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2005 TOURISM PROGRAM & PARTNERSHIP STATUS UPDATE

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report, April 6, 2005, 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 tourism marketing initiatives implemented and results achieved from January – April 2005.

3. BACKGROUND

Regional Council approved the 2005 Tourism Marketing plan in December 2004 and authorized the Regional Chair and Regional Clerk to execute a partnership agreement with Tourism Toronto. This report is a status update of the marketing program.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

The region's marketing plan identified activities targeting the following three market segments:

- Leisure
- Travel Trade
- Corporate/Convention/Conference business

The plan also incorporates a Research, Industry Development and Partnership program element.

The new partnership with Tourism Toronto provides a \$250,000 augmentation to the Region's base tourism budget to implement enhanced marketing and promotional activities that build awareness of York Region and the northeast Toronto area. This partnership program is implemented in parallel with the Region's tourism program.

This report highlights initiatives facilitated and implemented from January to April 2005 to meet the goals of attracting visitation, generating overnight stays, increasing revenues and supporting the development, growth and sustainability of the tourism industry.

4.1 York Region Tourism Program Initiatives

To date, the tourism stakeholders have financially supported the Region's tourism program through partnered advertising in the amount of over \$100,000.

4.1.1 Promotional Brochures

- **York Region Visitors' Guide**

Staff facilitated advertising sales and production of the 2005 York Region Visitors' Guide. This Guide is the foundation of the tourism program and will be used to respond to consumer inquiries generated from advertising campaigns.

- **Farm Fresh Guide**

Staff assisted the York Region Farm Fresh Association secure funding to initiate the production of third edition of this guide which promotes the agricultural community and increases farm gate sales.

- **Arts and Culture**

Staff is facilitating the development of a promotional brochure to build awareness of the arts and cultural tourism product with assistance of Artslink York Region.

4.1.2 Research

- **An Overview of Tourism in York Region 2003**

Research Resolutions and Consulting Ltd. provided a comprehensive analysis of the most recent Statistics Canada Domestic and International Travel Surveys available from the Ministry of Tourism and Recreation. This summary provides an overview of current markets, value and characteristics of visitors to York Region in 2003.

4.1.3 Leisure Advertising Initiatives

These initiatives focus on generating consumer awareness and target the region's key consumer market segments. Staff leverage the Region's marketing dollars by engaging industry partners to participate in co-operative advertisements and through the extensive media programs the source organizations implement to promote their publications.

- **Tourism Toronto Summer Visitors' Guide**

York secured the inside back cover of this Guide with a circulation of 325,000 copies

- **Attractions Ontario Passport Guide**

Six attraction businesses partnered on a full page ad in this Guide with a circulation of 1.3 million copies within Ontario and border USA.

- **AAA Ontario Tour Book**

York secured a full page in this publication available to 5 million AAA members

- **Festivals and Events Ontario Guide**

York secured the inside front cover of this events guide with a circulation of 250,000 copies.

- Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation (Ministry of Tourism) advertising:
 - Spring InOntario Magazine, a resource listing in this magazine with a 400,000 circulation.
 - Summer InOntario Magazine, a resource listing with a 450,000 circulation in English plus 30,000 in French.
 - 2005 Ontario Road Map, York secured one of the six advertisements made available in this is the inaugural advertising opportunity.

4.1.4 Consumer Promotions

- Vaughan Mills Touch Screen Information Kiosk
This touch screen information kiosk was installed in November 2004 and during the month of February alone almost 1000 consumers visited the kiosk. Staff is researching opportunities to evolve this multi-media link that directs consumers to the tourism website including the possibility of direct telephone links to Hotel partners to sell overnight packages.
- Venue Vision
York Region Tourism will utilize the Venue Vision television system to bring information to residents and visitors. Staff is facilitating the execution of 15 second York Region commercials will air four times hourly on 15 televisions positioned in the Georgina Ice Palace and Sutton Arena, Newmarket Ray Twinney Recreation Complex,, Richmond Hill Elgin Barrow Arena, and Thornhill Community Centre.
- Ontario Travel Centre
Awareness for the York Region Visitors' Guide York is enhanced through year-round advertising exposure in this new high traffic information centre located at the Atrium on Bay, Toronto
- Green Tourism Association – Green Tourism Map
York Region is profiled in the Green Tourism map with 150,000 circulation.
- York Region Brochure Distribution Program
Thirty thousand copies of the York Region Visitors' Guide will be circulated from May-September in high traffic locations throughout the Greater Toronto Area and Ontario through the services of the CTM Brochure Distribution Company. In May, the CTM Brochure Distribution Company will launch a new service that provides brochure distribution to 50 York Region business locations. Staff has negotiated a discounted price for York Region tourism businesses who want to participate in this local program and take advantage of this opportunity to market to tourists and residents.

4.1.5 Customer Service

In addition to marketing and promotional initiatives, staff also provides inquiry fulfillment and customer and tourism industry response. During the first quarter of 2005, staff handled approximately 80-100 consumer inquiries and tourism industry consultations via telephone or email weekly. All marketing campaigns direct consumers to call toll free or visit www.yorktourism.com. A significant increase in consumer

inquiries is expected for the next quarter as the consumer marketing campaigns are now being launched and in anticipation of the upcoming peak summer travel period.

4.1.6 Travel Trade Marketing

To increase awareness and encourage group tour businesses, the Region participated in a full page advertisement in partnership with the Hilton Suites Hotel and Vaughan Mills in the March edition of the National Tour Association CrossSphere Courier Magazine.

