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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **RTO12 continues work on commercial air service into the Muskoka Airport**

**(Bracebridge, April 26, 2017)**....RTO12 is continuing to build its case for an airline to consider landing at the Muskoka Airport, says Executive Director James Murphy.

In February 2017, a report entitled ‘Consumer Marketing & Consumer Air Service Communications Plans’ was finalized by the consultant, Enterprise Canada, for the RTO12 Board of Directors. Based on numerous, confidential interviews conducted by Enterprise Canada with airline industry officials and feedback obtained therein, RTO12 has commenced in-depth gathering of intelligence to build a strong business case to make a pitch to an airline in the fall of 2018.

“Despite having sorted out many logistical details, including CATSA requirements and the feasibility of such a project from the airport perspective, we still need to do a lot of preliminary work before we make a pitch to an airline,” says Murphy. “Because airlines require very specific information around origin demand, potential markets and their sizes, and marketing plans to attract mass visitation including package and itinerary development, we will spend the next four months internally gathering as much intelligence as possible to move any discussions further down the decision-making path.”

This means that commercial air service will not be introduced at the airport in 2017, adds Murphy.

“Based on the Enterprise Canada report, we know airlines are open to hearing more about what we have to offer. But the reality is, we are an unknown entity at an unproven airport, so they are not going to make any decisions – which will have enormous associated costs for them - without thorough research and specific information being provided.”

Due to the strict confidentiality required by stakeholders in the airline industry, James Murphy is not able to say which, if any, talks are currently taking place. But he notes that the increased amount of work around international marketing, in particular the Share Your Canada 150 campaign, by RTO12 is intended to show the airline industry that the organization is serious about attracting mass volumes of travelers to Muskoka and the greater region, and about bringing them here by commercial aircraft.

“Our foray into international marketing that targets consumers directly, instead of relying on federal or provincial agencies to get us on the international radar, is intended to give us leverage when we do speak with airlines,” says Murphy. “To that end, our team will be focusing a great deal of attention on this segment, while never neglecting our successful domestic marketing program.”

**About Explorers’ Edge:**

Explorers’ Edge is the regional tourism organization for Algonquin Park, Almaguin Highlands, Loring-Restoule, Muskoka and Parry Sound that is funded by the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Visit [RTO12.ca](http://RTO12.ca) for administrative background, or [ExplorersEdge.ca](http://ExplorersEdge.ca) for travel information.

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