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COMMUNITY SOCIAL DATA STRATEGY UPDATE AND 2006 CENSUS RELEASES

The Community Services and Housing Committee recommends that:

- 1. the presentations by Cordelia Abankwa-Harris, Director of Policy and Program Support; Christina Harding, Senior Program Analyst; Brenda Mulroy, Manager of Planning and Research, York Regional Police; Carla Adams, Executive Director, Aurora Chamber of Commerce and Leslie Walker, Chief Executive Officer, Richmond Hill Chamber of Commerce regarding the Community Social Data Strategy Update and 2006 Census Releases be received; and**
- 2. the recommendations contained in the following report, January 30, 2008, from the Commissioner of Community and Health Services be adopted.**

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. This report be circulated to the York Region Consortium and Community Reference Group members, the area municipalities and the Human Services Planning Coalition.
2. Staff report back to Committee and Council on the progress of the 2008/2009 work plan for the York Region Consortium under the Community Social Data Strategy as appropriate.

2. PURPOSE

This report provides Committee and Council with an update on work being undertaken by York Region in partnership with the York Region Consortium. The report also provides preliminary observations on York Region's socio-economic trends based on the Statistics Canada 2006 Census data that is currently available.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The Community Social Data Strategy helps us understand and predict socio-economic trends

York Region, along with fourteen municipalities across Canada, participates in the Canadian Council on Social Development's Community Social Data Strategy. The Community Social Data Strategy provides a gateway for municipalities and community-

based organizations to access data from Statistics Canada to identify and better understand the social and economic trends within their individual communities. Understanding current trends and using data to predict future trends helps ensure that limited resources are effectively deployed and planned for.

3.1.1 The York Region Consortium oversees use of social data

As a condition of obtaining the Census and other data, municipalities must partner with organizations within their communities to form consortiums. York Region's Consortium, as the legal owner of the Community Social Data Strategy data, decides what will be produced and how the data will be shared with the community. While there is a lead data/product developer, all Consortium members contribute staff time and financial resources to purchase data and for product development.

3.1.2 Non-profit, business, planning and human services sectors provide strategic community input through the Community Reference Group

The Consortium seeks broader community input and consultation on all its products by inviting organizations from the non-profit, business, planning and human services sectors through a Community Reference Group. This allows organizations that have access to a broad range of partner agencies and organizations, but who may not be eligible to be Consortium members to participate. The Community Reference Group collaborates to determine the types of data that will be most useful to a broad spectrum of organizations and the general public, that is most responsive to York Region's changing demographics, and that will promote a better understanding of York Region's social and economic make-up.

3.1.3 Composition and leadership

The Consortium and the Community Reference Group are co-chaired by Mayor Tony Van Bynen, Town of Newmarket, and Daniele Zanotti, CEO, United Way of York Region.

York Region's Consortium is comprised of:

- The Regional Municipality of York (lead Consortium member)
- United Way of York Region
- York Catholic District School Board
- York Region District School Board
- York Regional Police

The Community Reference Group is comprised of:

- The Consortium
- The Aurora Chamber of Commerce
- Big Brothers/Big Sisters York Region
- Catholic Community Services of York Region
- Human Services Planning Coalition
- Town of Markham Planning and Urban Design Department
- Vaughan Chamber of Commerce

- York South Simcoe Training and Adjustment Board

3.2 Products produced and how community social data is being used in York Region

The Community and Health Services Department, under the direction of the Consortium, and in consultation with the Community Reference Group, has produced a series of extremely well received products including, the report *Community Snapshots: Recent Immigrants Living in York Region*, the brochure *What if York Region were a Village of Just 100 People?*, a statistical website and most recently, a series of four Fact Sheets entitled *Just the Facts About Your Community*.

