (CSD) and municipality are used interchangeably throughout this report, as the analysis focuses on municipal-level geographic units. Similarly, the terms census division (CD) and district are used interchangeably.

In the analysis, the 3 unorganized census subdivisions of Nipissing and Parry Sound that fall within the Almaguin region are omitted due to:

- data availability
- the fact that two of the unorganized regions extend outside the Almaguin Region,
- excluding these divisions makes this situational analysis more comparable to the previous 2018 analysis, and
- since they are unorganized regions, they do not have traditional municipal governments and rely on a mix of provincial services and Local Services Boards, which make them less likely to pursue ACED membership.

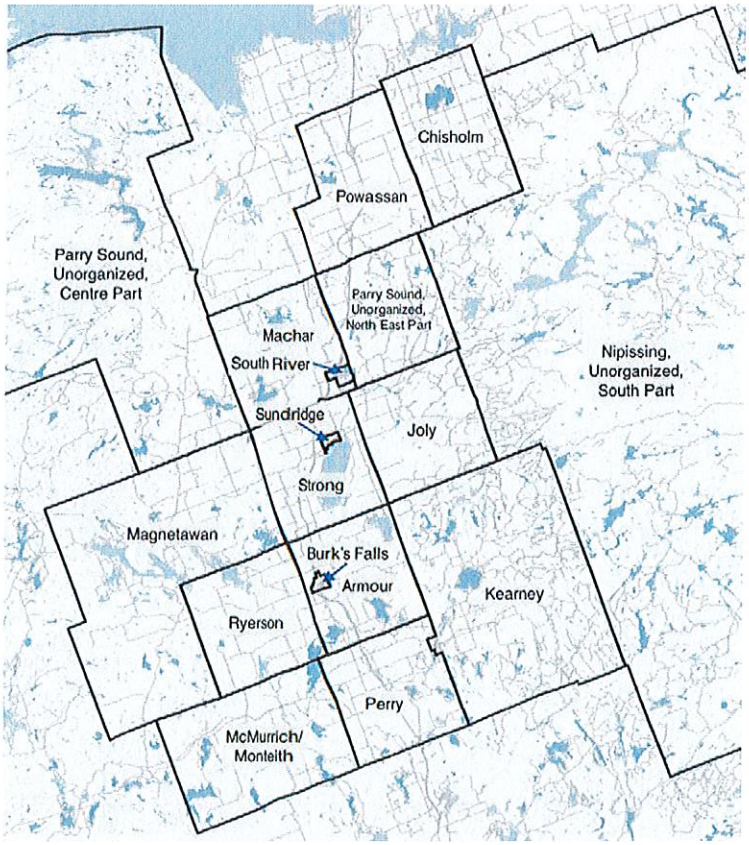
The census subdivisions excluded from the analysis are:

Nipissing, Unorganized, South Part
Parry Sound, Unorganized, Centre Part
Parry Sound, Unorganized, North East Part

The 14 census subdivisions included in the analysis of the Almaguin Region are:

1. Armour, Township (TP)
2. Burk's Falls, Village (VL)
3. Chisholm, Township (TP)
4. Joly, Township (TP)
5. Kearney, Town (T)
6. Machar, Township (TP)
7. Magnetawan, Municipality (MU)
8. McMurrich/Monteith, Township (TP)
9. Perry, Township (TP)
10. Powassan, Municipality (MU)
11. Ryerson, Township (TP)
12. South River, Village (VL)
13. Strong, Township (TP)
14. Sundridge, Village (VL)

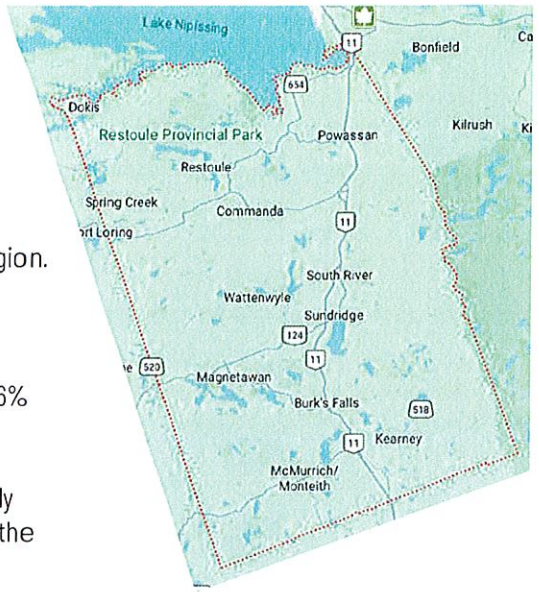
Of these 14 census subdivisions, all are in the District of Parry Sound census division (CD), except Chisholm which is part of the Nipissing District census division (CD).





Demographic Characteristics

This section provides a description of the population levels and growth, age distribution, seasonal and permanent population share, languages spoken, migration status, educational attainment, income distribution of the Almaguin Region.



Population

The Almaguin Region had a population of 18,970 in 2021, representing growth of 2.6% between 2016 and 2021 and 7.9% over the past decade. The municipalities with the largest populations in 2021 were Powassan, Perry, Magnetawan, Strong, Armour, Chisholm, and South River (all with populations > 1,000). The populations vary widely across the region with Powassan, the largest population, being more than 11 times the size of the smallest population, Joly.

Table 1 **Almaguin Region Population and 5-Year Growth Rate, 2021**

	Population 2021	Percent of Almaguin, 2021	5 Year Growth Rate 2016 - 2021	10 Year Growth Rate 2011 - 2021
Armour	1,459	7.7%	3.2%	6.3%
Burk's Falls	957	5.0%	-2.4%	-1.0%
Chisholm	1,312	6.9%	1.6%	3.9%
Joly	293	1.5%	-3.6%	3.2%
Kearney	974	5.1%	10.4%	15.8%
Machar	969	5.1%	9.9%	5.0%
Magnetawan	1,753	9.2%	26.1%	20.6%
McMurrich/Monteith	907	4.8%	10.1%	16.4%
Perry	2,650	14.0%	8.0%	14.4%
Powassan	3,346	17.6%	-3.2%	-0.9%
Ryerson	745	3.9%	15.0%	17.5%
South River	1,101	5.8%	-1.2%	5.0%
Strong	1,566	8.3%	8.8%	16.8%
Sundridge	938	4.9%	-2.4%	-4.8%
Almaguin Region	**18,970**	**100.0%**	**2.6%**	**7.9%**

Population growth was uneven across the region, with several municipalities experiencing strong gains while others saw declines. Magnetawan recorded the highest growth, increasing by 26.1% between 2016 and 2021 and 20.6% since 2011. Other municipalities with notable growth included Ryerson (15.0%), Kearney (10.4%), McMurrich/Monteith (10.1%), Machar (9.9%), Strong (8.8%), and Perry (8.0%).

Powassan remained the region's largest municipality, accounting for 17.6% of the regional population, followed by Perry (14.0%) and Magnetawan (9.2%). However, Powassan experienced population decline over both the five-year (-3.2%) and ten-year (-0.9%) periods. Other municipalities that recorded population losses between 2016-2021 included Joly (-3.6%), Burk's Falls (-2.4%), Sundridge (-2.4%), and South River (-1.2%).

Figure 1 Almaguin Population Map, 2021

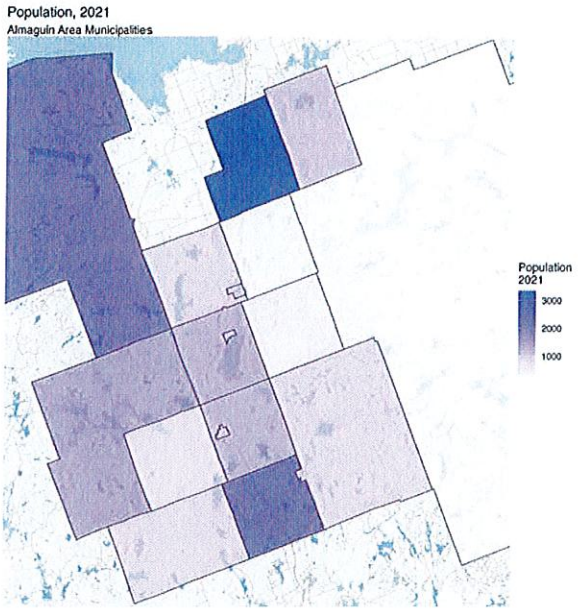
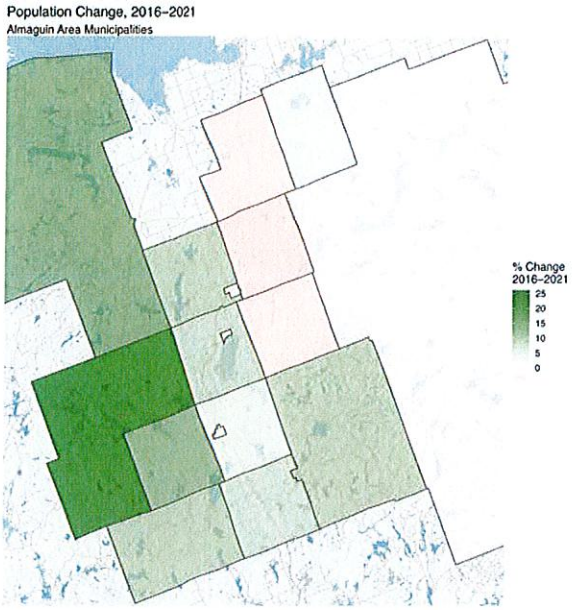


Figure 2 Almaguin Population Change Map, 2016-2021

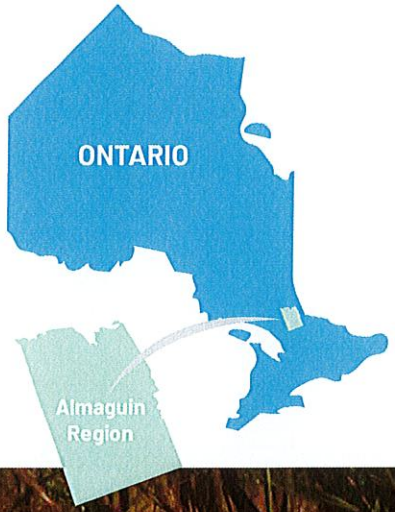


These maps show visually the 2021 population and 2016-2021 population growth for each census subdivision in the Almaguin Region. From the growth map, we can see that the highest growth regions were higher in the southern and western census subdivisions.

The total population for the Almaguin Region has increased consistently over the past 15 years (2006-2021). The growth rate doubled in the 2016-2021 period compared with the 2006-2011 and 2011-2016 periods. The most current period's population growth rate is much closer to the Ontario rate, narrowing the gap in growth rate.

Table 2 Population Change of Almaguin Region and Ontario (2006-2021)

Census Year	Total Population	Almaguin % Change	Ontario % Change
2006	17,148		
2011	17,587	2.6%	5.7%
2016	18,039	2.6%	4.6%
2021	18,970	5.2%	5.8%

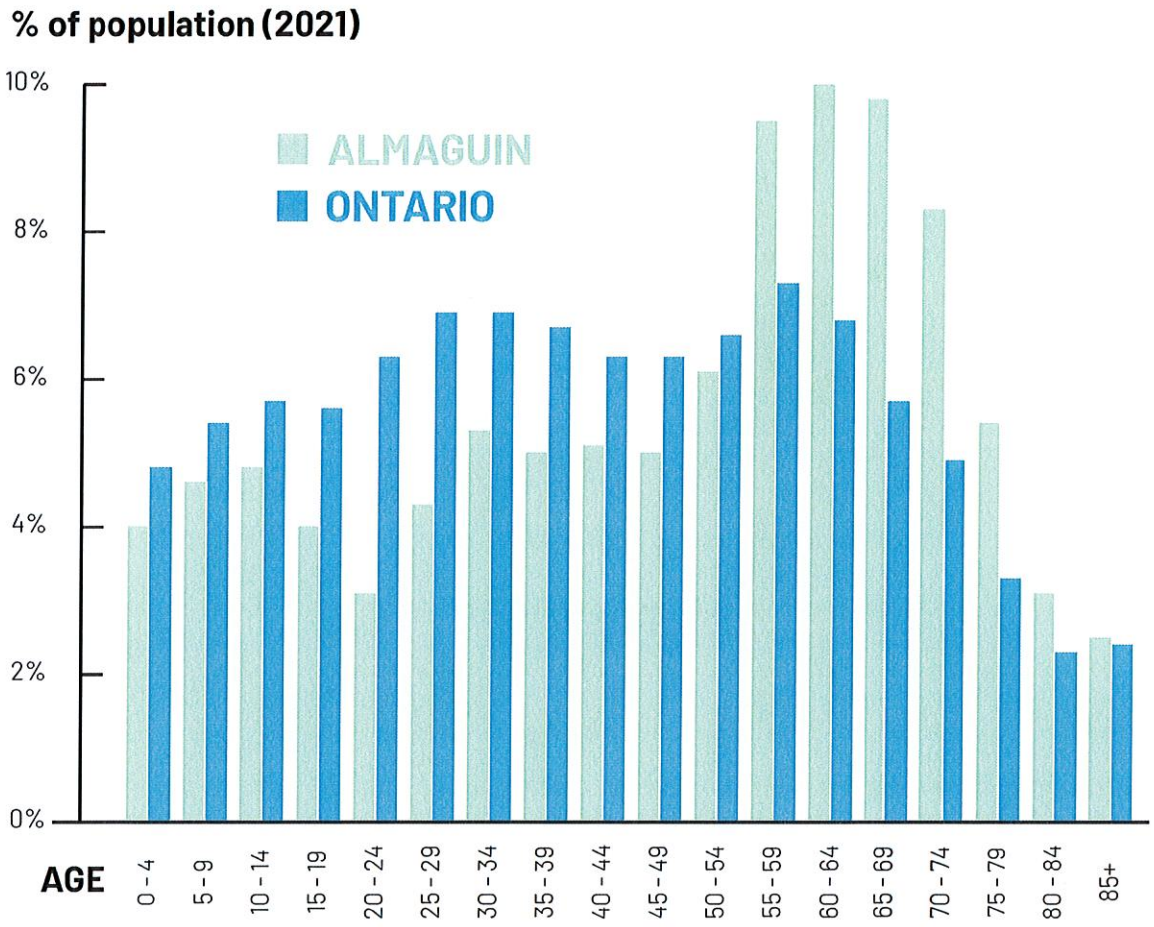




Population by Age

The Almaguin Region has a notably older age structure than Ontario as a whole. Residents aged 55 and over account for nearly half of the region's population (48.6%), compared to approximately one-third of Ontario's population (32.7%).

