

## RESEARCH INFORMATION LETTER

### *Northern Ontario Tourism Development and Recovery Strategy in the Face of the COVID-19 Pandemic*

NORDIK Institute and Algoma University are undertaking the *Northern Ontario Tourism Development and Recovery Strategy in the Face of the COVID-19 Pandemic* study to understand how tourism-based economies have grown under both normal circumstances and unanticipated crises (e.g., COVID-19 Pandemic) and identify strength and barriers to tourism industry.

There are four components to the project: i) survey and/or focus group of visitors to collect demand-side data; ii) survey of tourism business operators to collect supply-side data; iii) analysis of survey results and contextualization within wider literature and social contexts; and iv) a final report for Northern Ontario tourism industry.

**The survey deadline is May 30, 2021.**

We would like to share information about your rights as a participant and answer some frequently asked questions.

#### **Are my answers anonymous?**

The **survey** is completely anonymous meaning, we don't know nor will we be able to identify who you are. The answers we receive are grouped together with all other answers, so we cannot trace the answers back to the person who made them.

Should you wish to provide us your contact information, (it is optional), we would only contact you about this project to share results and future invitations. Your contact information is not connected with your survey response.

If you volunteer to participate in a subsequent **focus group**, which will take place by Zoom, you will be able to see other participants, and they will be able to see you. Your participation in the forum won't be anonymous. But we remind all participants that respecting the confidentiality of the process and not sharing the personal information of participants or what they said directly is important for building and maintaining trust in the process. We are all individually responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of the group. We ask that you recognize that the research team alone cannot guarantee that others in these groups will respect the group's confidentiality.

If you are not willing to respect others' confidentiality, you should not participate in the forum.

#### **What if I don't want to finish the survey or focus group?**

Participation is strictly voluntary, and you may exit the **survey** or close the browser window at any time. Your answers will not be saved. You can skip any questions you prefer not to answer.

Should you participate in a subsequent **focus group**, you can also skip any questions you prefer not to answer, and you may exit the focus group at any time. The focus group Zoom Call will be recorded for the sake of accuracy. The audio will be transcribed. Any identifying information will be omitted, replaced by a random number. Only Dr. Nusrat Aziz, the principal investigator and Prof. Sean Meades, the co-investigator, will have the key. If you decide later that you don't want your contributions included in the research, those contributions can be identified and excluded.

### **What are the risks or discomforts of participating in the survey or focus group?**

The risk of participating in this **survey** is low (including physical, social, psychological, and emotional risks) since all your answers are anonymous and all your answers will be combined with all other answers in the survey. Almost no one will be able to connect any of the answers to the people who made them.

However, as the SurveyMonkey service that we are using to collect answers uses a server located in the United States, it is subject to the USA Freedom of Information Act that permits US law enforcement to seek a court order that allows access to a person's personal information without their knowledge. Apart from this exception, all survey responses are anonymous.

If you volunteer to participate in a subsequent **focus group**, the risk of participating in the forum is low (including physical, social, psychological, and emotional risks), except that it is not anonymous. Because you will be able to see other participants on the Zoom call, and they will be able to see you, your participation in the forum won't be anonymous. But we remind all participants that respecting the confidentiality of the process and not sharing the personal information of participants or what they said directly is important for building and maintaining trust in the process.

### **What are the benefits to me or others?**

The project goal is to identify the means for promoting sustainable growth and fill a knowledge gap in the Northern Ontario tourism industry. The Covid-19 pandemic heavily impacted the tourism industry and may yield long-term changes in consumer demand and preferences. By building on input from your experience in tourism, the research will be able to identify the potential areas and development strategies of Northern Ontario tourism industry.

### **How is the information being stored?**

All digital files relating to this project will be kept on the password protected computers of Dr. Nusrat Aziz and Prof. Sean Meades, at either their home offices or offices at the Algoma University campus, which will remain locked at all times when not present.

### **Is there any pay or compensation for completing the survey or focus group?**

Yes. There will be a 'Draw Prize' for completing the survey. We will be offering two \$100 gift certificates to a local vendor or Northern Ontario tourism outfitter of your choice as well as promotional hats, toques and keychains from Algoma Country and Destination Northern Ontario.

There will be no compensation for participating in the focus group.

### **How will my answers be used?**

Your answers will be used as data to create a research report to help inform the Northern Ontario tourism community and regional economic development strategies. It may also be used for academic publications and presentations.

### **Can I see the study once it is completed?**

The final report will be available publicly on the NORDIK Institute website ([www.nordikinstitute.com](http://www.nordikinstitute.com)). We will also share these pieces with the community directly through our partners. You can also sign up to receive copies directly by providing your email address at the end of the survey/focus group discussion.

### **Who is conducting the study?**

Dr. Nusrate Aziz, Associate Professor, School of Business and Economics, Algoma University

Research Associate, NORDIK Institute

[nusrate.aziz@algomau.ca](mailto:nusrate.aziz@algomau.ca)

Prof. Sean Meades, Lecturer, Department of Community Economic and Social Development, Algoma University

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If you would like to know more about the study or have concerns, please either Dr. Aziz or Prof. Meades.

### **Rights of Survey Participants**

If you have any questions about the rights of study participants, please contact the Research Ethics Board at Algoma University ([ethicsoffice@algomau.ca](mailto:ethicsoffice@algomau.ca))

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