

5

YORK REGION TOURISM WEB SITE - ESOLUTIONS GROUP LTD. BLANKET PURCHASE ORDER EXTENSION

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report dated January 14, 2008, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services:

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Blanket Purchase Order with eSolutions Group Ltd., for the York Region tourism web site, be extended in the amount of \$81,060 plus applicable taxes, to cover the annual hosting and services fees plus additional web functionality enhancements for a period of three years (2008-2010 inclusive).

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to seek Regional Council's authorization to extend the current Blanket Purchase Order B00009894-0000064390 with eSolutions Group Ltd., in the amount of \$81,060 plus applicable taxes. This amount covers the following services for a term of three years (2008-2010):

- \$21,060 for external hosting and maintenance costs of the York Region Tourism web site (fees estimated at a cost of \$7,020.00 annually).
- \$60,000 for web site enhancements.

3. BACKGROUND

In May 2007, Regional Council approved the York Region Tourism Web Site report recommending that eSolutions Group Ltd., based out of Waterloo, be awarded the contract to develop a more dynamic, visually appealing and interactive tourism web site. This component of the project was completed when the new tourism web site launched in July 2007.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

The initial Blanket Purchase Order with eSolutions Group Ltd. Was for development of an externally hosted, more dynamic, visually appealing, user friendly and interactive site. The web technology and infrastructure platform was designed to be scalable to respond to marketplace demands and continue to position the York Region tourism web site as the lead community marketing and information portal for consumers and the tourism

industry. It is being recommended to extend the Blanket Purchase Order over a three year term to support responding to consumer and tourism industry needs in a timely fashion.

4.1 External Hosting and Servicing Fees

The external hosting and maintenance costs for the York Region Tourism web site are estimated at a cost of \$21,060 (\$7,020 annually) including:

Hosting Services	\$720
SSL Certificate	\$450
i:Create License	\$2,500
Business Directory License	\$2,500
i:Survey Hosting Service	\$850

4.2 Web Site Enhancements

The objective is to continuously improve the functionality of the tourism web site to build the profile of York Region as a tourist destination and to provide York Region's tourism industry with a highly effective, integrated on-line marketing, advertising and promotional vehicle.

Web site enhancements will include the incorporation of new features such as:

- address changing marketplace demands
- provide additional consumer navigational aids
- create opportunities for new promotions, communications and marketing activities
- ensure ease of use for consumers and the tourism industry
- empower and engage the consumer
- provides market research

From July 2007 to January 2008, there were a total of 44,434 unique visitors to the web site representing an average of 241 unique visitor sessions per day. There were a total of 606,850 page views during that period, suggesting that the average site visitor entered through the home page and navigated to 8 pages within the site.

Tourism branch staff will conduct an annual assessment of the web site functionality and consult with the tourism industry and the York Region Tourism Advisory Group to determine the necessary enhancements required at a maximum expenditure of \$60,000 (plus taxes) over the three year period.

4.3 Relationship to Vision 2026

The tourism web site supports the Vibrant Economy, Engaged Communities and a Responsive Region and Responding to the Needs of Our Residents goals identified in Vision 2026.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Funding for the extension of the Blanket Purchase Order to cover external hosting and maintenance costs will be allocated in the annual tourism operating budget and will be offset through the sales of web banner advertising. The initial web site design was funded through the destination marketing partnership with Tourism Toronto.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

There is no direct municipal impact associated with this project. The York Region Tourism web site provides a page exclusively designed for each municipality to market respective tourism attributes and services. The proposed enhancements will strengthen participating tourism business listings building the municipal profiles. Local municipalities are encouraged to ensure that direct links are in place from municipal sites to take advantage of the marketing and promotional initiatives in the tourism program to drive consumer traffic

7. CONCLUSION

Continuing to enhance the internet presence is key component of the tourism promotional efforts to capture York Region's share of tourism revenues and support the sustainability and growth of the tourism businesses. Building the functionality of the York Region Tourism web site to provide diverse travel information, consumer focussed communications and targeted messaging supports a positive first impression of York Region as a viable tourist destination.

For further information about this report, please contact Brenda McGowan, Program Manager, Tourism Development at (905) 830-4444 ext. 1553 or brenda.mcgowan@york.ca.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.