

13

2006 TOURISM PUBLICATIONS YORK REGION VISITORS' GUIDE AND KEYNOTE CONFERENCE AND MEETING PLANNER

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report, April 10, 2006, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services:

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that 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 2006 York Region Visitors' Guide and the 2nd edition of the York Region KeyNote Conference and Meeting Planner.

This report also advises Regional Council that the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services is exercising his authority to renew the services of Lenmark Communications Ltd., to produce the 2007 York Region Visitors' Guide. The production of the 2007 Visitors' Guide is subject to the provision of the purchasing by-law, continued budget approval and a mutually satisfactory working relationship.

3. BACKGROUND

As the region's tourism program evolves, staff regularly consult with tourism industry stakeholders to ensure appropriate regional promotional publications are being developed to meet the needs of the end user and increase revenues to area municipalities and industry partners. The Visitors' Guide and the KeyNote Conference and Meeting Planner are the only regional brochures engaging the tourism industry in a partnership to build consumer and meeting/conference market awareness and demand. Strategic advertising, distribution channels and marketing activities are identified in the 2006 regional tourism program that support the promotion and marketing of these publications.

3.1 York Region Visitors' Guide

In June 2004, when Regional Council approved Lenmark Communications Ltd., to be awarded the contract to design, produce and print the 2005 York Region Visitors' Guide, the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services was authorized to extend the contract on an annual basis for an additional two years. The production of the 2007 York

Region Visitors' Guide is the final year of the contract extension with Lenmark Communications Ltd.

3.2 KeyNote Conference and Meeting Planner

The meetings, conference and corporate business represent a core market for many of the region's facilities and the Planner positions the area as a prime destination for this market segment. The KeyNote Conference and Meeting Planner was initially conceived by the York Region Hotel Marketing Committee in 2004 to rebuild market share from SARS and the fierce competition to rebuild the business sector back into Toronto and the Greater Toronto Area. The KeyNote Conference and Meeting Planner is the only regional publication that engages industry partners in a cooperative initiative to build awareness, solicit new business and generate revenues from the meeting and conference markets.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

The Visitors' Guide and the KeyNote Conference and Meeting Planner provide affordable advertising buy-in opportunities that allow regional tourism stakeholders, large or small, an opportunity to partner with the region and leverage their limited marketing dollars. These are the only regional publications of their kind designed as front line marketing tools for consumers and meeting planners with the goal to increase revenues to area municipal communities and establishments. To further extend marketing reach, electronic versions of both publications will be available on the region's tourism website www.yorktourism.com.

4.1 York Region Visitors' Guide

In each year of production the Guide continues to evolve. Changes to the format of the 2006 guide were enhancements that allowed for increased market penetration (doubling the print quantity to 150,000 copies) without increasing the costs for the industry partners to participate while providing a more compact, consumer friendly publication. The Guide provides comprehensive information regarding area Municipalities, attractions, accommodations, arts, theatre, dining, shopping, golfing, marinas, nature, events listings and more. The Guide also provides the opportunity for complimentary listings for many community festivals, agricultural fairs and events.

4.1.1 Marketing and Distribution

The Visitors' Guide is marketed as the fulfilment piece for consumer inquiries generated from the various consumer advertising, promotional campaigns and trade show participation as outlined in the approved 2006 regional tourism marketing program.

The region participates in a visitor program with the CTM Brochure Distribution Company to distribute the Guide from May through September. This service guarantees circulation on a regular basis to Toronto, York Region and Greater Toronto Area Hotels,

Attractions, Theatres and Corporate Businesses, Ontario Travel Centres, and this year the program has been extended to include circulation to the areas of Kawartha/Peterborough, Niagara Falls/St. Catharines and Southwestern Ontario. Staff also undertakes a distribution program throughout York Region and the Province via Chambers of Commerce, Tourist Information Centres, Municipalities, Welcome Wagon, Travel Centres, Libraries, Industry partners and Tourism Toronto.

4.2 KeyNote Conference and Meeting Planner

The KeyNote Conference and Meeting Planner has proven to be a valuable resource to the meeting planning industry since its inception in 2004. This year, the region partnered with The Meeting and Travel Group, Canada's leader in the meeting and incentive travel industry for over thirty years to build the profile of the publication. The Planner provides information on a variety of facilities and services to encourage meeting coordinators to think outside of downtown Toronto and look to York Region facilities to host upcoming meetings, conferences and special events.

The Meeting and Travel Group partnership included the sales, development, marketing/promotion, printing of 15,000 copies of the Planner, creation of an online micro-site linked to www.meetingscanada.com from April 2006-April 2007 and direct distribution to specifically target professionals who plan, organize and/or influence meetings, conferences and special events.

4.2.1 Marketing and Distribution

The KeyNote Conference and Meeting Planner was distributed with the March/April issue of the M&IT Magazine reaching 10,407 qualified meeting planners. The balance of the print run will be distributed through the region's affiliation with key associations including Meeting Planners International, Independent Meeting Planners Association of Canada, Canadian Society of Association Executives and through our partnership with Tourism Toronto. In addition, an online micro-site has been developed to extend market reach and increase the promotion for the participating meeting facilities.

4.3 Relationship to Vision 2026

These publications support the goals related to the "Arts, Heritage and Culture Opportunities" and the "Vibrant Economy" sections outlined in Vision 2026.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The region's tourism business model is based on recovery of revenues through advertising sales and partnerships to partially offset the costs for production of the Visitors' Guide and the KeyNote Conference and Meeting Planner.

The net cost to design and produce a 64 page York Region Visitors' Guide and increase the print run from 80,000 copies to 150,000 copies was \$74,970. The revenue generated by advertising sales totalled \$76,350, representing a surplus of \$1,380 which will be used to offset marketing, promotion and distribution expenditures. The partnership with The

Meeting and Travel Group was rather unique as it included the production of 15,000 copies of a 20 page KeyNote Conference and Meeting Planner, as well as, targeted distribution to 10,400 planners and the development of a micro-site to support online marketing activities. A total of \$24,025 was generated through industry advertising sales to offset the total net project cost of \$32,025. The region's contribution was \$8,000 which represents a reduction from the previous year when distribution purchased separately from publication production was a regional expense of \$10,000. These publications are identified in the region's tourism program which are funded in the 2006 Economic Development budget allocation.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

These publications play an integral role in driving new business and generating revenues into establishments in all area Municipalities. Increased revenues provide positive economic impacts through new employment opportunities, stimulates business growth and retention and supports the sustainability of the tourism and related business sectors. The Visitors' Guide and the KeyNote Conference and Meeting Planner are the only comprehensive regional publications which are marketed beyond York Region to drive overnight traffic from the Greater Toronto Area, Ontario and the United States to area Municipalities. Both publications augment emerging area municipal tourism efforts.

7. CONCLUSION

The Visitors' Guide and the KeyNote Conference and Meeting Planner are designed to generate revenues into the region and are anchor components of the region's tourism marketing program. There is growing Municipal and Industry support and recognition for the region's tourism efforts and the Visitors' Guide and the KeyNote Conference and Meeting Planner play an integral role in this success.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.