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RESULTS OF THE YORK REGION INDUSTRY EDUCATION COUNCIL STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report dated January 4, 2008, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. A stakeholder advisory committee be created to develop the business case, mission and goals for a York Region Industry Education Council.
2. Economic Development Branch staff circulate the draft Industry Education Council consultation report for comment to key business, educational and municipal economic development stakeholders.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide Regional Council with the draft Industry Education Council feasibility study prepared by the consultant firm Ontario Business Education Partnership and titled *York Region Industry Education Partnership*, dated November 23, 2007, appended to this report and that an advisory committee be established to develop an implementation action plan for the York Region Industry Education Council.

3. BACKGROUND

Regional Council at its meeting of April 19, 2007 authorized a feasibility study to formulate the implementation strategy and action plan for the establishment of the York Region Industry Education Council. A report on Phase I stakeholder consultations has been prepared and is appended to this report.

The 2005 Economic Development Strategy identified five strategic directions. The strategic direction, "Sustaining a High Quality Workforce" recognizes the need to align workforce development efforts with the needs of existing and new business clusters. Attracting new institutions of advanced learning, research and training and forming stronger partnerships to affect a learning climate and a training culture within the Region is identified as a key priority. The intentions of new business investment in York Region are tied to labour force availability.

The Economic Development Strategy identified four action items to develop an Industry Education Council with the overall objective of facilitating the evolution of an Industry Education Council and to address common workforce development issues that may impact business and industry. This includes:

- Enlist the involvement of York Region, industry, universities, colleges, school boards, associations, and other non-government agencies
- Draft terms of reference
- Identify candidate members and appropriate government resources
- Secure senior government funding support for this initiative

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

4.1 Interview and consultation methodology

The consultant firm *Ontario Business Education Partnership* was retained based on the request for proposal submitted and dated June 11, 2007. The Ontario Business Education Partnership is a partnership of not for profit organizations across Ontario committed to advancing business/education cooperation in support of workforce and economic development. The scope of the proposal dictated the creation of an interview questionnaire and the completion of telephone interviews, the development and facilitation of three focus group sessions, and an interim and final draft report on the consultation results.

In July 2007, over 750 letters of introduction were mailed to stakeholders to communicate the importance of the York Region Industry Education Council and to introduce the retained Consultant for subsequent interviews. The Consultant placed 125 phone calls to academia, government, and industry.

Targeted stakeholders include the following interest groups:

- Academia from secondary school, community college, and university
- Area municipal economic development directors and officers
- Businesses
- Chamber of Commerce and Board of Trade
- Industry human resources directors
- Skilled trades groups
- The Regional Municipality of York's Human Resources Department
- York Catholic District School Board
- York Region District School Board

In addition, three focus group consultations were facilitated during October 2007.

4.2 Highlights of the consultant's report

Support has been established for the formation of an industry education partnership to leverage resources, knowledge and innovation to address common workforce development issues with academia, government and industry. The stakeholders are eager to formulate an appropriate governance structure and business model for a self sustaining York Region Industry Education Council.

Research into the business models adopted by Ontario's eleven existing regional industry education councils indicate that they are at the forefront of the workforce initiative that brings together business, education, government and community groups to address the skills issue. They all are self sustained financially with funding secured from fees for membership, service, and projects supplemented by municipal and local business sponsorship. The operating model is a public/private partnership.

Stakeholders from education and business agreed that the formation of an industry education partnership in York Region will make a positive region wide impact. They communicated that a York Region Industry Education Council can serve to:

- Consolidate stakeholders to collectively identify, enhance, and promote best practices
- Act as an advocate amongst stakeholders to facilitate effective communication
- Engage industry and educators in experiential learning opportunities
- Emphasise awareness of regional and municipal opportunities
- Impart knowledge of workforce needs and local labour market development
- Integrate programs and services
- Become a mechanism to generate youth employment and community prosperity
- Align training and education services for new citizens
- Create a unified voice in the community
- Contribute to the economic vibrancy of the Region

The key stakeholder recommendation is to appoint a stakeholder advisory committee to determine the mission, vision and mandate. Task Force membership will include representation from York Region, a Chamber of Commerce, York University, Seneca College, the York Catholic District School Board, the York Region District School Board, and a minimum of four representatives from local industry. Geographic representation will be incorporated into the selection process.

The short-term actions required of the advisory committee are:

- Convene the stakeholders to formulate the York Region Industry Education Council's structural framework including the vision, mission, and goals.
- Determine financing mechanisms and a funding model for the partnership with the objective of self sufficiency and sustainability.
- Develop action plans and a timetable for implementation.

Responsibility to facilitate the evolution of the Industry Education Council shall remain with the York Region Economic Development Branch until an appropriate business

model is developed by the stakeholder advisory committee and endorsed by Regional Council.

4.3 Next steps

Staff will review the comments received from the report circulation and convene the stakeholder advisory committee. The results will be presented to Regional Council for consideration in Q3-2008.

4.4 Relationship to Sustainability Strategy

The York Region Sustainability Strategy identifies and promotes economic vitality including the attraction of a talented labour force and addressing industry requirements and skills availability. The York Industry Education Council would represent a tangible action plan to fulfil the goals of the York Region Sustainability Strategy.

4.5 Relationship to Vision 2026

Vision 2026 identified attracting and supporting businesses, encouraging continual learning, promoting and supporting innovation, and partnering in service delivery as key elements in achieving the Vibrant Economy goal. Implementation of the Economic Strategy supports the Vibrant Economy Goal of *Vision 2026*.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

2007: The direct costs of the feasibility consultation amounted to \$12,000 and were derived from the approved 2007 Planning and Development Services Department budget allocation and staff complements for FY-2007.

2008: The Planning and Development Services Department budget of 2008 has allocated \$15,000 and staff complements to the implementation of the Industry Education Council for FY-2008.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Local municipal economic development offices have indicated that the Strategic Directions are in line with their economic development objectives and programs. Implementation of the Industry Education Council requires collaboration and support from local municipalities and their businesses.

The formation of an industry education partnership will benefit academia, industry, and the municipalities collectively through:

- Increased awareness of available programs and services
- Reduction in service duplication

- Increased ability of stakeholders to identify joint needs and collectively create collaborative solutions
- Developing lifelong learning opportunities for residents
- Facilitating job creation in designated employment areas

A community's workforce is critical to its economic success. From a community perspective, the workforce is central to the municipality's economic future. Without the right workforce, companies expand elsewhere or relocate to a community where the company can draw on the required skills.

7. CONCLUSION

The Industry Education Council facilitated focus group sessions were positively supported by the stakeholders.

Academia, government, and industry concluded that a positive region wide impact can result from establishing a York Region Industry Education Council building on the economic vibrancy of the Region. The initial next step is to appoint a stakeholder advisory committee to develop the business model.

For further information about this report, please contact Sharon Végh, Program Manager, Economic Development at (905) 830 4444 ext. 1509 or sharon.vegh@york.ca.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

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