Figure 3 **Age Distribution of Almaguin Region and Ontario Population, 2021**

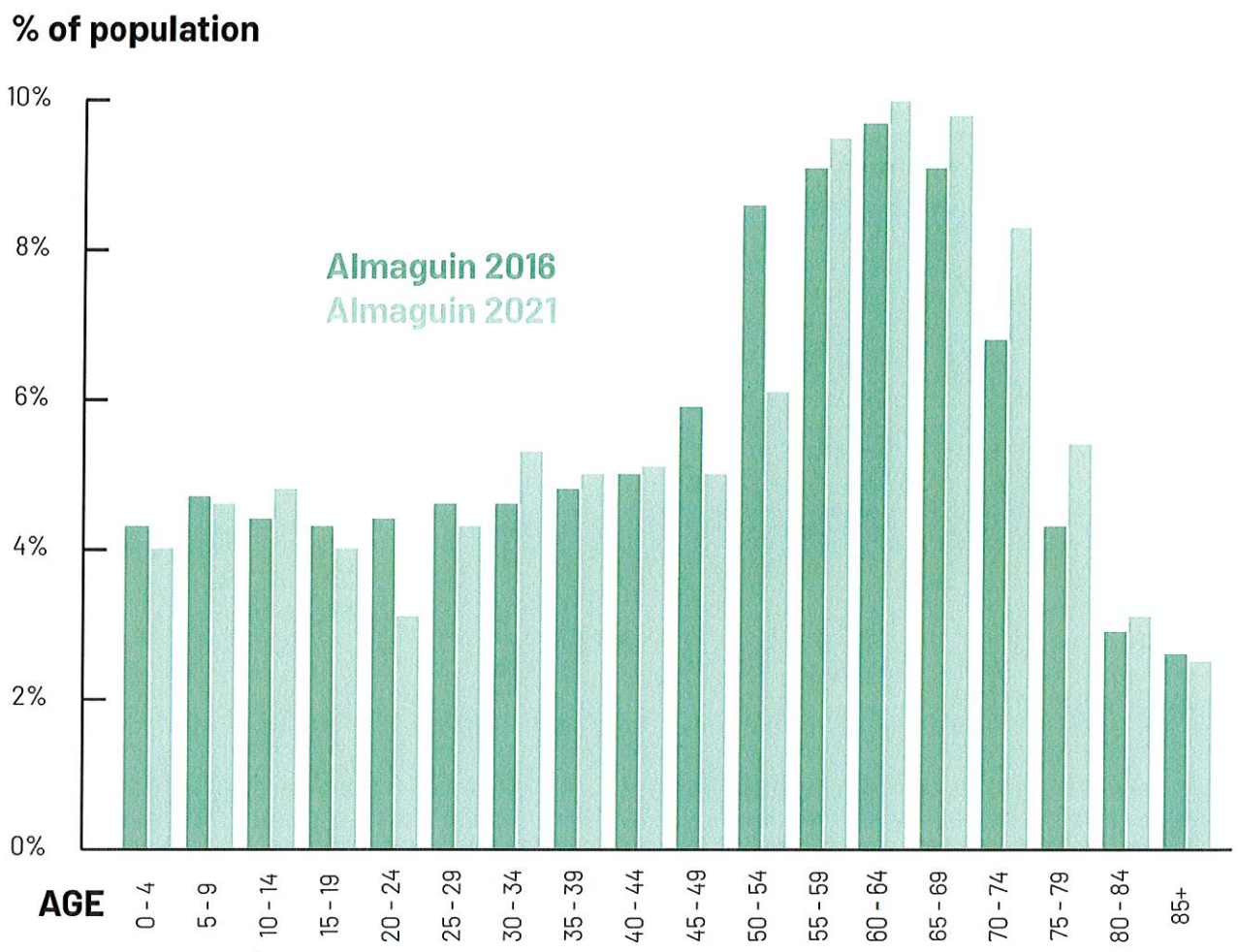


The largest age cohorts in Almaguin are those aged 60 to 64 (10.0%), 65 to 69 (9.8%), and 55 to 59 (9.5%), reflecting the region's strong concentration of older adults and retirees.

Almaguin has a smaller share of children, youth, and young adults than the provincial average. Residents aged 0 to 24 represent 20.5% of the population, compared to 27.8% in Ontario. The gap is particularly pronounced among young adults aged 20 to 34, who comprise 12.7% of the region's population compared to 20.1% provincially. This suggests ongoing challenges related to youth retention, workforce renewal, and attracting younger households.

The region has lower proportions of residents in most prime working-age groups (25 to 54) than Ontario and it has significantly higher proportions of residents aged 55 to 79. These demographic trends indicate growing demand for healthcare, seniors' services, accessible housing, and age-friendly community planning, while also highlighting potential labour force and succession challenges for local employers and businesses.

Figure 4 **Age Distribution of Almaguin Region Population, 2016 and 2021**

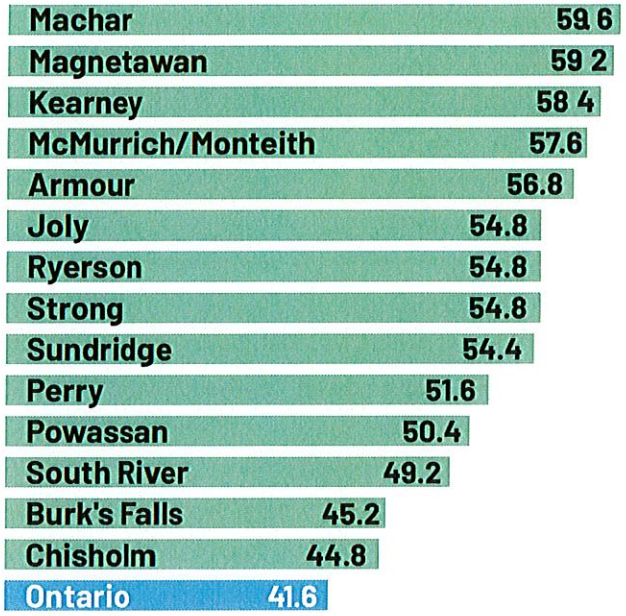


Between 2016 and 2021, the Almaguin Region's population continued to age, with growth concentrated among older age groups and declines occurring among younger adults and pre-retirement cohorts. The most significant decreases were observed among residents aged 20 to 24, whose share of the population fell from 4.4% to 3.1%, and those aged 50 to 54, which declined from 8.6% to 6.1%. Smaller declines were also recorded among children aged 0 to 4 and youth aged 15 to 19.

At the same time, the proportion of older residents increased across nearly all senior age groups. The share of residents aged 65 to 69 rose from 9.1% to 9.8%, while those aged 70 to 74 increased from 6.8% to 8.3% and those aged 75 to 79 grew from 4.3% to 5.4%. The large cohorts aged 55 to 64 in 2016 continued to move into older age categories by 2021, contributing to the region's increasingly senior demographic profile.

Modest gains were observed among residents aged 30 to 44, particularly those aged 30 to 34, whose share increased from 4.6% to 5.3%. This may indicate some attraction or retention of working-age households during the period. Overall, however, the data show a continued demographic shift toward an older population.

Figure 5 Median Age in Almaguin Region and Ontario, 2021



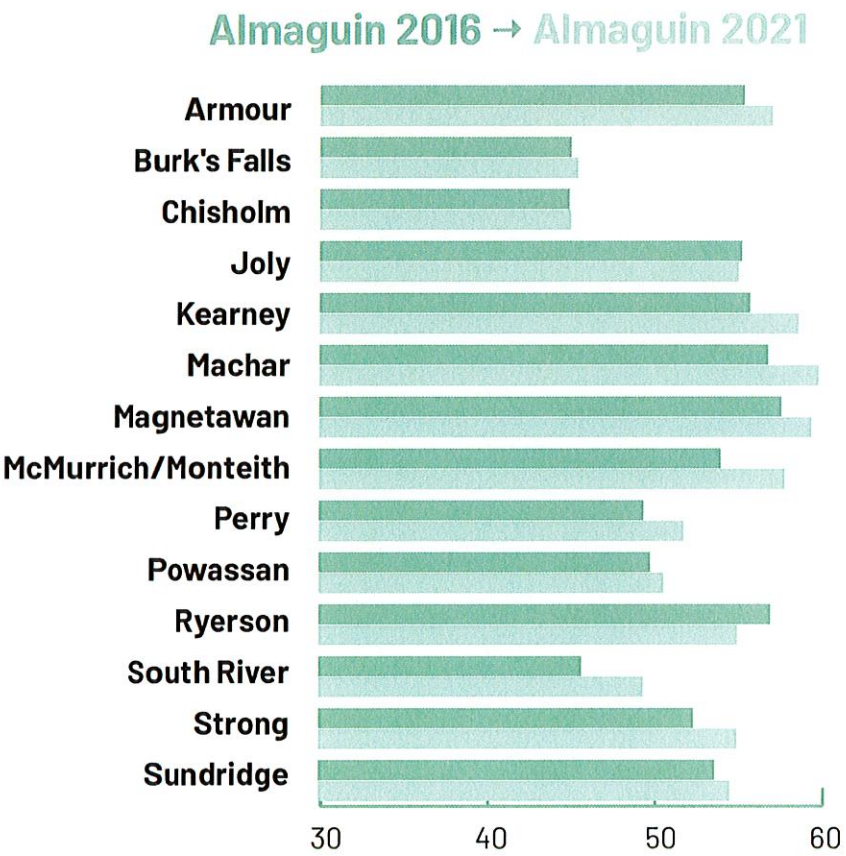
The median age across Almaguin municipalities in 2021 highlights the region's aging population, with most communities having median ages well above the provincial average. Median ages ranged from 44.8 years in Chisholm to 59.6 years in Machar, indicating considerable variation across the region but an overall concentration of older residents.

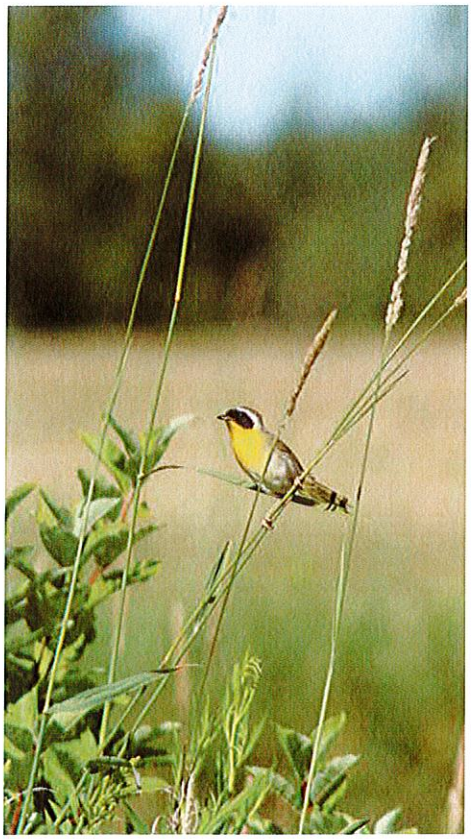
Between 2016 and 2021, the median age increased in most Almaguin municipalities.

The largest increases in median age occurred in McMurrich/Monteith (+3.8 years), South River (+3.7 years), Machar (+3.0 years), Kearney (+2.9 years), Strong (+2.6 years), and Perry (+2.4 years). These increases suggest that populations in these communities are aging rapidly, driven by both the aging of existing residents and limited growth among younger age groups.

Ryerson and Joly experienced declines in median age during the period, while Chisholm, Burk's Falls, and Powassan experienced only modest changes, suggesting more stable age distributions.

Figure 6 Median Age in Almaguin Region, 2016 and 2021



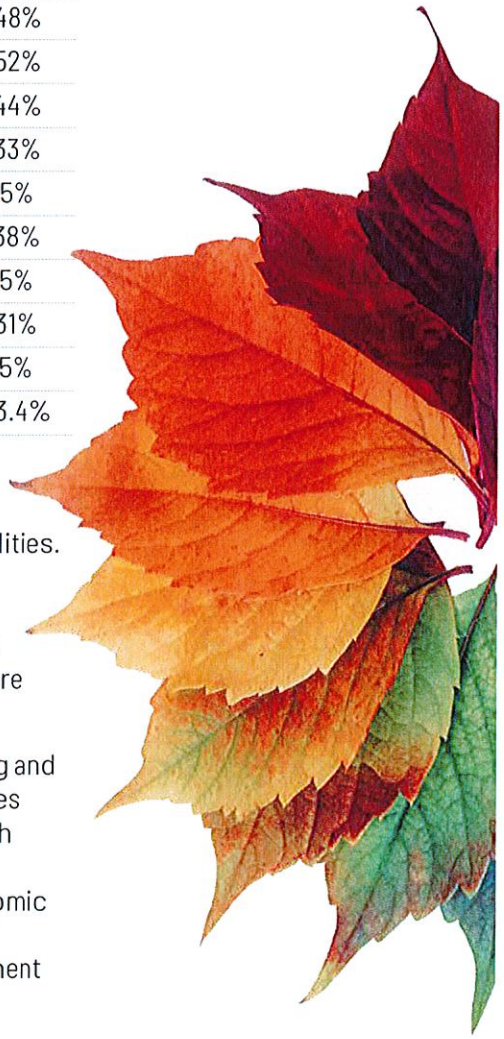


Seasonal Population

The Almaguin Region has a significant seasonal residential component, with 4,164 of its 12,468 private dwellings (33.4%) occupied on a seasonal basis in 2021.

Table 3 **Seasonally and Permanently Occupied Dwellings, Almaguin Region, 2021**

	Dwellings **Permanently** Occupied	Dwellings **Seasonally** Occupied	**Total** Dwellings	Percent of **Seasonal** Dwellings
Armour	667	420	1087	39%
Burk's Falls	465	58	523	11%
Chisholm	508	106	614	17%
Joly	127	28	155	18%
Kearney	460	735	1195	62%
Machar	459	416	875	48%
Magnetawan	825	892	1717	52%
McMurrich/Monteith	410	325	735	44%
Perry	1144	566	1710	33%
Powassan	1317	64	1381	5%
Ryerson	344	211	555	38%
South River	482	28	510	5%
Strong	660	293	953	31%
Sundridge	436	22	458	5%
Almaguin Region	8304	4164	12468	33.4%



Seasonal dwellings account for a large share of the housing stock in several municipalities. Kearney has the highest proportion of seasonal dwellings, with 62% of all dwellings occupied seasonally, followed by Magnetawan (52%), Machar (48%), and McMurrich/Monteith (44%). In contrast, Powassan, South River, and Sundridge each have only 5% of dwellings occupied seasonally, and Burk's Falls has 11%, reflecting their roles as more permanent residential and service-centre communities.

The prevalence of seasonal housing has important implications for municipal planning and economic development. Seasonal residents contribute significantly to local economies through tourism, recreation, retail spending, and property tax revenues. However, high concentrations of seasonal dwellings can also create challenges related to housing availability, labour force retention, service delivery, and maintaining year-round economic activity. The data suggest that many Almaguin municipalities experience substantial seasonal population fluctuations, making it important to balance the needs of permanent residents, seasonal property owners, visitors, and local businesses.

	Change in **Permanently** Occupied Dwellings, 2016-2021	Change in **Seasonally** Occupied Dwellings, 2016-2021	Change in **Total Number of** Occupied Dwellings, 2016-2021
Armour	57	-50	7
Burk's Falls	-2	15	13
Chisholm	2	-11	-9
Joly	-8	-1	-9
Kearney	50	-10	40
Machar	63	-36	27
Magnetawan	195	-176	19
McMurrich/Monteith	24	-41	-17
Perry	103	-69	34
Powassan	-9	9	0
Ryerson	42	-67	-25
South River	-8	-10	-18
Strong	48	-17	31
Sundridge	-15	-24	-39
Almaguin Region	**542**	**-488**	**54**



Between 2016 and 2021, the Almaguin Region experienced a notable shift in its housing occupancy patterns, with growth in permanently occupied dwellings offsetting declines in seasonal dwellings. Across the region, the number of permanently occupied dwellings increased by 542 units, while seasonally occupied dwellings declined by 488 units.

The largest increases in permanently occupied dwellings occurred in Magnetawan, Perry, Machar, Armour, Kearney, Strong, and Ryerson. These gains suggest growth in year-round residency, potentially due to in-migration or the conversion of cottages into permanent homes.

Conversely, nearly every municipality experienced a decline in seasonally occupied dwellings. Magnetawan, Perry, Ryerson, Armour (-50), McMurrich/Monteith (-41), and Machar (-36) recorded the largest decreases. Only Burk's Falls (+15) and Powassan (+9) saw increases in seasonally occupied dwellings during the period.

Overall, the data point to a regional transition toward more year-round residency and fewer seasonally occupied properties. This pattern suggests that many properties previously used as seasonal or recreational residences may have transitioned to year-round occupancy. While the census data cannot confirm the reasons for this shift, it is consistent with broader trends observed across rural and cottage regions of Ontario, where some seasonal property owners chose to make their recreational properties their primary residence, especially surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic that accelerated remote work and early retirement.

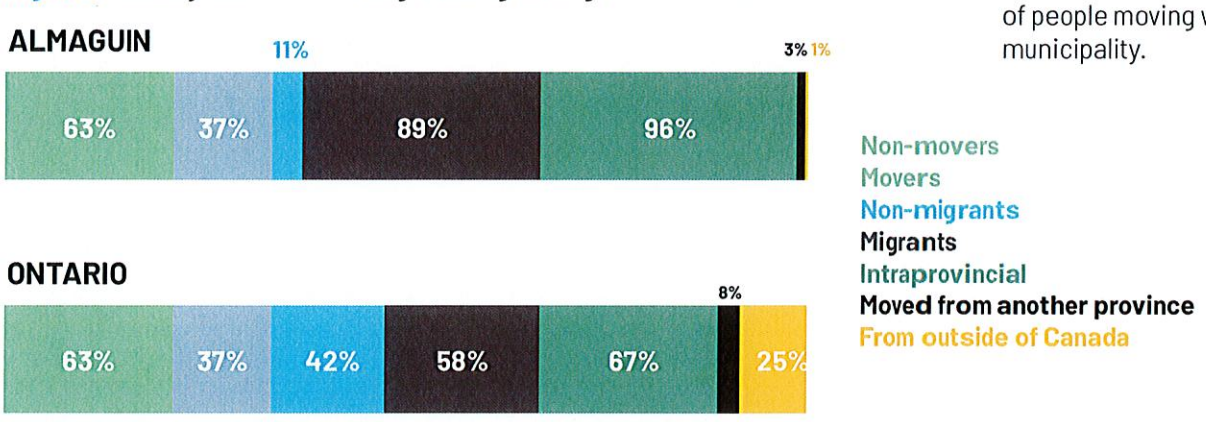
Migration

Like Ontario overall, 63% of Almaguin residents were non-movers, meaning they lived at the same address five years earlier, while 37% were movers. However, the type of movement among movers differed significantly from the provincial average.

