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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN UPDATE

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends:

- 1. Receipt of the presentation by Doug Lindeblom, Director, Economic Strategy and Tourism; and**
- 2. Adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report dated December 20, 2011, from the Executive Director, Office of the Chief Administrative Officer.**

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that this report be received for information.

2. PURPOSE

This report provides an update on the status of the Economic Development Action Plan.

3. BACKGROUND

The Growth Plan, which is embodied in the Regional Official Plan, calls for the creation of 280,000 jobs in York Region by 2031. An economic plan is necessary to set longer term goals for economic prosperity and job growth which then guide program development and the setting of shorter term targets. More specifically, there is a need to develop a plan and programs that facilitate the creation and retention of jobs in the Region to meet job creation targets and maintain a healthy and sustainable live-work balance.

The 2005 Economic Strategy established a strong basis for success

The previous 2005 Economic Strategy identified five strategic goals including:

- Create an environment to share information and ideas
- Sustain a high quality workforce
- Strengthen entrepreneurship and industry clusters
- Enhance the quality of place
- Encourage the efficient movement of goods and people

An underlying theme of all the goals was the creation of partnerships to deliver effective programs with the broadest possible reach, creating synergies within and between communities.

The 2005 Economic Strategy has provided a solid foundation for success. The Strategy contained five strategic directions with 90 associated actions, with key accomplishments completed in areas such as:

- Business education events like the ‘Business Innovation in Changing Times’ series in partnership with numerous northern six community stakeholders
- Facilitating the creation or expansion of over 1,000 businesses and over 1,300 jobs through the Small Business Enterprise Centre programs since 2005.
- Developing the York Region Immigration Portal to support the significant immigrant workforce needed to fill future jobs being created.
- Facilitating connections between companies and international markets through the Investment Marketing Program, resulting in the creation of over 400 jobs.
- Facilitating the creation of ventureLAB, York Region’s Regional Innovation Centre to support innovative companies to commercialize products for market.
- Facilitating the transition to Regional Tourism Organization Zone 6 – Central Counties as a larger regional tourism destination.
- Creating a Centres and Corridors focus through the new Official Plan, creating long opportunities for intensified employment and live/work opportunities.
- Developing a Regional Transportation Master Plan that promotes connectivity and goods movement which will attract and support new business ventures.
- Establishing a Smart Commute program to engage York Region businesses.

The new Economic Development Action Plan will build on previous success while recognizing emerging trends and opportunities

York Region’s future economic success depends not only on economic factors but also on physical and social factors which all parts of the Region’s influence. There is a growing awareness of the economic implications of Regional programs which is being reflected in Corporate strategy documents. Going forward, partnerships both within and external to the Corporation will continue to be critical in developing and delivering programs that support economic vitality.

The new Economic Development Action Plan will evaluate where the Region has been and will continue to be successful, and recommend programs, actions and partnerships that will foster success. The Economic Development Action Plan will serve to implement the Strategic Priorities of Council as detailed in guiding documents such as the Corporate Strategic Plan, with an emphasis on creating jobs that are necessary for future economic prosperity.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

The framework for the Economic Development Action Plan is centred on the identification and development of an Innovation Network

In the rapidly changing economic and social environment that exists, prosperity will depend upon the support and development of creative people, companies and institutions – the Innovation Network. The Economic Development Action Plan will be designed to identify, map, connect and support this Network.

Preliminary analysis and consultation suggests that the plan should focus on identifying and connecting innovation assets and promoting the development of new assets, including companies and people.

The Economic Development Action Plan is a seven-phase process

The work plan process for the Economic Development Action Plan was approved by Council on September 22, 2011, with a seven Phase Work Plan Process outlined in *Table 1* below. The Phases are overlapping, with the goal of completing the process with a final Economic Development Action Plan to be presented for Council approval later this year.

Table 1
Work Plan Process

Phase	Actions	Deliverables
1: Mobilize*	Identify possible stakeholders, build roles	Communication Strategy
2: Research*	Gather data to position the Region's global, national and provincial economic position	Regional Economic Profile
3: Vision*	Articulate vision and high level goals	Vision and Goals
4: Analyze*	Analyze Regional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, determine metrics, communicate to stakeholders	Results of Analysis
5: Prioritize	Identify, prioritise and select strategic objectives and actions	Strategic Objectives
6: Implement	Determine action implementation schedules and communicate	Implementation Plan
7: Update	Evaluate and update implementation plan	Updated Action Plan

*Concurrent Phases currently underway.

Staff is actively working on several phases concurrently to engage stakeholders efficiently and take advantage of emerging ideas as they surface. It is important to recognize that as the process proceeds and consultations and research progresses, opportunities to undertake actions are emerging that cannot await the Economic Development Action Plan completion. Staff is actively working with partners to act upon appropriate emerging opportunities, which are identified in the sections following.

