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RESULTS OF THE YORK REGION CEO FORUM, *THE ECONOMICS OF GOING GREEN*

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report dated October 31, 2007, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services:

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Economic Development Staff and the Chair's office plan the 2nd annual York Region CEO Forum to be held in the fall of 2008.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Regional Council on the results of the York Region CEO Forum, *The Economics of Going Green*, held on September 25, 2007.

3. BACKGROUND

The 2005 Economic Strategy identified five strategic directions, one entitled *Enhance the Quality of Place*, which included action plans to promote a balanced approach to economic development that enhances environmental sustainability, economic vitality and quality of life.

York Region's commitment to quality of place is enshrined in Vision 2026, the long term plan that establishes the foundations of York Region's growth. Maintaining a healthy environmental balance is a key to the Region's prosperity and quality of life. Research conducted in 2007 by Larter Advertising, in the preparation of a York Region Economic Development Marketing & Communications Strategy, identified that *Quality of Life* is a key factor influencing site selection.

During the past five years York Region has undertaken a number of significant initiatives and programs such as the York Region Sustainability Strategy and the York Region Greening Strategy which demonstrate the Region's commitment to preserving the environment and benefit the Region's land, air and water. The Region demonstrates leadership in sustaining quality of life through its environmental stewardship. It has significant protected lands (69%) concurrent with the challenges of growth. York Region companies are also embracing "green" strategies and the local municipalities are actively promoting green initiatives.

Environmental products and services are an emerging sector cutting across industry classifications in a high growth, global, growth market. The environmental sector includes businesses that produce goods and provide services used to measure, prevent, limit or correct damage to water, air and soil. Currently there are over 230 York Region companies that are in the environmental sector.

The York Region CEO Forum was a direct, proposed action emanating from the *Economic Strategy, June 2005* to foster ongoing opportunities for sharing information and exchanging ideas on economic issues and to encourage participation from the business community.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

York Region CEO Forum Conference Theme

Government environmental policies, business sustainability challenges and consumer interest in green initiatives are converging to create opportunities for York Region organizations to profitably capitalize on these trends. The Economic Development Branch convened the York Region CEO Forum with the theme, ***The Economics of Going Green***, on September 25th at the Paramount Conference Centre in Vaughan, focusing on the benefits for business to invest in the financial and human capital needed to enhance competitiveness, sustainability and profitability to meet today's global challenges. It offered a rich and diverse group of executive level speakers, who highlighted the value created by implementing environmentally sound business practices. A copy of the Agenda is attached (*Attachment 1*).

Presentations

York Region's Director of Economic Strategy and Tourism, Patrick Draper, welcomed the attendees and Mayor James Young provided an introduction of Chairman Bill Fisch who gave the opening remarks focusing on the Region's Sustainability Strategy. The speakers and topics of the presentations included:

- Brent Kopperson of the Windfall Ecology Centre who spoke on global climate change and the Kyoto Accord.
- Dan Fortin, President of IBM Canada, presented IBM's site naturalization projects and the interest and commitment of his employees to the environment.
- Kevin Brady, a partner in Five Winds International Consulting provided his company's model of how to handle the complex issues of integrating environmental and social factors into the core decision making process for companies.
- As an Ontario leader in the private equity sector, John Cook, Managing Partner of Investeco Capital Corporation, spoke about opportunities for emerging entrepreneurs in the environmental sector.
- Scott Smith, CEO of J. D. Smith & Sons Ltd., Vaughan, who provide integrated third-party distribution and logistic services, spoke about his company being a leader

in transportation and third-party logistics. He explained how the company had overcome challenges to be awarded the Supply Chain & Logistics Canada (SCL)'s first-ever Green Supply Chain Award for 2007.

- The session ended with a final presentation by James Savage, Director of Communications for Philips Electronics Ltd. who made an official announcement of Philips' new Environmental Strategy and commitment to the environment.

Greg Sorbara, Ontario's Minister of Finance, was the guest speaker at the luncheon which featured a menu of local food that had been sourced within the GTA.

4.1 Attendees

The York Region CEO Forum was very well attended. Registrants comprised 140 individuals, executives from York Region businesses with 50 or more employees, Mayors and Regional Councillors, representatives from the Chambers of Commerce/Board of Trade, municipal economic development representatives, environmental service providers and York Region staff.