Table 4 **Categorized Mobility Status 5 Years Ago, Almaguin Region and Ontario, 2021**

MOBILITY STATUS 5 YEARS AGO	Almaguin	Ontario
Non-movers	63.4%	62.6%
Movers	36.6%	37.4%
Moved within same municipality	11.0%	41.8%
Migrants	89.0%	58.2%
Moved from another Ontario municipality	95.9%	66.8%
Moved from another province	3.0%	7.9%
Moved from outside of Canada	0.5%	25.3%

Figure 7 **Mobility Status 5 Years Ago, Almaguin Region and Ontario, 2021**



Among Almaguin residents who moved within the previous five years, the majority were migrants (89%) rather than people moving within the same municipality (11%). These shares indicate that mobility in Almaguin is more strongly associated with attracting new residents. Most migration into Almaguin occurred from elsewhere in Ontario, with 96% of migrants moving from another Ontario community.

While the table above groups movers into broader categories and shows the percent of each subgroup within its parent group, the figure below shows mover types as a percent of the entire population of Almaguin and Ontario. Both the table and the figure show that the main difference between Ontario and Almaguin mobility trends is that Almaguin has a higher proportion of people moving between different municipalities, while Ontario has a higher proportion of people moving within the same municipality.



Language

The Almaguin Region's population is predominantly English-speaking. Regarding knowledge of official languages, most residents only know English. In 2021, approximately 93.5% of residents reported knowledge of English only, while 6.4% reported knowledge of both English and French. Very few residents reported only knowing French or an unofficial language.

Figure 8 **Knowledge of Official Languages in Almaguin Region, 2021**

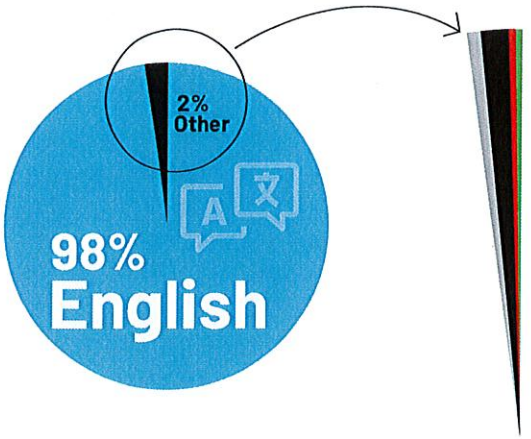


Table 5 **Languages Most Often Spoken at Home in Almaguin Region, 2021**

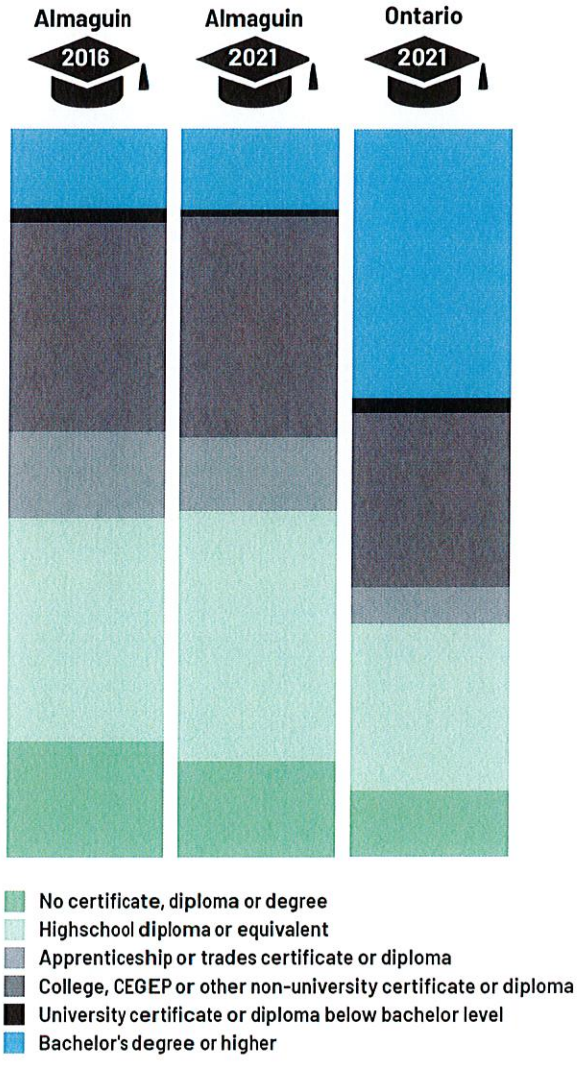
French
Non-official languages
English and French
English and non-official language(s)

Of languages spoken at home, English is the primary for nearly all residents. In 2021, 98.0% of residents reported speaking English most often at home, while 1.2% reported speaking a non-official language most often at home.

Educational Attainment and Field of Study

The Almaguin Region's educational attainment profile shows a higher concentration of residents with high school, college, and trades-based credentials compared to the provincial average, and a lower share of residents with university degrees.

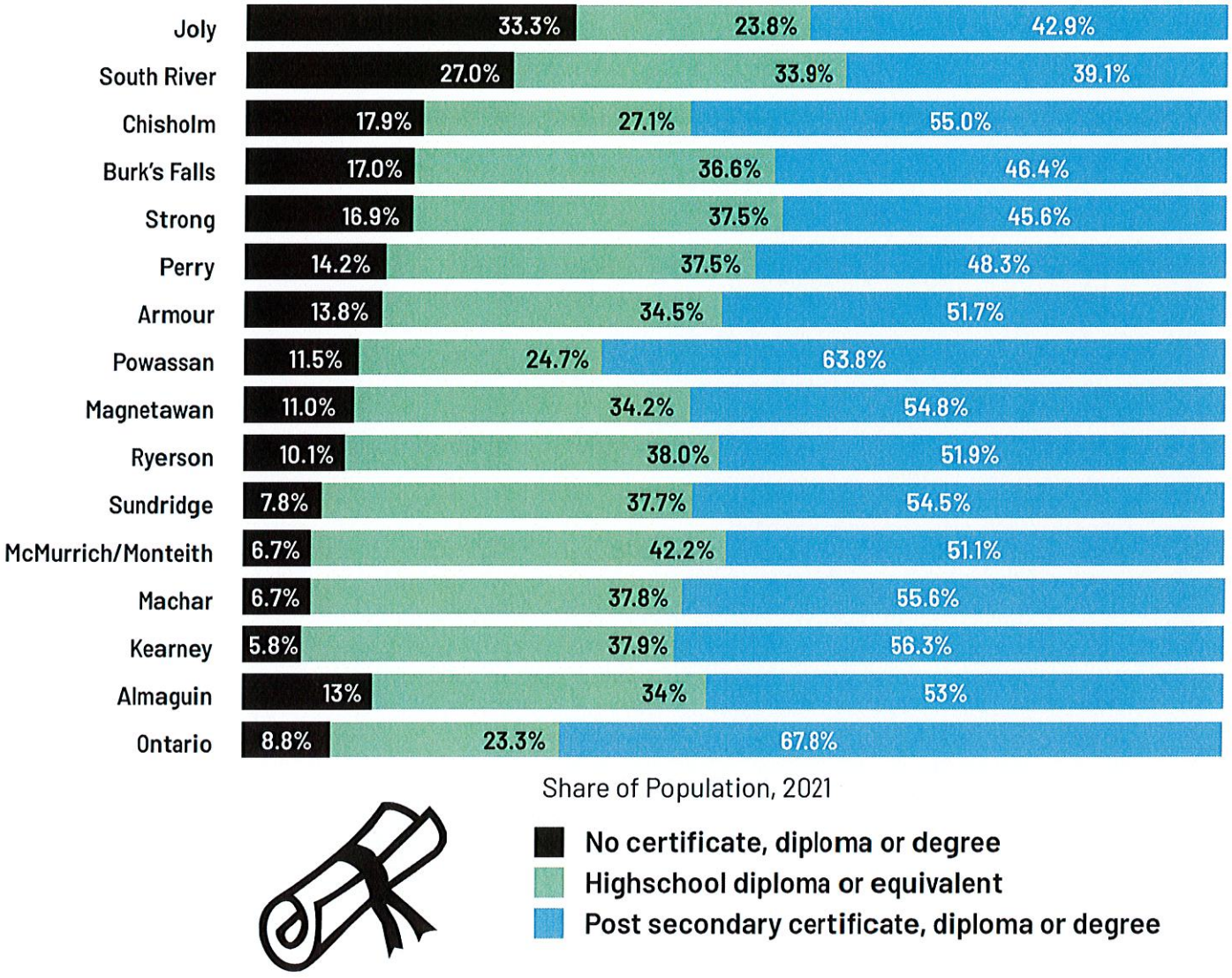
Figure 9 **Highest Level of Education, Population Aged 25-64, Almaguin Region and Ontario**



The proportion of residents without a certificate, diploma, or degree declined from 16% in 2016 to 13% in 2021, indicating an overall improvement in educational attainment. However, only 11% of residents held a bachelor's degree or higher in 2021, compared to 37% across Ontario. This gap highlights a smaller presence of university-educated workers in Almaguin and may reflect the region's more rural economic structure, with greater reliance on trades, skilled occupations, small business, and service-based employment.

Overall, Almaguin's education profile suggests a workforce with strong practical and technical skills, while also pointing to potential opportunities to attract and retain residents with higher levels of formal education to support economic diversification and future workforce needs. Educational attainment varies considerably across Almaguin municipalities. Overall, most communities have a majority of residents with some form of postsecondary education, although the share of residents without a certificate, diploma, or degree differs substantially.

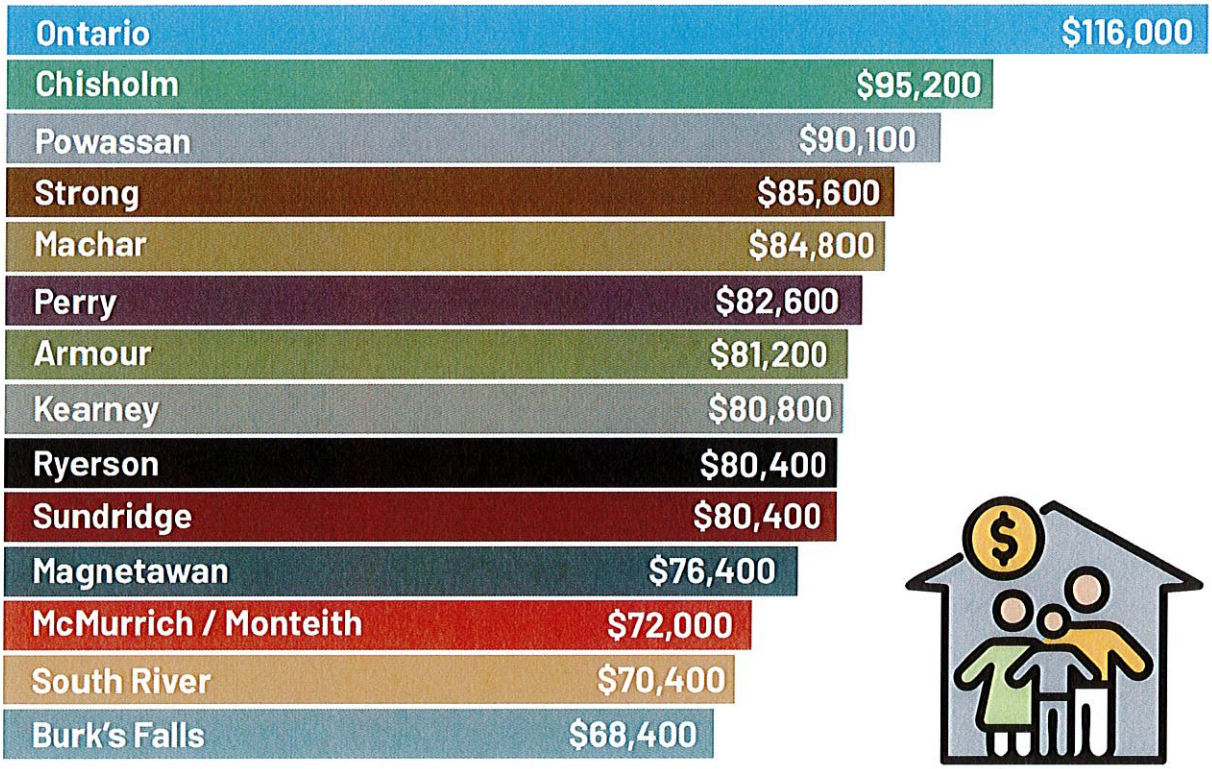
Figure 10 Highest Level of Education, Population Aged 25-64, Almaguin Regions, 2021



Powassan has the highest proportion of residents with postsecondary education, followed by Kearney, Machar, Chisholm, Magnetawan, and Sundridge. These municipalities have relatively strong concentrations of residents with college, trades, and other postsecondary credentials. In contrast, Joly and South River have much higher shares of residents without a certificate, diploma, or degree.

Household Income

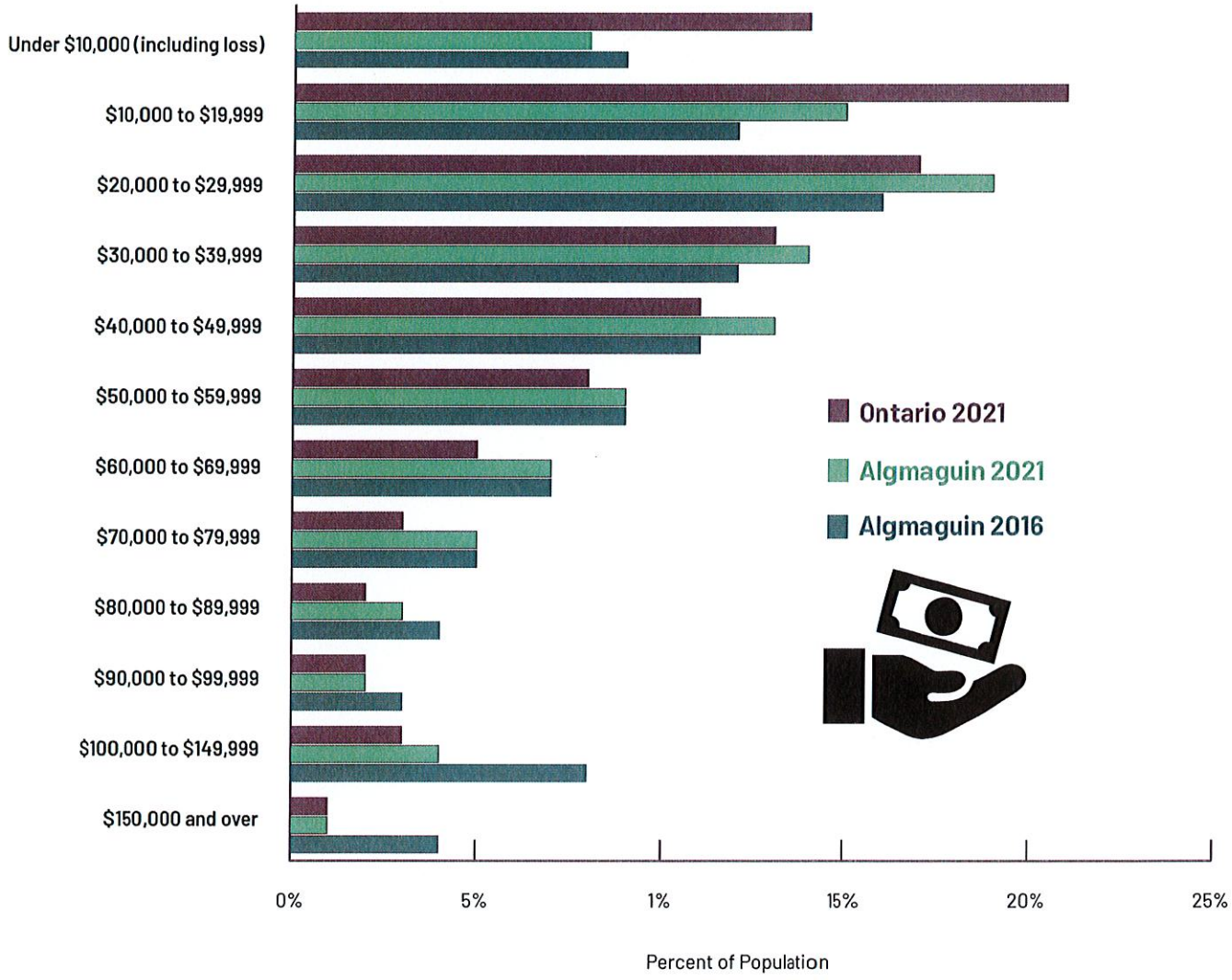
Average household incomes across the Almaguin Region are generally below the Ontario average. In 2021, Ontario's average household income was approximately $116,000, while Almaguin municipalities ranged from $68,400 to $95,200. The population weighted average household income for the Almaguin Region was $82,400 in 2021, $33,600 lower than the provincial average. This average does not include Joly since the data is not available.



