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UPDATE ON INCLUSIVITY ACTION PLAN

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report, April 13, 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 provide an update on the Human Services Planning Coalition's (HSPC) *Inclusivity Action Plan* initiative to help make York Region an ethno-culturally inclusive community.

3. BACKGROUND

The Human Services Planning Coalition (HSPC) was established in 2001 by York Region as a response to rapid growth and recognition that the provision of human services is an important factor in maintaining and enhancing quality of life in York Region. The HSPC provides a forum for all human services providers to collaborate on actions that will increase funding and service delivery efficiencies.

In its 2003-2004 work plan, the HSPC identified the issue of diversity as a priority for all human services, defining it as a question of inclusivity (i.e. generating the feeling and the reality of belonging). While the HSPC recognized that diversity can take many forms, including disability, gender, sexual orientation, race, colour and culture, it placed a special focus on ethno-cultural diversity simply because the impact of rapid growth in the number of immigrants arriving in York Region is huge.

The *Inclusivity Action Plan* is a project sponsored and supported by the Human Services Planning Coalition. It was initiated in December 2003 when HSPC Community Members identified the need to address ethno-cultural diversity in York Region as a high priority. In January, 2004 the HSPC, in partnership with the Simcoe-York District Health Council, established a task group to explore options for developing an *Inclusivity Action Plan*.

The task group included representatives from the United Way of York Region, Catholic Community Services of York Region, YRDSB, YCDSB, York Neighbourhood Services, CHATS, York Region Police Services, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, York Region Health Services Department and the Human Services Planning Branch.

A discussion tool was developed and distributed to over 1,000 service providers between August and October 2004. In addition, focus groups were held with representatives from ethno-cultural communities and a range of human service providers. The results of the consultation were compiled in a *Draft Inclusivity Action Plan and Workbook* and distributed as a second phase document to 1,500 stakeholders.

On January 20, 2005, 180 people representing 95 different organizations in York Region were invited to a summit to discuss the *Draft Inclusivity Action Plan*. The summit also provided an opportunity for participants to indicate priority of the actions, to provide additional suggestions or recommendations and to begin developing work plans for implementation.

The *Inclusivity Action Plan* is a community plan to increase York Region's capacity to respond to and meet the needs of immigrants and new Canadians. The plan has been designed in a way that creates a framework for participation by all service providers, governments, ethno-cultural organizations, employers and individual residents. In short, it is a community plan to invest in York Region's capacity to welcome and integrate immigrants and, thereby, to create social capital for a vibrant economy and a highly skilled labour force.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

4.1 Impacts of Growth in Number of Immigrants

York Region is growing rapidly in both population and diversity. With a total population of 889,591 (as of Dec/04) York Region is becoming home to an increasing number of immigrants.

In 2001, the number of immigrants in York Region was 283,800 or 39% of the total population, up from 97,325 or 28% of the population in 1986. Between 1991 and 2001, over 94,900 of York Region's residents immigrated to Canada, up from 13,000 who immigrated between 1977 and 1986. Over one in five persons in the municipalities of Markham (22%) and Richmond Hill (20%) were immigrants who came to Canada between 1991 and 2001. Between 1994 and 1999 international migration accounted for 33% of the Region's net migration.

In 2001, York Region's population could speak over 65 non-official languages and 13% reported a non-official language as their home language (up from 9% in 1986).

This rapid growth in immigration brings assets in terms of skilled professionals, cultural diversity and economic prosperity. Immigrants, however, face challenges that restrict their full integration into Canadian society and the labour force.

The Institute for Research on Public Policy estimates this country loses \$2 billion a year because immigrant's qualifications are not recognized in the workplace. More than 40

percent of immigrants to Canada in the 1990s had at least one university degree, nearly twice the Canadian average and yet their jobless rate is at least three times the rate for Canadian-born citizens. When they get a job, six out of 10 immigrants end up working in areas other than those for which they are qualified. As a result, one in four new male immigrants with a university degree is under-employed and, for women the rate is even worse at 40%.

According to the OECD, the dependency ratio (i.e. the ratio of working vs. non-working members of society) will decline rapidly in Canada unless shored up by population growth from immigration. By 2011, when half of all baby boomers will be 55 years and over, new Canadians will account for virtually all of the country's new workers. The nation will soon lose a large share of its current supply of doctors, nurses, university professors and skilled construction workers to retirement. Already, 70% of the net growth in the labour market is provided by immigration. By 2011, this figure will rise to 100%.

The challenge in York Region is to remove barriers to the full participation of immigrants and to tap into the rich experiences, skills and abilities of this growing population. A challenge of this magnitude requires the efforts of many.