4.1.7 Corporate, Conference, Meetings Market

- Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation Meeting and Convention Guide
A two-sided York Region profile sheet was produced for insertion in the Ontario Tourism Meeting and Convention Guide that will be used to generate meeting planner interest in York Region as a meetings destination.
- Canadian Society of Association Executives Membership Directory
Five Hotels partnered with York Region on a double page advertisement in this directory that has a circulation to 15,000 association management executives.

4.1.8 Industry Development

- Tourism Industry Workshop, March 8, 2005
Staff facilitated this pilot in partnership with the Ministry of Tourism and Recreation, which provided valuable insights, tips and best practices to build business to 20 York Region tourism organizations in attendance.
- Beyond the City Lights “Working Together for Success” Rural Tourism Conference
April 19, 2005, Port Perry
York Region is a co-ordinating partner with the provincial ministries of Agriculture and Food, Rural Development-Municipal Affairs and Housing, Tourism and Recreation and Durham Region to execute this tourism industry educational/networking conference. Attendance to this conference is being extended to rural organizations and tourism partners from the areas of Durham, Peterborough, Kawartha Lakes, Haliburton, Northumberland, York and Bancroft .
- Georgina Island Consultation
On February 22, staff presented and consulted with Georgina Island representatives in the development of a long term tourism strategy for Georgina Island. Crane Aboriginal Management is facilitating the consultation process and developing the business plan. Staff will continue to build the relationship with the Georgina Island tourism businesses for potential partnership opportunities as their program evolves.

4.2 Tourism Toronto Partnership Program

The Tourism Toronto \$250,000 partnership complements the Region’s tourism program and provides the opportunity to enhance marketing efforts that build awareness of York Region and the northeast Toronto area. Currently, the funding has been allocated as follows; \$157,000 towards Leisure consumer marketing, \$36,000 Travel Trade Marketing, and \$57,000 for the Corporate, Convention and Meetings market. This program is being implemented concurrently to the Region’s tourism program. A

northeast Hotel Tourism Advisory Group has been established to oversee and provide direction to staff as the program moves forward.

4.2.1 Leisure Advertising Initiatives

- CAA Publications
Advertising has been secured for the May and September editions of Leisureways, Going Places and Journey publications circulated to 1.4 million CAA members.
- Great Toronto Getaway Newspaper Insert
Advertising has been secured in the April – September editions, circulated monthly to 40,000 residents in Ottawa and Buffalo.
- Ottawa Life
Advertising was secured in their April/May Trek Ontario Guide circulated to 40,000 in the Ottawa area.
- AAA Michigan Living
Advertising was secured for the May/June edition circulated to 1.1 million Michigan AAA members.
- AAA Going Places Upstate New York
Advertising was secured in the May/June edition circulated to 834,000 AAA members.
- Fifty Five Plus Magazine
Advertising was secured in the May/June, July/August and September editions circulated to 125,000 Ontario residents

4.2.2 Travel Trade Marketing

Several initiatives have been identified for implementation later in the year.

4.2.3 Corporate, Conference and Meetings Market

Several initiatives have been identified to build this market segment. To date, staff has placed advertising as follows:

- Independent Meeting Planners Association of Canada
Full page advertisement in the annual directory circulated to 150 planners.
- Canadian Meeting & Travel Group
Full page advertisement in the Conventions Meetings Canada annual directory circulated to 10,500 planners.

4.3 Program Evaluation

Staff will employ a series of performance metrics to analyse the effectiveness of the marketing and promotional activities. Such metrics will include tracking the number of consumer inquiries, web site hits, media relation results and feedback from the Hotels and industry stakeholders on overall tourism performance. Tracking is a requirement of the Tourism Toronto partnership and staff will be reporting back performance measurement results later in the year.

4.4 Partnerships

In response to the needs expressed by the tourism industry stakeholders throughout York Region and authorized by Regional Council, Region staff has taken the lead on tourism marketing and promotions on behalf of the area municipalities. The Region has also secured strategic partnerships with other organizations including the Province of Ontario and Tourism Toronto to leverage region-wide tourism promotion.

Staff has been participating with the City of Vaughan to explore the potential to hire a local tourism co-ordinator. Staff has also participated in meetings with the Town of Markham to discuss the evolution of a Markham Tourism Board.

It is important to recognize that effectively marketing the Region's tourism assets and experiences requires a comprehensive and cooperative approach rather than a fragmented one. Staff will continue to attempt to build and nurture inclusive municipal and tourism industry partnerships throughout York Region. This partnership approach will assist the public and private sector stakeholders to be better positioned, to be more effective and to leverage additional revenues with limited resources and most importantly, demonstrate a positive economic impact and return on investment for tourism businesses.

4.5 Relationship to Vision 2026

The activities outlined support the Vibrant Economy and Enhanced Environment Heritage and Culture goals of Vision 2026.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The York Region initiatives outlined are funded in the approved 2005 Economic Development budget allocation for the tourism program. The \$250,000 Tourism Toronto funding has been allocated to implement the partnership program as outlined in this report.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The benefits of promoting tourism and increasing awareness of York Region's tourism attributes contribute to profitable tourism businesses, create new employment opportunities and encourage economic growth and sustainability within the area municipalities. In order to lessen the impacts of market fragmentation, it is key to build upon the Regional marketing successes to date demonstrating a comprehensive tourism experience for the consumer.

7. CONCLUSION

The tourism industry continues to struggle to overcome the adversities and negative consumer perceptions brought about by the events of the past few years. Tourism is an important generator of jobs and provides positive economic impact to the communities of York Region. The initiatives and partnership dollars identified in this report will help to support and restore the health of the Region's tourism industry.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.