Chisholm and Powassan reported the highest average household incomes in the region, followed by Strong, Machar, and Perry (all greater than the Almaguin Region weighted average). The lowest average household incomes were reported in Burk's Falls, South River, and McMurrich/Monteith. Overall, no Almaguin municipality reached the provincial average, with regional incomes generally ranging from approximately 60% to 82% of the Ontario average.

These income patterns reflect the region's rural economic structure, where employment is often concentrated in sectors such as trades, resource-based industries, tourism, retail, and local services. Lower average incomes compared to the provincial level may also relate to the region's older population, including a higher share of retirees and residents with fixed incomes.





Household income distribution in Almaguin shows that a larger share of households are concentrated in lower and middle income ranges compared to Ontario overall. In 2021, the largest income groups in Almaguin were households earning $20,000-$29,999 (19%), $10,000-$19,999 (15%), $30,000-$39,999 (14%), and $40,000-$49,999 (13%). In 2021, 61% of households fell into the $10,000-$49,999 range for household income.

Compared to 2016, Almaguin saw a decline in the share of households earning under $20,000, decreasing from 35% to 23% in 2021. At the same time, the proportion of households in most middle-income ranges increased, including households earning $30,000-$79,999. This suggests some improvement in household income distribution over the period.

However, Almaguin continues to have fewer high-income households compared to Ontario. In 2021, only 5% of Almaguin households earned $100,000 or more, compared to 12% across Ontario. The gap is particularly noticeable among households earning $150,000 or more, which represented 1% of Almaguin households compared to 4% provincially.

Housing Affordability

Figure 11 **Median Household Incomes (2015-2020) and Dwelling Values (2016-2021)**

	Median Household Income ($)			Median Value of Dwellings ($)		
	2015	2020	% Change (2015-2020)	2016	2021	% Change (2016-2021)
Armour	59,648	69,500	17%	275,102	400,000	45%
Burk's Falls	40,288	54,400	35%	179,908	324,000	80%
Chisholm	62,720	78,000	24%	235,478	348,000	48%
Joly	50,816	71,000	40%	244,945	300,000	22%
Kearney	56,661	68,000	20%	225,116	500,000	122%
Machar	62,464	70,000	12%	250,638	400,000	60%
Magnetawan	54,336	67,000	23%	250,528	500,000	100%
McMurrich/Monteith	54,272	62,800	16%	200,598	348,000	73%
Perry	58,069	72,000	24%	250,799	400,000	59%
Powassan	66,133	79,500	20%	221,597	324,000	46%
Ryerson	57,344	67,000	17%	269,672	448,000	66%
South River	40,576	61,200	51%	149,017	250,000	68%
Strong	60,672	70,000	15%	200,673	352,000	75%
Sundridge	50,624	61,200	21%	20,108	348,000	74%

While incomes are rising, this does not necessarily mean that residents of the Almaguin region are experiencing improved affordability or a higher standard of living. The cost of living, particularly housing costs, has increased substantially over the same period. Between 2015 and 2020, median household incomes increased across all municipalities, ranging from a 12% increase in Machar to a 51% increase in South River. However, these gains were often accompanied by much larger increases in median dwelling values. Between 2016 and 2021, median home values increased by between 22% in Joly and 122% in Kearney, with several municipalities experiencing increases of more than 60%.

The rapid increase in housing prices suggests that income growth has not kept pace with the rising cost of homeownership. For example, in Kearney and Magnetawan, median dwelling values doubled or more while median household incomes increased by approximately 20% and 23%, respectively. This widening gap between earnings and housing costs may create affordability challenges for existing residents, particularly younger households, first-time homebuyers, and workers whose incomes are tied to local employment opportunities.

These trends also highlight the changing economic landscape of the region. Rising property values may reflect increased demand for rural and recreational properties, population shifts, and broader housing market pressures, but they may also contribute to barriers for attracting and retaining workers. While higher property values can increase household wealth for existing homeowners, they may reduce housing accessibility and place pressure on businesses and municipalities seeking to maintain a stable local workforce.

Labour Force Profile

This section describes labour force characteristics and provides insight on specific industries in which the labour force is employed, and the occupations in which they work. According to the 2021 census, the Almaguin Region's labour force was 8240 people. This reflects a 52.8% participation rate, 10 percentage points below the provincial rate of 62.8%.

Definitions:

- Participation Rate: The percentage of the working-age population (aged 15 and over) that are either employed or actively looking for work.
- Employment Rate: The percentage of the working-age population that is employed. This measures the proportion of people who worked for pay or profit, full-time or part-time.
- **Unemployment Rate:** The percentage of people in the labour force that are unemployed and actively seeking work

Table 6 **Labour Market Statistics Almaguin and Ontario, 2021**

	Total Population	In the Labour Force	Participation Rate	Employment Rate	Unemployment Rate
Armour	1459	620	47.1	39.2	17.7
Burk's Falls	957	500	60.2	53	11
Chisholm	1312	645	58.4	49.8	14.7
Joly	293	90	43.9	36.6	16.7
Kearney	974	410	48.5	43.2	9.8
Machar	969	405	45.3	41.9	7.4
Magnetawan	1753	650	41.7	37.2	10.8
McMurrich/ Monteith	907	380	46.9	41.4	10.5
Perry	2650	1195	52.9	48.2	8.8
Powassan	3346	1555	58.3	52.3	10.3
Ryerson	745	310	48.4	45.3	6.5
South River	1101	455	48.1	40.2	16.5
Strong	1566	690	51.3	44.6	13
Sundridge	938	335	43.2	37.4	13.4
Ontario			**62.8**	**55.1**	**12.2**

Overall, the Almaguin region has lower participation rates and employment rates than the provincial levels, meaning that a smaller proportion of the working age population is working or looking for work. Burk's Falls, Chisholm, and Powassan had the highest labour force participation rates and employment rates in the region and were closest to the provincial average. In contrast, Magnetawan, Sundridge, Joly, and Machar had the lowest participation rates, indicating a smaller share of residents actively engaged in the labour market.

Figure 12 **Median Age vs Labour Market Participation, Almaguin Region and Ontario, 2021**

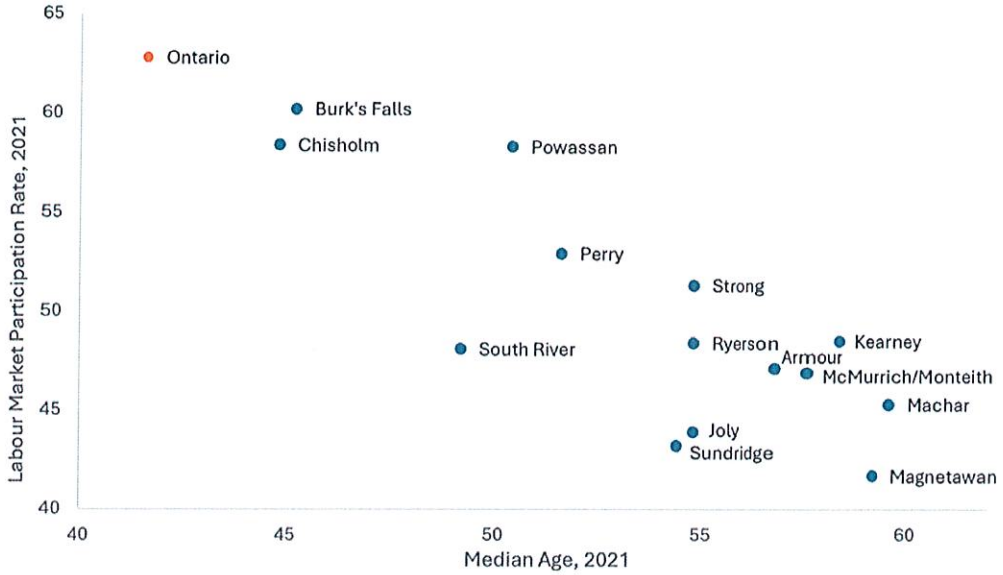


Figure 12 demonstrates a clear negative relationship between median age and labour force participation rates across Almaguin municipalities. In general, municipalities with older populations tend to have lower participation rates, while those with younger populations tend to have higher participation rates.

Communities with relatively younger populations, such as Burk's Falls, Chisholm, and Powassan, tend to have higher labour force participation rates. In contrast, municipalities with older populations, including Machar, Magnetawan, Kearney, and McMurrich/Monteith, generally exhibit lower participation rates.

This pattern reflects the influence of demographic change on the local workforce. As populations age, a larger share of residents moves into retirement or reduce their participation in the labour market, resulting in fewer people actively working or seeking employment. Consequently, municipalities with older age profiles often have smaller available labour pools and may face greater workforce recruitment and retention challenges.

Another constraint on the local labour force is access to affordable housing. Rising housing costs and limited availability of attainable housing can make it more difficult for employers to attract and retain workers, particularly younger households and individuals entering the workforce. This challenge was identified during engagement sessions, where stakeholders noted that housing availability is increasingly becoming a barrier to workforce recruitment across the region.

Although the trend of lower labour force participation is consistent across Almaguin municipalities, unemployment rates vary more significantly between communities. Six municipalities in the Almaguin Region report unemployment rates above the provincial average, while eight have unemployment rates below the provincial rate.

The region benefits from a network of organizations that support employment, training, and workforce development. Resources including, but not limited to: AGILEC in Burk's Falls; Employment North in Sundridge; East Parry Sound Literacy Council in South River, and Women's Own Resource Centre provide valuable employment supports, literacy programs, and skills development opportunities for residents.

These services play an important role in improving workforce readiness and helping connect residents with available employment opportunities. However, there is still an opportunity to strengthen regional coordination of workforce development efforts. Currently, there are limited examples of municipalities leading dedicated workforce gap or training initiatives independently. Given that labour market challenges extend beyond individual municipal boundaries, a regional approach through ACED could help identify priority sectors, coordinate employer needs, connect residents with training opportunities, and support long-term workforce attraction and retention strategies.

Labour Force by Industry

The Almaguin Region's labour force is highly concentrated in a small number of key industries.

The top five industries in 2021 were:

1. Construction (15.1%)
2. Retail trade (14.4%)
3. Health care and social assistance (13.6%)
4. Manufacturing (10.4%)
5. Public administration (6.6%)

Together, these industries account for approximately 60% of employment in the region. Between 2016 and 2021, the largest increases in Almaguin's labour force share occurred in construction, manufacturing, public administration, and mining, while accommodation and food services, professional services, education, and utilities experienced declines.

Table 7 **Percent of Almaguin and Ontario Labour Force by Industry, 2021**

		Ontario (%) 2021	Almaguin (%) 2021	Change in % of Almaguin 2016-2021
11	Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting	1.5%	2.9%	0.1
21	Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	0.5%	2.2%	0.7
22	Utilities	0.8%	0.6%	-0.6
23	**Construction**	**7.5%**	**15.1%**	**1.6**
31-33	**Manufacturing**	**9.1%**	**10.4%**	**1.6**
41	Wholesale trade	3.4%	2.4%	-0.1
44-45	**Retail trade**	**11.1%**	**14.4%**	**0.6**
48-49	Transportation and warehousing	5.3%	5.0%	-0.1
51	Information and cultural industries	2.4%	0.8%	0.0
52	Finance and insurance	5.6%	1.6%	0.1
53	Real estate and rental and leasing	2.1%	1.5%	-0.1
54	Professional, scientific, and technical services	9.5%	3.3%	-1.1
55	Management of companies and enterprises	0.4%	0.0%	0.0
56	Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	4.5%	4.3%	0.1
61	Educational services	7.4%	4.7%	-0.9
62	**Health care and social assistance**	**12.0%**	**13.6%**	**0.3**
71	Arts, entertainment, and recreation	1.8%	0.8%	-0.4
72	Accommodation and food services	5.4%	5.5%	-1.8
81	Other services (except public administration)	3.9%	4.3%	-0.3
91	**Public administration**	**6.0%**	**6.6%**	**1.2**

Table 8 **Percent of Labour Force - Top 3 Industries per Census Subdivision, 2021**



COMMUNITY	#1	#2	#3
Armour	17%	14%	12%
Burk's Falls	21%	19%	13%
Chisholm	20%	16%	10%
Joly	36%	27%	18% 18%
Kearney	21%	17%	16%
Machar	19%	13%	11% 11%
Magnetawan	15%	14%	10% 10%
McMurrich/Monteith	21%	15%	8% 8%
Perry	21%	17%	13%
Powassan	8%	15%	11%
Ryerson	19%	16%	13%
South River	29%	13%	12%
Strong	17%	14%	12%
Sundridge	19%	13%	11%
Almaguin Region	15%	14%	14%
Ontario	12%	11%	9%

Labour Force by Occupation

	Ontario (%) 2021	Almaguin (%) 2021	Change in % of Almaguin 2016-2021
Legislative and senior management	0.8%	1.3%	-92.4%
Business, finance, and administration	12.2%	18.5%	10.1%
Natural and applied sciences and related	3.1%	9.5%	-15.3%
Health	6.9%	7.6%	-13.3%
Education, law and social, community and government services	11.5%	12.1%	26.0%
Art, culture, recreation, and sport	1.8%	3.2%	-6.5%
Sales and service	24.7%	24.2%	7.6%
Trades, transport, and equipment operators	27.4%	16.4%	18.3%
Natural resources, agriculture, and related production	4.8%	2.1%	48.1%
Manufacturing and utilities	6.8%	5.2%	16.0%

The occupation sectors that make up the highest percent of jobs in the Almaguin Region are:

1. Sales and service occupations
2. Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations
3. Business, finance, and administration occupations

The occupation sectors that showed the most growth between 2016-2021 were:

1. Natural resources, agriculture, and related production,
2. Education, law and social, community and government services, and
3. Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations



Commuting Patterns

This section provides an overview of the commuting patterns to work for the employed labour force aged 15 years or over in the Almaguin Region.

Table 9 **Commuting Destination for the Almaguin Region Labour Force, 2021**

Commute within census subdivision (CSD) of residence	19.9%
Commute to a different census subdivision (CSD) within census division (CD) of residence	32.6%
Commute to a different census subdivision (CSD) and census division (CD) within province or territory of residence	47.5%
Commute to a different province or territory	0.0%



In the Almaguin Region, 19.9% of employed residents work within their home municipality, while 32.6% commute to another municipality within their census division and 47.5% commute to a municipality outside the local census division. No residents reported commuting to another province or territory. The relatively high proportion of workers commuting outside their census division of residence is influenced by the large labour force populations near the region's census division boarders. Perry and Powassan, two of the largest labour force centres in Almaguin, border the Nipissing District and Muskoka District, respectively. As a result, many residents can access employment in neighbouring regions with relatively short commuting distances.