Feedback received through the Consortium and Community Reference Group indicates that the data provided through the Community Social Data Strategy is being used widely for service and program planning and advocacy purposes. It has provided a wealth of information that would be cost-prohibitive for the majority of agencies to purchase individually. So far the data has:

- **Provided supporting information for advocacy initiatives**

The Consortium's first major report, *Community Snapshots: Recent Immigrants Living in York Region* made many aware for the first time just how diverse York Region is and gave hard evidence of historic underfunding of programs and services for recent immigrants. Information contained in the report was used by the Human Services Planning Coalition to support its successful requests for the funding of the Welcome Centre in Vaughan (\$4.1 million) and the Web Portal (\$300,000).

York Region has also earned a seat on the Municipal Immigration Committee, established to support the Canada Ontario Immigration Agreement. York Region is playing an active role in these discussions. Being at this table, the Region is in a position to communicate and make the case for more funding to help integrate newcomers in the economic and social life of our communities.

- **Helped agencies, organizations and area municipalities to understand the needs of the diverse population of York Region**

The first of a series of fact sheets entitled *Just the Facts about your Community* was released in November 2007. The fact sheets provide profiles of youth, seniors, families in general and the low income population. The facts sheets have been widely distributed to local municipalities, community organizations, federal and provincial government offices, the business community and to the general public for information and for use in decision making and planning.

- **Informed the general public about the changing nature of York Region's population to improve cultural awareness and sensitivity**

The Community Snapshots Report on recent immigrants received local and national news media coverage and generated a number of journal articles. Feedback indicates

that the report is being used for service planning and advocacy and educational purposes.

- **Provided a baseline for monitoring socio-economic trends**

The data acquired through the Community Social Data Strategy was primarily Statistics Canada's 2001 Census data. The 2006 Census data will enable York Region and other Consortium members to analyze differences between the 2001 and 2006 Census periods to identify and better understand trends, possible issues, and service planning implications.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Through the Community Social Data Strategy, the Region and other Consortium members get to more extensive, sophisticated data at more discreet levels of geography than would normally be available to the general public. This allows a deeper understanding of changes that are occurring and could occur in our communities. This special data order will be available in late 2008 or early 2009, after Statistics Canada completes its schedule of general public releases in May 2008.

The Community and Health Services Department collaborates with the Planning and Development Services Department to examine and verify the data.

4.1 Statistics Canada's 2006 Census Data is being released in phases What has been released to date?

Statistics Canada is releasing data from the 2006 Census in phases. The Planning and Development Services Department has reported to Council on Statistics Canada's Census releases regarding:

- Population and dwelling counts (released March, 2007)
- Age and sex data (released July, 2007)
- Marital status; families and households; housing and shelter costs (released September, 2007)

Since then, Statistics Canada has released data related to:

- Language, mobility and migration, immigration and citizenship (December 4, 2007)
- Aboriginal peoples (January 15, 2008)

The remainder of Statistics Canada's 2006 Census data intended for general release to the public will be released over the next few months. Future releases include:

- Labour, Place of Work, Education, Language (March 4, 2008)
- Ethnic Origin and visible minority (April 2, 2008)
- Income and earnings, housing and shelter costs (May 1, 2008)

4.2 What is the 2006 Census telling us about our community so far?

The following provides some preliminary observations about the changing demographics and socio-economic characteristics of York Region's residents from the 2006 Census data released to date.

York Region has a relatively young and fast growing population

- York Region grew 22.4% from 729,254 in 2001 to 892,712 in 2006 making it the highest growth rate for a Census Division in Ontario and the third highest in Canada. Peel Region, which had the second highest growth rate in Ontario, grew by 17.2% and the City of Toronto grew by less than 1%.
- Most of York Region's growth is due to a rapid increase in York Region immigrant population. The GTA has the highest number of immigrants in Canada but most growth was in the 905 municipalities.
- Like the rest of Canada, York Region's population is aging with an increased number of residents above age 65; however, York Region's population in all age groups has increased since 2001. In fact, York Region has the highest growth rate in Ontario for all age groups including children between 0 and 14 years where most Census Divisions are experiencing a decline in this age group. This will increase the demand for Regional social and health programs used by residents of all ages.
- The Census Divisions with the highest number of children in Ontario are the City of Toronto, Peel Region and York Region. These are also the top three Census Divisions for number of immigrants and recent immigrants.
- With approximately one in ten residents in York Region above age 65, York Region is still a relatively young community compared to the rest of Canada which has approximately one in seven Canadians in this age group.
- The prevalence of most types of disabilities increases with age. In 2006, an estimated 138,370 York Region residents reported having a disability. (This information is based on Participation Activity Limitation Survey (PALS) 2006; PALS not available at the Regional level. Estimation was obtained by applying the Ontario rate of 15.5%.) As York Region's population ages it will be important to design programs and services that are accessible and to continue to support the work done through the Region's accessibility planning process.

