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DRAFT YORK REGION LONG TERM TOURISM DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY CONSULTATION SUMMARY

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report dated May 20, 2009, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. The Stakeholder recommendations and feedback be used to formalize a final version of the York Region Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy.
2. This report be circulated by the Clerks Department to the local municipalities, York Region public and private school boards, Chambers of Commerce and Board of Trade and by the tourism branch to the York Region Tourism Advisory Group for information.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to present a summary of relevant highlights and recommendations from the stakeholder consultations on the Draft York Region Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy. The industry and municipal feedback will be incorporated to formulate the final strategy and vision for tourism development in York Region over the next 10 years.

3. BACKGROUND

In light of changing needs and market conditions there was need to revisit the previous tourism strategy completed in 1997 to develop a new 10 year tourism destination development strategy for York Region. The creation of a Draft York Region Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy was developed through extensive industry consultation.

In January 2009, Regional Council received the draft strategy and approved the commencement of stakeholder consultation sessions over the February-May 2009 period to receive feedback and recommendations to formalize a final strategy document. The draft strategy was intended to assist in defining the role and scope of tourism from a regional perspective and in determining an efficient and sustainable growth scenario for

York Region's tourism infrastructure and development. This document would be the blueprint for tourism development in York Region for the 10 year period 2009-2019.

The Region's overarching goals of Healthy Communities, Economic Vitality and Sustainable Natural Environment set the vision for tourism growth and development.

Five key directions were identified to define the environment in which tourism as a business will be conducted and to provide the framework to obtain feedback during the consultation process:

1. Strengthen Strategic Marketing

Strengthening the image of York Region in the minds of consumers as a leading destination for getaways, visiting friends and relatives, tournaments, meetings and groups.

2. Expand Tourism Attractors

Create visitor friendly communities, new tourism experiences and opportunities for additional tourism infrastructure investment.

3. Leadership and Governance

Establish an organization with the infrastructure that supports marketing and creates a business climate for investment, expansion and enhancement of overall tourism economic development.

4. Sustainable Funding

To ensure that sufficient funding is in place to enhance new product and experiences, market the Region effectively to key market segments, and service the information needs of visitors and residents.

5. Product Sector Development

To continually upgrade the quality and quantity of tourism attractors, products and packages, based on market research.

For each of these strategic directions, a goal statement, a measurable objective and a set of actions were identified to support responsible, accountable and sustainable implementation.

This report summarizes the feedback and recommendations obtained through continued collaboration and consultation with public and private sector tourism stakeholders. This feedback will be integrated into the development of a final strategy that fully realizes the economic potential and long term viability of tourism for York Region over the next 10 years.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

The consultation process consisted of 13 presentations, correspondence to 285 tourism businesses, local municipalities, Chambers of Commerce, Board of Trade, various provincial ministries, key trade associations, academia and York Region departments to obtain feedback and direction to amend the draft into a final strategy

Consultation sessions, direct mail campaigns and outreach activities were facilitated to seek input from a variety of stakeholders including:

- Presentations to the nine local Municipal Councils
- March 6 Municipal Economic Development Staff presentation
- March 12 letter and strategy mailed to 285 tourism partners
- Open consultation sessions held March 30 in Richmond Hill and April 2 in Newmarket
- April 8 presentation to Regional Commissioners and Directors
- Correspondence to associations included Ontario Restaurant Hotel Motel Association, Ontario Finest Inns, Ontario Accommodation Association, Campgrounds of Ontario, Resorts Ontario, Ontario Tourism Education Council, OMAFRA, Tourism Industry Association of Ontario, Greater Toronto Hotel Association, Tourism Toronto, York Region Arts Council, Festival and Events Ontario, Attractions Ontario
- Outreach to Academia – Colleges -Fleming, Humber, Seneca and York Region School Boards
- Strategy and letter mailed to Provincial Ministries including Tourism, Economic Development, Culture and the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation
- Strategy and letter forwarded to local Chambers of Commerce and Board of Trade

Written and anecdotal feedback was provided from the local Municipalities and many interested stakeholders including Festival and Events Ontario, Ontario Tourism Education Council, the Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association, Attractions Ontario, Thornhill Village Festival, the Society for the Preservation of Historic Thornhill, Hilton Suites Toronto/Markham Conference Centre and Spa, Brooks Farm, Motus O, the York Region Arts Council and the Toronto Region Conservation Authority.

The written submissions to the Region from Municipal Councils, as well as overall tourism stakeholder comments concur with the goals, objectives and action plans as outlined in the Draft York Region Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy

There is unanimous agreement that the guiding principles and opportunities for growth contained in the Region's strategy are relevant and are necessary to the future success of York Region's tourism sector. All nine local municipalities are very supportive of tourism development and either have or are taking steps to incorporate tourism within their various policies to address sustainable infrastructure, investment opportunities and

industry growth. From the consultation process, there are minimal amendments required to the goals, objectives or action plans on the draft strategy. There was significant support and direction given to strengthen the tourism attractors as identified in the strategy. Many recommendations were provided that guide and identify the major tourism sector growth opportunities, as well as the priority lands for tourism investment. These recommendations be incorporated to strengthen the *expanding tourism attractors* by building the quality and quantity of the current tourism attractors and the *product sector development* sections of the final tourism destination development strategy. As well, these recommendations will be included in further market and feasibility analysis to determine the highest potential tourism investment opportunities to attract potential investors and developers.

Although there are uncertainties pertaining to the Provincial Tourism Strategy, the report back from the industry was extremely positive and supportive of forging ahead to craft a comprehensive 10 year tourism strategy for York Region.

Having a defined long range tourism strategy in place prepares York Region to react to opportunities provided through Ontario Tourism's new strategic direction and positions the Region to leverage sustainable funding resources through Provincial, Federal and private sector entities

Many valuable insights and comments provided from the industry stakeholders that will be incorporated into draft strategic goals include:

Strengthen Strategic Marketing

- Leveraging the strengths and commitment of industry organizations and resources in place that can stimulate demand across municipalities and have a direct impact the image of York Region as a leading four season tourism destination
- Assess opportunities to build a cluster around particular product segments
- Leverage the Region's multi-cultural diversity to encourage visiting friends and relative tourism visits and overnight stays

Expand Tourism Attractors

- Recognize and support further development of the natural and cultural heritage districts, features and attractions that are unique to York Region
- Recognize the Region possesses a diverse menu and broad base of arts and cultural destinations and inventory
- Recognize the importance of the festivals and events play in the tourism and community landscape and cultivating larger marquee events to reap economic and social benefits
- A common theme for tourism investment included further consideration of a Oak Ridges Moraine Interpretative Centre
- Recognize the lack of convention facilities for York Region to be competitive
- Address transportation infrastructure challenges to serve tourism investment

- Build upon the strength of York Region's diverse cultural communities from a tourism perspective

Leadership and Governance

- The importance of having solid initiatives with a commitment to achieving these goals in an accountable, timely and transparent process.
- Ensure that the regional organization is structured to be able to effectively operate in the future
- Enhance accessibility to education and training for business and employees to address labour market challenges and service delivery in the hospitality and tourism industry

Sustainable Funding

- Ensuring sustainable funding is in place to realize the benefits from the investment in product and marketing
- Take a coordinated and multi-jurisdictional approach to sponsorship generation, grant applications and funder resources

Product Sector Development

- Build upon the importance of education to be included as a key tourism objective and recognizing current tourism operators that are leaders in providing learning experiences
- Work with Conservation authorities to deliver services and programs
- Stimulate growth not only of primary attractors but also secondary and tertiary attractors that have the potential to build their capacity
- Cultivate the potential to host and bid on sport events

For highlight excerpts from the Municipal and Industry feedback refer to Attachment 1 - Appendix A.

For the full reports provided by the local municipalities refer to Attachment 2 - Appendix B.

Relationship to the Provincial Tourism Direction

In principle, the Provincial Tourism Competitiveness Study and the Draft York Region Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy support the economic benefits of tourism

Regional tourism staff were directed by Regional Council when crafting the Regional strategy to ensure there was alignment with the various Provincial Ministries involved in tourism, specifically the Ministry of Tourism's future direction. On February 19, a new Ontario Tourism Competitiveness Study "Discovering Ontario – A Report On The Future of Tourism" crafted by a Committee chaired by MPP Greg Sobara for the Ministry of Tourism was released. Subsequent correspondence to the local Municipalities encouraged

staff to review and to provide feedback on the Ontario Tourism Competitiveness Study, as well as the Draft York Region Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy for York Region.

Both the Provincial Competitiveness Study and the Regional tourism destination development strategy connect with the sustainable development priorities and planning policies that define how York Region will evolve. Both documents demonstrate the recognition of the importance of the tourism sector and the need for a sustainable tourism infrastructure to support the contribution to the diversity of the economic base, and to the cultural, recreational and institutional opportunities.

There are many alignments between the Provincial and Regional strategies including a regional marketing approach, expanding tourism attractors through smart investments, enhancing infrastructure and the quality and quantity of tourism products and experiences

The Provincial Study also identifies new directions on how the business of tourism may function from a business, municipal and regional perspective based on the proposed creation of 11 tourism zones throughout the province with one destination marketing and management organization per zone. Funding for the tourism zones originally was through the collection of destination marketing fees but the Ministry of Finance has allocated revenues from the Harmonized Sales Tax collection to fund the tourism zones, leaving uncertainty around the viability of hotels collecting a destination marketing fee from overnight guests. Currently the Provincial Study proposed York Region be split into two tourism zones consisting of a Toronto Region and a Muskoka/Georgian Bay Region.

The direction provided by the Municipalities was for York Region to work with the Province where synergies are aligned but to lobby the Provincial government to keep the entire York Region in one tourism zone

The local Municipalities encourage York Region to advocate the Provincial government to keep the entire Region of York in one tourism zone. There is the fear that York Region would be overshadowed in a Toronto zone and that there are no natural or practical opportunities with a Muskoka/Georgian Bay zone that are aligned with Regional growth plans. Regional tourism staff is consulting with the Province to ensure our best interests.

As well, discussions have taken place with neighbouring municipalities to propose to the Ministry of Tourism the creation of a “North of Toronto” region that respects York Region municipal boundaries and incorporates the regions of Durham, Peel and parts of Simcoe into a provincial tourism zone. The concept of a North of Toronto zone has been discussed at provincial consultation sessions on May 13 in Gravenhurst and May 26 in Vaughan.

The Ministry of Tourism plans to complete the industry consultation process by end of May with a goal to have defined the provincial tourism zones and the framework to

identify the roles and responsibilities of the destination marketing and management organization for each of the zones by the end of December 2009. This timeline is necessary to meet the Ministry of Finance deadline to secure the Harmonized Sales Tax required to fund these zones which is in place in July 2010.

Next Steps

There is a need to have a long term destination development strategy in place for York Region

The overarching support received from the local municipalities and tourism industry confirms the need for a proactive long term destination development strategy in place that builds on the success of the existing program demonstrates a commitment to improving the sustainability of tourism in York Region, and sets the stage and standards for success.

