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STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT REPORT 2005 INITIATIVE

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the following:

1. The presentation by Diane Bladek-Willett, Director, Health Information and Planning, Health Services, be received; and
2. The recommendation contained in the following report, February 18, 2005, from the Commissioner of Health Services and the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services be adopted:

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. The following report be received for information by Committee and Council.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide Committee and Council with information regarding the upcoming release of the York Region State of the Environment Report (SOE) 2005.

3. BACKGROUND

Our Environment, Our Home, York Region State of the Environment Report 2000, was launched in response to an April 1989 Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care *Mandatory Health Programs and Services Guidelines* requirement for a report on local environmental risk areas at least once every five years. The SOE 2000 Report was the first of its kind for York Region and was released in June 2000.

The SOE 2000 project was a corporate-wide project led by the Health Services Department with involvement from other Regional departments and external agencies. The report had its formal beginning in 1997 at an Environmental Focus Group Day. Over 70 individuals attended the event from provincial ministries, area municipalities, Regional Departments, environmental and community organizations, conservation authorities, universities, and the transportation and energy sectors. The Focus Group Day was a great success and provided a clear outline for the 2000 report.

The final products of the York Region SOE 2000 initiative were a technical report, a summary report, a SOE Map and an educational brochure entitled *An A to Z of Environmental Actions*. The report was widely circulated to all levels of government,

health and community agencies, schools, universities, libraries and to the general public. It was very well received and there was much demand for the final products.

The SOE Report 2000 is divided into the three main compartments of the biophysical environment: land, water, and air. Each chapter details the Region's environmental resources, outlines the stresses or pressures on the resources and describes their condition in 2000.

The report contains 80 indicators of health of the environment. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of each environmental resource can be achieved through the use of these indicators. In addition, the Report contains 24 recommendations for action to protect the environmental resources of York Region.

Recommendation 1 of the SOE 2000 Report states that regular updating is required to monitor the state of the environment in the Region effectively. The SOE 2005 Report is planned to be an update of the original report and will be led jointly by the Health Services and Planning and Development Services departments. A number of changes in the status of York Region's natural environment since 2000 as well as numerous important environmental initiatives require documentation in a centralized site.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

4.1 Proposed Structure for 2005 Report

The original structure, format, and indicators used to measure health of the environment in York Region's SOE Report 2000 have been reviewed and compared against SOE reports from other communities, particularly within the Province of Ontario. A thorough review of the available literature has also been undertaken to increase knowledge of current environmental issues with a focus on York Region and its surrounding areas. Documents which provide important context for this report include the Region's Official Plan (ROP) and *Vision 2026*, York Region's long term strategic plan for the future.

The review of the structure of SOE Reports from other jurisdictions has validated that the essential structure of the SOE Report 2000 is sound and requires little change. The vast majority of SOE reports reviewed were of similar format and contained many of the components of the Region's initial report.

The SOE Report 2005 proposes to provide an overall assessment and description of the current state of the Region's natural resources. It will also document the changes in the status of the natural environment in York Region since 2000. A progress report on the 24 recommendations included in the original report will also be incorporated.

The 2005 report will build on the indicators from the initial report and include the best available measures to assess and track environmental health now and in the future. Key messaging will focus on the personal responsibility of each York Region resident to

protect and enhance the local environment. Recognition of the numerous environmental initiatives in York Region since the release of the SOE 2000 Report will be included, as will recommendations for the future based on new findings.

4.2 Proposed Products

Suggested products include a final report, education/communication pieces for wide distribution detailing ways York Region residents can protect the health of the environment, an updated SOE map and posting of materials on the Regional website.

In addition, a database has been created to house all SOE measures, targets and status from the original report, with the ability to add status changes up to and including 2005. This forms the beginning of an environmental health indicator database that can be updated over time.

4.3 Proposed Process

Internal SOE Report 2005 Advisory and Working Committees have been established to guide the development and production of the report. Individuals from various Regional Departments will advise on the overall context of the document, ensure the content is factual and assist with its design.

It is proposed that external consultations with key stakeholders will take place during March through May 2005. This will be in the form of information sessions for various stakeholders including areas municipalities, conservation authorities, environmental groups and related organizations and agencies.

An opportunity will be presented for each area municipality to include their important environmental achievements in the final document.

It is anticipated that the SOE Report 2005 will be presented to Regional Council in November 2005.

4.4 Review of Indicators

As a result of an extensive literature review, it was discovered that indicators being created for Canada-wide use by the National Round Table of the Environment and the Economy (NRTEE) as well as Environment Canada, will serve as useful resources for this initiative. The proposed approach is to retain the majority of indicators from the 2000 Report for the sake of comparison. However, there are a number of instances where the 2000 measure no longer applies.

The 2000 Report contains 80 indicators of health of the environment. Approximately 107 indicators are currently proposed for the 2005 Report. These are undergoing a review process and will be refined.

4.5 Relationship to Vision 2026

The development of the SOE 2005 Report and the many initiatives being undertaken with respect to the environment clearly support the Region's vision statement of Creating

Strong, Caring and Safe Communities. Although this work most clearly aligns itself with Vision 2026's Goal of Enhanced Environment, Heritage and Culture, it also supports all eight goal areas in some way. In the recent *Towards the Vision: Second Annual Report on Indicators of Progress* (Spring 2004), environmental objectives and initiatives are mentioned in virtually every goal area.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The following table outlines the costs associated with the development and production of the SOE Report 2005.

Table 1
Estimated Costs for State of the Environment 2005 Report

	2005 Gross Costs
Consultant	\$32,500
Printing	48,000
Materials and Supplies	8,000
Total Gross Budget	\$88,500
Less: MOHLTC 55% Funding	48,675
Net Tax Levy	\$39,825

In addition to the above, individuals from various Regional Departments will be involved in this project through Advisory and Working Committees. Estimated Health Services staffing costs are \$105,000 Gross (\$47,250 Net) or 1.0 FTE of combined management and staff time. Sufficient funds are available within the proposed 2005 Health Services Department Budget to accommodate these costs.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

A comprehensive document and ongoing education regarding the status of York Region's natural environment will positively impact on the goal of having all residents and partner organizations work together to improve the local environment. This will in turn benefit all nine area municipalities and future residents of York Region. In addition, area municipalities will be invited to include information in SOE 2005 that will showcase local initiatives.

7. CONCLUSION

The SOE Report 2005 will provide a comprehensive description and/or measure of York Region's natural environment. As a follow-up to the *Our Environment, Our Home*, SOE Report 2000, the 2005 SOE Report is an important tool for tracking environmental

progress in York Region, and will assist in the identification and prioritization of future environmental and planning initiatives.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.