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2004 YORK REGION VISITORS' GUIDE

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report, March 4, 2004, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services:

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. This report be received for information.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to update Regional Council on the production and distribution of the 2004 York Region Visitors' Guide.

3. BACKGROUND

In April 2003, staff sought Regional Council's approval to retain the services of Lenmark Communications Ltd. to design, produce and print the Region's Visitors' Guide for a third year.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

The Visitors' Guide is the only Regional publication of its kind and is the front line consumer brochure designed to promote travel to and within the Region. Eighty thousand copies of the Guide are produced on an annual basis. The Guide provides comprehensive information regarding area Municipalities, attractions, accommodations, arts, theatre, dining, shopping, golfing, marinas, nature, events listings and more. The Guide provides affordable advertising buy-in opportunities that allows Regional tourism stakeholders large or small an opportunity to partner with the Region to increase visitation and tourism revenues into their communities and establishments. The Guide also provides complimentary listings for many community festivals, agricultural fairs and events.

4.1 York Region Progress Report

In each year of production the Guide continues to evolve. This year, there are thirteen new advertising partners and the publication has increased in size from 56 to 60 pages. This year's Guide builds on a tradition of excellence. In 2002 and 2003, the York Region Visitors' Guide received the Ontario Economic Development "Certificate of Recognition" awards from the Economic Developers Council of Ontario.

4.1.1 Marketing and Distribution

The Guide is marketed as the fulfilment piece for consumer inquiries generated from the various consumer advertising and promotional campaigns as outlined in the approved 2004 Tourism Marketing Program and the enhanced SARS Recovery Program.

York Region participates in a Visitor program with CTM Brochure Distribution Company to distribute the Guide from May through September. This service guarantees circulation on a regular basis to Toronto and Greater Toronto Area Hotels, Attractions, Theatres and Corporate Businesses, Ontario Travel Centres, and this year the program has been extended to include the Kingston and Area Visitor program. As well, staff distribute the Guide throughout York Region, the GTA and the Province via Chambers of Commerce, Tourist Information Centres, Municipalities, Welcome Wagon, Travel Centres, Libraries, Industry partners and Tourism Toronto.

4.1.2 2005 York Region Visitors' Guide

A Request for Proposal (RFP) for the design, production and printing of the 2005 Visitors Guide has been prepared and distributed. Staff will report back on the results of the RFP process and recommend a qualified proponent to Regional Council.

4.2 Relationship to Vision 2026

The Guide supports the goals related to the "Arts, Heritage and Culture Opportunities" and the "Vibrant Economy" sections outlined in Vision 2026.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Funding for the Visitors' Guide is included in the 2004 Economic Development Budget and is in keeping with the budget estimates put forward for the 2004 Operating Budget.

The 2004 Visitor's Guide was budgeted to cost \$90,000 (+taxes). The final production cost for the 2004 Guide was \$94,796 (+taxes). Revenues generated from advertising sales are \$90,000 resulting in a net cost to the Region estimated at \$4,796 (+taxes).

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The Visitors' Guide plays an integral role in driving tourism traffic and revenues into tourism establishments in all area Municipalities. Increased tourism revenues result in increased employment, stimulates business growth and retention while generating positive economic impact. This is the only comprehensive regional publication which is marketed beyond York Region to drive overnight traffic from the GTA, Ontario and the Border States to area Municipalities.

7. CONCLUSION

The Visitors' Guide is the anchor of the Region's tourism program and is the key consumer piece designed to generate tourism revenues into the Region. There is growing Municipality and Industry support and recognition for the Region's tourism efforts and the Visitors' Guide plays an integral role in this success.

It is recommended that this report be received for information.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(A copy of the attachment referred to in the foregoing has been forwarded to each Member of Council with the April 7, 2004 Planning and Economic Development Committee agenda and a copy thereof is on file in the Office of the Regional Clerk.)