Staff will incorporate the industry and municipal comments into the draft strategy for a Regional Council report in the Fall 2009. Supporting the strategy will be recommendations to establish an implementation plan based on the following considerations:

- The implications and status update from the Provincial Ministry of Tourism Competitiveness Study
- The means by which the tasks will be pursued in terms of work programs and interactions with other organizations
- The resources required to support the various strategies/objectives from a human and financial perspective

Relationship to Vision 2026

The Draft York Region Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy supports the Vibrant Economy, Engaged Communities and a Responsive Region and Responding to the Needs of Our Resident goals identified in Vision 2026. The Draft Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy is aligned with Regional and Provincial strategic planning and sustainability documents and policies.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Funding to facilitate the stakeholder consultations was provided in the 2009 economic development and tourism operating budget. The marketing program of the tourism branch receives funding support currently received from Tourism Toronto. The consultations confirmed having a long term tourism destination development strategy places York Region in a position of strength to leverage funding for financial stability from various

public and private sector funders including the Ministry of Tourism and the Southern Ontario Development Corporation.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The feedback obtained through the consultation process integrates elements of the municipal and regional policies to create efficiencies, productivity and a sustainable competitive municipal advantage. The direction provided ensures the Region's tourism strategy has a unified voice and a strategic platform to enhance business competitiveness, improve the quality of life for residents, support labour force development and local municipality long term fiscal sustainability. Refer to Appendix A – *Attachments 1-9* for the full reports submitted by the local Municipalities on the Draft York Region Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy.

7. CONCLUSION

The consultation sessions undertaken to date to craft the draft and now a final strategy reinforces that the scope and mandate of the Region's current activities need to evolve to fully capitalize on the economic, social and environmental potential from tourism. The Draft York Region Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy provides a long term framework to achieve this transition through managing growth while creating an environment that encourages investment and employment opportunities through tourism industries.

The Provincial Ministry of Tourism Competitiveness Study direction plays an integral part of how the business of tourism will operate from a regional and municipal perspective. Regional tourism staff will monitor their process and report back accordingly with recommendations to support the development of tourism within York Region.

The Draft York Region Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy will be amended to a final strategy document through the incorporation of the industry feedback and recommendations.

For more information on this report, please contact Brenda McGowan, Program Manager Tourism Development at (905) 830 4444 Ext. 1553 or Patrick Draper, Director Economic Strategy and Tourism at Ext 1503.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The two attachments referred to in this clause are attached to this report.)

City of Vaughan

Initiatives such as the Region's strategy enable us to work cooperatively, building capacity for strengthening our existing businesses as well as, attracting new tourism investment". Vaughan's new Official Plan contemplates a new urban structure based on intensification, transit and complete communities with a significant focus on natural heritage corridors and the Cultural Plan will make recommendations on the development of cultural industries and infrastructure.

Vaughan is interested in playing a role in the "access to nature" Oak Ridges Moraine interpretative centre, green education and tourism opportunities with existing Toronto Region Conservation Authority facilities. There is significant interest in sports including hockey and to be known as the "Soccer Capital" based on current facilities already in place plus cooperating on opportunities ranging from bidding on tournaments, marketing and cross promotion to sport infrastructure development.

Town of Georgina

"The recently approved Socio-economic Mission and Strategic Plan indicate that these opportunities for growth contained within the Region's Plan are consistent with the strategies identified in the Town's Plan. The guiding principles and opportunities contained in the Region's strategy are relevant not only to York Region but are also key to the future success of Georgina's tourism sector." The Region is encouraged to continue to provide marketing programs that support the four opportunities to grow the tourism sector including converting same day visitors to overnight stays, increase visiting friends and relative expenditures, attract more long haul visitors and increase business meetings, conferences and sport tournament travel.

Town of Whitchurch Stouffville

"The Town's Corporate Strategy recognizes the inclusion of "leisure tourism and cultural development" as a priority action under the strategic goal of "Balanced Growth and Community Sustainability". The Town encourages the Region to continue its efforts in streamlining the branding for York Region, strengthening the strategic marketing initiatives through research and evaluation and in developing sustainable funding especially for the purposes of marketing and servicing the information needs of visitors and residents. The Town looks forward to working with the Region to explore opportunities to expand visitor information services and tourism attractors, in particular those related to natural heritage experiences.

Town of Richmond Hill

"Overall, the Town agrees with the goals, strategies and action plans as outlined in the Regional strategy". Developing a unique "personality" for York Region, the expansion of

tourism infrastructure and attractors focussed on meeting and convention, sporting events, eco-tourism and the arts facilities. Richmond Hill supports a governance model that does not add additional costs or levels of administration with additional “red tape” and sustainable funding is required in order to properly market the Region, fund programs and plan for the future. Further development of Region’s Tourism Customer Service Program has the potential to differentiate York Region from the competition and high profile festivals and events and the potential to bid on sports tournaments, meetings and conventions are key target markets. The Town Parks staff has requested the Region’s assistance in understanding the impact of tourism on local communities and the establishment of criteria on which to assess the fit of trails and facilities into the tourism package.

Town of East Gwillimbury

“East Gwillimbury’s current tourism initiatives support all of the Region’s growth opportunities and can assist York Region in accomplishing them”. The enhancement of tourism related opportunities will play a crucial role in supporting the significant development and population growth proposed in the short and long term period. The Regional strategy identifies tourism and economic development initiatives that support the direction of the Town’s Strategic Plan, more specifically the Community Vision of planning a thriving community for today and tomorrow. Several suggestions for tourism development from an agri-tourism, eco-tourism, heritage related and near-urban agriculture and rural recreation were proposed.

Township of King

“Overall, the Township agrees with the goals, objectives and action plans as outlined in the Regional strategy document”. The Town expressed significant interest in opportunities that attract cultural, outdoor and recreation enthusiasts while being sensitive to residents and the carrying capacity and sustainability of the land. Several initiatives were identified including enhancing festivals and events, heritage and cultural, bidding and hosting sports events, agri-tourism, the development of eco/green accommodations and meeting facilities and the conversion of a core feature into an attraction of critical acclaim – the Oak Ridges Moraine Culture and Interpretative Centre. Enhancements to the Region’s Tourism Customer Service training program would be supported by the Township and local business would be encouraged to participate.

Town of Newmarket

“We in York Region have to counter the “economic rain shadow” Toronto casts by offering exciting and interesting destination alternatives for discerning tourists”. In addition to new destination attractions, fully developing the tourism sector will require an allocation of resources to better inform local residents and generate greater expenditures from the visiting friends and relative markets. Capitalize on the meetings and convention market, better develop the accommodation sector particularly in the northern Municipalities and explore the idea of establishing a convention centre in York

Region. A priority should be placed on developing an Oak Ridges Moraine/Green Belt Interpretative Centre and explore sport tourism opportunities and facility development.

Town of Aurora

The Town believes the strategy is sound and provides good strategic direction for tourism development for all of York Region. There should be an increased focus on heritage and culture as it relates to a tourism generator and there is interest to build greater tourism capacity by supporting and expanding sporting activities, festivals and events and through the creation of new facilities. Several questions were posed to the Region to address when finalizing the strategy including how can tourism leverage the Region's multi-cultural diversity, identify what are York Region's key benefits, define the nature of public/private partnerships and the approach to implementation, monitoring and evaluating the strategy.

Town of Markham

The Town endorses in principle York Region's tourism destination development strategy and will continue to support and partner with the Region in the delivery of the tourism strategic plan. Comments included maximizing the potential of Markham assets including golf courses, Unionville, Markham, festivals and the enhancing the opportunities based on the diversity of Markham's communities. Recognize the Municipalities commitment to enhancing their cultural venues including Varley Gallery, Markham Theatre and Markham Museum and package experiences to enhance the overall tourism experience. Significant interest and support for the development of a strategy to bid on sports events and conventions.

Toronto and Region Conservation Authority

TRCA strongly supports a vision of sustainable tourism that links the goals of healthy communities, a sustainable natural environment and economic vitality. They believe that that York Region's natural environment is one of its strongest assets and the incorporation of education for sustainability should be included as a key tourism objective. The role of conservation authorities should be broadened to maintain the Region's high quality natural features and be involved in the marketing of green tourist products and provide consultation on green business initiatives and promotions. It was expressed that the strategy lacks specific courses of action when it comes to development direction for the next ten years and it would be beneficial for all partners to have York Region set tangible tasks and solid initiatives to improve the current situation and achieve its goals. Building upon the current TRCA facilities and proposed infrastructure enhancements would be encouraged.

Festivals and Events Ontario

Pleased with York Region identifying the importance of festival and events as core assets for development and recognizing their economic and social responsibilities for community and destination development.

Ontario Tourism Education Council

Linking the Historic Villages to a position of tourism attractors and the need for meeting space incorporated not only into hotel facilities but into attractions and heritage sites supports positioning York Region as a dynamic meeting and conference destination. Building clusters of key attractors formed already or built in close proximity to a central point to initially attract tourism would be a start and evolve outwards from there. There is a need to expand the role of York Region tourism beyond marketing to address all aspects of the strategy. Enhancing accessibility to education and training for business and employees to address labour market challenges in the hospitality and tourism industry should be a core component incorporated into the strategy.

Ontario Restaurant Hotel Motel Association

Significant emphasis on ensuring accurate and relevant research is available for accountability and clear measurement of goal achievement for a project of this scope.

Attractions Ontario

Focussing on your current cores strengths (getting people from Toronto up to York Region) would be the optimal use of current resources. Business travel is a good niche to develop with a focus on expanding convention and meeting space. Given the new Provincial regionalization movement, coordinating Regional marketing efforts with the Province may not be lucrative, nor meets the goals defined in the strategy.

Thornhill Village Festival and the Thornhill Historic Society

Reference to the important cultural role that ALL heritage conservation districts, designated heritage homes and buildings play in York Region, not forgetting Thornhill and the Thornhill Village Festival.

The Society for the Preservation of Historic Thornhill

Written by a volunteer who previously participated on the York Region Tourism Board when it operated as an external agency to the Region. Stressed the importance of building the profile of York Region's countryside on the doorstep of metropolitan Toronto and exploring the natural environment and Green Belt opportunities. Enhance marketing efforts to promote to residents as well as tourists for economic stability.

Hilton Suites Hotel, Spa and Conference Centre

Pleased with the identification of a need for larger exhibit/convention centres to compete with Toronto and Mississauga. Identified the need to address efficient and cost effective public transportation linkages from the airport to be competitive. It costs between \$140-\$160 for a roundtrip limo compared to \$26 via coach to downtown Toronto. Sustainable funding is key but the destination marketing fee should not be the only resource identified but a more inclusive funding option should be considered. A sense of urgency to solidify the strategy and implement the action items in a timely fashion to build sustainable tourism was encouraged.

Brooks Farm

The mention of farms in the strategy is wonderful. To maintain farmland profitability and preserve it's growing potential, the support of agri-tourism is vital.

Motus O

The direction for the next 10 years is very clear and focussed. Leadership and Governance and Product Sector Development stood out as it is extremely important to continue to educate people on the value of tourism and the areas it affects economically as well, building and expanding current tourism products for achieve sustainable development.

York Region Arts Council

The Region's strategy identifies and connects the inherent relationship between tourism and the arts and culture industries. The York Region Arts Council believes they are in a good position to represent the diverse arts and culture industry across the Region and should be recognized as a strategic partner of the new York Region Tourism organization.

