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VISION 2026: TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE REGION, FIFTH ANNUAL REPORT ON INDICATORS OF PROGRESS FOR THE YEAR 2006

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report dated February 20, 2007, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Council adopt this report and *Vision 2026: Towards a Sustainable Region, Fifth Annual Report on Indicators of Progress*.
2. That *Vision 2026: Towards a Sustainable Region, Fifth Annual Report on Indicators of Progress* be widely circulated to the public, stakeholders and staff and to local municipalities.

2. PURPOSE

This report provides members of the Regional Planning and Economic Development Committee and Regional Council with highlights of *Vision 2026: Towards a Sustainable Region, Fifth Annual Report on Indicators of Progress (Attachment 1)*.

3. BACKGROUND

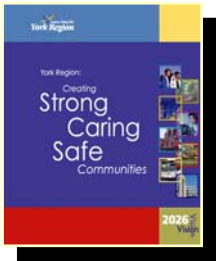
Vision 2026 is York Region's strategic plan for the next quarter century and was created in partnership with our community, staff and Council. At the heart of *Vision 2026* and its Annual Report on Indicators of Progress is a commitment to forging a legacy of sustainability that is based a sustainable natural environment, healthy communities and economic vitality.

These values are also at the crux of the York Region Sustainability Strategy: Towards a Sustainable Region which is scheduled to be released in the summer of 2007.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Throughout consultation and during the official launch of *Vision 2026* in April of 2002, Regional Council, staff and the residents of York Region emphasized that *Vision 2026* should not be 'shelved' but used to guide future initiatives, incorporated into our day-to-day operations, and that there should be progress reports to the public on a regular basis.

Regional Council directed that these progress reports be submitted on an annual basis. Vision's first annual report on progress, *Towards the Vision* was launched at Regional Council on May 22, 2003.



Through *Vision 2026*, the Region has committed to enhance our communities, environment, economy and quality of life by continuing to develop and build on initiatives like the Greening Strategy and reporting out to the public in initiatives like the State of the Environment Report as well as continuing to use our key strategic documents, like the Regional Official Plan, Transportation Master Plan, and the Human Services Strategy to set sustainable policy and implementation guidelines.

4.1 York Region's Vision Towards Sustainability

In March of 2007, Regional Council endorsed the York Region Sustainability Strategy for consultation. The Sustainability Strategy will provide a long-term framework for making smarter decisions about growth management and municipal responsibilities that better integrate the economy, environment and community.

The Region has built a strong foundation for sustainability over the years with an extensive list of initiatives that include, but are not limited to:

- Regional Official Plan based on the themes of natural environment, economic vitality and healthy communities
- The Greening Strategy and Land Securement Initiatives
- The State of the Environment Report 2005
- Energy and Environmental Management Systems (EEMS)
- Water for Tomorrow Program
- Energy Efficient Affordable Housing Project: Tom Taylor Place
- Public Transit and Rapid Transit Initiatives (YRT/VIVA)
- Minimum LEED Silver Standard for Regional Facilities
- Corporate Clean Air Task Force
- York Region Housing Strategy
- Coordinated approach to the ROP and Infrastructure Master Plans Update
- A variety of purchasing and operation decisions (i.e. LED traffic lights, new carpet procurement etc).

The Sustainability Strategy will inform and help to update Regional Strategies and Initiatives. In particular, the Sustainability Strategy will be of assistance in the Region's Growth Management initiative and update of Infrastructure Master Plans.

Towards a Sustainable Region continues to meet Vision's commitment of reporting on progress to staff, Council and the public and highlights how York Region's corporate

decisions support and further the goals of *Vision 2026* through our programs and business areas. It also positions the Region well to build on our successes and address challenges through the additional lens of sustainability.

Towards a Sustainable Region indicators are based on information the Region already collects including Key Performance Indicators, mandatory provincial reporting indicators, and information used by the Region.

Figure 1: The Function of the Sustainability Strategy



Highlights of this year's indicators include:

- Continued high quality of life rating by residents.
- In 2006 child care fee assistance was provided to a monthly average of 3,263 children, an increase of 505 children over the monthly average of 2,758 children in 2005.
- York Regional Police complement of visible minority officers has increased from 6% in 2001 to more than double that at 13.4% in 2006, continuing to become more representative of the communities we serve.
- Secured 563 acres of greenlands through the Greenlands Property Securement Strategy, total of 1246 have been secured since 2001.
- York Region welcomed 2.975 million visitors in 2004, an increase of 19% compared to 2003.
- There were 460,000 jobs in the Region as of December 31, 2006, up from 450,000 in 2005 and 430,000 in 2004, with 10,000 – 20,000 jobs created per year for the past 6 years.
- York Region Transit/Viva provided approximately 17.1 million transit trips, an increase of 12.4% over the previous year of almost 2 million more transit trips.
- Mobility Plus ridership has increased 36% over four years, from a ridership of 191,402 in 2002 to 260,673 in 2005 and increased a further 10.4% between 2005 and 2006.
- In 2006 72% of citizens were satisfied with Regional Government, consistent with previous years (71% in 2005, 71% in 2004, 70% in 2003 but up from 66% in 2002).
- Effectiveness levels ranged from the highest for providing access to services so that people feel safe in their neighbourhoods (88%), availability of human services (84%), and enhancement of the natural environment (73%) to a low of 57% for providing a range of affordable housing opportunities.
- York Region has maintained a AAA credit rating, the highest possible credit rating, since 1992.

