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For Immediate Release

York Region plans 2010 tourism marketing and development *Destination and partnership development programs support strategy*

NEWMARKET – In partnership with the tourism industry, The Regional Municipality of York will deliver a range of marketing and promotional initiatives throughout 2010 with the goal of attracting more visitors to the Region and encourage tourism industry stakeholders to work together to develop new products, tour packages and visitor services.

Initiatives will include a direct mail campaign to residents, promotions at Toronto's Union Station and Viva Bus Terminals, a travel showcase at the York Region Administrative Centre, a media tour and a York Region Tourism Week promotion to celebrate all that York Region has to offer visitors.

"Regional staff will work even more closely with local municipalities and stakeholders to provide assistance with destination planning and product development," said York Region Chairman and CEO Bill Fisch. "Our plan is to build on our tourism potential and maximize our economic opportunities across all nine of our local municipalities."

In addition to the 2010 Tourism Marketing Program, York Regional Council approved two new initiatives, including the York Region Tourism Industry Partnership Development Program and the Long-Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy 2009-2019.

"The Region's role is a very strategic one," said Town of East Gwillimbury Mayor Jamie Young, Chair of York Region's Planning and Economic Development Committee. "The Region has a vital role to play in raising our awareness of the opportunities and challenges so we can work together on strategic initiatives that will make a big difference to the long-term prosperity of the tourism industry and our communities."

The Tourism Industry Partnership Development Program will:

- Strengthen tourism industry partnerships
- Facilitate professional development
- Develop new service offerings and packages
- Research tourism needs and trends
- Track and manage consumer inquiries and information services

The partnership development program is one aspect of the York Region Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy, which describes a sustainable growth scenario for York Region's tourism infrastructure and development. This document is a 10-year blueprint for tourism development in York Region for the 2009 to 2019 period.

This strategy will be released to the tourism industry at the Annual Tourism Industry Conference on November 10th at the Tuscany Event Centre, 222 Edward Street in the Town of Aurora.

Overview of Tourism in York Region

2.87 million visitors spent \$334.86 million on tourism activities, in 2007

70 per cent of these visitors, or 2 million people, were on same-day excursions and 30 per cent or 852,000 were overnight visitors.

2.59 million visitors were from Ontario

Metro Toronto area visitors accounted for 21 per cent of overnight visitors and 26 per cent of same day visitors

Why do visitors stay overnight?

- Visiting friends and relatives (471,000 visits)
- Pleasure (229,000)
- Business travel (78,000)

On an operational level, the 2010 Tourism Marketing Program is designed to deliver innovative, integrated, research-driven marketing, public relations and promotional initiatives in partnership with industry stakeholders that inspire growth in the number of visitors along with the accompanying increase in visitors' spending.

For example, York Region may declare a one-week York Region Tourism Week in June to raise awareness of tourism opportunities in the Region. This promotion would tie in with the Ontario Ministry of Tourism's week-long celebration that encourages "staycations" in the Province.

York Region Tourism proposes to coordinate special events and activities with local municipalities to inform residents and engage their visiting friends and relatives in outdoor adventures, culinary experiences, unique festivals and events, diverse shopping and authentic cultural and heritage attractions that are available in York Region.

This initiative would build on York Region's existing strengths. According to results from Statistics Canada's 2007 Domestic and International Travel Survey, the top three reasons visitors travel to York Region are to attend:

- Festivals and fairs (36,000 visitors)
- Cultural performances (67,000)
- Museums and galleries (49,000)

Another major attractor in York Region is the quality and quantity of golf experiences. To build on this, York Region will consult with the golf industry to develop an enhanced golf program and promotional campaign.

For more information on the Region's tourism initiatives, please visit www.yorktourism.com

For more information on The Regional Municipality of York, please visit www.york.ca

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