Figure 13 **Almaguin Region Census Subdivisions and Neighbouring Census Divisions**

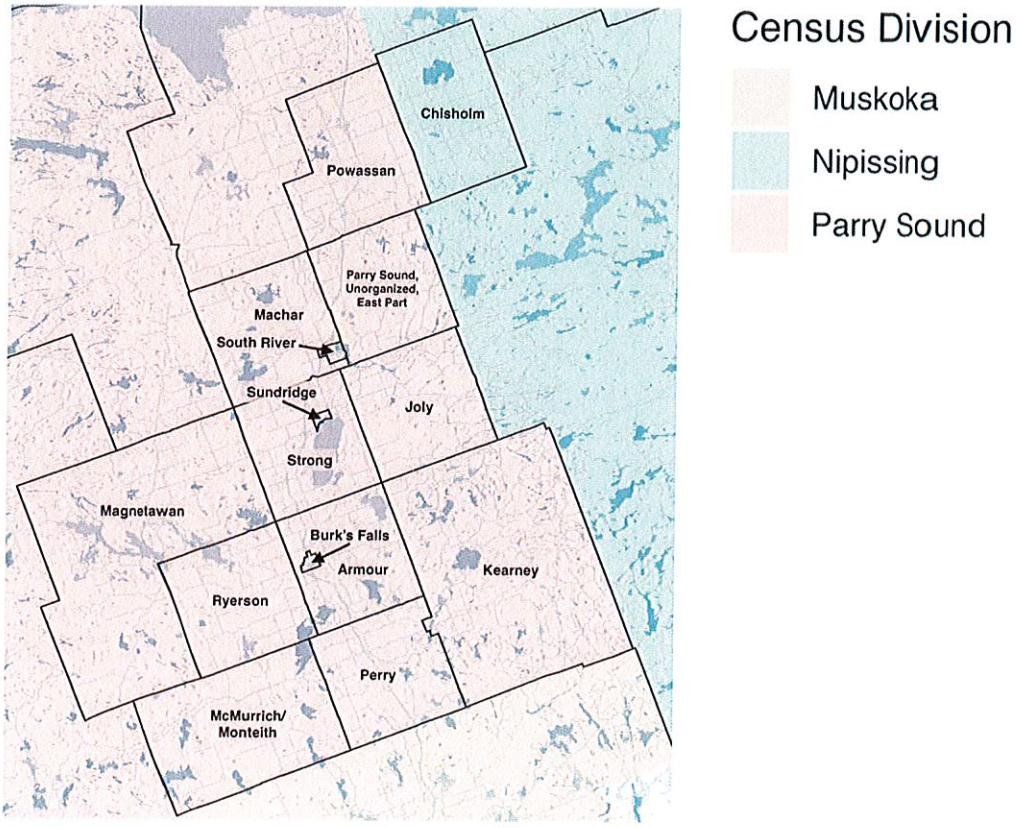


Table 10 **Commuting Destination by Almaguin Census Subdivision, 2021**

	Commute within CSD of residence	Commute to a different CSD within CD of residence	Commute to a different CSD and CD within province of residence
Armour	7%	41%	51%
Burk's Falls	55%	10%	34%
Chisholm	7%	72%	22%
Joly	0%	78%	22%
Kearney	17%	17%	67%
Machar	0%	77%	23%
Magnetawan	32%	44%	25%
McMurrich/Monteith	18%	27%	55%
Perry	7%	13%	80%
Powassan	27%	13%	60%
Ryerson	0%	44%	56%
South River	47%	29%	24%
Strong	15%	59%	26%
Sundridge	36%	38%	27%

Burk's Falls and South River are the only census subdivision in which the largest share of the labour force commutes within the census subdivision.

For most Almaguin census subdivision, the middle column of Table 10, likely reflects commuting to another municipality within the Almaguin Region, as these communities are located within the Parry Sound District. For Joly, Machar, Magnetawan, Strong and Sundridge the highest proportion of their workers fall into this category. The one exception is Chisholm, where commuting to a different census subdivision within the census division cannot be interpreted the same way. Since Chisholm is in the Nipissing District census division, this column represents people working in other municipalities within the Nipissing District. Because there are no other municipalities in the Almaguin Region that are also in the Nipissing District, these workers are not commuting to another municipality within the Almaguin Region.

As previously mentioned, for municipalities closer to the edge of the district, such as Armour, Kearney, Powassan, Perry, McMurrich/Monteith, and Ryerson, largest share of the labour force commutes to a census division outside of the Region.

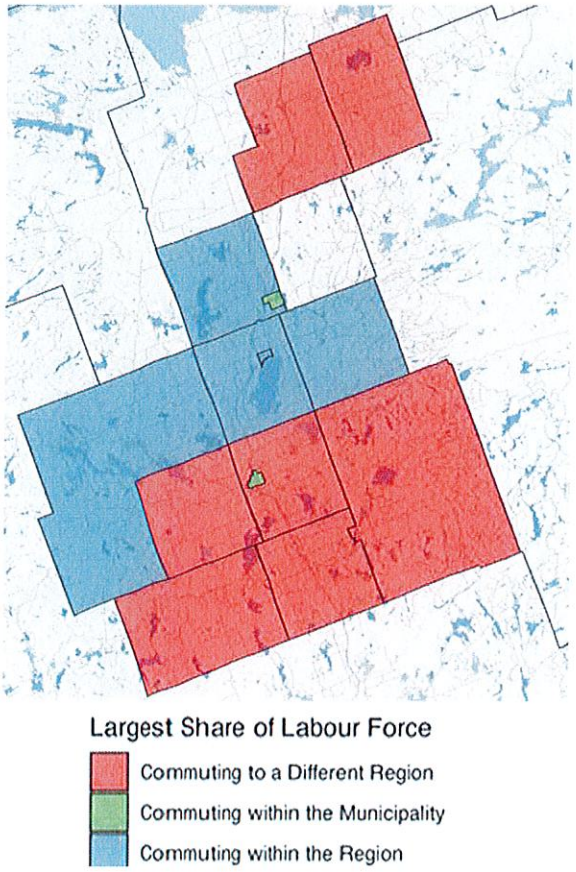
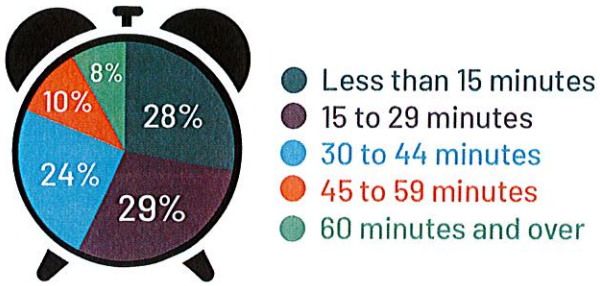
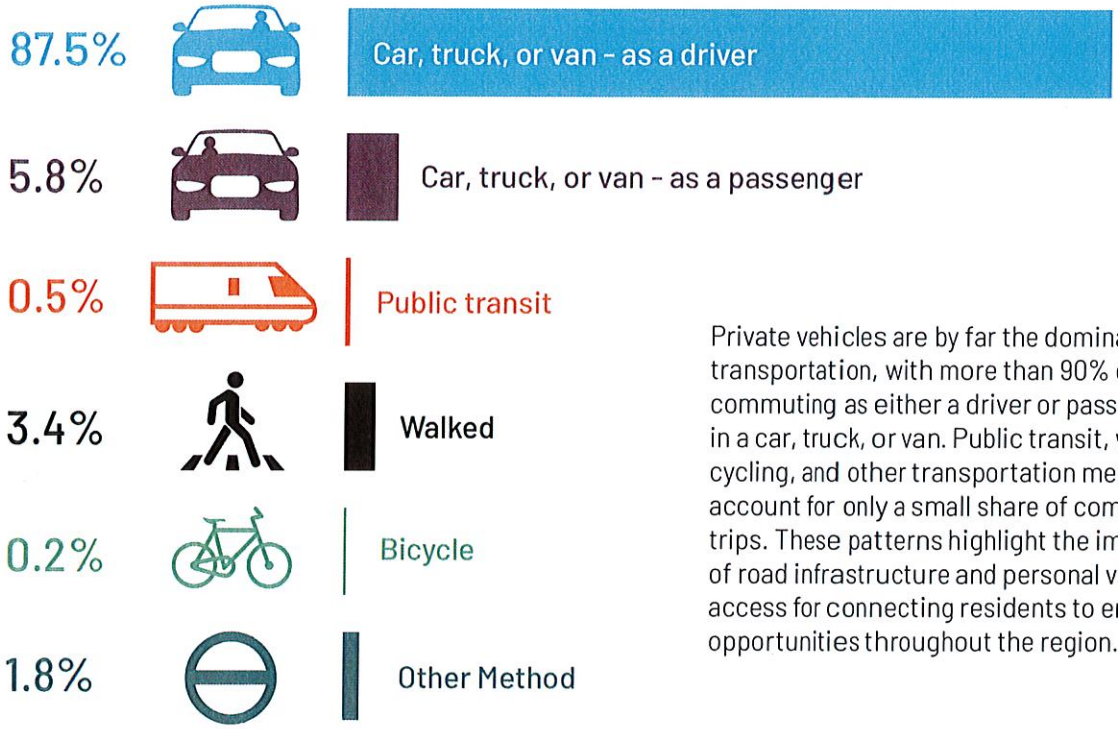


Table 11 **Commuting Time for the Almaguin Region Labour Force, 2021**



Commuting patterns in the Almaguin Region suggest that most workers travel relatively short to moderate distances to work and rely heavily on personal vehicles. More than half of employed residents have a commute of less than 30 minutes, while fewer than one in five commute for 45 minutes or longer. This reflects the region's network of interconnected communities and access to employment opportunities both within and outside Almaguin.

Table 12 **Commuting Method for the Almaguin Region Labour Force, 2021**



Private vehicles are by far the dominant mode of transportation, with more than 90% of workers commuting as either a driver or passenger in a car, truck, or van. Public transit, walking, cycling, and other transportation methods account for only a small share of commuting trips. These patterns highlight the importance of road infrastructure and personal vehicle access for connecting residents to employment opportunities throughout the region.



Industry Sector Analysis / Economic Base Analysis

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 of industry at another level. In this analysis, Almaguin is compared to Ontario.

Location Quotient Analysis is a great tool to identify the relative strength of an industry. A score of greater than 1.0 means that the industry makes up a larger share of the labour force in Almaguin compared to the provincial level. A score of less than 1.0 means the opposite. For example, in Almaguin, 14% of the jobs in the region are in the construction industry. Meanwhile in Ontario, 7% of jobs are in the construction industry. This comparison would yield an LQ of 2.0, since 14%7%=2.0, meaning that relative to the provincial level, construction is a much stronger industry in Almaguin.

In deciding whether an LQ Score is low, normal, or high, we use the following thresholds:

Greater than 1.2 = High Between 0.8-1.2 = Normal Less than 0.8 = Low

Location Quotient Analysis - Industry

Table 13 **Location Quotients by Industry Share of Labour Force, Almaguin Region, 2021**

Industry (2-digit NAICS)	LQ	Score
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting	1.9	High
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	4.6	High
Utilities	0.8	Normal
Construction	2.0	High
Manufacturing	1.1	Normal
Wholesale trade	0.7	Low
Retail trade	1.3	High
Transportation and warehousing	0.9	Normal
Information and cultural industries	0.3	Low
Finance and insurance	0.3	Low
Real estate and rental and leasing	0.7	Low
Professional, scientific, and technical services	0.3	Low
Management of companies and enterprises	0.0	Low
Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	0.9	Normal
Educational services	0.6	Low
Health care and social assistance	1.1	Normal
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	0.4	Low
Accommodation and food services	1.0	Normal
Other services (except public administration)	1.1	Normal
Public administration	1.1	Normal

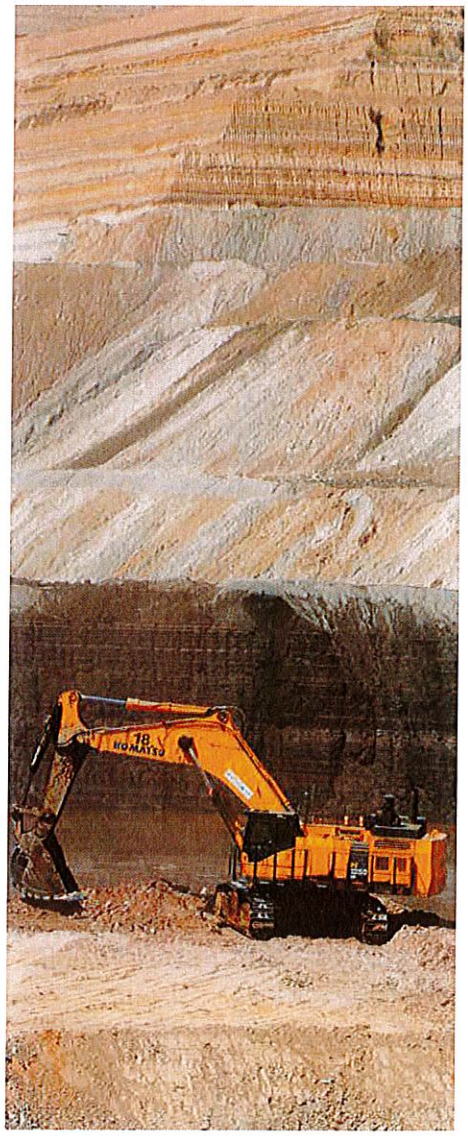
The LQs for Almaguin reflect a regional economy that has a higher concentration of jobs in:

- Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting
- Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction
- Construction
- Retail trade

Table 14 **Location Quotients by Industry, Census Subdivisions in Almaguin Region, 2021**

	Industries with LQ greater than 2	LQ
Armour	• Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	5.2
	• Utilities	2.2
Burk's Falls	• Construction	2.8
	• Utilities	2.7
	• Accommodation and food services	2.3
	• Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	2.1
Chisholm	• Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	5.3
	• Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	4.0
	• Utilities	2.2
	• Construction	2.1
Joly	• Transportation and warehousing	3.4
	• Retail trade	3.3
	• Health care and social assistance	2.3
Kearney	• Utilities	3.4
	• Construction	2.8
Machar	• Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	7.9
	• Construction	2.5
Magnetawan	• Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	4.4
	• Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	3.3
McMurrich/ Monteith	• Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	8.7
	• Construction	2.8
	• Other services (except public administration)	2.1
Perry	• Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	3.6
	• Construction	2.3
Powassan	• Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	7.7
	• Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	3.2
Ryerson	• Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	6.6
	• Construction	2.5
	• Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	2.2
South River Strong	• Manufacturing	3.1
	• Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	5.8
	• Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	3.2
	• Construction	2.2
Sundridge	• Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	6.5

Table 14 shows the industries with Locations Quotient greater than 2.0 at a municipal level. A higher location quotient threshold was applied at the municipal level to account for the smaller size of local labour markets. In small municipalities, relatively few workers can generate high location quotient values, even when an industry is not a major economic driver. A higher threshold helps distinguish true areas of specialization from results that may be driven by small population and employment counts.





Business Pattern Data

This section provides an overview of the number of businesses within the region for 2022 and 2025 based on how many employees they have.

Table 15 **Businesses by Number of Employees, Almaguin Region, 2022 and 2025**

	Number of Employees								
	0	1-4	5-9	10-19	20-49	50-99	100-199	200-499	Total
Number of Businesses (2025)	1,374	338	114	56	38	6	0	1	1,927
% of Total (2025)	71.3%	17.5%	5.9%	2.9%	2.0%	0.3%	0.0%	0.1%	
Number of Businesses (2022)	1,174	328	110	60	35	7	2	1	1,717
Change (2022-2025)	200	10	4	-4	3	-1	-2	0	210

Overall, business in the Almaguin region is characterized by small companies that employ fewer than 5 people. 88.8% of the businesses in the Almaguin Region have less than 5 employees, and 71.3% of businesses are consider owner operated (without any employees), though this number is likely underrepresented as the Canadian Business Counts does not include unincorporated businesses that have revenue less than $30,000 (non-taxable and/or taxable).

Comparing data from 2025 with the 2022 data shows an increase in the number of businesses across business with less than 10 employees and an overall decrease in the number of businesses with 10 or more employees.

Overall, the data indicate that Almaguin's economy is driven primarily by small and medium-sized enterprises rather than large corporations. This business structure contributes to local economic resilience and entrepreneurship but may also create challenges related to labour availability, business succession, access to capital, and long-term growth.