Endorsed by Council, these indicators are meant to be meaningful and representative, providing a “barometer” of progress.

To date, strategic corporate initiatives like *Understanding Barriers: York Region’s First Annual Accessibility Plan*, the Economic Strategy and *The Profile of York Region’s Low Income Population* have used *Vision 2026* as their broad framework.

4.2 Are We Making Progress?

Over the last five years, York Region has made major headway on a number of *Vision 2026*’s Goals. This progress has helped us move forward on action areas that speak to quality of life, environment, economy, growth management, and sustainable communities.

Have we made progress? Some of our successes and award winning initiatives in this Fifth year of reporting include:

- The Recycling Council of Ontario Gold Award for York Region’s Yes! Blue Box Campaign
- The Recycling Council of Ontario Bronze Award for York Region’s Waste Management Centre
- Canadian Institute of Planners Award for Planning Excellence for York Region’s State of the Environment Report
- Regional Wind Energy Pre-feasibility study
- Council approval of York Region LEED Silver Building Standards as a minimum sustainable design and construction standard for new Regional facilities
- The York Region Sustainability Symposium and Council approved Sustainability Strategy Workplan
- A YRT Solar Panel Bus Shelter Pilot
- The Tom Taylor housing development
- CMHC Award for Armitage Gardens in the category of “Best Practices in Affordable Housing
- Smart Commute York Region to encourage Regional employees to use alternative modes of transportation instead of driving alone to work
- York Region named in Maclean’s Magazine as one of Top 100 Employers in Canada and Top 50 in the GTA
- York Regional Police received a 2006 Microsoft Technology Innovation Award for Project ShARE (Sharing and Administering Resources Electronically).

However, there is a need to improve our performance in areas where we have influence.

Residents have told us some of the major concerns include congestion, growth management, public transit and environment and that they support the Region’s efforts in areas like rapid transit and compact urban growth to address these issues. Employers in York Region have told us that diversity, mix and affordability of housing are important for continued economic growth and employment.

In 2007/08, York Region has an ambitious program to address these concerns through a number of initiatives, these include:

- The *York Region Draft Sustainability Strategy* was recently endorsed by Council with 80 action items
- The *Planning for Tomorrow* growth management workplan
- The Transportation Master Plan Update
- The Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan Study
- Energy retrofit of the Region's Administration building.

These are just a few of the initiatives that the Region is undertaking to implement *Vision 2026* as well as the Region's Sustainability Strategy.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Vision 2026: Towards a Sustainable Region, Fifth Annual Report on Indicators of Progress has been completed with existing staff. The budget for the publication, printing and wide distribution of *Vision 2026: Towards a Sustainable Region, Fifth Annual Report on Indicators of Progress* is provided for in the Council approved 2007 Business Plan and Budget.

In 2006, a pilot approach to distributing and communicating *Towards a Sustainable Region* was taken. Stakeholders, staff and the public were encouraged to access the electronic version of the Report on the Region's website but encouraged to request print copies if desired. As a result, most people accessed the report through the website and the print run of *Towards the Vision* was reduced by half. The same approach will be used this year.

Print copies of the report this year will be printed on Forest Stewardship Council certified paper, with vegetable based inks, using a waterless printing process, at a GTA based printer who is Bullfrog powered.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Throughout the *Vision 2026* process, it has been recognized that the area municipalities are key stakeholders in contributing to a collective Vision for York Region's future.

Staff of the area municipalities were consulted on the creation of *Vision 2026* and on the Performance Measures Workbook. We will continue to dialogue with the area municipalities and share information with interested municipal staff.

In addition, area municipalities will be fully consulted and engaged in the York Region Sustainable Development Initiative.

7. NEXT STEPS

Vision 2026: Towards a Sustainable Region, Fifth Annual Report on Indicators of Progress will be made widely available to the public, staff, and stakeholders through mailings and the Region's website.

In future, and under the umbrella of the Sustainability Strategy, *Towards a Sustainable Region* will become the monitoring and reporting document for the Region's progress on sustainable development. Staff are working to develop high-level sustainability indicators. Typically, these indicators will be based on the theme areas of the Sustainability Strategy current list, which are continuously reviewed for improvements. These indicators will also focus more specifically on practical triple-bottom line actions, engagement and implementation.

8. CONCLUSION

Throughout consultation and during the official launch of *Vision 2026* in April of 2002, Regional Council, staff and the residents of York Region emphasized that *Vision 2026* should not be 'shelved' but used to guide future initiatives, incorporated into our day-to-day operations, and that there should be progress reports to the public on a regular basis.

Regional Council directed that these progress reports be submitted on an annual basis. Vision's first annual report on progress, *Towards the Vision* was launched at Regional Council on May 22, 2003.

Vision 2026: Towards a Sustainable Region, Fifth Annual Report on Indicators of Progress is the Fifth in a series of annual reports that strive to communicate our progress towards implementing *Vision 2026*.

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Vision 2026: Towards a Sustainable Region, Fifth Annual Report on Indicators of Progress will be made widely available to the public, stakeholders and staff.

For further information about this report please contact Laura Atkins-Paul, Senior Planner, Long Range & Strategic Planning Branch, 905-830-4444, Ext. 1534, or laura.atkins-paul@york.ca.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachment referred to in this clause is attached to this report.)