

## **For Immediate Release**

### **Consultant's report on potential for commercial air service into Muskoka Airport to be presented on June 23**

**BRACEBRIDGE, Ont. (June 3, 2016)** — Tourism stakeholders in Muskoka and surrounding areas will soon learn the findings of a report on what would be required to bring commercial air service into the local airport.

Regional Tourism Organization 12, known as Explorers' Edge, the District of Muskoka and the Town of Gravenhurst commissioned a consultant's report earlier this year to examine what is required to ensure the local airport meets federal government regulations and standards for commercial passenger traffic. That report will be presented to the District's Planning & Economic Development Committee on Thursday, June 23, 2016 at the District office.

"The consultants and I spent much of late winter and spring surveying more than 220 stakeholders, including the general public, tourism operators, municipal and district government representatives, various business interests and current airport tenants to gauge their interest in introducing commercial air service to the region, and to gather insight on what they see as the pros and cons of such an initiative," says James Murphy, Executive Director of Explorers' Edge. "From our perspective, we are trying to determine if such a project could have a significant impact on tourism in Muskoka and the surrounding areas. As the organization charged by the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport with building the regional tourism industry, we are very interested in the findings of the report."

The report is being prepared by aviation industry experts InterVISTAS, which was contracted in February 2016 to determine initial stakeholders' interest in commercial air service into the Muskoka Airport. The aim of the report is to determine the economic benefits and costs of opening commercial air service and to specifically determine what is currently required at the airport in order for the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority (CATSA) to designate the airport with pre-board and hold baggage screening capabilities. Approval by CATSA would allow commercial airlines serving international destinations via connecting terminals to expand their service to Muskoka.

This is the first step in a very long process, says Murphy.

"We are looking forward to reading the comprehensive report from InterVISTAS at the end of June," he says, adding the next step— if approved by the District — will be to get the CATSA designation at the airport. "Many airports have sought security screening designation by CATSA and only a few have been successful. There is a criteria to be met in order to get the

designation, and with this report, the consultant will tell us what is needed before we can formally approach CATSA.”

Until the CATSA designation is secured and a framework is developed, officials in Muskoka are not speculating on how the service may look or be delivered.

“We are not currently in a position to negotiate with any airlines, or to articulate a specific plan to fill planes,” says Murphy. “There are a lot of preliminary considerations to take into account before we get to any of that, and we may decide after seeing the initial report that the return on investment is not worth it. A lot remains to be seen, but the InterVISTAS report is definitely the first step on the exploratory path.”

James Murphy will present the consultant’s report to the District’s Planning & Economic Development Committee with InterVISTAS representatives in council chambers on June 23, 2016.

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For all media inquiries or to arrange an interview with James Murphy, Executive Director of RTO12, please contact Stephen Murdoch, Vice President of Enterprise Canada at [smurdoch@enterprisecanada.com](mailto:smurdoch@enterprisecanada.com) or 289-241-3997.