Council Attachment 2

Town of Aurora
Town of East Gwillimbury
Town of Georgina
Township of King
Town of Markham
Town of Newmarket
Town of Richmond Hill
City of Vaughan
Town of Whitchurch Stouffville



**TOWN OF AURORA
GENERAL COMMITTEE REPORT**

No.ADM09-004

SUBJECT: *York Region's Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy*

FROM: *Neil Garbe, Chief Administrative Officer*

DATE: *May 5, 2009*

RECOMMENDATIONS

THAT Council support in principle the Region of York's draft Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy, subject to the comments contained in this report being addressed; and

THAT this report be forwarded to the Region of York Clerk.

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

This report outlines staff comments, concerns and background information relating to the Region of York's draft Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy.

BACKGROUND

On February 24, 2009, Brenda McGowan and Patrick Draper, of the Economic Strategy & Tourism Department of the Region of York presented their draft Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy to Council. They had requested Council to ask Municipal staff to:

- Provide a cross departmental joint submission on the strategy recommendations by May 1, 2009
- Identify major tourism sector growth opportunities critical to building capacity and recognition for Aurora
- Identify priority lands for tourism development
- Provide a summary of proposed future development (eg. Hotels, attractions, recreational facilities)

COMMENTS

1. The Region's approach to promoting tourism is sound and should be supported. Staff suggest that the Strategy should be changed to reflect the following comments:

- With respect to the goal of strengthening strategic marketing as well as furthering the goals of expanding tourism attractors and product sector development, there should be an increased focus on heritage and culture as it relates to a tourism generator, within the Strategy. Having been awarded the 2009 Prince of Wales prize for the Town's commitment to preserving its built heritage and having many significant heritage and cultural attractions, the Town wishes to partner with the Region of York to build tourism capacity in this area.
- The Town of Aurora believes that this draft Strategy provides a good overall strategic direction for tourism development for all of York region. Since this document is inclusive of all of York region, there should be equal graphic representation of all of the Region's municipalities. Currently, the report does not include a picture of Aurora. The Town of Aurora would be happy to forward photographs of an Aurora tourism attraction.

We further recommend the Region address the following questions before finalizing the Strategy:

- How can the Region's multi-cultural diversity be leveraged to encourage greater overnight and longer-term tourism visits?
 - What are the key advantages of York Region that are of benefit to tourists with respect to entertainment, cultural/historical and recreational tourism attractions?
 - What is the nature of public/private partnerships with respect to core tourism attractions?
 - Will there be a phased approach to implementing the strategy (for example, an initial focus on priority sectors)? Will there be implementation timeframes so that the strategy can be monitored and evaluated in terms of its effectiveness?
2. The following comments are provided to address the Region of York's request to the Town of Aurora to identify major tourism sector growth opportunities critical to building capacity and recognition for Aurora.
- One of the proposed goals of the Strategy is to strengthen strategic marketing. This year, the Town of Aurora, along with seven Doors Open partners, is collaborating with the Region to advertise for all of the York Region Doors Open festivals. The Town welcomes this collaboration and wishes further collaboration in future marketing initiatives.
 - The Town of Aurora will seek to build greater tourism capacity by supporting and expanding sporting activities, festivals and special events and by creating new facilities.
3. Finally, the delegates from the Region of York asked the Town of Aurora to identify priority lands for tourism development and to provide a summary of

proposed future hotel developments. Currently, hotels can be situated in our business park and some commercial zoning designations. In the past year, Aurora has received a few enquiries for potential hotel projects. These developers expressed a great interest in locating within the Aurora market and servicing both business and tourist clients.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Tourism Strategy is intended to generate economic activity in the municipality. These initiatives will contribute to the economic health of the Town.

CONCLUSIONS

The strategy is fundamentally sound and should be supported. Staff are proposing that the Region of York amend its draft Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy to reflect the comments made in this report.

PRE-SUBMISSION REVIEW

The report was reviewed by the Senior Management Team on Wednesday, April 22, 2009.

Prepared by: Marnie Wraith, Economic Development Officer - Ext. 4742

Marnie Wraith
Economic Development Officer

Neil Garbe
Chief Administrative Officer



Town of
East Gwillimbury

CWC 2009-_____

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE COUNCIL

DEVELOPMENT AND LEGAL SERVICES

MOVED BY _____

DATE : May 4, 2009

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Development and Legal Services, Policy Planning Branch Report P2009-36, dated May 4, 2009, regarding Response to York Region Draft Long Term Tourism Strategy, be received; and

THAT a copy of Report P2009-36, be forwarded to York Region for input into the development of the Regional Tourism Strategy.

CARRIED ☐

DEFEATED ☐

TIED (LOST) ☐

Councillor C. Morton, Chair



Town of East Gwillimbury

DEVELOPMENT & LEGAL SERVICES REPORT P2009-36

To: Committee of the Whole Council

Date: May 4, 2009

Subject: Response to York Region Draft Long Term Tourism Strategy

Origin: Development & Legal Services – Policy Planning Branch

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **THAT** Development & Legal Services Report P2009-36, dated May 4, 2009 re: Recommendations on York Region Long Term Tourism Strategy be received;
2. **THAT** a copy of Report P2009-36 be forwarded to York Region for input into the development of the Regional Tourism Strategy.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to comment on York Region's Draft Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy as it pertains to East Gwillimbury, as directed by Committee of the Whole Council.

BACKGROUND

On March 2, 2009, P. Draper, Director of Economic Strategy and Tourism and B. McGowan, Manager of Tourism Development, of York Region presented a deputation to Committee of the Whole Council regarding York Region's Draft Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy. The matter was referred to staff to provide comments on the strategy recommendations.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Historically, the Region has worked closely with its 9 municipalities on developing tourism initiatives; East Gwillimbury currently has a strong working relationship with the Region and has benefited from the regions assistance. York Region and East Gwillimbury will be experiencing significant development and population growth in both the short and long term period. The enhancement of tourism related opportunities will play a crucial role in supporting this growth. The Town of East Gwillimbury is looking to develop a variety of tourism opportunities that will enhance the Town and Region's tourism identity.

The 4 major Opportunities for Growth that have been identified by the Regions Draft Strategy are:

- Convert same day visitors to overnight stays
- Increase visiting friends and relatives expenditures
- Attract more long haul visitors
- Increase business meetings, conferences and sporting tournaments travel

East Gwillimbury's current tourism initiatives support all of the regions growth opportunities and can assist York Region in accomplishing them.

The Regions Draft Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy is based on and supported by the triple bottom line. The three overarching goals that the Region has set to incorporate throughout their Tourism Strategy support the direction of East Gwillimbury's planned development, they are:

- 1) Healthy Communities
- 2) Economic Vitality
- 3) Sustainable Natural Environment

The following are proposed tourism strategies identified by Town staff. The strategies will be more closely scrutinized and developed as part of the Town's future economic development strategy with enhanced public and local stakeholder input.

- Expansion of regional commercial and entertainment opportunities on Yonge Street north
- Development of opportunities along 404 employment corridor for destination areas including hotels, conference centre sites and regional-scale sporting facilities capable of attracting large tournaments or competitions.
- Maximize significant town and regional residential growth by taking advantage of the Town's 75% rural area for agri-tourism, eco-tourism, heritage related tourism and "near-urban agriculture" countryside uses as well as rural recreation which includes a wide range of activities such as golf, marinas, equestrian, pick-your own operations, maple syrup, wineries, farm education, etc.
- Continuation of tourism related uses centred on East Gwillimbury Civic Square and Sharon Temple including Music at the Civic Square, the Saturday Night Car show, etc.
- Creation and extension of town recreational trail systems, Oak Ridges trail system and the pursuit of the Lake to Lake trail concept making use of the heritage lock system and the Holland River.
- Continued development of strategy to retain a northern York Region post secondary institution in Queensville where lands have currently been designated for that particular use.
- Promotion of agricultural opportunities through development of farmers markets to showcase local food and goods.

It is recommended that the Region give consideration to these specific areas identified above as part of the final Tourism Strategy.

During the Regions process of developing the Long Term Tourism Destination Development strategy, the Ontario Tourism Competitiveness Study released Discovering Ontario - A Report on the Future of Tourism in February, 2009. The provincial study raises strong tourism initiative, the Town supports for the most part; the provincial effort should be closely aligned with York Regions work in terms of funding and marketing strategies.

The Province's report proposes to divide York Region into 2 districts for the purposes of establishing marketing organizations funded through blended sales tax revenues. The northern municipalities fall under the Muskoka-Georgian Bay Tourism Region zone; East Gwillimbury and the northern municipalities are concerned with the proposed regional boundaries as they do not properly represent or support marketing opportunities that can be offered in the municipalities. The Toronto Region is where the southern York Region municipalities fall, this region is better suited for East Gwillimbury taking into consideration future growth plans.

The creation of a new regional tourism zone that would represent the Municipalities in northern York Region is a suggested solution; this would allow for the marketing of a tourism region that represents similar tourism opportunities.

The Town of East Gwillimbury supports York Region's Draft Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy and looks to work with the region on identified tourism opportunities. The Town also encourages the region to work with the Province in developing a Tourism Strategy that best supports the tourism opportunities of East Gwillimbury.

NEED FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Draft Long Term Tourism Strategy is a Region of York initiative. Public consultation is not required by the Town.

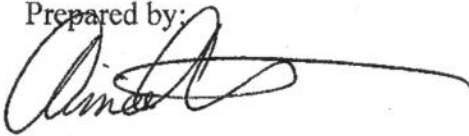
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications related to this report.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PLAN

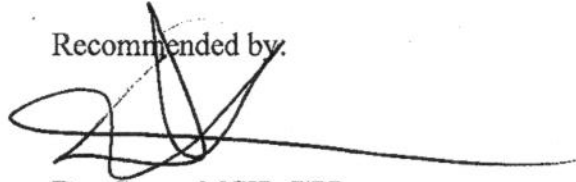
The report identifies tourism and economic development initiatives that support the direction of the Town's Strategic Plan, more specifically the Community Vision of planning a thriving community for today and tomorrow.

Prepared by:



Aimee Artinian
Economic Development Assistant

Recommended by:



Dan Stone, MCIP, RPP
Manager of Policy Planning

Reviewed and Recommended by:


for

Don Sinclair, General Manager
Development and Legal Services

Approved for Submission:



Thomas R. Webster
Chief Administrative Officer

THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF GEORGINA

REPORT ED-2009-0002

FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
MAY 4, 2009

**SUBJECT: REGION'S DRAFT 'LONG TERM DESTINATION
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY'**

1. **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- A. THAT REPORT ED-2009-0002 BE RECEIVED FOR INFORMATION.
- B. THAT COUNCIL SUPPORT THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF YORK'S DRAFT 'LONG TERM DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY'.
- C. THAT COUNCIL ADVISE THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF YORK OF THE TOWN'S DESIRE TO CONTINUE TO IDENTIFY AND PARTICIPATE IN COMBINED MARKETING EFFORTS THAT SUPPORT THE FOUR OPPORTUNITIES FOR TOURISM SECTOR GROWTH, AS CONTAINED WITHIN THE REGION'S STRATEGY AND AS OUTLINED IN SECTION 3 TO REPORT ED-2009-0002.
- D. THAT COUNCIL ADVISE THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF YORK THAT THE TOWN OF GEORGINA HAS MAJOR CONCERNS WITH BEING INCLUDED WITHIN A MUSKOKA-GEORGIAN BAY TOURISM ZONE AND THAT IT SUPPORTS THEIR REQUEST TO THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A TOURISM ZONE THAT BETTER SERVES THE INTEREST OF NOT ONLY THE TOWN OF GEORGINA BUT THE REGION OF YORK AS A WHOLE.
- E. THAT THE CLERK FORWARD A COPY OF REPORT PB-2009-0002 AND COUNCIL'S RESOLUTION THEREON TO THE CLERK AND THE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC STRATEGY AND TOURISM FOR THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF YORK AND TO THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO.

