

## For Immediate Release

July 27, 2017

### Progress Update – Economic Opportunities and Transition Study

The Economic Opportunities Taskforce (Counties of Paintearth and Flagstaff, Villages of Forestburg and Halkirk, and the Towns of Coronation and Castor) have retained the consulting services of Urban Systems Ltd. to undertake a review and analysis of the social and economic impacts expected to accrue from the potential closures of the Battle River Generating Station and Paintearth Mine, identify economic opportunities the region can realistically capitalize on and to provide high-level steps to successful transition.

A series of initial town hall meetings and one on one interviews were held in Forestburg and Castor during the week of May 15 -18. A second series of one-on-one interviews and focus group interviews were held in Forestburg and Castor during the week of Jul 17-21. This second series of interviews focused on Regional economic assets and transition opportunities. There were many things learned from both sessions. The Economic Opportunities Taskforce extends a sincere thank you to everyone that participated in these sessions. As an important part of the exercise and to fully appreciate whether the identified assets are indeed competitive or comparative, there must be an appreciation of the external business climate and market conditions. Based on the assets that make the region unique and marketable, Urban Systems is working with external economic development agencies to ensure there is the proper alignment with regional assets and external activities to ensure viable economical opportunities are identified.

#### **NEXT STEPS**

What are the next steps that the Economic Opportunities Taskforce will be undertaking:

- 1) SURVEY – The survey has been a great success and a welcome source of well thought-out contributions. As a result, the closing date of the on-line survey has been extended to the End of August. The on-line survey can be found at:  
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ImapctOpportunity>
- 2) Urban Systems has completed the community visits portion of the study and will continue working with external economic development agencies to further explore opportunities for the region to capitalize on.
- 3) Urban Systems will facilitate a workshop with the Task force in mid September that will allow a review of the report as well as work on strategies and tactics on how best use the impact information and identify high-level regional actions that the Task Force and the communities can employ immediately.
- 4) The Task Force is presently developing a strategy that ensures use of the information collected and economic opportunities identified will be provided to the local citizens, businesses, community organizations and the Government of Alberta.

The Taskforce has set and stayed true to the guiding principle that the asset mapping and economic opportunities report is a community document and is the property of the region's citizens

For any questions, please contact your respective municipality.



The Province of Alberta is working in partnership with the Government of Canada to provide employment support programs and services.