Table 16 Businesses by Number of Employees and NAICS, Almaguin Region, 2022 and 2025

	Number of Employees								
	0	1-4	5-9	10-19	20-49	50-99	100-199	200-499	Total
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, & hunting	86	10	1	1	0	0	0	0	98
Mining, quarrying, & oil & gas extraction	1	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	5
Utilities	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10
Construction	179	95	29	14	0	0	0	0	317
Manufacturing	23	9	6	5	2	2	1	0	48
Wholesale trade	15	5	5	1	1	0	0	0	27
Retail trade	42	23	24	8	8	3	0	0	108
Transportation & warehousing	62	21	0	1	2	1	0	0	87
Information & cultural industries	7	9	2	0	0	0	0	0	18
Finance & insurance	40	3	4	1	0	0	0	0	48
Real estate & rental & leasing	277	15	2	0	0	0	0	0	294
Professional, scientific, & technical services	56	19	3	1	0	0	0	0	79
Management of companies & enterprises	7	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
Administrative & support, waste management & remediation services	39	9	4	1	0	0	0	0	53
Educational services	8	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	12
Health care & social assistance	33	14	2	8	5	1	1	1	65
Arts, entertainment, & recreation	19	7	6	1	1	0	0	0	34
Accommodation & food services	61	24	8	6	3	0	0	0	102
Other services (except public administration)	85	36	7	3	2	0	0	0	133
Public administration	1	1	4	5	9	0	0	0	20
Unclassified	123	24	2	1	1	0	0	0	151

Construction is the largest business sector by number of establishments, followed by real estate and rental and leasing, unclassified businesses, other services, retail trade, accommodation and food services, agriculture, and transportation and warehousing. Together, these sectors reflect the importance of small-scale entrepreneurship, construction activity, tourism, resource-based industries, and local services to the regional economy.

Several sectors, including real estate, construction, professional services, transportation, and agriculture, are characterized by a particularly high proportion of businesses with no employees, suggesting that self-employment and owner-operated businesses play an important role in the local economy. In contrast, larger employers are concentrated in sectors such as health care and social assistance, manufacturing, retail trade, and public administration.

Tourism

Businesses and Employment

The number of tourism business and people employed in the tourism sector are available for each municipality in the Almaguin region.

Table 17 **Tourism Businesses and Employment, Almaguin Region, 2024**

	Tourism Businesses	Tourism Employment	Percent of Labour Force Employed in Tourism
Chisholm	9	75	13.5%
Burk's Falls	5	55	12.5%
Kearney	10	35	9.6%
Sundridge	7	25	8.8%
South River	14	30	7.9%
Strong	7	45	7.4%
Perry	13	80	7.3%
Magnetawan	17	40	7.0%
Ryerson	3	20	6.9%
Armour	12	25	4.9%
Machar	2	15	4.0%
Powassan	12	55	3.9%
McMurrich/Monteith	13	10	3.0%
Joly	0	0	0%

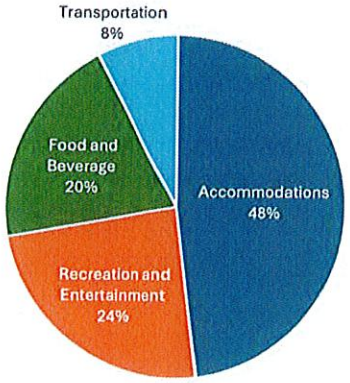
Tourism is an important contributor to the Almaguin economy, supporting employment and local businesses across the region. In 2024, tourism employment accounted for a meaningful share of the labour force in many municipalities.

The tourism sector's importance varies across the region. Chisholm, Burk's Falls, Kearney, Sundridge, South River, Strong, Perry, Magnetawan, and Ryerson have some of the highest concentrations of tourism-related employment, indicating that visitor spending plays a significant role in supporting local jobs and businesses. In contrast, municipalities such as McMurrich/ Monteith, Powassan, Machar, and Armour have lower shares of employment tied to tourism.

Overall, the proportion of the labour force employed in tourism across the Almaguin Region is slightly below the Ontario average of 9.67%. However, this data may understate the true economic importance of tourism within the region. Tourism in Almaguin is highly seasonal, and although many businesses do not fall within the tourism classification, they still rely heavily on visitor spending. For example, retail stores, gas stations, construction businesses, personal services, and other local enterprises often benefit significantly from seasonal residents and tourists.

As a result, tourism's economic impact extends beyond direct tourism employment and supports a broader range of businesses and jobs throughout the regional economy.

Figure 14 Tourism Businesses by Subsector, Almaguin Region, 2024



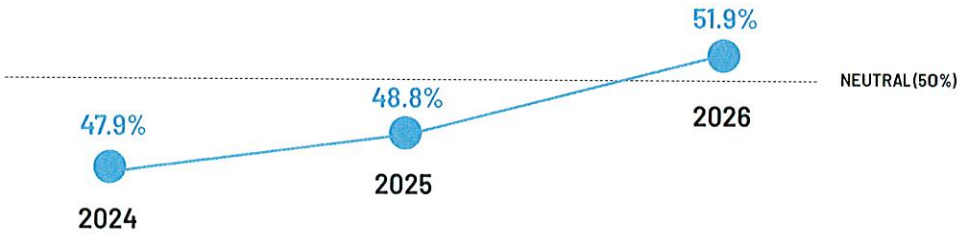
The Almaguin Region's tourism sector is made up of 166 businesses and is primarily driven by accommodation-based businesses. In 2023, accommodations accounted for the largest share of tourism operators, followed by recreation and entertainment businesses and food and beverage establishments. Transportation-related tourism businesses represent a small portion of the sector and travel services are limited. The high number of accommodation operators reflects the region's tourism model, which is solely based on smaller, independent accommodation businesses rather than large hotels or resorts. Many operators provide lodging through smaller-scale accommodations such as cottages, cabins, inns, and seasonal rentals, which aligns with Almaguin's focus on outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism. Recreation and entertainment businesses further support this visitor economy by providing activities connected to the region's natural assets.

Tourism Business Confidence

According to the 2026 Business Confidence Index published by Explorers' Edge, tourism business sentiment across Muskoka, Parry Sound, Almaguin Highlands, Algonquin Park, South Algonquin and Loring-Restoule, has improved steadily over the past three years.[1] The index, which measures tourism operators' outlook on business conditions, industry challenges, and future opportunities, reached 51.9 in 2026, up from 48.8 in 2025 and 47.9 in 2024.[1]

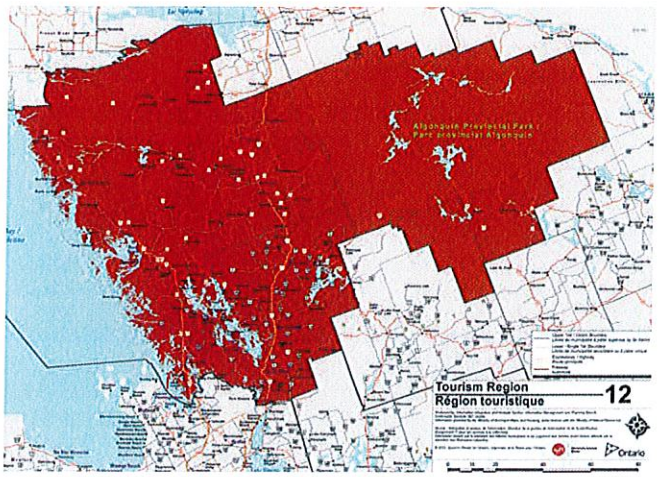
The 2026 results represent a notable milestone, as this is the first year the index has exceeded the neutral benchmark of 50, indicating that tourism operators are, on average, more optimistic than pessimistic about the year ahead.1 The findings suggest growing confidence within the tourism sector despite ongoing economic and operational challenges and point to a more positive outlook for the regional visitor economy.[1]

Figure 15 Tourism Business Confidence Index, 2024-2026



[1] *Explorers' Edge, 2026 Business Confidence Index, https://explorersedge.ca/resources/explorers-edge-business-confidence-index/*

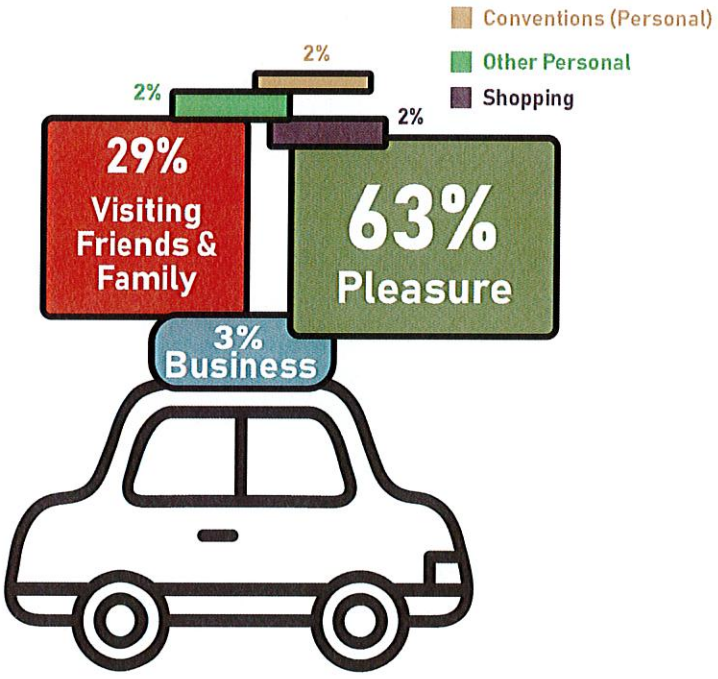
Visitors



There are no data regarding specific tourism within the Almaguin region; however, there are data for Tourism Region 12: Muskoka, Parry Sound and Algonquin Park, which includes the Almaguin region. While these data can provide insight into the characteristics of visitors to the broader region, they should be interpreted with caution when applied to Almaguin. Major tourism destinations such as Muskoka and Algonquin Park attract large volumes of visitors with travel patterns, spending behaviours, and recreational interests that may differ significantly from those of visitors to the Almaguin region. These destinations tend to attract a higher proportion of overnight visitors, resort and cottage tourism, and destination-based recreational travel compared to what is typical in many parts of Almaguin. As a result, the data presented below should be viewed as broader regional tourism trends rather than a direct representation of tourism activity within Almaguin.

In 2022, approximately 4.4 million people visited the region. Most visits were driven by leisure and recreation.

Figure 16 **Main Purpose of Trip to Region 12, 2022**

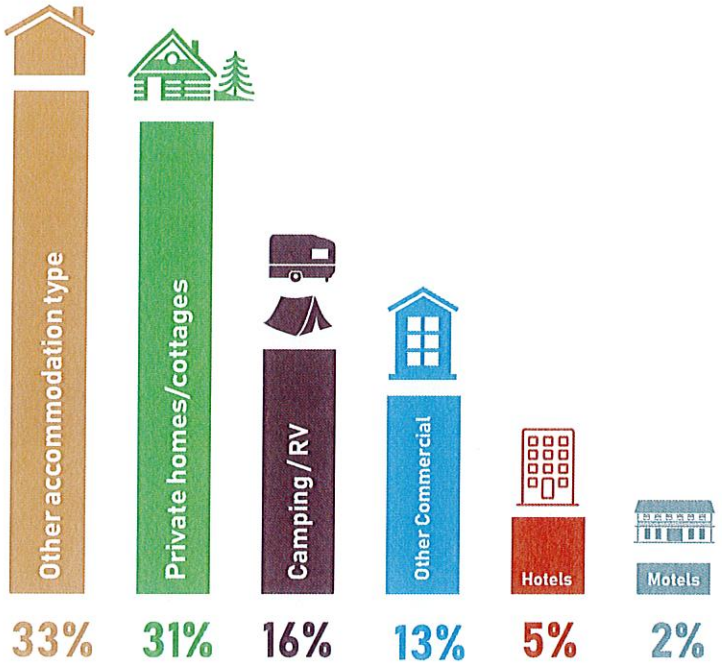


Pleasure travel accounted for approximately 2.8-million visits (63%), making it by far the most common reason for travel to the region. Visiting friends and family was the second-largest travel purpose, representing 1.3 million visits (29%). Business travel and other trip purposes collectively accounted for less than 10% of total visits, highlighting the region's strong recreational and lifestyle tourism appeal.

While RTO 12 data indicate that approximately 70% of visits were overnight trips and 30% were same-day visits in 2022, the Almaguin region may experience a different visitation pattern.

Given its location along the Highway 11 corridor and its more limited hotel and resort accommodation capacity compared to destinations such as Muskoka and Algonquin Park, Almaguin may attract a higher proportion of day-trippers and pass-through visitors. This suggests that opportunities may exist to increase visitor spending and length of stay by encouraging travelers to stop and explore local attractions, businesses, and communities.

When visitors stay in the RTO 12 Region, they mostly stayed in other accommodation types (1.03 million visits) and private homes or cottages (971,000 visits), reflecting the region's strong cottage-country character and extensive use of seasonal properties. Camping and RV facilities were also popular, likely driven by the inclusion of Algonquin park in the RTO 12 Region, while commercial accommodations such as hotels and motels accounted for a relatively small share.



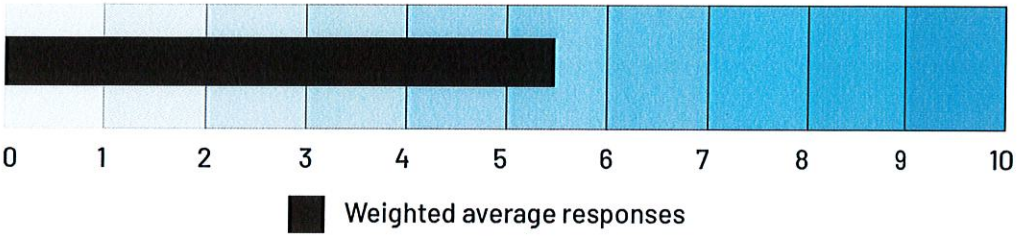
Tourism activity in RTO 12 is highly seasonal. The peak tourism season occurred during the summer months (July to September), which generated approximately 2.25 million person visits, accounting for more than half of all annual visitation. Spring (April to June) was the second busiest season with just over 1.0 million visits. In contrast, winter tourism activity was considerably lower, with approximately 470,000 visits occurring between January and March. Fall visitation remained moderate, attracting approximately 645,000 visits between October and December. The strong concentration of visits during the summer months reflects the region's appeal for cottage use, camping, boating, outdoor recreation, and nature-based tourism. However, the continued visitor activity throughout the year also demonstrates the importance of shoulder-season and winter tourism opportunities, including fall colours, snowmobiling, visiting family for holidays, and other seasonal recreational activities.

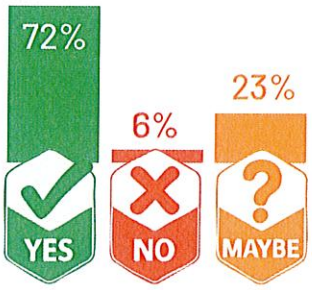


Appendix B:
Online Survey Results

The online survey received a total of 55 responses. The results of the online survey are on the following pages.

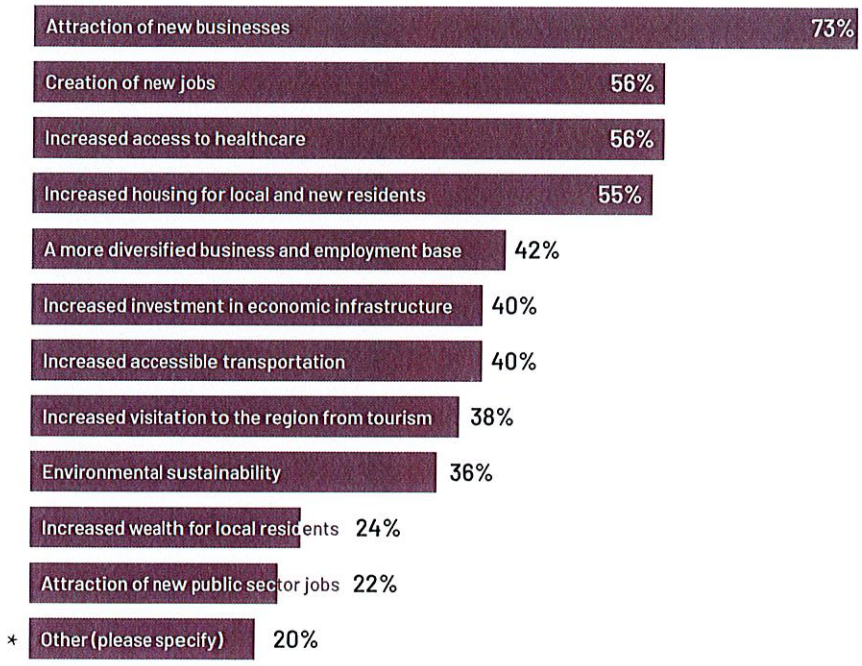
1. How well positioned is the broader region of Almaguin Highlands for economic growth and sustainability? (With 1 being not positioned at all for growth and 10 being extremely well positioned for growth)





2. Is a regional approach to economic development STILL more likely to achieve results than each municipality proceeding on its own?

