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YORK REGION INDUSTRY EDUCATION COUNCIL

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report dated March 1, 2007, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. A Feasibility Study be undertaken to formulate the implementation strategy and action plan for the establishment of the York Region Industry Education Council.
2. Staff report back to Regional Council in the last quarter of 2007 with the findings of the Feasibility Study, and a Workplan for the next phase.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide Regional Council with the background research on Industry/Business Education Councils in other jurisdictions, and to seek authorization to conduct a Feasibility Study for the establishment of an Industry Education Council in York Region.

3. BACKGROUND

During the Economic Strategy consultation process, stakeholders have expressed their concern over skills shortages and skills imbalance in the Region. The quality of the labour force and the range of issues surrounding the supply, access and training of employees was a theme raised consistently. Some participants have indicated that the skills and human resources needs of business should be identified and addressed.

As one of the priority action areas, the 2005 Economic Strategy has recommended that the Region facilitate the evolution of a Regional Industry Education Council to provide an opportunity for business, education, government, the work force, union, and other stakeholders to leverage resources, knowledge and motivation to address common workforce development issues.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

4.1 Industry/Business Education Councils

The following are the industry/business education organizations currently operating across Ontario:

- The Halton Industry Education Council
- Industry-Education Council of Hamilton-Wentworth
- Business Education Council of Niagara
- Foundation for Enrichment of Education Perth Huron
- KEYS (Kingston Employment and Youth Services)
- Career Education Council Guelph Wellington Dufferin
- OCRI (Ottawa Centre for Research and Innovation - TalentWorks)
- Business and Education Partnership of Waterloo Region
- Eastern Ontario Training Board
- Far Northeast Training Board

The Region of Peel is currently in the process of conducting a feasibility study for the purpose of establishing an Industry/Business Education Council at the Region. The industry/business education councils in Ontario, together with a number of local training boards, are members of The Ontario Business Education Partnership which is a province-wide network dedicated to promoting, supporting and facilitating collaboration and partnerships to build and develop talents and skills to enhance the workforce. It is also the provincial co-ordinator of the Passport to Prosperity program, which is a Ministry of Education initiative that seeks greater business involvement in career education for students.

Across Canada, The Learning Partnership is a national not-for-profit group that brings together stakeholders to develop partnerships that strengthen public education in Canada. Examples of other Canadian Industry Education Councils outside of Ontario include the Saskatoon and District Industry Education Council and the Central Nova Industry Education Council in Nova Scotia.

In the United States, similar organizations can be found in the Santa Barbara Partners in Education, the Industry Education Council Long Beach, the Bay Area Industry Education Council, and the Niagara Frontier Industry Education Council in New York. A comparable model outside of North America is The Council for Industry and Higher Education in London, U.K.

4.2 Current Practices in Ontario

Research into the business models adopted by other jurisdictions have shown that the industry/business education councils operating in this province are in the forefront of the workforce initiative that brings together business, education, government, and community groups to address the skills issue.

4.2.1 Goals and Objectives

While the individual Industry/Business Education Councils operate under different names, they all share the common goal of facilitating partnerships among business, education, government, labour and the community to ensure that the local community has the skills, knowledge and competencies to compete in the marketplace. Their objectives are to enhance career education and create the best opportunities for youth, improve school to life transition, enhance employability and life skills, promote lifelong learning, and grow and retain the local talent pool.

4.2.2 Common Characteristics

The common characteristics of Industry/Business Education Councils are:

- Non-profit incorporated entity (some with charitable status).
- A formal governance structure with Boards of Directors and staffing.
- High ranking representation from key sectors of the community.
- Inclusive, community-based membership from education and training, government, business/industry, labour, associations and community organizations.
- Local focus to meet the needs of the local community.
- Self sustaining funding sources.
- Partnership driven.

Within the framework of the common characteristics, there are individual and unique differences between these groups. Generally, the Industry/Business Education Councils operate under four different models. Councils such as Hamilton-Wentworth are working more closely with municipalities, others are more autonomous as in the Halton model, while some are attached to school boards as in the case of Guelph Wellington Dufferin, and groups such as OCRI and Waterloo are more industry focused. Most of them are directed towards high school students and youth, but some may have a different focus, as in the case of the Business Education Council of Niagara which also incorporates an early years component.

4.2.3 Funding Model

All of the Councils operate on the basis of a self sustaining model and derive their funding through membership and projects as well as corporate support, although some of them may also receive financial support from municipalities. The funding available from the Ontario Government is directed towards delivery of the Passport to Prosperity program.

4.2.4 Programs and Services

The programs and services offered by the different Industry/Education Councils vary depending on their focus, but almost all of them deliver the Passport to Prosperity program on behalf of the Provincial Government. The programs, services and events offered by these groups are generally organized around workforce development, employment support, training, and school to career transition. Some of the Councils also host Mayors Roundtables or Breakfasts to address issues on education and the economy.

4.3 York Region Workforce Initiative

It is recommended that a York Region initiative be implemented to address workforce issues. The workforce initiative will be able to draw on the research findings of the Industry Cluster Analysis, as well as the feedback from the Wisdom Exchange Program to support the delivery of programs and services.

Preliminary discussions had taken place with interested stakeholder groups to discuss their common issues related to skills and employment, and to explore options to address the issues. The consensus was that business and education should work closer together towards developing a partnership to implement the workforce initiative.

4.3.1 Phase 1

As a first step to implementing the workforce initiative, it is recommended that a Facilitator be retained to convene a stakeholder consultation session to identify community resources, secure interest in participation, and assess preferred models for the establishment of an Industry Education Council in York Region. Participants could include business leaders, the school boards, colleges and universities, the Georgina Trades Training Institute, The Learning Partnership, the Ontario Business Education Partnership, the York South Simcoe Training and Adjustment Board, South Lake Community Futures Development Corporation, federal and provincial government departments and ministries, area municipalities, representatives from the work force and unions, and other interested community groups involved in education and training. It is anticipated that the consultation session will commence in the spring, and will take approximately two months to complete.

With commitment and interest to participate established, the next step would be to conduct a Feasibility Study to formulate the implementation strategy and action plan, and recruit a champion and supporters. The process will be supported by a Steering Committee comprising of representatives from business, the Region, other levels of government, and education.

4.3.2 Next Steps

Staff will report back to Regional Council in the last quarter of 2007 with a proposal for implementation, including the governance structure of the proposed York Region Industry Education Council, funding sources, programs and services, and other details of operation.

4.4 Relationship to Vision 2026

Vision 2026 has identified the support of continual learning as a key element in achieving the Vibrant Economy goal.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The total cost of the first phase of this workforce initiative is estimated at approximately \$18,000. Funds have been included as part of the Economic Strategy implementation in the proposed Economic Development budget for 2007.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Labour force and skills play a key role in the economy of the Region, and as such are factors that affect all municipalities as a whole. It is through strategic collaboration and sharing of resources between the Region and the local municipalities that changes can be effected for the benefit of everyone.

7. CONCLUSION

Today's economic growth is driven by knowledge, skills, innovation and entrepreneurship. All of these characteristics derive from the quality of the labour force which a region possesses. An essential element for sustained economic vitality is to ensure that there is a proper balance of labour force skills to enable local firms to meet the challenges of global competition. It is recommended that an Industry Education Council be established in the Region to address the workforce issue, and that staff be authorized to proceed with the first phase of the implementation process.

For further information about this report, please contact Ellen Ma, Economic Development Co-ordinator, Economic Development Branch at (905) 830-4444 ext. 1509 or ellen.ma@york.ca.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.