2. **INTRODUCTION:**

The Regional Municipality of York has prepared a draft 'Long Term Destination Development Strategy' (Tourism Strategy) for the purpose of

identifying directions that would encourage and accommodate sustainable tourism economic activities in York Region (refer to Schedule '1'). A strong focus has been placed on those tourism activities that contribute to and enhance York Region as a place to work, live and visit. York Region has recently circulated a draft 'Tourism Strategy' to the nine area municipalities for comment.

Regional Staff have also requested that the municipalities provide comment on the Region's position/concerns with respect to the Province's Tourism Strategy, details of which were provided to the York Region Tourism Advisory Group at a meeting held on April 9, 2009. The writer was not able to attend this meeting, however details of this presentation have since been discussed with Brenda McGowan of the Region's Economic Strategy and Tourism Department. Regional staff have indicated two areas of concerns with respect to the Provincial document which are outlined in Section 3 below.

The Regional Economic Strategy and Tourism Department will be providing a comprehensive report on both the Regional and Provincial Tourism documents which will include comments received from the area municipalities. This report will be presented to Regional Planning and Economic Development Committee on June 17, and to Regional Council on June 25, 2009.

3. DISCUSSION:

York Region's 'Long Term Destination Development Strategy':

The draft Strategy has been developed in consideration of the increasing importance of tourism in the Canadian economy. In 2007, Canada's Tourism sector represented 3.8% of all employment and 2% of the GDP. In York Region, visitors spent almost \$248.4 million in 2006 contributing only 0.5% to York's GDP and 0.7% of its total employment. Growth of the Tourism Sector in York Region to match that of the Nations GDP would result in 6,000 new jobs and expenditures of over 1.1 billion according to the Ministry's Economic Impact Model.

The Region's Strategy states that, "the revenues generated by tourist activity can make a big difference to a business' profitability and even survival". With a relatively small population base, Georgina Council is well aware of the importance of tourism dollars to many of our local businesses.

Upon review of the Tourism Strategy, staff agree that the guiding principles and opportunities for growth contained within the Tourism Strategy are relevant not only to York Region, but are also key to the

future success of Georgina's tourism sector. The Region has identified 4 opportunities for growing the tourism sector:

- Convert same day visitors to overnight stays;
- Increase visiting friends and relatives expenditures;
- Attract more long haul visitors; and,
- Increase business meetings, conferences and sport tournaments travel.

A review of Town's recently approved Socio-economic Mission and Strategic Plan indicates that these opportunities for growth contained within the Region's Plan are consistent with the strategies identified in Town's Plan (ie. encourage overnight stays, provide attractions to increase expenditures).

In this regard, staff look forward to continuing to work with Regional staff to strengthen and promote the local tourism sector and request that the Region continue to provide marketing programs that address these four identified opportunities.

For Council's information, the Town's Economic Development staff are currently involved in several tourism promotion initiatives with the Region including; York Region's Spring and Fall visitor guides, Summer Discovery Guide and website promotions. Copies of the advertising placed most recently focuses on the summer festivals held here in Georgina (refer to Schedule '2'). Staff will continue to add additional events to these promotional pieces as information becomes available.

In addition, Town staff are currently investigating a joint venture with the Region that would involve the distribution of tourism promotional material to 10,000 commuters at Union Station. While acknowledging that growth in the tourist industry will rely heavily on the ability to attract out of Province visitors who typically spend more money, this specific effort recognizes that at present 88% of visitors to the Region are from within the Province and from a relatively close geographic radius.

Provincial Tourism Strategy:

In 2008, Greg Sobora, MPP for Vaughan was appointed to lead the development of the Ontario Competitiveness Study, the results of which were released in February 2009. This report sets out a goal for Ontario to become one of the world's preferred places to visit with a target of doubling the tourism dollars received in Ontario from 22 to 44 billion by 2020. The Region generally supports the findings of the report, however staff have expressed concerns with respect to 'Leadership and Governance' and 'Sustainable Funding'.

Leadership and Governance: The Province's report is proposing to establish 11 tourism zones, with one marketing management organization being established for each. It is contemplated that the northerly 6 municipalities of York Region would be part of a larger tourist zone (Muskoka-Georgian Bay). This zone would include the eastern shores of Lake Huron north to Georgian Bay and east to include Muskoka. The southerly three municipalities would be placed within a Toronto Region zone.

In view of the Region's past work and efforts providing marketing assistance for all the area municipalities, and the unique natural attributes contained within (ie. Lake Simcoe, Oak Ridges Moraine), and in consideration of the very different product and visitor base, the Region is concerned with:

- a) splitting of the Region into two zones; and,
- b) being included within the Muskoka-Georgian Bay zone which markets a different product and to a different audience/clientele.

In this regard, York Region will be requesting that the Province consider establishing a "Toronto North" zone that would encompass all of York Region. Staff support the Region's position on this matter.

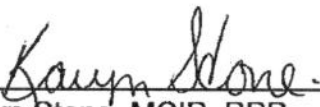
Sustainable Funding: The second issue deals with the collection of destination marketing fees (DMF), which are fees collected from hotels on a per room basis. Presently, the Greater Toronto Hotel Association and a number of participating hotels in the south end of the Region collect on a voluntary basis a DMF, which is then distributed to Tourism Toronto and York Region for marketing efforts. The Province's report proposes a mandatory province wide collection of DMF. Rather than distribute these fees to existing local and Regional governments who are currently responsible for marketing efforts on behalf of their geographic areas, it is proposed that these fees would be dispersed to non-governmental agencies that would be created to market the 11 tourist zones.

Given the strong working relationships that have been established with the nine area municipalities, Regional staff are of the opinion that the preferred option is to create a Toronto North or York Region zone with the collection of the DMF being dispersed to York Region who would continue to provide marketing on behalf of, and in consultation with the nine municipalities.

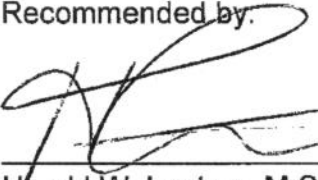
4. CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, staff recommend that Council support the proposed York Region Draft 'Long Term Destination Development Strategy' and further, that the Town support the Region's Economic Strategy and Tourism Department's position that the Province include York Region within its own separate tourist zone and be marketed in a manner that is in the best interest of the Region.

Prepared by:


Karyn Stone, MCIP, RPP.
Economic Development Officer

Recommended by:


Harold W. Lenters, M.Sc.Pl., MCIP, RPP
Director of Planning and Building

Approved by:


Susan Plamondon, B.A., LL.B.
Chief Administrative Officer

29 APRIL 2009

TOWNSHIP OF KING

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE REPORT

The following item from the Committee of the Whole Report of May 4th, 2009 was adopted by Council at its meeting of May 4th, 2009.

COPIES TO: FILE

JAMIE SMYTH

C.O.W. #2009-103

**Economic Development, Parks, Recreation & Culture, Planning Dept. Joint Report
No.: JR-2009-01**

**Re: Input on Draft Regional and Provincial Tourism Destination Development
and Competitiveness Strategies**

Committee considered Economic Development, Parks, Recreation & Culture, Planning Department Joint Report No.: JR-2009-01 to provide relevant highlights and recommendations on the York Region Tourism Destination Development Strategy and the Ontario Tourism Competitiveness Strategy.

Committee recommends that Economic Development, Parks, Recreation & Culture, Planning Department Joint Report No.: JR-2009-01 be received, and the recommendations therein be approved, as amended, as follows:

- (a) Joint Report JR-2009-01 be received as information.
- (b) This report be submitted to the York Region Tourism Manager for the Region's use in formulating a summary report on the Regional strategy and providing input and recommendations on the Ontario Tourism Competitiveness Study.
- (c) That staff include the 'Shift' lands as a potential site that could be assessed for its feasibility as a potential Oak Ridges Moraine Cultural and Interpretive Centre.

**CHRIS SOMERVILLE
CLERK**

TOWNSHIP OF KING

DATE: May 4th, 2009

TO: Committee of the Whole

FROM: Economic Development, Parks Recreation & Culture and Planning Departments

SUBJECT: Joint Report JR-2009-01 - Input on Draft Regional and Provincial Tourism Destination Development and Competitiveness Strategies

1. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is respectfully recommended that:

- (a) Joint Report JR-2009-01 be received as information.
- (b) This report be submitted to the York Region Tourism Manager for the Region's use in formulating a summary report on the Regional strategy and providing input and recommendations on the Ontario Tourism Competitiveness Study.

2. **PURPOSE**

This Report is to provide Council with relevant highlights and recommendations on the York Region Tourism Destination Development Strategy and the Ontario Tourism Competitiveness Strategy. Staff representing Parks, Recreation & Culture, Planning and the Economic Development Officer have reviewed the draft documents and have provided input for this report.

3. **BACKGROUND**

On February 2nd, Patrick Draper, Director of Economic Strategy & Tourism and Brenda McGowan, Manager Tourism Development presented the draft **York Region Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy** to Council. They were seeking support for the following:

- Coordinate a cross departmental joint submission on the strategy recommendations by May 1, 2009
- Identify major tourism sector growth opportunities critical to building capacity and recognition for the Township of King
- Identify priority lands for tourism development within the Township
- Provide a summary of proposed future development i.e. Hotels, Attractions, Recreational facilities

Cow
MAY 4/09

Following the consultations on the draft strategy, a summary report will be presented to York Region Council in June with the expectation that a final strategy will be completed in the fall of 2009. The Township's direction and input will be used to formalize the proposed draft tourism strategy into a plan for an industry led tourism destination marketing organization for York Region.

During subsequent correspondence to the Township, staff was also encouraged to review the Provincial Ontario Tourism Competitiveness Study that was released on February 19th.

There are many alignments between the Provincial and the Regional strategies including a regional marketing approach, expanding tourism attractors through smart investments, enhancing infrastructure and the quality and quantity of tourism products and experiences. The Provincial study also identifies new directions on how the business of tourism may function from a business, municipal and regional perspective including the creation of 11 tourism zones and the regularization of destination marketing fees (DMF), collected on hotel guest bills.