The traditional family structure is dominant but lone parent families are increasing

- Unlike most of Canada the traditional family structure is still dominant in York Region, with 82.7% of census families being married couples compared to 73.9% in Ontario. This is also the highest proportion of married couples in the GTA.

- Data for couple families indicates that 67.2% of married couples in York Region have children, compared to 46.0% in Canada overall – this is the largest proportion for Census Divisions in Canada. This impacts the need for affordable and accessible childcare in the Region.
- The number of lone parent families grew by 37.2% from 22,275 in 2001 to 30,565 in 2006. Lone parent families are at greater risk of poverty than two-parent families and rely upon social assistance and social housing to a greater degree.
- 10.4% (18,400) of York Region children 14 years and under live in lone parent families and 82.2% of these children live in households led by women. Female lone parent families are at high risk of poverty and are the highest user group of Community and Health Services programs.
- The number of people living alone increased by 32.9% between 2001 and 2006 from 26,210 to 34,830. This may be linked to the increase in the number of people who are 65 years and older. At 31.1%, elderly women (75 years and older) are the highest proportion of female one-person households. Elderly women are a group that are at high risk of living in poverty and at higher risk of living with a disability. This will impact the need for social programs and services that are accessible.

The Housing Rental Market continues to tighten

- In 2006 there were 275,680 private dwellings in York Region compared to 223,185 in 2001. Renters have decreased from 13.7 % in 2001 to 11.7% in 2006 and are the lowest proportion in the GTA. This indicates that the rental market continues to tighten in York Region and low income households may have fewer options for housing.

Almost half of York Region's residents are immigrants

- In 2001, 40.0% of York Region's total population were immigrants. By 2006 the immigrant population represented 43.0% of the total population. There are now 380,535 immigrants that make York Region their home.
- Between 2001 and 2006 the number of recent immigrants (those who immigrated to Canada between 2001 and 2006) grew by 7.0%. There are now 46,460 recent immigrants, living in York Region – third highest number in Ontario after the City of Toronto and Peel Region.
- In 2005, over 9,000 people moved to York Region from another country – representing about 27.8% of the Region's population growth. More custom data is needed to determine how many of these external migrants are recent immigrants.

York Region residents speak a variety of languages

- Approximately 35,000 York Region residents have no knowledge of English or French. This is a 49.8% increase from the last Census in 2001.

- The number of residents who speak a non-official language at home has increased by 151.6% since 2001 from 93,955 to 236,430.
- The top five non-official languages spoken in York Region homes are: Chinese languages (40.5%), Italian (8.4%), Russian (7.9%), Persian (6.0), and Tamil (5.0%).

Aboriginal Peoples

- In 2006, the number of residents who identify themselves as Aboriginal represents 0.4% of York Region's total population. This proportion hasn't changed since 2001. However, the actual number of Aboriginal people has increased from 2,560 to 3,595 or 40%.
- Compared to the other GTA municipalities (Halton Region, Peel Region, York Region, Durham Region, City of Toronto) York Region has the lowest proportion of Aboriginal Identity residents. The municipality with the highest proportion is Durham Region at 1.2%.