Work Plan Process Update

Work is ongoing on Phases 1 through 4 as follows:

Phase 1: Mobilize – Identify and Engage Stakeholders, Stage 1

Stakeholders are being engaged in two stages. The early engagement stage is being undertaken now with external economic development partners and internal York Region staff that are immediately engaged in current program delivery and related activities.

In this regard the following engagement activities are occurring:

- A meeting of Economic Strategy Branch staff was held on September 9, 2011 to identify current program strengths and emerging opportunities that are particularly tied to the Branch's role in facilitating job creation, and to explore general themes related to regional prosperity and innovation.
- An externally facilitated meeting of York Region economic development stakeholders was held on November 4, 2011, to explore the current economic development landscape and explore a future desired economic state. Regional partners included local municipal economic development staff, the Chambers of Commerce and Board of Trade, ventureLAB, York Technology Alliance, Seneca College, York University, York Arts Council and representatives from agri-business.
- A meeting of internal Regional staff from various disciplines is planned for January 13, 2012 to explore emerging themes and how they relate to current and potential Regional initiatives.

This Stage 1 consultation will be completed by end of January, 2012.

Phase 1: Mobilize – Identify and Engage Stakeholders, Stage 2

Once the internal and economic development delivery partner consultation is complete, The emerging themes resulting from the Stage 1 consultation are being consolidated and taken out to affected businesses, business organizations, agencies, and institutions for direct consultation on potential actions that could be implemented. This Stage 2 consultation will be completed by the end of Q1 2012.

Phase 2: Research

Research has commenced in the following areas:

- A scan of ‘innovation-supportive’ activities, including facilities, companies, and institutions are underway, which will assist in identifying areas of future network development and potential partnerships and linkages. This information will be mapped.
- A scan of best practice in regional economic strategy development is underway.
- A draft research report through an external consultant was prepared on the food processing and life sciences manufacturing sub-sectors as part of the Innovation in Manufacturing project and is being incorporated into the Action Plan process. This work includes mapping of the clustering of companies in York Region utilizing the Geomatics Branch resources. Subsequent work is underway to explore key growing and declining sub-sectors in these areas for potential action development.
- Preliminary third party research was identified indicating York Region as a leading Information and Communications Technology (ICT) hub in Canada – subsequent research is now underway in partnership with the York Technology Alliance to explore the full list of York Region ICT companies and identify key growth sub-sectors for further targeting and programming.

Research areas that have emerged through initial stakeholder discussions or have been presented as opportunities for Regional participation and will be pursued include:

- A review of key buildings, real estate and development sites that would support the development and attraction of research focused companies and institutions, as well as knowledge-based industries.
- A review of broadband capabilities across the Region, including mapping current bandwidth availability to identify gaps.
- A review of the location of major employers engaged in research activities and the location of their employees to better understand the relationship between innovative company location needs versus knowledge worker location needs.

The Research Phase of the Economic Development Action Plan process will be concluded by the end of Q1 2012 to coincide with the wrap up of stakeholder consultations.

Phase 3: Vision – Articulating Key Emerging Themes

Early consultations and research have identified several key areas or themes to build an Economic Development Action Plan around. These include:

- Jobs through Targeted Job Creation: Retaining and attracting a full range of employment opportunities, with a program emphasis on knowledge-based jobs that could locate anywhere/be at risk.

- Real Estate: Accommodating targeted business growth needs through land and buildings; ensuring appropriate built form opportunities such as office developments and research parks are promoted; protecting employment lands.
- Broadband Infrastructure: Identifying gaps, needs, and network mapping to ensure this critical business-supportive infrastructure is provided for.
- The Innovation Network: Connecting businesses to opportunities that will create products and services and drive innovation within companies; big companies mentoring small ones to leverage solutions; bringing innovation community thought leaders together to identify and develop solutions and promote the Region jointly.
- Enhancing the Post-Secondary Presence: Elevating existing post-secondary investments and partnerships within the Region; identifying potential new opportunities to attract research-based activities to the Region through post-secondary partners.
- Developing a Common Message: Developing and pushing out a message to the world about what York Region has to offer, and rallying everyone around that message so that consistent positive selling occurs at all levels with all stakeholders.

Phase 4: Analyze – refining themes and establishing a focus for action items

Staff is now exploring these emerging themes through the research and comparing the results with best practices and will prepare a document articulating the opportunities for use in future targeted consultations to establish a focus for future Economic Development Action Plan components.

Current Actions Underway

The process has coincided with several initiatives that staff is supporting as they relate directly to the development of the Economic Development Action Plan. These included:

- The Region is supporting the development of a thought leader forum designed to bring key business leaders together on a regular basis to identify areas of focus in innovation and help flesh out possible solution paths.
- Economic Strategy Branch staff is collaborating with the Strategic Service Integration and Policy Branch of Community and Health Services to address the needs of internationally educated professionals through a forum scheduled tentatively for the spring of 2012.
- Economic Strategy Branch staff is working with ventureLAB to develop industry led solution networks that will drive commercialized product and service development.