The Provincial recommendation is for the development of 11 tourism zones with one organization responsible for destination marketing and management. These proposed tourism zones place Markham, Vaughan and Richmond Hill in a "Toronto Region" and the northern municipalities of King, Aurora, Whitchurch-Stouffville, Newmarket, East Gwillimbury and Georgina under a "Muskoka/Georgian Bay" region. The Provincial direction to standardize a destination marketing fee across the Province would be to allocate the DMF funds to the one organization responsible for the marketing and management of each tourism zone.

4. DISCUSSION AND RELEVANCE

Overall, we agree with the goals, objectives and action plans as outlined in the Regional strategy document. Specific comments on some of the points found in the Strategy are outlined below.

King Township acknowledges that a significant majority of our current tourism and recreation product offerings are attractive to the near market "day visitors" and therefore from an economic impact perspective are deemed "low yield". Notwithstanding, there is significant room and carrying capacity to expand and enhance our tourism and recreation experiences through additional promotion, positioning, programming and packaging.

The following tourism and recreation sector growth opportunities are critical to building capacity and recognition for King:

- Enhanced Annual Festivals & Events: Nobleton Victoria Day, Schomberg Agricultural Fair (160th Anniversary in 2010), Studio Tour and Arts Festival King, Kettleby Fair, Door's Open King, Holland Marsh Soup-A-Licious, Schomberg's A Main Street Christmas.
- Heritage – Lloydtown Rebellion 1837 – (175th Anniversary in 2012) – This significant event in Canadian history presents an opportunity to create a performing arts experience as an animated tourism product.
- Enhancing Schomberg Village as a day tripper destination for specialty shopping, arts, culture and the Film Industry.
- Enhancing the use of King Museum site as a Heritage Village with additional programming
- Cycling: road touring and mountain biking @ Centennial Park and other locations
- Enhance Hiking Opportunities on the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail such as Geo-Caching Adventures and Competitions
- Sports Tourisms – bidding and hosting events using existing sport facility venues such as 3 Arenas, Summerski Canada site, Maple Leaf Cricket Club, Centennial Park, Cold Creek Conservation Area.
- Public Course Golfing and Golf two day Getaways
- Agri-Tourism/Agri-tainment and Culinary Tourism experiences – Pine Farms, Country Apple Farms, Round the Bend, Pucks Farm
- Unique Conference and Meeting Facilities: The Kingbridge Centre, Eaton Hall and Seneca Conference Centre, Cold Creek Conservation Area (Team and Leadership Building using outdoor adventure)
- Eco/Green (low to zero impact) tourist accommodations
- King Township as home to an Oak Ridges Moraine Culture & Interpretive Centre – Converting a Core feature as identified in the strategy into a Core Attraction of Critical Acclaim!

For the targeted growth opportunities mentioned above being on the northern central edge of the greater Toronto area presents significant opportunities to attract cultural, outdoor and recreational enthusiasts on a regular and return visit basis while being sensitive to our residents and the carrying capacity and sustainability of our land.

King Township has significant heritage, cultural and educational alignments and ties to the Greater Toronto Area such as the Carrying Trail, Casa Loma, Eaton Hall, Mary Lake Monastery as well as the Koffler Scientific Reserve as Part of the University of Toronto. Resources are needed to take advantage of these alignments and the significant cross promotion and marketing opportunities that exist with these connections.

Unless otherwise stated the Township supports the Goals, Objectives and all the Action Plan Items provided in the Draft Strategy. We have extracted action plan items for each of the Goals that King Township would like emphasized and pursued to a greater extent.

Goal 1: Strengthen Strategic Marketing:

- King Township concurs with the regions action items to: coordinate and expand Municipal and Regional destination marketing with Provincial Marketing efforts; and Maximize Greater Toronto Area visitation and increase the resources devoted to destination marketing to expand to new markets.

Goal 2. Expand Tourism Attractors:

- Establish a task force to evaluate the establishment of an Oak Ridges Moraine Interpretive Centre; identify new grant and funding programs; and Work with York Region's municipal departments such as public transportation, transit, environmental services, and planning and development services, to ensure that increases in visitation are integrated into the long-range regional and municipal master plans.

Considering the establishment of an Oak Ridges Moraine Cultural and Interpretive Centre is of significant interest to King Township. The Seneca College King City Campus Gate House is currently home to the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation, Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust and the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail Association. The Township requests that significant representation from the Township of King be part of this task force. A culture and interpretive centre that provides experiential and entertainment learning opportunities through "an access to nature" facility is a logical fit for King Township and aligns with the Goals and Objectives of Developing Green Attractions from the 2005 King Summit and the Future 2000 strategy that identified the goal of: "Promoting tourism opportunities that are compatible with the Township's natural environment."

Staff has identified a number of potential sites that could be assessed for their feasibility as a potential Oak Ridges Moraine Cultural and Interpretive Centre. They include: Cold Creek Conservation Area, Pottageville/Kettleby Lions Hall and Seneca's King Campus.

Goal 3: Leadership and Governance

- Leverage the expertise of the York Region Tourism Advisory Group through expanded scope responsibilities and roles; Establish an internal steering committee comprised of Municipal and Regional Departments with a vested interest in tourism growth; and Increase awareness and profile of the value of tourism for its economic, social and cultural contributions.

King supports the need for effective governance and accountability through structures such as advisory and steering committees however this should not add additional costs or administrative resources. These committees should be focussed on raising the profile and value of tourism through the development and regular provision of key performance indicators and measurements on how tourism contributes to York Region residents' quality of life, social, cultural and economic livelihoods.

Goal 4. Sustainable Funding

- Re-negotiate the current marketing partnership model with Tourism Toronto; and Investigate options that enable a more long term sustainable and inclusive Regional funding model for tourism development and marketing.

King Township concurs with the Region that the agreement with Tourism Toronto needs to be renegotiated in order to receive a fair and equitable share of the destination marketing fees that originate from York Region.

The Province's - **A Report on the Future of Tourism** proposes the creation of 11 tourism zones and the regularization of destination marketing fees (DMF), collected on hotel guest bills.

In light of the above Regional and Provincial proposed strategies, we understand that the funding of tourism destination development and marketing is currently in a state of flux and uncertainty. This is coupled with the most recent Ministry of Tourism announcement that the new harmonized tax reform package would produce an allocation of annual net revenue of approximately \$40 Million for destination marketing in Ontario's tourism regions, once they are established.

The Provinces proposed tourism zones place Markham, Vaughan and Richmond Hill in a "**Toronto Region**" and the northern municipalities of King, Aurora, Whitchurch Stouffville, Newmarket, East Gwillimbury and Georgina under a "**Muskoka/Georgian Bay**" region.

The initial information put forth by the province on the creation of tourism zones is disconcerting in that it appears that the municipalities of York Region would be divided into two different regions. There appears to be no significant justification for this grouping. Without this justification it is believed that King Township is better aligned with a Toronto region where our tourism and recreational product offerings and experiences are geared and targeted towards a near market ("GTA's Green and Country Playground", day tripping and short overnight stay type experiences vs. the medium to longer haul product offerings that are found in the Muskoka/Georgina Bay region.

It is believed that Northern York Region would be under promoted and under marketed next to the branding, awareness levels and tourism and recreation experiences offered in the Muskoka and Georgina Bay region.

The Township staff recommends that this proposed grouping is unacceptable and that Council should direct staff to provide these concerns to York Region and the Ministry of Tourism. We encourage York Region to lobby the Provincial Government and the Ministry of Tourism to establish York Region as part of one regional tourism zone/region.

Destination Marketing Fees (DMF)

It is proposed that all tourism accommodations levy a DMF and forward this fee on to a marketing body such as a Destination Marketing and Management Organization (DMMO) or tourism zone or region. It is proposed that this fee cannot be used by any level of government. It is stated that "dollars would flow directly to the industry" however it does not clarify who exactly would be receiving the funds and how those funds would be used. It appears that new administrative entities requiring significant staff resources would be created and therefore diverting funds away from direct marketing programs on behalf of tourism industry stakeholders.

How will the province deal with a situation that is more than likely the case in Northern York Region where a region or part of a proposed region has a proportionately smaller number of accommodations and therefore will not generate a large source of DMF revenue? This could essentially lead to "have and "have not" areas within regions and total regions themselves being under-funded and therefore under developed and under-marketed.

The Provinces proposed creation of stand alone tourism regions with regulated destination marketing fee collection mechanisms could also be detrimental to York Region's tourism marketing and development programs and the five strategic directions they are proposing in the regional strategy. A regional Tourism DMMO function could be perceived as being redundant and duplicative to a provincially mandated and regulated DMMO function.

Goal 5: Product Sector Development

- Become recognized as a Region dedicated to service excellence through labour development and training; Identify high profile festivals and events and evolution to provincial, national and international status; and Develop a strategy to bid on provincial and national level sports tournaments, meetings, conventions and other events based on current and future capacities.

Customer service excellence and the interaction with the "locals" as it pertains to tourism and hospitality experiences is what often is the most memorable and first thing people mention when they return home from their travels. This positive experience translates to the most powerful and effective form of advertising there is: "Word of Mouth". If not deemed as duplicating a provincial initiative and effort, the impact of a

Regional hospitality and tourism service excellence training program would be supported by the Township and local businesses would be encouraged to participate in the program(s).

York Region's Accommodation Base

With limited overnight tourist accommodations options available in the Township, we support the region's efforts to conduct tourist accommodation needs studies for each of the nine municipalities. This would have the impact of converting same day visitors to overnight stays and thus increase the local economic impact. York Region is facing hotel occupancies that are below industry standards. We acknowledge the critical importance of this fact when considering the desire to expand King Township's tourist accommodation options.

Priority Lands for Tourism Development Consideration:

- Cold Creek Conservation Area – limited overnight camping, outdoor adventure day camps, eco-tourism, hiking, outdoor adventure
- Pottageville/Kettleby Lions Hall – Green & Cultural Centre attraction
- Nobleton, Hwy 27 – former Imperial Ballroom & Conference Centre site
- Prestige Employment Area Lands 100 Acres, King City
- Pitway Lake Site, Keele Street North of Highway 9.
- Wiggins Heritage Home Highway 27, Schomberg 2 acres – Restaurant, Bed & Breakfast potential,

Summary of Proposed future development i.e. Hotels, Attractions, Recreational Facilities:

- Proposed Schomberg Replacement Arena and King Township Curling Facility

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications at this time other than staff resources to monitor and participate in the formalization of these Regional and Provincial strategies and if necessary report back on the implications they may have on the Township.

6. ATTACHMENTS

Attachments are not provided as part of this report. If interested in receiving printed or electronic copies of the **DRAFT York Region Long Term Destination Development Strategy** and **Discovering Ontario – A Report on the Future of Tourism, Ontario Tourism Competitiveness Study** are available through the Economic Development Officer.

Prepared & Submitted by:



Jamie Smyth
Economic Development Officer

Reviewed and Approved by:



Stephen Kitchen
Director of Planning

Catherine Purcell
Director of Parks Recreation & Culture

Cross Departmental Submission on the Region of York's Long -Term Tourism Development Strategy

BACKGROUND

- March 31st Ms. Brenda McGowan, Manager of Tourism Development, Region of York delivered a Presentation regarding “Long Term Destination Development Strategy.”
- The Presentation was received and it was requested by Council, that staff comment on the Strategy.

