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MINISTRY OF RESEARCH AND INNOVATION STRATEGIC PLAN 2006

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report dated March 5, 2007, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. The Ontario Ministry of Research and Innovation's 2006 Strategic Plan be endorsed.
2. The Regional Clerk circulate copies of this report to the Premier of Ontario, the Ontario Minister of Economic Development and Trade, and the area municipalities for their information.
3. The Regional Chair forward letters of support to the Premier of Ontario and the Prime Minister of Canada to expedite funding approval for the National Research Centre institute in Markham.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to present to Regional Council the Ontario Ministry of Research and Innovation's Strategic Plan, and to recommend support for the establishment of the National Research Centre institute in Markham.

3. BACKGROUND

The Ministry of Research and Innovation was created by the Ontario Government in June 2005 to steer a co-ordinated innovation agenda for the Province. The Premier of Ontario has assumed the role of the Minister of this new ministry, which underscores the significance the Province places on innovation as a driver of future economic prosperity.

In November 2006, the Premier released the Ministry's Strategic Plan. The document is the product of extensive consultation with researchers, industry, the private sector, academic institutions and other government ministries. The Strategic Plan also reflects the advice and initial recommendations of the Ontario Research and Innovation Council (ORIC), which is an advisory body reporting to the Premier. Input from the Council has provided insights on how Ontario can create an environment that is both innovation-focused and commerce-friendly, and laid the foundations for the government's innovation strategy.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

4.1 Ontario Innovation Strategy

The Ministry of Research and Innovation's Strategic Plan outlines the fundamental goals, values and policy foundations for a government-wide innovation strategy. This document is aligned with the following innovation goals for the Province by the year 2020:

- Ontario will be the preferred location to grow knowledge-based businesses.
- Ontario will be the preferred location for the best and brightest scientists and innovators from around the world.
- Ontario will attract increased private-sector investment in R&D.
- Ontario will generate the highly qualified workforce needed by an innovation-based economy.
- The Ontario Government will lead by example, with integrated and co-ordinated innovation initiatives across all ministries and a culture of innovation in its own operations.

The Strategic Plan is based on the common principles of excellence, value, strategic importance, collaboration and partnership, talent and leadership, and awareness. These principles set a clear direction for the Ministry of Research and Innovation, and a focus for the government's innovation strategy as a whole.

4.2 Ontario Strategic Action Areas

The Ontario Strategic Plan has proposed actions in the following areas:

- Value From Research – The Strategic Plan aims to ensure an environment in Ontario that supports research as a central pillar of growth and prosperity.
- The Move to the Marketplace – The Ministry will actively support and facilitate closer partnerships between academia and industry, to facilitate the transfer of ideas and knowledge from the research community to either an existing or a new company.
- Focusing for Success – The Ministry will establish areas of significant focus for investment to enable Ontario to build global strengths and recognition in certain industries.
- Innovation is About People – Ontario will work to create a culture of innovation by building awareness and understanding of innovation in a modern society; supporting the development of the skills needed to participate in research and development and facilitating the move to new ideas to market; and bolstering the “culture of commerce” needed for the Province's economic success and prosperity.
- Aligning the Goals – The Ministry will co-ordinate innovation agendas across government, to bring together individual ministry strategies and create opportunities for co-ordination, shared responsibility and action.
- Measuring Results – The Ministry will create an innovation scorecard for the Province to indicate the success of innovation policies.

- Sustaining Innovation – The Ministry will develop a sustainable funding strategy to support focused investments in Ontario.

4.3 Implications for York Region

The Ontario Innovation Strategy is in line with the direction proposed in the Region's Economic Strategy. York Region recognizes the importance of technology for business to maintain their competitiveness, and acknowledges that it has a role to play in fostering the conditions for innovation. Encouraging technological innovation and commercialization has been identified as one of the Strategic Objectives in the Economic Strategy.

York Region is home to a large number of companies in the biotechnology and information technology sectors, including MDS-Sciex, Apotex, Novopharm, Johnson&Johnson, Vita-Tech, Philips Medical Systems, IBM and AMD. The proximity of these companies creates a very strong potential for convergence in the areas such as bioinformatics, diagnostic imaging and related applications. In order to grow the biotechnology cluster and enhance the Region's competitiveness, the leveraging of innovation and technology as a key driver of economic growth should be promoted and encouraged. It is proposed that staff communicate to businesses the federal and provincial support programs and funding opportunities available to them, and that the Ontario Strategic Plan be circulated to key stakeholders for their information.

The Region's role as a founding member of YORKbiotech is a demonstration of its efforts to promote innovation and technology transfer. This biotechnology consortium is one of the 12 Regional Innovation Networks across Ontario established with funding assistance from the Provincial Government, York Region, York University, the Town of Markham, and other public and private sector partners. The mission of YORKbiotech is to act as a catalyst, harnessing the wealth of intellectual and technical resources to promote economic success and growth of the biotechnology and related industries as a key component of regional economic development. Bringing together the strengths of its members, YORKbiotech will help to accelerate commercialization and enhance economic outcomes. By harnessing the power of convergence amongst biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, vaccines, medical diagnostics, devices and assistive technologies, nanotechnology, advanced materials and information and communications technologies, YORKbiotech will facilitate the creation of new intellectual property, technologies, products, services and spin-off companies. Through its activities, the consortium will also strengthen the region's small and medium sized enterprises and multi-national enterprises. A presentation by the Executive Director of YORKbiotech has been scheduled for the Planning Committee Meeting in May 2007.

The proposed National Research Centre institute in Markham is another example of a partnership initiative that supports innovation and convergence technologies. This will be the first National Research Centre facility to be established in the GTA, the result of a collaborative effort between the federal and provincial governments, York University, the

Town of Markham, and other public and private sector partners. The institute will serve as a catalyst for the convergence of life sciences and information technology to accelerate research, development, and commercialization. The objective is to drive new transformative technologies that will readily attract capital for commercialization and which have exponential and multiplier effects in the economy. The National Research Centre institute, along with initiatives at the partner organizations, will increase national productivity and international competitiveness, and help to attract and maintain the best minds and companies in Canada.

Partnership initiatives such as YORKbiotech and the National Research Centre institute can help attract international investments based on the Region's technological strengths and interaction.

York Region is committed to promoting the Province's innovation and commercialization agenda. It is recommended that letters of support be forwarded to the Premier of Ontario and the Prime Minister of Canada to expedite funding approval for the National Research Centre institute.

4.4 Relationship to Vision 2026

Promoting and supporting innovation is one of the action areas under the Vibrant Economy goal of Vision 2026.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Innovation will drive economic growth and prosperity, which will benefit all the local municipalities and the Region as a whole.

7. CONCLUSION

Innovation is the process by which ideas get transformed into new products and services, and as such, is key to the creation of new companies and the growth of existing ones. Ontario's economic prosperity depends on the ability to compete and succeed in the global marketplace. The Ontario Innovation Strategy sets out the foundation on which the Province will build strong and sustainable economic growth through innovation. It is aligned with the direction of the Region's Economic Strategy and merits support.

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.