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2009 YORKLINK DIRECTORY

The Community Services and Housing Committee recommends

- 1. receipt of the deputation from Pauline Costello, Community Resource Team, York Region District School Board**
- 2. adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report dated February 24, 2009, from the Commissioner of Community and Health Services.**

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. Regional Council approve the printing and release of the 2009 10th Anniversary edition of the YorkLink Directory.

2. PURPOSE

The YorkLink Directory and website are well-used, effective, and appreciated community resources serving York Region residents and community service providers.

This report will provide an update on the 2009 edition and seeks Council approval for the Directory's printing and release.

3. BACKGROUND

First issue printed and website launched in 2000

In December 1998, Regional Council approved the development of an annual community services directory to inform residents of services available in the Region and to help agencies deliver these services to the people of York Region by offering a centralized source of information.

The first issue of YorkLink was printed in 2000, and in the same year an electronic database was developed to store the data and supplemented the print directory with a searchable, online directory.

YorkLink celebrates 10 years and continues to provide York Region with information about community services

Marking its 10th anniversary with the 2009 issue, YorkLink continues to provide residents and community agencies with up-to-date, comprehensive information about local community services. Directory listings contain descriptions of the services each agency provides as well as contact information. Where applicable, listings also cite the availability of accessibility features such as elevators, barrier-free washrooms and parking spaces for people with disabilities.

To celebrate YorkLink's 10th anniversary we will have a celebratory display in the Great Hall of the Administrative Centre when YorkLink is distributed and as needed at other appropriate locations and dates throughout 2009.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

YorkLink helps people find the supports and assistance they need

YorkLink continues to be a highly regarded and effective tool that helps people find the supports and assistance they need. YorkLink is used by people and agencies across the Region including community agencies, settlement agencies for new immigrants, child care centres, school staff, doctors' offices and others. Reaction from the public is very positive and people comment specifically on how useful the printed edition is for those who work outside an office, and how helpful it is to search for agencies on the website.

Available in printed format or through the York Region website

The Directory of over 700 community agencies and organizations is available in a printed format or through the York Region website. Print copies are distributed to local community agencies, libraries, schools, government offices, and information kiosks, which use YorkLink to connect their clients to other community services. Copies are also available to the general public upon request.

Translation assistance is available in the Region's top spoken languages

Translation services are available to meet the needs of the Region's culturally diverse population. YorkLink includes translation assistance in the Region's top spoken languages to assist residents who do not read English. Translation assistance is provided in Arabic, Cantonese/Mandarin, Farsi, French, Hindi, Italian, Korean, Russian, Spanish, Tamil, Urdu and Vietnamese.

Promotion of YorkLink and the online directory includes print ads and presentations in the community

As in previous years, to promote the online version of the directory and increase awareness about the YorkLink website, print ads promoting the online directory were placed, using two highly-visible approaches, across York Region:

- A black and white ad was placed in each of the nine local municipalities' fall parks and recreation guides, which were distributed to York Region residents. These publications are widely distributed and give the ads a longer shelf-life than placing the ads in other publications.
- Full-colour ads were placed in York Region Transit buses that travel in each municipality. The ads ran for eight weeks, from the middle of September to the middle of November.

In March 2008, the Community and Health Services Department was invited by Labour Community Services, a Project of the Toronto and York Region Labour Council, to train students in the Union Counsellor Program on the use of the YorkLink directory. Labour Community Services has identified YorkLink as a key source of community information for Union Counsellors working in York Region.

In 2009, 4,500 copies of the directory will be printed to meet the continued demand from front-line staff and community agencies for the printed directory.

To promote the use of the online version, print ads will again be placed in York Region Transit buses and in local municipality parks and recreation guides. In addition to advertising, the following initiatives are also planned:

- An email blast will be sent to all agencies listed in YorkLink reminding them of the features available on the YorkLink website, and inviting them to a networking event for YorkLink agencies.
- An announcement about the 2009 Directory will be added to the News and Information section on the main York Region web page.
- Presentations will be given to groups with links to the broader community, including the York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee, Labour Community Services, and other community groups upon request. These presentations will promote YorkLink to representatives from organizations across the Region, provide a valuable opportunity to highlight the enhancements made to the online version and printed directory, as well as provide an opportunity to receive feedback that can be used to enhance future editions of YorkLink.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

YorkLink meets increased demand without an increase in budget

The cost of the YorkLink Directory is included within the Community and Health Services Department's budget. Through continued marketing, community outreach, and an increased web presence, the Department has been able to meet the increased demand of residents and community service agencies for access to YorkLink information, while managing this within the branch budget.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Community service agencies and organizations from every local municipality are included in the YorkLink Directory. Residents, community agencies, school boards, and government agencies from every municipality benefit from the information contained in the Directory, as do the municipal governments which are also listed in YorkLink.

The majority of printed Directories are delivered to local community agencies, libraries, schools, government offices, and information kiosks, which use YorkLink to connect their clients with important community services. Printed copies are distributed to members of the general public upon request.

7. CONCLUSION

YorkLink is an effective, highly-regarded community resource. Now in its tenth year, YorkLink continues to provide residents, school boards, other levels of government, and community agencies with up-to-date, comprehensive information about important community services.

For more information on this report, please contact Cordelia Abankwa-Harris, Managing Director, Strategic Service Integration and Policy Branch, at Ext. 2150.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.