Action Requested by Region

- To endorse York Region's Tourism strategy by supporting destination development, growth and long-term viability of tourism in the Region, an expanded mandate and scope for York Region Tourism is recommended.

Region of York Tourism Vision

York Region is seeking economic, social and cultural development based on sustainable tourism, which preserves the environment and respects local populations

Establish itself as a tourist destination, building upon its cultural identity and the quality of its environment

Strategic Framework

- Goals -

1. Strengthen Strategic Marketing
2. Expand Tourism Attractors
3. Leadership and Governance
4. Sustainable Funding
5. Product Sector Development

Strengthen Strategic Marketing

- Goal:

- Strengthen the image of York Region in the minds of consumers as a leading destination for getaways, visiting friends and relatives and meetings of groups

Town Response:

- *Maximize the tourism value of Markham's 9 world class golf courses*
- *Highlight and promote the charm of downtown Unionville, downtown Markham*
- *Support partnership with local associations to promote community and cultural events*

Expand Tourism Attractors

- Goal

- Create visitor friendly communities, new tourism experiences and opportunities for additional tourism infrastructure investment.

Town Response:

- *Venues such as the proposed Sports Institute, or New Cricket Pitch have potential of being attractions to sports enthusiasts.*
- *Packaging of our hotel and conference facilities with leisure activities such as golf or cultural events enhance the overall tourism experience*
- *The diversity of Markham's communities may be basis for unique opportunities*

Leadership and Governance

- Goal
 - Establish an organization with the infrastructure that supports marketing and creates a business climate for investment, expansion and enhancement of overall tourism economic development

Town Response:

- *Continue to support and partner with the Region of York in the delivery of the Tourism Strategic Plan*
- *Collaborate with GTA and Tourism Ontario partners to support development of tourism sector*

Sustainable Funding

- Goal
 - To ensure that sufficient funding is in place to enhance new product and experiences, market the Region effectively to key market segments, and service the information needs of visitors and residents
- Towns Response:*
 - *Identify possible funding programs and support partnership applications*

Product Sector Development

- Goal

- To continually upgrade the quality and quantity of tourism attractors, products and packages, based on market research

Towns Response:

- *Determine signature events and enhance the opportunities based on the diversity of communities*
- *Support the Region's strategy to bid on provincial and international sports events and conventions.*

Identify Tourism Growth Opportunities

- Goal
 - Cultural venues continue to increase visitation
- Towns Response*
 - *Varley Art Gallery is expanding*
 - *Markham Museum building a new archive facility*
 - *The celebration of the Markham theatre 25th anniversary*

Proposed Future Development

- Identified new assets:
 - *Two hotels in Markham Centre District*
 - *A mixed use hotel and convention centre in the Woodbine area*

The Town of Markham is supportive of the Region of York's Draft Tourism Strategy

*Staff have provided this input to Regional staff for
inclusion in the final Strategy.*



TOWN OF NEWMARKET

Christopher Kallio, M.A., Economic Development Officer
Legal and Development Services
Tel: (905) 953-5300, Ext. 2436, Fax: (905) 953-5136
E-mail: ckallio@newmarket.ca

April 29, 2009

Ms. Brenda McGowan
Program Manager, Tourism Development
Regional Municipality of York
17250 Yonge Street
Newmarket, ON L3Y 4X9

Dear Ms. McGowan:

Re: Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy: Newmarket comments

Thank you for your recent presentation to Council regarding the draft Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy for York Region. Senior staff at the Town have reviewed the document and provide the following comments/responses as per your request.

Summary of Proposed Future Developments

As you are aware, Newmarket does not have a large surplus of available vacant land for future development, however, specific tourism projects can be accommodated depending on location requirements of individual businesses. We currently have two accommodation projects at opposite stages of the development cycle: a 5-storey Holiday Inn Express on Pony Drive set to open shortly, and a proposed 100 unit mid-range hotel as part of a commercial/office complex at the eastern Mulock Drive/Highway 404 gateway to our community, which has advanced to the zoning approval stage. We also see opportunities for additional accommodation in our Yonge Street/Davis Drive corridor to service growing commercial and medical related uses associated with Viva Rapid Transit and intensification.

Opportunities for Tourism Development

We concur that converting the day-tripper market to overnight visitors will generate maximum economic benefit for both Newmarket and York Region. To achieve this, York Region must enhance its perception as a destination within tourism markets. Although Canada's Wonderland is a major destination, much of its market is GTA-based day-trippers, and for visitors attending from further afield, Toronto is a strong competitive magnet for the overnight market. We in York Region have to counter the "economic

Newmarket's vision: A community *well* beyond the ordinary

395 MULOCK DR., P.O. BOX 328, STN MAIN NEWMARKET, ON L3Y 4X7
Direct Dial 905-953-5300, ext 2431 General Information: 905-895-5193 Fax: 905-953-5136

www.newmarket.ca

rain-shadow" Toronto casts by offering exciting and interesting destination alternatives for discerning tourists.

York Region does feature a number of physical, recreational and cultural amenities—Lake Simcoe, historic downtowns, events and festivals—to offer residents and the VFR market, but these on their own are not enough to be considered destinations and it can be argued that greater opportunities to enjoy these experiences exist elsewhere.

In addition to new destination attractions, fully developing the tourism sector across York Region will require:

- An allocation of resources to better inform local residents of the many things to do in the Region in the hope that this is communicated/shared with the significant VFR market, so that we generate greater expenditures.
- Recognition that York Region, and certainly Newmarket, was built on commerce, and that we are an urbanized, economically vibrant community. We therefore can build on this strength by capitalizing on the meetings and convention market.

We believe a priority should be placed on developing an Oak Ridges Moraine/Green Belt Interpretive Centre. This unique opportunity must be of the highest quality with revolving, interactive exhibits that will interest families, school groups, seniors and any traveller with an interest in the environment. This facility should be built within, or in close proximity to, the Moraine, with the possibility of trails and other natural features incorporated into the site design. We also believe that this facility should be in close proximity to an urban centre to capture additional visitor expenditures. In this respect, Newmarket or a King Township site in close proximity to Newmarket would be an ideal location for this facility. We would be pleased to become involved in any future discussions/steering committees, etc., that are established to further explore this development opportunity.

We should also explore the idea of establishing a convention centre in York Region. Although these are typically subsidized by the public sector, a feasibility study would identify and weigh the pros and cons of proceeding down this path.

Related to this, the accommodation sector, particularly in northern York Region, must be better developed. As mentioned, we in Newmarket have experienced interest from the development industry and hopefully we will see new rooms developed over the next couple of years. This would provide opportunities for overnight visitors while destination attractions evolve and the meetings and conventions market expands. We also foresee medical tourism becoming more important over the next decade, headlined by the growing reputation and tertiary care services provided by Southlake Regional Health Centre. For example, cancer patients at our new Cancer Treatment Centre travelling from the furthest reaches of Southlake's capture area may spark increased room night demand from families and loved ones wanting to be nearby.

York Region should also fully explore Sport Tourism opportunities given the growth of sports facilities/infrastructure, such as Newmarket's Magna Centre. This industry creates significant overnight room night demand and local expenditures, provided the hotel rooms, shopping venues, restaurants, etc., are available locally. A few of the many issues surrounding the business of Sport Tourism that need to be addressed as part of further tourism planning include:

- Should we be aggressively bidding on Regional, Provincial or even larger scale competitions?
- Are our facilities sufficient to host these events, and can/will local communities make these available at the expense of resident-based programming?
- Can our array of high quality golf courses or other facilities be packaged and promoted to encourage longer stays?

Comments on Discovering Ontario: A Report on the Future of Tourism

This report is another in a long line of Ontario government reports on the status and future of the province's tourism sector, and the four generic strategic proposals described can not be criticized. We also concur with the specific recommendation to standardize destination marketing fees across the province to increase marketing efforts. Our primary concern is the recommendation to establish Regions (although the Province has historically used such a system), specifically in relation to where the Northern 6 communities are slotted. Rather than being placed within Region 6, which links us with the Muskoka-Georgian Bay Region, we believe our communities would be better serviced by including all of York Region within the Toronto Region (Region 5). We would need conclusive evidence that the notion of separating the three southern communities of York Region from the Northern 6 communities makes economic, financial, geographic and organizational sense before endorsing this proposal.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide input into future tourism planning in York Region. We look forward to receiving the final report and working closely with York Region Tourism on upcoming initiatives.

Sincerely



Christopher Kallio
Economic Development Officer



Town of Richmond Hill

P.O. Box 300
225 East Beaver Creek Road
Richmond Hill, Ontario
Canada L4C 4Y5
(905) 771-8800
www.richmondhill.ca

April 14, 2009

Brenda McGowan
Program Manager, Tourism Development
Regional Municipality of York
17250 Yonge Street
Newmarket, Ontario L3Y 6Z1

Dear Brenda:

Re: Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy Feedback

The Region has requested feedback from the Town of Richmond Hill regarding the strategy recommendations found in the York Region Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy. Feedback was also requested on the provincial document "Discovering Ontario: A report on the future of tourism". Members representing the Parks, Recreation and Culture department, Planning and Development and the Strategic Initiatives department within the office of the CAO have reviewed the document and have the following comments:

- Overall, we agree with the goals, objectives and actions plans as outlined in the strategy document. Specific comments on some of the points found in the strategy are outlined below:
- Goal 1: Strengthening Strategic Marketing.
 - Richmond Hill concurs that developing a unique "personality" for York Region and strengthening our marketing of this image is necessary in order to help increase visitation and revenue to the Region.
 - We respectfully request that the municipalities be consulted regarding the new image prior to its introduction to the marketplace, and that each municipality receive equal prominence in the various promotional vehicles (i.e. advertising, experiential packages etc.)
- Goal 2: Expand Tourism Attractors
 - Richmond Hill agrees that there needs to be an expansion of the tourism infrastructure and attractors found in York Region.
 - There is great potential in focusing on: the meeting and convention market which includes sporting events, eco-tourism and the arts (e.g. experiential visits for dinner/theatre/wine tours/museums etc.)
 - Richmond Hill disagrees with the statement that the tourism infrastructure and attractors in the Region need to increase at a *faster* rate than the increase in visitors to the Region. Realizing that each of the two factors are interdependent (i.e. that people will visit if

there are attractors, and that with the increase in tourists, come more attractors), realistically speaking, both the private and public sectors will not finance expansions without evidence of potential increased visitation.

- Goal 3: Leadership and Governance.
 - Richmond Hill would support a governance model that does not add additional costs or levels of administration with additional “red tape”.
 - The activities performed by the Region and the Province should not duplicate but rather support each other’s efforts.
 - We would like some more information on how the proposed structure differs from the current Advisory Group. (i.e. is the main difference the formalizing of the mission/values/goals/mandates of the Advisory Group?)
- Goal 4: Sustainable Funding
 - Sustainable funding is required in order to properly market the Region (i.e. fund programs) and plan for the future.
 - Richmond Hill concurs with the Region that the agreement with Tourism Toronto needs to be renegotiated in order to receive a fair and equitable share of the destination marketing fees that originate from York Region.
 - Resources dedicated to marketing specifically York Region need to be in place or else our market will be overshadowed by Toronto to the south and Muskoka/cottage country to the north.
- Goal 5: Product Sector Development
 - The service excellence program of staff training is an excellent initiative and one which has to the potential to differentiate York Region from the competition, regardless of which attractor is being promoted. Richmond Hill will encourage local businesses to participate in this program.
 - High profile festivals and events as well as bidding on sports tournaments, meetings and conventions are key target markets. We assume that the nine municipalities will be consulted prior to submitting any bids so that we can determine which event to support.