4.3 The bottom line – what the information means for our communities

Even though all the data has not yet been released, it is clear that York Region's population is continuing to grow and became increasingly diverse in many ways including age, family makeup, ethnic origin and languages spoken. This diversity is unique and apparent even between local municipalities in the Region. What this means is that a "one size fits all" approach cannot be used for program/service planning and delivery. Different municipalities will have different needs and considerations. In general, some of the service planning and delivery implications of such rapidly increasing growth and diversity include:

- Removing barriers and increasing accessibility of existing and future York Region programs and services. Some of this is being addressed through the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* planning processes but, as York Region becomes more diverse it will be important to also look at how the Region can decrease other types of barriers such as language.
- Recognizing that the familial make-up of York Region is changing and that there is an increasing need for mixed housing options including affordable housing. Demands for mixed housing will be greatest felt in the southern more urban municipalities which are experiencing the highest rates of growth.
- Continuing to develop a transit system that is responsive and reflects not only where growth is but where people need to go whether it's to school, to work or to access local community services.
- Promoting communities that are welcoming and inclusive. As a regional government we can help educate the general public of the changing face of York Region through

products such as “*Just the Facts about Your Community*” and the benefits that diversity brings to local communities and neighbourhoods.

- Working collaboratively with all levels of government. Given that municipalities are the level of government responsible for delivering many of the social services funded and mandated by the Province; there is a need for York Region municipalities to work closely with each other and with the provincial and federal governments in understanding who residents are and what types of programs and supports they need.
- Understanding that a rapidly growing and diversifying population not only impacts municipal governments but also impacts other organizations, such as community agencies, schools, businesses, police and hospitals. It will important for all to understand who their new “customers” are in order to plan for the future.

Clearly it is important that the Region continue to advocate for program and service funding from other levels of government. Growth among all age groups in York Region also emphasizes the importance for the Region to better understand the needs of its residents so that it can provide responsive and effective programs reflective of the diverse needs of our growing population. This data and analysis that examines its implications can provide the information needed to do this and the hard facts to advocate effectively.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no immediate financial implications of this report. The Census data released to date is part of Statistic’s Canada general public release and is made available by the Federal government at no cost to the Region. The data obtained by the York Region Consortium through the Community Social Data Strategy is a special order of custom cross-tabulations that permits more detailed analysis and is collectively purchased by the York Region Consortium and its members. This has resulted in cost savings to all participants. York Region’s portion of the cost is within the Community and Health Services Department’s existing base budget.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The knowledge gained through the Community Social Data Strategy is intended to support and to promote service and community program design that is more responsive to York Region’s changing demographics in all nine local municipalities. All products that the Consortium creates focus on increasing knowledge of the social and economic conditions of the diverse communities in York Region and are distributed across York Region, to the area municipalities, community agencies, the business community and other stakeholders.

Attachment 1 provides some examples of the diversification among the nine local municipalities.

7. CONCLUSION

The goal of the Community Social Data Strategy is to share data as broadly as possible with community agencies and municipalities that could not otherwise afford this type of data. A number of tools, such as reports, fact sheets, brochures, presentations and a web site have been developed to support this overall goal.

The diversity of the organizations that are a part of the Community Reference Group, including the involvement of the business community, shows the broad appeal that looking at data from the perspective of community impact has. It also demonstrates an interest in the Region's rapidly changing social make-up and how this information can be used to improve access to service and understand and respond to demographic trends.

The knowledge gained through leading product development has been invaluable to the Community and Health Service Department. The data supports the Department's mandate of planning and delivering community and health services that are more responsive to York Region's true needs. All Community Social Data Strategy products are developed with a focus on increasing the Region's, community agencies', and organizations' knowledge of the social and economic conditions of the diverse communities in York Region.

In 2008, we will be analyzing the 2006 Census information and consulting with the York Region Consortium and Community Reference Group on future research and analysis priorities that will help to increase knowledge of the social and economic trends of the diverse communities in York Region. Staff will report back to Committee and Council as appropriate.

For more information about this report, please contact Cordelia Abankwa-Harris, Extension 2150, Director, Policy and Program Support Services in the Community and Health Services Department.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachment referred to in this clause is attached to this report.)