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2011 YORKLINK DIRECTORY

The Community and Health Services Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report dated March 25, 2011, from the Commissioner of Community and Health Services.

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that this report be received for information.

2. PURPOSE

This report provides an update on the 2011 edition of YorkLink.

The YorkLink Directory and website are actively used and effective community resources serving York Region residents and community service providers.

3. BACKGROUND

In December 1998, Regional Council approved the development of an annual community services directory to inform residents of services available in York Region and to help agencies deliver these services to residents 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. A searchable, online directory was also developed to supplement the print directory.

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

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 residents find the support and assistance they need. It is used by people and agencies across the Region including community social service agencies, settlement agencies for new immigrants, child care centres, school staff, health care professionals and others. Reaction from the public is very positive. People comment specifically on how useful the printed edition is for those front-line staff who work outside an office, and how helpful it is to search for agencies on the website.

Available in a printed format and an online version

The Directory of over 700 community agencies and organizations is available in a printed format and is online at www.yorklink.org. A total of 4,500 print copies are distributed to local community agencies, libraries, school boards, government offices, and information kiosks which use YorkLink to connect their clients to other important community services. Copies are also available to the general public upon request.

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

Translation services are available for the Region's culturally diverse population. YorkLink includes a phone number for translation assistance in the region's top spoken languages. Translation assistance is provided in Arabic, Cantonese/Mandarin, Farsi, French, Hindi, Italian, Korean, Russian, Spanish, Tamil, Urdu, and Vietnamese.

YorkLink Directory remains an important complement to 211 service

York Region's 211 service was launched on Thursday, January 13, 2011. 211 is a three-digit phone number, 2-1-1, and website (www.211ontario.ca) to provide information on community, social, health and government services in Ontario. There is no printed directory.

YorkLink has a twelve year history of helping people find community services and is therefore well-established and well-known. Since 211 is a brand new service, Community and Health Services staff are working with staff from 211 to share information, enhance linkages between 211 and YorkLink, help 211 with getting more established in York Region and help 211 to become more familiar with services offered within the Region. A community consultation group involving front-line agencies is being considered to increase awareness about 211 and avoid any potential duplication between 211, YorkLink, and other services. In this early implementation period, YorkLink will remain unchanged. In the future, YorkLink will be reassessed.

Promotion of YorkLink and the online directory

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. These publications are widely distributed and give the ads a longer shelf-life than 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 2011, 4,500 copies of the directory will be printed to meet the continued demand from front-line staff and community agencies. Since 2005, 4,500 copies have been printed (down from 5,000 in 2003 and 2004). Rarely has there been a residual supply, with 2010 being fully depleted. A reduction of printed copies in 2008 necessitated a reprint. Advance copies of the 2011 directory will be available to the members of Regional Council at their meeting on April 21, 2011.

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 without an increase in budget. The cost to print 4,500 copies is \$15,341.00.

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. A limited number of 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 twelfth 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. YorkLink complements 211 by providing a printed directory and by providing the community with a well-known and familiar resource as 211 moves through this early implementation period.

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

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.