Information on identifying the major tourism sector growth opportunities in Richmond Hill, as well as priority lands for development and a summary of proposed future developments is outlined as follows:

- Major tourism sector growth opportunities in Richmond Hill
 - Eco tourism
 - Arts based (due to new Performing Arts Centre etc.)
- Identification of priority lands for tourism development in Richmond Hill
 - Oak Ridges Corridor Park (conservation area, walking and exploring nature)
 - Rawlinson and Perryman estate (identified for environmental education purposes). (Perryman will first be a restoration/regeneration area.)

- Summary of proposed future developments (i.e. hotels, attractions, recreational facilities)
 - Oak Ridges Community Centre (including a swimming pool, activity rooms etc.), park, splash pads and Ecological Centre (a facility focusing on environmental and outdoor education, providing programs linked to the Oak Ridges Moraine Landform Information, and the three connecting trail heads on the Community Centre Site.)
 - Possible enhancement to existing parks/green space to include unique attractions (e.g. zip lines)
 - Finalizing development of the Richmond Hill Centre for Performing Arts – outside square/performing arts/community gathering place

Other comments

Parks staff would like the Region's assistance in understanding the impacts of tourism on local communities (i.e. perhaps establishing criteria on which to assess the fit of trails and facilities into the tourism package.)

In order to assist the Region with promoting Richmond Hill's tourism offering, we are including a summary of the tourism related sites and events within Richmond Hill. Please see the attached document, Appendix I.

Feedback on Provincial report

In terms of feedback on "A report on the future of tourism" produced by the Province, the following are the comments from Richmond Hill:

- In *general* Richmond Hill agrees with the recommendations outlined in the document.
- Additional comments or areas of concern are noted below:
 - Tourism Regions
 - The concept of creating tourism regions across the province to "identify and define unique experiences offered by the region" is valid as each region would understand their product offering and how best to market it.
 - Richmond Hill's concern lies in how these regions are defined. The initial information put forth by the province is disconcerting in that it appears as though York Region as a whole, and perhaps some municipalities themselves would be divided between two different tourism regions.
 - On a practical level, Richmond Hill does not have the financial or human resource capacity to support two marketing campaigns for two different regions within our own municipality (i.e. north and south Richmond Hill).
 - We encourage York Region to lobby the Provincial government to keep the entire Region of York in one tourism region. If this is not possible or practical, then we would encourage the Province to design the tourism regions such that one entire municipality (e.g. Richmond Hill) is located within one of the tourism regions and not divided.

- Destination Marketing Fees (DMF)
 - Requiring that all tourism accommodations levy a DMF and forward this fee onto a marketing body (such as a Destination Marketing and Management Organization (DMMO)) would provide additional funding for marketing purposes.
 - One concern we have is that this fee cannot be used by any level of government. The statement that “dollars would flow directly to the industry” does not clarify *who* exactly would be receiving the funds. (i.e. assuming the funds flow to a DMMO, who comprises the DMMO and how is the DMMO funded?) We would rather see the funding go directly to marketing *programs* rather than adding a new level of administration. Would the DMMO be staffed by volunteer representatives from within each region or would the DMMO be a permanent paid level of administration?
 - There is also a concern that the tourism regions will be designed so that some markets receive a larger share of the DMF.
 - How would the province deal with a situation whereby a tourism region or parts of a tourism region do not contain a large number of accommodations and therefore do not have a large source of funding? Without adequate funding, how is a region supposed to market their area? (The “have” regions will receive more funding than the “have not” regions.)
 - As per page 29 of the report, one of the next steps regarding the DMF is to require formal votes in each Region. What if the majority of accommodations in a region vote not to adopt a DMF? Then there will be no funds for marketing that region by the DMMO. How would this be handled?
- Encouraging Markets
 - Having the ability to conduct or access market research is important for smaller markets that cannot finance market research projects on their own. The research results will enable each Region to properly market and plan appropriate tourism related infrastructure developments.
- Strategic Marketing
 - Richmond Hill agrees that focusing resources on marketing *experiences* (and the associated destination) within Ontario is the best course of action.
- Critical Tools
 - We concur that the whole-of-government approach to tourism would be the most effective.
 - Improving way-finding is also a valid recommendation. If we bring the tourist to Ontario, and then they have difficulty finding the locations of interest, we have not only frustrated that tourist, but created a vocal opponent who will use negative word of mouth to further damage Ontario’s tourism industry.

Brenda McGowan

April 27, 2009

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Please contact me if you have any questions or require further information.

Sincerely,

Brenda Osler

Coordinator Economic Development Programs

Office of the CAO

Appendix I

Richmond Hill – Tourism Locations and Events to Promote

Outdoor Experiences

The natural geographic features of Richmond Hill provide for wonderful outdoor experiences.

Some of those experiences include:

- **The Oak Ridges Moraine**
 - hiking and biking trails
 - http://www.richmondhill.ca/subpage.asp?pageid=parks_oak_ridges_moraine
- **Hiking Trails**
 - Numerous trails throughout the Town that connect to Regional trails
 - http://www.richmondhill.ca/subpage.asp?textonly=&pageid=prc_trails
- **Phyllis Rawlinson Park**
 - Hiking
 - Bar-b-que facilities and fire pits
 - Robert Holland Interpretive Centre
 - http://www.richmondhill.ca/subpage.asp?pageid=prc_parks_phyllisrawlinson
- **Lake Wilcox**
 - canoeing, kayaking, windsurfing, fishing
 - http://www.richmondhill.ca/subpage.asp?pageid=prc_lake_wilcox
- **Lake St. George Conservation Area**
 - Controlled by the TRCA; available for corporate, school and group booking.
 - http://www.trca.on.ca/Website/TRCA/website.nsf/Webpage/trca_learning_educationnew_facilities_stgeorge_default_asp_load_information?OpenDocument&Language=EN
- **Richmond Green**
 - 100 acres of green space including:
 - 4 softball and 3 baseball diamonds, suitable for provincial and national tournaments
 - Ability to host elite sporting events
 - Senior and junior soccer fields
 - One indoor soccer/lawn bowling/multipurpose facility
 - 3 playgrounds
 - Splash park
 - Outdoor skating path
 - Indoor ice arenas (2 pads)
 - Basketball practice areas
 - Skate park

- Outdoor ball hockey arena
- Walking/biking paths
- Amphitheatre – (currently used to host Richmond Hill's own Concerts in the Park series but able to host other outdoor concerts/events)
- Pond
- **Canada Day celebrations** with largest municipal fireworks display in Canada
- http://www.richmondhill.ca/subpage.asp?pageid=parks_richmond_green_spaces_centre_and_park
- **Mill Pond**
 - Walking/cycling trails
 - Concerts in the park series
 - Festivals and events (e.g. Winter Carnival, Mill Pond Splash)
 - Skating/shinny on the pond
 - Playground
 - http://www.richmondhill.ca/subpage.asp?pageid=pre_parks_millpond
- **Golf courses**
 - One private and four public golf courses (including one executive golf course)
 - Numerous driving ranges

Marketable Areas

- **Shopping**
 - Hillcrest Mall
 - <http://www.hillcrestmall.ca/home/index.ch2>
 - Downtown Richmond Hill
 - Various small shops and restaurants
 - Location of the new Richmond Hill Centre for Performing Arts
 - Along Highway 7 – Many Asian shops and restaurants
- **Dining**
 - Variety of restaurants, many of whom have been awarded healthy heart menu awards and recognition from national newspapers. Ethnic variety includes: Chinese, Continental, Greek, Hungarian, Indian, Italian, Japanese, Middle Eastern, Thai, Vietnamese
- **Arts, Culture, Events**
 - Richmond Hill Centre for Performing Arts
 - 531 seat theater
 - Only theatre in the Region with a fly tower
 - 150 seat rehearsal hall (also available for meetings and events)
 - Outdoor plaza for events and private functions
 - Catering kitchen
 - Culture programming, educational programming, film festivals
 - <http://www.richmondhill.ca/subpage.asp?pageid=theatre>

- Curtain Club
 - Located at 400 Newkirk Road
 - Established in 1963, this approximately 100 seat theatre has allowed local artists to use their skills to delight local audiences.
 - www.thecurtainclub.org
- Heritage Centre
 - **The Richmond Hill Heritage Centre**, located at 19 Church Street North, Richmond Hill, ON L4C 3E6 Telephone: (905) 780-3802
 - **Heritage Village Festival** (usually the second Saturday in June) – A street festival held on Yonge Street between Major Mackenzie and Crosby featuring local entertainment, craft vendors, food etc. Contact Karin Ash, Manager Adult and Cultural Services, 905-508-7012 x225
 - http://www.richmondhill.ca/subpage.asp?pageid=parks_the_richmond_hill_heritage_centre
- Doors Open in Richmond Hill
 - Contact Maggie MacKenzie at 905-787-1441 x223 for more information
 - Some of Richmond Hill's most unique and intriguing heritage sites are open for everyone to experience. Admission is FREE and typically takes place in June.
- Museum of the Streets
 - Walk through downtown Richmond Hill in a self-guided journey to 12 significant 19th century sites, all within close proximity to one another.
 - http://www.richmondhill.ca/subpage.asp?pageid=prc_heritage_museum_of_the_streets
- Walks on the Wild Side
 - Four of Richmond Hill's most intriguing trails are part of this program. Learn about nature and environmental protection while being physically active.
 - http://www.richmondhill.ca/subpage.asp?textonly=&pageid=prc_trails
- Richmond Hill Group of Artists
 - **Fall Art Show Open House** (October). For more information contact Karin Ash, Manager Adult and Cultural Services at 905-508-7012 x 225, or email: kash@richmondhill.ca
 - **The Annual Richmond Hill Studio Tour & Art Sale**, which began in 2003, is a juried show that provides local artists the opportunity to showcase and potentially sell their work. This event, held in October, includes only original, hand-made art in many forms and media, such as painting, sculpture, pottery, photography, printmaking and hand-crafted jewelry, continues to grow and is quickly becoming one of the most recognized tours in York Region.
 - http://www.richmondhill.ca/subpage.asp?textonly=&pageid=richmond_hill_group_of_artists
 - <http://www.rhga.ca/>
 - http://www.richmondhill.ca/subpage.asp?textonly=&pageid=studio_tour_and_art_sale