4.2 The Inclusivity Action Plan

On March 26, 2005 the HSPC received the report on the proceedings of the Inclusivity Summit and approved a community-wide *Inclusivity Action Plan*. The plan consists of six actions developed around three themes:

Theme: Improving Communication

Action #1: Welcome/Resource Centre

Rated as a high priority and requiring immediate action by 75% of Summit participants, this action involves the coordination of existing welcome/resource programs and functions in York Region and the introduction of new services. The outcome of this action is accessible, one-stop service for immigrants seeking assistance with employment, housing, education, health care and social services. The Welcome/Resource Centre may be a physical location but outreach, satellite programs and web-based access are critical components.

Action #2: English Language Development

An immigrant's success in Canada is highly dependent on their ability to become fluent in Canada's official languages. French is not a dominant language in York Region but the need for more English as a Second Language (ESL) and English Language Development (ELD) programs has been strongly expressed by both immigrants and service providers. Summit participants rated this as a high priority and 71% said it needed immediate action. The outcome will be increased funding for ESL/ELD programs and a broader range of programs to serve differing needs.

Theme: Creating Ethno-cultural Awareness

Action #3: Awareness Campaign

Rated as a medium to high priority and requiring immediate action by 60% of Summit participants, this action is specifically targeted at human service providers. It involves a messaging strategy and complementary training and professional development to encourage service providers to rethink their current beliefs and practices. The outcome will be tools and resources for an agency or organization to use to become more knowledgeable and more responsive to York Region's ethno-cultural communities.

Action # 4: Learning Opportunities for Children

Investing in the development of inclusive and respectful character traits in children will deliver huge returns in making York Region a truly inclusive community. Summit participants rated this action as a high priority and 61% said it needed to be addressed immediately. With leadership from the York Catholic School Board and the York Region District School Board the outcome of this action will be school and community programs that teach inclusivity as the norm.

Theme: Promoting Ethno-cultural Representation

Action #5: Volunteer and Leadership Development

Rated as a medium to high priority and requiring immediate action by 49% of Summit participants, this action will increase volunteer opportunities for immigrants and supports the development of their leadership skills. The action will focus on proactive outreach to identify and engage people not traditionally well-served by mainstream human service providers. The outcome will be more and new programs to support mentoring, networking and education.

Action #6: Organizational Development

Rated as a high priority and requiring immediate action by 53% of Summit participants, this action will improve and increase the range of educational resources available to human service providers in York Region. This action will involve the coordination of tools and best practice resources to inform staff and board recruitment policies, HR functions, governance and organizational development. The outcome will be staff and board composition that is reflective of the community served.

4.3 Implementing the Plan

The Action Plan has been structured in a way that creates a framework for participation by all service providers, governments, ethno-cultural organizations, employers and individual residents. This structure limits the Region's role to facilitator and transfers the responsibility for implementation to the human service agencies that are best resourced to deliver on outcomes.

As a result of the planning process, a Working Group for each action has been established. The Working Groups have broad stakeholder representation and leadership from a designated community partner. An Inclusivity Action Steering Committee will be established with the primary function of managing the implementation of the *Inclusivity*

Action Plan and to coordinate and monitor the Working Groups so that a coordinated, integrated effort is maintained. The Steering Committee will be accountable to the HSPC.

Initially the action plan is 18 months in duration with a review and evaluation after one year which will assess progress and determine the next steps. The following chart is a schedule of activities:

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An official launch of the plan will be held on Wednesday, May 18, 2005, at 11:00 a.m. at Seneca College, King Campus.

4.4 Linkages

The Inclusivity Action Plan has linkages with initiatives at the Region, in the community and throughout the GTA.

4.4.1 Economic Strategy

One of five strategic directions in the *Economic Strategy* (2004) is to sustain a high quality workforce. The strategy recognizes the talents that foreign-trained professionals bring to York Region and, more specifically, includes an objective of supporting immigrant mentoring and integration. Actions identified in the *Economic Strategy* will, in part, be met by the actions of the Inclusivity Action Plan. For example:

Economic Strategy Action	Inclusivity Action Plan Action
Assist in the compilation of a directory of immigrant support and training resources within the Region	• Action # 1 Welcome/Resource Centre will provide elements of a directory of resources • Action # 5 Volunteer and Leadership Development will provide training resources for immigrants
Advocate for the training and immigration policies that are attuned to the needs of the employer community and provide resources needed to support a new immigrant labour force	• Action # 1 Welcome/Resource Centre will provide resources for immigrant workers • Action # 2 English Language Development will advocate for and increase the number of sector-specific language programs for foreign-trained professionals • Action # 3 Awareness Campaign will promote the assets that immigrants bring to York Region and its economy • Action # 5 Volunteer and Leadership Development will contribute resources to help support immigrants' transferable skills • Action # 6 Organization Development will encourage and provide tools to help human service employers recruit an ethno-culturally diverse workforce.