Link to Key Council-approved Plans

The Region has taken positive Council-adopted steps to recognize economic prosperity and vitality as key to the Region's future. The approved Corporate Strategic Plan identifies completion of the Economic Development Action Plan as a major activity for

this term of Council under the section entitled “Increase the Economic Vitality of the Region”.

Additionally, Vision 2026 recognizes “A Vibrant Economy” as one of its eight goals stating “In 2026, York Region will be renowned for its advanced technology, innovative businesses, supportive business infrastructure and highly skilled resident workforce.” Similarly, the draft version of Vision 2051 includes “An Innovation Economy” as one of eight goal areas.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Economic Development Action Plan is being undertaken primarily with in-house resources. External consultants and service providers are being engaged for portions of the research and process facilitation work. All related initiatives are included either in the approved 2011 budget or the proposed 2012 Planning and Development Services Department budget.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Local municipalities are an integral component and key partners of the Region’s economic strategic direction and will continue to be included in the consultation process and implementation of the Regional Economic Action Plan. Many of the local municipalities have, or are in the process of, producing Economic Strategy documents. Each municipal Economic Strategy will be reviewed, discussed with the municipal Economic Development Offices, and taken into consideration in the final document to ensure that the Regional Economic Development Action Plan is consistent with municipal plans.

7. CONCLUSION

The Economic Development Action Plan is being built on the solid foundation provided by the 2005 Economic Strategy. Building on successful programs and partnerships, the Economic Development Action Plan’s framework will centre on the identification and development of an Innovation Network in the Region for the purpose of facilitating the creation and retention of the jobs necessary to the Region’s future economic prosperity.

Work on the Economic Development Action Plan is progressing through the Council approved seven phase process, with the first four phases being undertaken concurrently. Early stage stakeholder engagement with economic development program delivery partners has identified a number of emerging themes. Staff will explore these emerging themes and refine them into actionable items through secondary stakeholder engagement and additional research and analysis.

For more information on this report, please contact Doug Lindeblom, Director, Economic Strategy at Ext. 1503.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.



Economic Development Action Plan

Presentation to
Planning & Economic Development Committee

Doug Lindeblom
Director, Economic Strategy
January 11, 2012



Slide 1

2005 Economic Strategy



Success Through Partnerships



Slide 2

Innovation is the Key to Future Success



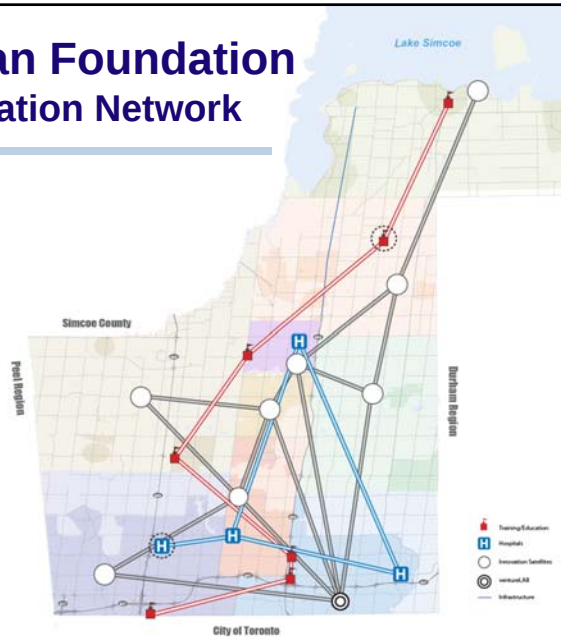
People who Innovate are Driving Change



Slide 3

New Action Plan Foundation Building an Innovation Network

Council Approved
Direction
September 2011



Slide 4

Consultation is Underway



Direct consultation with Regional Hospitals & Academic Institutions



Slide 5

Consultation is Underway



Seneca

YORK
UNIVERSITY

YORK
REGION
Arts
COUNCIL

ventureLAB

YTA
York Technology Alliance

Newmarket
Chamber of Commerce

Richmond Hill
Chamber of Commerce

AURORA
Chamber of Commerce

East Gwillimbury
Chamber of Commerce

Markham
Chamber of Commerce

Richmond Hill
Chamber of Commerce

VAUGHAN
Chamber of Commerce

WILLOWDALE
Chamber of Commerce

Consultation sessions with Regional Economic Development Stakeholders - Nov 4th, 2011



Slide 6

Emerging Themes

1. The right real estate
2. Innovation infrastructure
 - Bandwidth
 - Innovation hubs
3. Growing the post secondary research presence
4. Connecting business with opportunity
5. Creating a common (unified) message
6. Creating THE place



Slide 7

Refining the Themes

Develop Actions



Further Outreach to (January – March)

- Targeted business and associations
- Boards and Chambers
- Municipal economic advisory groups

**Draft Action Plan in late Spring 2012
Final Action Plan before Council later this year!**



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