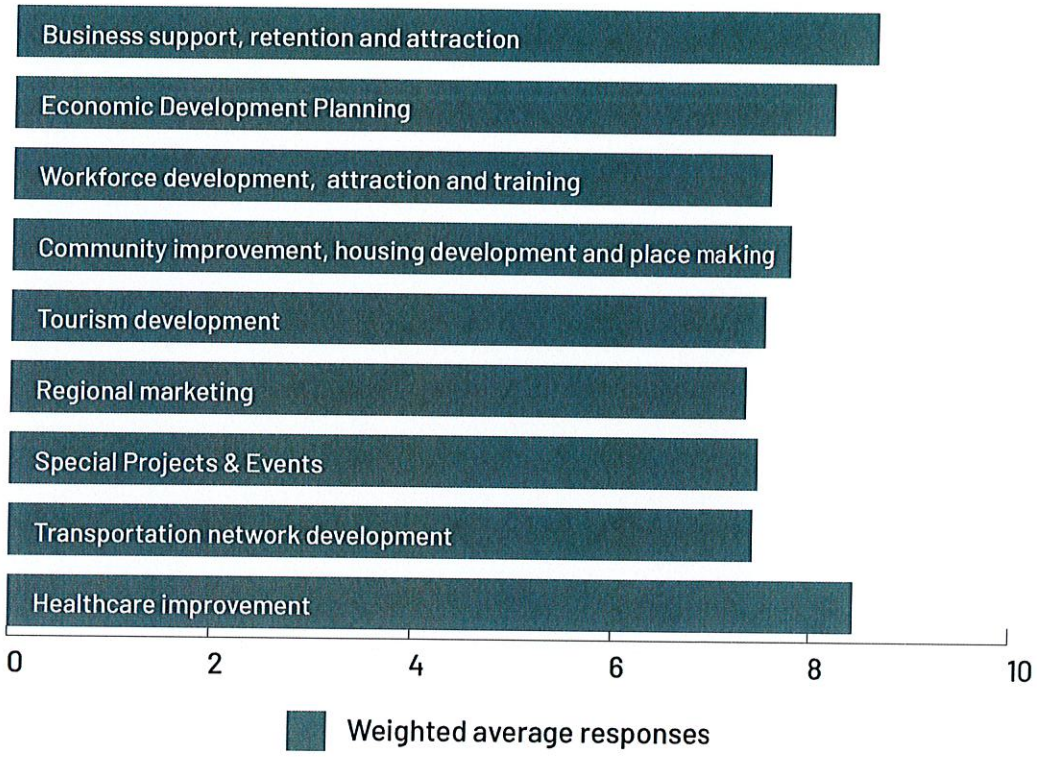
3. Which of the following key objectives should be included in an updated regional economic strategy?



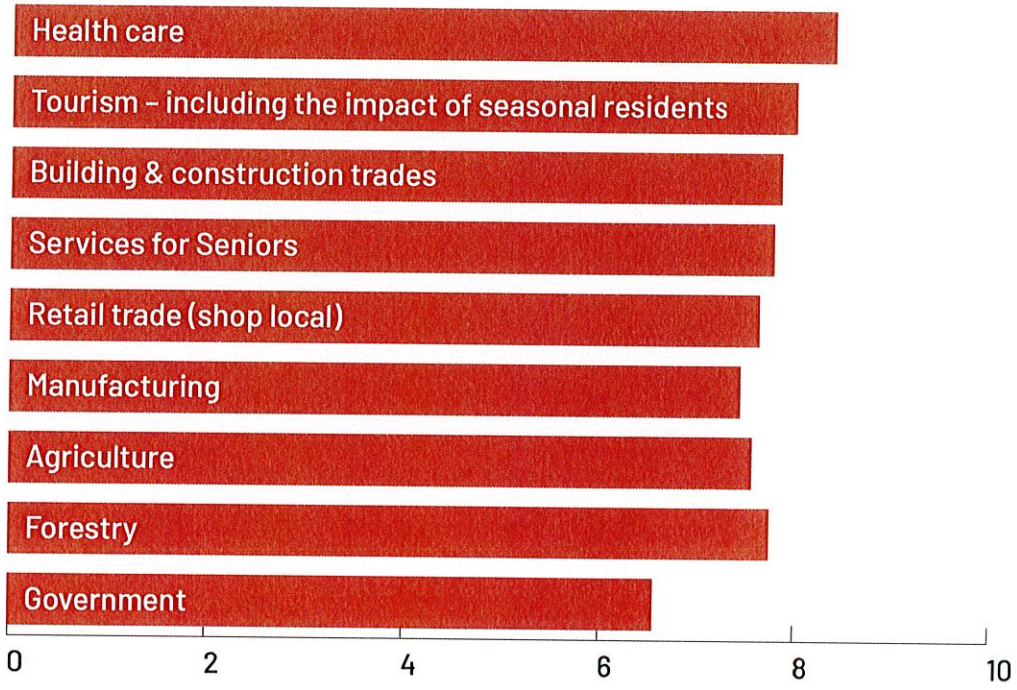
***Other please specify:**
11 responses

- Promoting human-based jobs while minimizing AI/robotic replacements.
- Only one complete would be a success..... sorry but nothing has changed since 2018
- Vibrant downtown shopping areas
- Hotels/places for visitors to stay
- Increase performance arts opportunities
- Lakes and waterways need stronger municipal protections put in place now. Pesticide/chemical use leaching into waterways. Septic inspections... relevant to short term rentals that cannot handle the septic load of increased use. Perhaps rules for short term rentals (there are rules for trailers!)
- Bring back some of past attractions & enrich the heritage days
- Increase of public non-motorized trails (hiking, biking, etc)
- Financial accountability, transparency and honesty at Township level-also accountability for Council members who break Township bylaws for their own personal agendas (McMurrich Monteith)
- Investment in visual identities of communities, ie. planting, general beautification of 'downtown' of communities to encourage longer visits
- Attraction of Youth development Initiatives

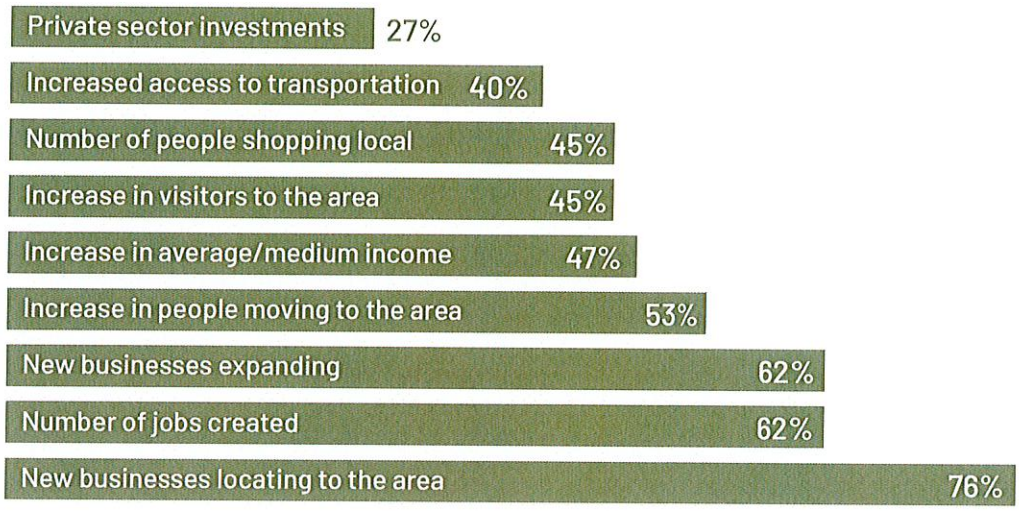
4. Thinking about possible actions to assist in economic development, on a scale of 1 to 10 – with 10 being very important and 1 being not important at all – how would you rate the importance of the following activities?



5. 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?



6. What type of measurements of success should be included as part of an updated regional economic development strategy?



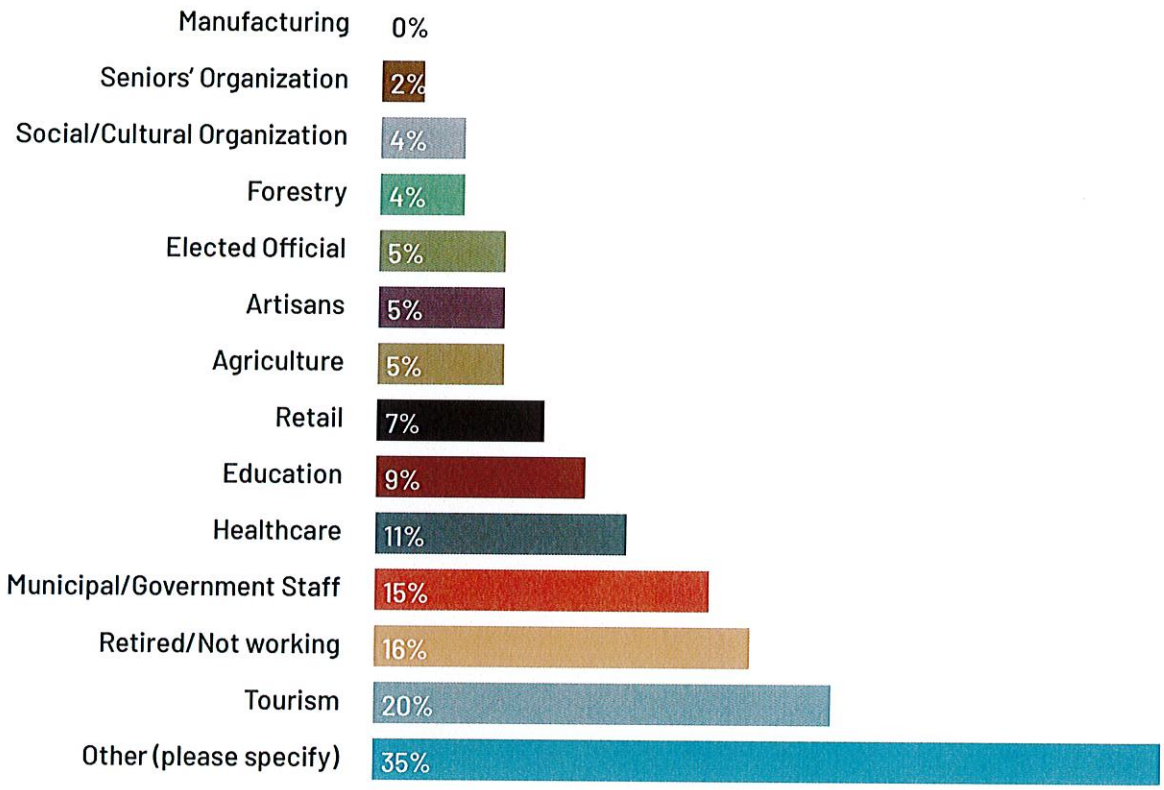
7. Will stable and long-term core funding be essential to implement an ongoing successful economic development strategy?



8. How do you identify yourself within the region? Are you a:



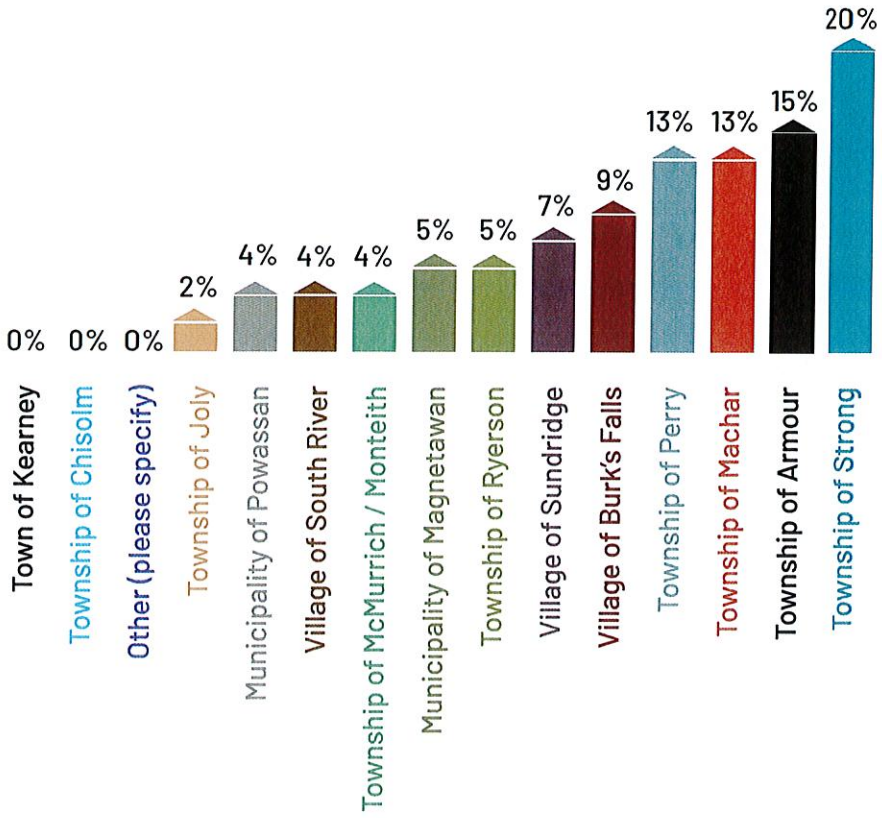
9. Which employment sector do you represent? (Choose all that apply)



Other (please specify): 19 responses

Sector	Responses
Business Owners/ Entrepreneurs	Entrepreneur Small business owner Retiring and starting infrastructure for potential new business
Construction and Engineering	Construction Construction Engineering consulting
Professional Services	Real Estate Marketing Finance Professional Services and Religious Organizations Business Services
Sales and Commercial	Sales Wholesale Sales
Health Care	Previously in the healthcare sector for 15 years. Currently a Mother who is very concerned with our local area and growth.
Nonprofit	Nonprofit service provider, skills training and support
Tech	Tech
Waste	Waste industry
Marina	Marina
Semi-Retired	Retired. Working part time

10. In which municipality do you reside?



11. Now it's your turn! As we work towards an updated 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)



Comments with 1-2 themes mentioned:

New Business :

- Provide subsidy to new businesses to open in the area
- It would be nice to take risks and seek new economy business like data centres, solar generation, value add manufacturing.
- We need to look at new economic sectors like data, energy and technical services.
- Attracting new businesses to remove 'ghost town' appearance of some of the spaces within our communities.
- We need jobs. Invest in existing companies so they can grow and provide financial incentives for new business to move to the region.
- Business infrastructure

Marketing:

- We need to go old-fashion and go door-to-door to get the word out about Almaguin, ACED and working together.
- Need to get the message out to all, not everyone knows what you can do for them, or how you help the area.
- Developing and Marketing the "Almaguin" Region

Marketing; Attract New Residents

- Almaguin faces a couple unique challenges. 1) the main appeal of Almaguin is that it's a hidden gem... when a hidden gem gets discovered, it's appeal is no longer that it's a hidden gem, it's just that it's a gem. So what is the GEM of Almaguin (unique from the regions to the North, South, East, and West)? 2) Almaguin's demographics are on the older side of average. Do we lean into that - become "the place to retire" - and need to think about people having a maximum of a couple decades of life here... do we work on making Almaguin appeal to younger people (young families coming to "the land of opportunity")... OR is it possible to do both? Can we bridge the generational gap that society has created? Can we value seniors, make seniors feel valued, and still bring "life" to the region? Do people want to grow? Or do people like that we're "undiscovered" and life is a bit slower/quieter here? Those were questions... you asked for suggestions. My suggestion is the latter - we need to think about how we make Almaguin both THE best "place to retire" and "place to raise a family". Exploring that would take more space than I have now.

