



# Media Release

February 12, 2020

## **Members of the public who were surveyed last Fall, think that addictions and housing are some of the greatest challenges to the safety and well-being of North Hastings residents.**

The seven municipalities in North Hastings are working together to create a Community Safety and Well-being plan. To gain community input and inform the plan the North Hastings Community Safety and Well-being Public Consultation Survey was created. Two versions of the survey were created (Adult Version and Under 16 Version) to get feedback from both adults and youth. From July 26<sup>th</sup> to December 2, 2019 over three hundred surveys were returned, and the results provide unique insights into how some people feel about their safety and well-being in the area.

Respondents came from every municipality in North Hastings. Nature, people, and small town/rural life were identified as the most liked features of the community. Substance misuse (including both drugs and alcohol), followed by drugs specifically, and lack of affordable housing were the main areas of concern. Affordable housing, employment, improvements to people's attitudes/behaviour and youth programs were recommendations to make the community better. While health care, road maintenance, and library were the services that benefited respondents the most. Respondents identified affordable housing, transit, and health care as services they felt were needed.

Nearly two dozen youth completed the Under 16 Survey with the help of the Youth Advisory Board (YAB). The youth reported that people and friends were the most important part of their community. People (i.e. people's behaviour and attitudes) were also the most concerning part of their community. Youth respondents stated that improving the environment was the primary recommendation to make the community better.

The municipalities hired Dr Meara Sullivan (from Carlow/Mayo) to analyse the data and report the findings. Dr Sullivan explained, "This sample was not random, or intended to reflect the overall population of North Hastings. The aim was to explore some of the unique views of individuals most directly affected by risk factors in the region." However, Dr Sullivan noted, "While the responses are not representative, the views are important and the contribution from a large group of people across North Hastings is invaluable."

At present, residents, professionals, agency executives, and people with lived experience are providing advice on the substance of the survey results. In the Spring months ahead, small task

groups will research what the region can do to reduce key risk factors and threats to safety and well-being, and upon completion of early drafts of the Community Safety and Well-being Plan, the public will be invited, once again, to make suggestions for improving it. It is expected that each municipal Council will be asked to review and adopt the report in the fall of 2020, well in advance of January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021, the date by which each municipality must have a Community Safety and Well-being Plan in place.

You can review the report at <https://tinyurl.com/nhcswbreport>

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