4.4.2 Community Linkages

All of the outcomes of the actions in the plan are shared by multiple stakeholders in the community. In some cases, an agency or organization has a mandate to deliver services to the broader community or to specific clients. The *Inclusivity Action Plan* has been designed in a way that provides a framework for collaborative action. Leads for the Working Groups have come from agencies that have a role and responsibility to provide services of this type to the York Region community. For example, COSTI Immigrant Services will be leading English Language Development and the York Region District School Board and the York Catholic District School Board will be jointly leading Learning Opportunities for Children.

A measure of the value of this collaborative framework is difficult to calculate, but the leadership to enable the framework should be noted as a significant non-monetary contribution by the Regional Municipality of York and the HSPC.

4.4.3 GTA-wide initiatives

Although more and more immigrants are living in York Region, they often seek employment or human services in Toronto and other neighbouring municipalities. For this reason, it is important that initiatives in York Region are integrated with related GTA-wide initiatives.

The Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC) has 70 members representing leaders from private, voluntary and public sectors and a goal of improving immigrant access to the GTA labour market. Chair Fisch is a member of TRIEC. Regional staff attends an Intergovernmental Relations sub-committee and, recently, have participated in brokering an agreement to launch a mentoring project in York Region and to conduct a focus group with York Region employers.

TRIEC also sponsors programs that have outreach and benefits for York Region, such as Careerbridge (an internship program for internationally trained professionals) and GTAabc (a program to increase ethno-cultural representation on agencies, boards and commissions).

Many of the action plans in the *Inclusivity Action Plan* will benefit from TRIEC's initiatives and, similarly, outcomes from actions plans will serve to further the efforts of TRIEC.

4.5 Relationship to Vision 2026

Vision 2026 addresses immigrant issues and inclusivity in a number of goal statements. Most significantly, in the goal of creating 'quality communities for a diverse population' the action areas associated with celebrating our diversity will be met by these initiatives.

They will also help to ensure an 'enhanced environment, heritage and culture' by supporting the action of embracing our evolving cultural and faith communities.

In creating a 'vibrant economy', the action area of attracting and supporting business will be advanced by a strong, internationally trained labour force.

Meeting the needs of immigrants and newcomers to York Region will help achieve the goal of 'responding to the needs of our residents'.

In the goal of 'managed and balanced growth', human service needs of all residents will be addressed in proactive ways.

And lastly, in the goal of 'engaged communities and a responsive region', the action area of being a Region that involves its citizens will be enhanced by these initiatives.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications. The costs of developing the *Inclusivity Action Plan* have been limited to staff time, printing and mailing expenses. These costs were approved in the 2004/05 budgets.

The total expenses for the Summit were \$16,055. Revenue generated to cover these costs was \$18,700 and was obtained through partnership agreements from organizations with membership on the Inclusivity Action Group and the Inclusivity Summit registration fee. The additional revenue will be used for printing the Summit report and the final Action Plan.

The establishment of the Working Groups and the Steering Committee are both functions that will occur within the existing community service provider and HSPC structure. The cost to provide dedicated resources to manage communications and coordinate the efforts of the Working Groups and the Steering Committee for one year is estimated to be \$145,248. A grant application to HRSDC for \$136,848 has been submitted and indications are that the grant will be approved. The remaining costs of \$8,400 are in-kind contributions from community partners in the form of office rent and office supplies.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Local municipalities are important partners in the provision of human services in York Region. Programs and services provided by the Human Services Planning Branch continually and consistently include representation of the interests of area municipalities.

Partnership with local municipalities is an important and necessary foundation for all initiatives. Although the demographic shift is happening in all municipalities, the three southern municipalities have the largest numbers of immigrants i.e. Markham at 52.9% of total population, Richmond Hill at 48.3% and Vaughan at 41.9%.

The *Inclusivity Action Plan* will provide outcomes of significant value to residents of local area municipalities.

7. CONCLUSION

Human services are those programs and services that support a safe, healthy community and maintain and promote its quality of life. The Human Services Planning Coalition (HSPC) was established in 2001 to respond to rapid growth and the recognition that human services are an important factor in maintaining and enhancing quality of life in York Region. The HSPC provides a forum for all human services providers to collaborate on actions that will increase funding and service delivery effectiveness and efficiency.

Ethno-cultural inclusivity is the result of people helping each other through caring, cooperation and trust. It is achieved when people of different ethno-cultural backgrounds live, learn, work, and play together in a way that fulfills and generates the feeling and – even more importantly – the reality of belonging.

A truly inclusive community provides equal opportunity for everyone. An inclusive community accommodates diversity everyday in every way. Diversity can take many forms, including disability, gender, sexual orientation, race, colour and culture. The *Inclusivity Action Plan* places a special focus on ethno-cultural inclusivity simply because the impact of rapid growth in the number of immigrants in York Region is huge.

The *Inclusivity Action Plan* is a community plan to invest in York Region's capacity to welcome and integrate immigrants and, thereby, to create social capital for a vibrant economy, a highly skilled labour force and an enviable quality of life.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachment referred to in this clause was included in the Agenda for the May 4, 2005 Committee meeting.)