Marketing; New Business

- Marketing and funding assistance for both new and established businesses; identifying new sectors and businesses that could be established and promoting their development

Marketing; Regional Collaboration

- Our branding has been great it would be better if all municipalities would be apart of this venture We would be stronger together then apart . I think some of our priorities should lay in how we can self sustaining with our funds and how to make itwork . Learning from the chamber which are having difficulty how can pivot and make ACED substantial for future

Marketing: Regulation, Taxes, and Environment

- Continue promoting our small town values, access to nature, and hidden gems. Develop and implement a policy towards AI as it relates to job creation, ensuring that human based jobs aren't threatened by emerging technologies.

Housing and Workforce

- Housing! I work in HR for a significant publicly-funded employer in this region. I often have to recruit people from North Bay or Huntsville to work for us because there aren't enough skilled workers in Almaguin. But since there's nowhere for these new workers to live in this region they won't be spending their earnings in this region. They're taking Almaguin money and spending it in North Bay or Huntsville. They also aren't likely to remain working here for long-term with the cost of the commute. If we can solve the housing problem, it unlocks so much potential for local businesses to thrive.

Regulation, Taxes, and Environment

- Environmental sustainability- with more people and tourists the lakes and land will suffer if we don't take action.
- First and foremost consider longterm environmental impacts... dead lakes = everything/everyone loses. Thoughtful planning is not optional it is necessary!
- We need to correct tax bases, meaning update property uses, MCAP assessments, and enforcing tax evasion. We also need to hold Township officials accountable for bending rules for their own benefit. Provincial and Federal grants should be maximized for infrastructure projects. Social Services access needs improvement as does access to fresh food for vulnerable populations.
- communities involved should be required to sign on to an agreement that "businesses" that can/will have negative impacts over other communities in the area will be blanket denied permit, example: the "battery" project on Peggs Mountain road, will have a massive negative impact on BF an Ryerson, vis a vis cost of insurance for Fire Fighting. those costs are NOT the responsibility of BF and Ryerson. the possible "data centre" in Armour should also be denied as it would impact BF so negatively as to make BF basically uninhabitable. Such projects should be rejected out of hand and all communities in Almaguin should be required to sign on to such an agreement.

Regional Collaboration

- The process of Amalgamation was discontinued, I think it would serve our communities better if Townships and Villages Amalgamated. This would provide better economical value to our communities.
- Increasing the member municipalities throughout the Almaguin area. (Is there a way to make membership more affordable?)

Transportation and Connectivity

- Develop regional transportation
- It's hard to attract future development without good access to communication. The cellular service in Almaguin is terrible, and Bell intends to do nothing about it, according to recent emails and conversations.

Tourism

- Tourism drives the economic growth and sustainability as tourism seasons encourage cottages and residential growth

Tourism; Recreation and Events

- Bike tourism, adventure events, highlighting our outdoor experiences, hiking trails

Tourism; Regulation, Taxes, and Environment

- Need to work with municipalities to create realistic short term rental by laws that supports our regions tourism base. Tourism is the only way many businesses survive in the small communities and we shouldn't be putting up road blocks for their success.

Recreation and Events

- Wellness activities and engaging community members.
- Look at the EDI. Increase free/affordable recreational opportunities for kids. Build a 4 season community pool!

More Action

- Fewer surveys we all now the answers , fewer comities the only slow even the easiest things down ..... just do it
- Strategic long term plan with core and Lo term funding

Comments with 3 or more themes mentioned:

New Business; Transportation and Connectivity; Housing and Workforce; Regional Collaboration; Marketing; Regulation, Taxes, and Environment

- As both a local business owner and a Real Estate Broker, I believe our greatest opportunity is to encourage smart, sustainable growth while protecting the character that makes Almaguin Highlands unique. Our priorities should include attracting new businesses that create year-round employment, supporting existing local businesses, expanding access to reliable high-speed internet and infrastructure, and increasing the availability of housing for families, seniors, and the local workforce. Tourism, agriculture, forestry, and outdoor recreation are already strengths of our region. We should continue investing in these industries while encouraging entrepreneurship and reducing barriers for small business development. I also believe we need stronger regional collaboration. Our municipalities accomplish far more when we work together instead of competing with one another. A unified vision for economic development, marketing, investment attraction, and community events will strengthen the entire Almaguin Highlands. Finally, let's ensure growth doesn't come at the expense of what people value most: our natural environment, small-town atmosphere, and strong sense of community. If we can balance economic opportunity with responsible planning, Almaguin will remain a place where people want to live, work, invest, and raise their families for generations to come.

New Business; Housing and Workforce; Tourism; Regional Collaboration; Attract New Residents

- As a leader connected to both the professional services and faith/community sectors, I believe regional economic development should prioritize people, partnerships, and practical support for local growth. First, we need to continue strengthen support for small businesses, entrepreneurs, and professional service providers through networking, mentorship, training, grant awareness, and business retention strategies. Many local businesses do not need only more ideas; they need clearer pathways, stronger collaboration, and better access to resources. Second, workforce devel-

opment should remain a major priority. This includes leadership development, youth entrepreneurship, skilled trades pathways, newcomer integration, and helping young adults see a future in our region. Third, faith-based and non-profit organizations should be recognized as important community partners. Churches and service organizations often provide social connection, volunteer mobilization, care, gathering spaces, and support for families. These contributions strengthen the social fabric that makes economic growth sustainable. Finally, I would encourage ACED to focus on regional collaboration, downtown/community revitalization, tourism, housing, and initiatives that help people not only visit our region but choose to live, work, build, and invest here long term.

Regional Collaboration; Housing and Workforce; Transportation and Connectivity; Health Care; Tourism

- Local businesses need to support each other and work together. We need services, support and attractions for both residents and tourists. More employees opportunities and housing options for people. Especially affordable housing. Transportation between the communities an asset if possible. Attract more doctors to the area.

More Action; Transportation and Connectivity; Housing and Workforce; New Business

- The region should shift its focus from planning and coordination toward implementation. Residents and businesses have he region should shift its focus from planning and coordination toward implementation. Residents and businesses have heard many discussions about economic development over the years, but visible progress remains limited. Key challenges such as transportation connectivity, workforce attraction, housing availability, and business expansion continue to exist. Future efforts should concentrate on delivering projects that produce measurable economic benefits, strengthening partnerships with the private sector, and reducing barriers for business growth. Success should be evaluated based on tangible outcomes rather than the number of strategies, meetings, or reports completed.

Transportation and Connectivity; Health Care; Recreation and Events; Tourism

- I believe the regional strategy should focus on three practical priorities. First, develop a regional transit service that connects our communities and improves access to jobs, healthcare, and local businesses. Second, strengthen healthcare by supporting a regional healthcare hub and recruiting more healthcare professionals to serve our growing and aging population and help cut down on 911 calls. Third, invest in connecting our communities through trails and outdoor recreation. Better trail networks would improve quality of life for residents while encouraging visitors to explore our towns and support local businesses. These are achievable goals that would make the Almaguin Highlands a better place to live, work, and visit.

Housing and Workforce; New Business; Regulation, Taxes, and Environment

- Economic development efforts should support a mix of housing options—including affordable, workforce, rental, and attainable ownership housing—to ensure that people who work in the region can also live in the region. At the same time, the region should prioritize attracting and growing industries that provide stable, year-round employment with competitive wages and opportunities for career advancement. This could include supporting local entrepreneurship, skilled trades, healthcare, technology, manufacturing, and other sectors that match regional strengths. Economic growth should be balanced with community character and environmental sustainability so that development improves quality of life for current and future residents.

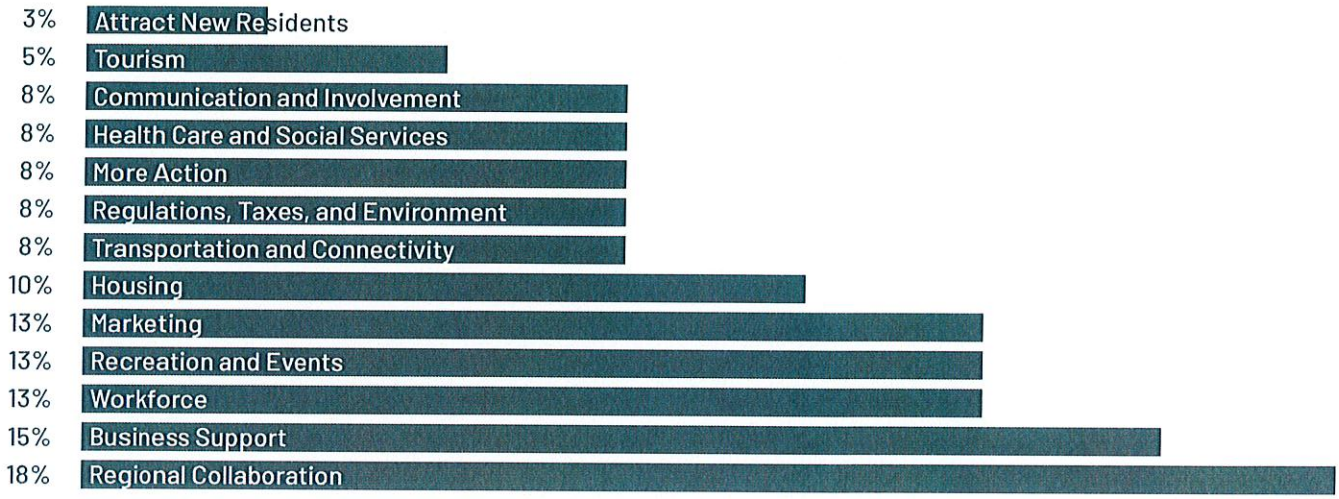
Marketing;

Health Care;

Housing and Workforce

- Setting ourself apart from Muskoka should be a focus. We need to promte the region as a great place to live work and play. We also need to focus on health care and housing, as all regions are facing similar challenges. But we can't address workforce without first addressing the housing crisis

12. Finally, if you could change or improve one thing about the region to strengthen its future economy and quality of life, what would it be? (200 words or less)



Comments with 1-2 themes mentioned:

Regional Collaboration

- That everyone would work together.
- Work together on an economic strategy. There is certainly more strength in numbers. Perhaps wait until the new councils are voted in.
- Start to get communities to work together and think of the area holistically and encourage development in certain areas
- I'd make all 11 /12 municipalities join aced
- Just like health care education policing or transportation it's all apart of the bones which makes the frame work up for our region .
- We need to Amalgamate in order to get economies of scale.

Regional Collaboration; More Action

- If I could improve one thing, it would be regional leadership's ability to deliver transformative projects that individual municipalities cannot achieve alone. The region has significant natural assets, strategic location advantages, and strong communities, yet there is a lack of major initiatives that create lasting economic impact. Greater emphasis should be placed on attracting investment, developing destination experiences, improving regional connectivity, and pursuing projects that generate employment and increase visitation. Residents want to see ambitious projects with clear timelines, measurable objectives, and visible results. The region's future depends on turning opportunities into action rather than continuing to identify the same challenges year after year.

Workforce

- Attract more employment opportunities to the area.

Workforce; Communication and Involvement

- Improve leadership and get information from all residents of the area before voting on issues.have all community work together to bring in employment.Need more community involvement to work with out going and newer residents

Workforce; Health Care

- Need more employment. Need more local doctors

Recreation and Events

- Continue to develop community based events and organizations that encourage a more vibrant social life.
- Increase in quality dining options
- Better water recreation spaces
- Establish marina on one of the major lakes with retail surrounding like Port Carling
- More restaurants, live music locations, opportunities for engagement and actives outside of just shopping.
- Planning for quality of life not just economic development. People and businesses may come but they will not stay if services and quality of life activities (eg recreational facilities like pools, 250 Clark street-like options) do not exist for ALL ages.

Recreation and Events; Regional Collaboration

- That everyone work together. There's so much duplication and competition across municipalities, and it just doesnt make sense why they wouldn't chose to work together instead. Especiaqlly where events and rec programming are concerned.

Marketing

- May I offer a suggestion on Marketing?
  Almaguin: it's everything Muskoka is... but at a reasonable cost!
  also, see above, Communities such as "armour" should be required to take into consideration the impact on BF and Ryerson before agreeing to anything.
- Recognition that smaller municipalities deserve and require more assistance. Not everything good happens in the GTA or Waterloo Region.
- We need to build the brand of Almaguin as a destination (not only to visit, but also to start or spend the last years of your life). We need to be unique. Can we blend technology and nature in a way that people have GOT to see? That people HAVE to be a part of? We need to think of people's first impression of Almaguin... what do they see when they get off the bus or the train? What's the "famous, must do" stop when you drive into Almaguin (think Webers 'marking' that you're through the cities and heading into Muskoka). I'd like to see us leverage what we've got and no one else does (e.g., dark sky) and what we can build that no one else can (because they're "established" and don't have space for it) - e.g., energy high-tech production and/or building that are designed to be part of natural ecosystems.
  I think this is anonymous... feel free to follow up with me - Joel Baylis. You've got my email :)
- More media coverage

Business Support

- Local small businesses need supports.
- Support for new start ups and existing businesses.
- Shop Canadian, its starts at Home.
- Have all current commercial spaces filled with businesses providing both goods and services to residents and tourists. These occupied spaces would bring a degree of maintenance and beautification to their properties which could be enhanced through municipal programs providing seating, planting, banners, etc. Many of our communities are pretty dismal places to move through.

Housing

- Make housing affordable
- Housing

Housing; Business Support

- Have both Governments give forgivable loans to help Investers buisness people get started on new appts , homes,condos, rental units.

Transportation and Connectivity

- More and more people are cancelling expensive land lines and going to cell phones. Without reliable cell service, an emergency can go unanswered. Also, for businesses with employees on the road, constant loss of signal can be frustrating, or even costly.
- Improved and cost effective connection to transit infrastructure (trains)

Regulations, Taxes, and Environment

- making sure it's on line with environmental stewardship and indigenous rights
- Fee for vacant buildings
- First and foremost we need to clean house in crooked Township offices-have a way to remove Mayors from office -and forensically audit Townships. Reviewing Township bylaws for relevancy, appropriateness and value to the community makes sense...also prosecuting Township employees for crimes. Misuse of taxpayer money should not be tolerated. Once Township governance is cleaned up, prosperity plans can commence and actually BE meaningful. A lot of residents have given up on leadership and distrust is rampant.

More Action

- Fewer Words ..... more Action ..... we do the same survey in 5-6 Years (laughing emoj)
- Take more risk.

Health Care and Social Services

- Keep health care in the region and not have people travelling miles for basic health care needs. IE: Cancer treatments
- Social services

Communication and Involvement

- A community where people can both live and build a career is better positioned for long-term economic growth, stronger social connections, and an improved quality of life for residents of all ages. This would be the single most impactful investment in the region's future.

Tourism

- As the region grows, I hope future development is planned in a way that encourages people to come into our towns instead of meeting all their needs along Highway 11. Our communities should be the destination. Investments in downtown businesses, public spaces, events, and attractions will have a much greater long-term benefit than development that simply serves highway traffic.

Tourism; Business Support

- More tourism and local shopping.

Comments with 3 or more themes mentioned:

Attract New Residents; Marketing; Transportation and Connectivity; Workforce

- If I could improve one thing, it would be our ability to attract and retain young families and skilled workers. Every community depends on the next generation, and without them, businesses struggle to find employees, schools lose enrollment, volunteer organizations decline, and local services become more difficult to sustain.
  To accomplish this, we need a coordinated regional approach that includes attainable housing, reliable high-speed internet, quality childcare, modern infrastructure, and good-paying local employment opportunities. We also need to actively promote Almaguin Highlands as a place where people can build a career while enjoying an exceptional quality of life.
  We already have incredible natural assets, strong communities, dedicated volunteers, and local businesses that care deeply about this region. Our challenge isn't creating a great place to live—it already is. Our challenge is making sure more people know about it and have the opportunity to call it home.
  If we invest in people first, economic growth, business investment, and vibrant communities will naturally follow.

Housing; Workforce; Communication and Involvement

- I would focus on creating stronger pathways for young people, families, and working professionals to build a long-term future in the region.
  A strong future economy depends on whether people can see themselves living, working, raising families, starting businesses, and contributing here for the long term. To strengthen that, we need coordinated investment in workforce development, attainable housing, childcare, youth retention, entrepreneurship, and leadership development.
  Many small communities have great natural beauty, committed local businesses, and strong community spirit, but we need to make it easier for people to stay, return, or relocate here. That means helping youth connect with local career opportunities, supporting trades and entrepreneurship, welcoming newcomers, and ensuring families have access to the services they need.If we can build a region where people do not feel they have to leave in order to grow, succeed, or raise a family, we will strengthen both the economy and the quality of life for decades to come.