4.2 Exhibitors

Ten environmental service providers participated as exhibitors at the York Region CEO Forum. As providers of programs and services interconnected with the environmental sector, they offered registrants an opportunity to learn more about energy conservation, environmental education, sustainability and recycling initiatives, and related funding opportunities. The exhibitors included:

- Ontario's Environmental Leaders Program, a provider of incentives to environmental leaders who commit to meeting beyond compliance environmental targets and motivates continuous improvement.
- Ontario Centre for Environmental Technology Advancement, (OCETA Toronto/York Region Sustainability) - a private sector, not-for-profit Ontario Corporation with a mandate of providing business services to entrepreneurs and start-up companies (SMEs). They assist in the process of commercialization of new environmental technologies and support sustainable economic development.
- York Region Smart Commute non-profit Transportation Management Associations, (TMA's): Smart Commute 404-7 Markham and Richmond Hill, Smart Commute North Toronto-Vaughan, Smart Commute Newmarket.
- The Windfall Ecology Centre, a community based, non-profit organization that brings environmental solutions to businesses, institutions, and communities.
- Bullfrog Power, a leading provider of 100% green electricity, with service available to Ontario residents and businesses.
- Local Food Plus, a non-profit organization that brings farmers and consumers to the table to share in the benefits of environmentally and socially responsible food production.
- York Region Departments and programs: Transportation and Works/ VIVA, Waste Management, Corporate Energy and Water for Tomorrow.

4.3 Feedback

After the York Region CEO Forum, an electronic survey (*Attachment 2*) was sent, via the Regional Chair's office, to those who registered at the event. The following feedback was received from the respondents, which includes over 50% of the company executives who attended the event.

- 77.14% believe that the theme "The Economics of Going Green" is extremely important/very important to their organization.
- 77.15% of the survey respondents considered the presentations made by the speakers to be extremely important/very important.
- 42.86% found the information made available by the exhibiting environmental support organizations to be important.
- An overwhelming 82.86% indicated that, as a result of attending the York Region CEO Forum, they learned new ideas that could be introduced into their organizations.
- 100% of the respondents reported that the York Region CEO Forum was a good opportunity to meet and network with other York Region executives.
- 97.14% indicated that they would be interested in participating in a future York Region CEO Forum in 2008.

Some of the more general comments on the York Region CEO Forum were:

- *"The Forum was very well organized and the presentations were very informative and well thought of in informing the business community of the competitive advantage of opting for greener practices."*
- *"Excellent turnout."*
- *"It (the CEO Forum) demonstrated some urgency for communities to become involved in pushing this positive initiative forward."*
- *"I identified the people that we need to become involved with in York Region, to push for a more focused effort involving experts on the subject."*
- *"Hats off to the speakers that have actually accomplished Green or that have assisted others in accomplishing green."*
- *"Consider having representatives from the LEED Program, Canada Green Build Council participate in the future."*

4.4 Relationship to Vision 2026

York Region's commitment to quality of place is enshrined in Vision 2026, the long term plan that establishes the foundations of York Region's growth. Encouraging existing businesses to leverage "green" business practices and attracting high quality new investments from firms committed to sustainability respond to the goals of Vision 2026 to enhance the environment while promoting a vibrant economy.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Costs to plan and organize the York Region CEO Forum, amounted to \$36,629 and were derived from the 2007 Economic Development budget. They include costs for project management and production of materials, costs for room rental and lunch at the Paramount Conference Centre and services and rental of audio visual equipment.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The area municipalities are actively promoting green initiatives within York Region. The York Region CEO Forum was well attended by municipal economic development staff and members of Regional Council.

The York Region CEO Forum was an action directly resulting from the *Economic Strategy, June 2005* to foster ongoing opportunities for sharing information and exchanging ideas. It was also an extended outcome of the Business Wisdom Exchange meetings that were held in partnership with local municipal economic development staff and York Region business executives in 2006.

7. CONCLUSION

The CEO Forum was an effective vehicle to communicate the environmental sustainability message to business leaders in York Region. The feedback received will be used to plan for and improve upon the context for a 2008 CEO Forum and to develop supplementary initiatives to maintain the momentum on the “*Economics of Going Green*” as part of ongoing economic development marketing activities.

For further information about this report, please contact Catherine Resentera, Economic Development Officer at (905) 830-4444 ext. 1562 or catherine.resentera@york.ca.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachments referred to in this clause are attached to this report.)