- Wave Pool
 - Play in the waves, lounge on water mats, soak in the warm water of the swirl pool, ride the thrilling 160 ft. twisting water slide or simply relax in the on-deck sauna.
 - The only indoor wave pool within the Greater Toronto Area - a year round sun and surf destination.
 - Male, female and family change rooms available. Fully accessible.
 - The Wave Pool is available for group rentals to schools, community groups and businesses.
 - For more information call (905) 508-WAVE (9283)
 - http://www.richmondhill.ca/subpage.asp?pageid=parks_the_wave_pool
- Indoor Bocce Facility
 - Located within the Rouge Woods Community Centre (110 Shirley Drive, telephone 905-787-1441)
 - 4 bocce courts, viewing/card playing area, kitchenette
 - http://www.richmondhill.ca/subpage.asp?pageid=parks_rouge_woods_community_centre
- Santa Claus Parade
 - Residents and visitors of all ages enjoy this parade which travels south on Yonge Street, through downtown Richmond Hill.
 - Typically held in November.
 - Community groups, floats, marching bands, clowns and of course Santa Claus will delight the young and young at heart.
- Winter Carnival on Mill Pond
 - Typically held in the first week of February, the Richmond Hill Winter Carnival is a weekend of affordable fun and entertainment organized by volunteers to celebrate the community of Richmond Hill in a welcoming atmosphere.
 - 2010 will mark the 42nd year of this event.
 - Amateur band contests, bed races, shinny and skating, dog and animal show, magician, jumping castles, skydivers, pancake breakfast and more.
- Canada Day at Richmond Green
 - Attracting well over 15,000 event goers each year, Canada Day festivities held at Richmond Green park offers a variety of activities for Richmond Hill residents and visitors to enjoy including, live family entertainment on three stages, midway featuring inflatable and mechanical rides, Canada Day Home Show, a petting zoo, pony rides, children's games and activities in the Children's Village, a youth sports area including skateboarding demonstrations, Bavarian gardens and multicultural food vendors, hot air balloon rides and one of the largest municipal fireworks displays in Canada that will light up the skies over Richmond Green.
 - Parking available on site, in surrounding area and complementary shuttle bus services offered from various locations throughout Richmond Hill.

May 6, 2009

Mr. Patrick Draper
Director of Economic Strategy & Tourism
Regional Municipality of York
17250 Yonge Street
Newmarket, ON
L3Y 6Z1


Dear Mr. Draper,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Region's draft Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy. As we know the City of Vaughan is the most significant tourism destination in the GTA, outside of Toronto. Initiatives such as the Region's strategy enable us to work cooperatively, building capacity for strengthening our existing businesses as well as attracting new tourism investment.

Our responses to the Region's "Asks to Municipal Councils" as well as overall comments are below:

Asks to Municipal Councils

1. Provide a cross departmental joint submission on the strategy recommendations by May 1, 2009.

The City of Vaughan is very supportive of tourism development and has taken steps within our various policy studies to address the development of this particular industry. These policy studies are coordinated through the City's Growth Management Strategy: Vaughan Tomorrow.

Our new Official Plan embraces many of the policies that are contained within the Province's Places to Grow as well as the Region's overarching goals of healthy communities, economic vitality and sustainable natural environments. Our new Official Plan will contemplate a new urban structure based on the notions of intensification, transit supportive developments, and complete communities. Within this context, it has a significant focus on natural heritage corridors, which complements the Region's vision of sustainable development. In addition, the Official Plan also recognizes the importance of city building and placemaking, yet another vital part of tourism development.

The Cultural Services Division of the Recreation & Culture Department is engaged in developing a Cultural Plan, including cultural mapping. In addition to assessing the City's cultural and heritage assets, this Plan will make recommendations on the development of cultural industries and infrastructure.

Our Employment Sectors Strategy (ESS) is currently underway and will examine the current and future employment mix to meet the needs of a growing community and provide good quality employment opportunities. Tourism, of course, will be a sector that is addressed as part of this Strategy and the Economic Development Strategy to follow. Recommendations of the ESS will be incorporated as part of the Official Plan.

All of these masterplans and studies are available on the following website, www.vaughantomorrow.ca.

2. Identify major tourism sector growth opportunities critical to building capacity and recognition for your municipality.

Vaughan has a number of provincially and nationally significant tourism destinations, e.g. Canada's Wonderland, McMichael, etc. However, we need to build more connections between destinations, tourism businesses and smaller operators. In essence, we need to assess opportunities to build a cluster around particular product segments.

Under the Region's strategic direction: *Expand Tourism Attractors*, it was proposed to create a multi stakeholder "access to nature" visitor information service. We believe that Vaughan could have a larger role in this focus area. While the Oak Ridges Moraine is a significant feature in many York Region communities, the Kortright Centre, Boyd Park and associated Greenbelt lands also present green education and tourism opportunities. The Living City Campus, developing through the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, has we believe, some critical mass behind it.

Vaughan also has some significant interest in sports development, both soccer and hockey. With the presence of the Ontario Soccer Centre (and Association), the AC Milan Centre, Astra Sportsplex, Vaughan has the potential of being a "Soccer Capital". There are opportunities to co-operate, ranging from bidding on tournaments, marketing and cross-promotion to infrastructure development.

In addition, there is significant interest in Vaughan to act as host to a NHL franchise.

3. Identify priority lands for tourism development.

The key areas in Vaughan for tourism development lie within the Vaughan Corporate Centre and the Vaughan Enterprise Zone. With the arrival of the subway to the Corporate Centre in 2015, we will create a downtown with the necessary transportation and hospitality investments to support development of conference, convention facilities and an arts (performing and fine arts) centre. The City has received a number of enquiries for the development of cultural centres. This area is also in close proximity to York University and the Rexall Centre generating opportunities for visits tied to visiting lecturers, university operations as well as sporting events.

The Vaughan Enterprise Zone, at the confluence of Toronto, Vaughan, and Brampton, is the GTA's largest remaining contiguous employment areas. Within a 10-minute drive of Lester B. Pearson International Airport and the Woodbine Live! Development, the Enterprise Zone is

poised to capitalize on the spillover effects of the airport strip hotel traffic, and the \$750+ million investment.

The areas surrounding Vaughan Mills is also an area for potential tourism investment. This area would capitalize on traffic generated by both Vaughan Mills, Canada's Wonderland and the transient traffic heading north to cottage country.

4. Provide a summary of proposed future development, i.e. hotels, attractions, recreational facilities.

Current hotel developments (8 properties) totaling: 1,110 superior rooms

Planned hotel developments (3 properties) totaling 450 superior rooms

The Active Together Masterplan details the City's requirements for recreation, culture, parks, facilities and libraries. A copy of the Masterplan can be found on www.vaughantomorrow.ca.

With respect to strategic direction: *Leadership and Governance*, the Vaughan Tourism Advisory Committee would welcome a more active participation in groups such as the York Region Tourism Advisory Group. The input of municipal and industry partners is invaluable.

With respect to strategic direction: *Sustainable Funding*, the Vaughan Tourism Advisory Committee would recommend that the Region and its municipal partners take a coordinated approach to sponsorship generation, as well as grant applications. In our experience, sponsors and funders are much more receptive to a co-ordinated approach and to projects which have multi-jurisdictional buy-in.

On a housekeeping note, as we reviewed the draft Strategy, we noted that there are some inconsistencies in the photo captions. We kindly request that all photos pertaining to activities or venues in Vaughan, be noted as in Vaughan.

In closing, we congratulate you on this comprehensive strategy and urge you to continue with a more detailed dialogue with Vaughan, so that we may arrive at specific action plans that builds on the great lifestyle we enjoy, as well as address our unique tourism milieu.

Sincerely,



Tony Carella
Councillor & Chair of Vaughan Tourism Advisory Committee

C Vaughan Tourism Advisory Committee
 Michael DeAngelis, City Manager
 Shirley Kam, Manager of Economic Development
 Vittoria Giovannetti, Manager of Tourism

April 29, 2009

Brenda McGowan
Manager of Tourism Promotion
Regional Municipality of York
17250 Yonge Street
Newmarket, ON
L3Y 6Z1

Dear Brenda:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Draft Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy and Provincial Strategy Review presented to Council on March 3, 2009.

As your presentation identified, tourism development has tremendous potential for positive economic and social impact in York Region and, specifically, Whitchurch-Stouffville. The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville Corporate Strategy recognizes this through the inclusion of "Leisure, tourism and cultural development" as a priority action under the strategic goal of "Balanced Growth & Community Sustainability".

The Guiding Principles identified in the Region's Draft Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy are sound and will contribute to maximizing the economic, social and environmental benefits of increased tourism development in the Region. The four distinct Opportunities for Growth are appropriate and highly applicable to Whitchurch-Stouffville. As Whitchurch-Stouffville looks forward to the imminent opening of the new Lebovic Centre for Arts & Entertainment – Nineteen on the Park as well as the planned expansion of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum, the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville is eager to assist/partner with the Region to "encourage same-day visitors to extend their stay" and to "enhance in-region communication to educate and encourage local residents to take visiting guests to experience a wider range of local product offerings". By "growing tourism infrastructure, attractors and accommodation" and "attracting a greater share of long-haul visitors" the Region will contribute to increasing the markets for public and private sector tourism destinations in Whitchurch-Stouffville.

York Region Tourism's cohesive approach to marketing has benefitted the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville significantly by enabling our marketing dollars to stretch much further through collaborative efforts. The Town encourages the Region to continue its efforts in streamlining the branding for York Region, strengthening the strategic marketing initiatives through research and evaluation, and in developing sustainable funding especially for the purposes of marketing and servicing the information needs of visitors and residents,

The Town looks forward to working with York Region Tourism to explore opportunities to expand visitor information services and tourism attractors, in particular those related to increasing awareness and usage of natural heritage experiences. The planned expansion of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum, given its central location within York Region on the Oak

Ridges Moraine and convenient accessibility from the 400-series highways, presents a timely opportunity to investigate joint venture/ partnership approaches to maximize the impacts of tourism infrastructure development.

While the Provincial Tourism Strategy Review includes some very proactive, exciting and beneficial initiatives, the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville has a number of concerns.

- (1) The boundaries of the new tourism regions proposed in the Discovering Ontario: A Report on the Future of Tourism, are extremely problematic since they bisect York Region. Whitchurch-Stouffville would fall at the southern end of the Muskoka-Georgian Bay Region. Such a geographic division separates Whitchurch-Stouffville from its most significant market of daytrippers (GTA residents). It further lumps our municipality into an area with an existing, highly established brand recognition (Muskoka-Georgian Bay/cottage country) that is completely incongruous with the Whitchurch-Stouffville (Country close to the City) context. The segregation of York Region municipalities between provincial tourism regions negates the progress to date in developing cooperative and collaborative partnerships and networks across the Region as well as in building the York Region brand.
- (2) The limit of only one Destination Marketing and Management Organization (DMMO) within such a vast and diverse region as the proposed Muskoka-Georgian Bay Region would complicate communications and collaboration among tourism operators. Creating a "unique" and effective brand for this region, given its disparate sub-regions in terms of geography, industry, urbanization, and cultural diversity to name only a few, is unimaginable. It further negates the successful collaborative initiatives and collateral recognition achieved by existing DMOs including York Region Tourism.
- (3) The restriction that DMF dollars not fund any level of government would prohibit York Region Tourism, our current and highly effective DMO, from accessing this source of funding for collaborative marketing initiatives or product development that benefit our local tourism industry.

If you require any further information or clarification, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Dorie Billich,
Museum Curator

Copy Mayor Emmerson and Members of Council
 Dave Cash, CAO