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YORK REGION SMALL BUSINESS ENTERPRISE CENTRE WORK PROGRAM 2004

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report, April 1, 2004, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. This report be received for information.
2. Staff be authorized to submit an application to Human Resources and Skills Development under the Job Creation Program for additional staff support.
3. The Regional Chair and Regional Clerk be authorized to execute subsequent and all future agreements with the Government of Canada for funding assistance.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide Regional Council with an update on the activities of the York Region Small Business Enterprise Centre program.

3. BACKGROUND

In February 2003, the Region entered into a Letter of Agreement with the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade (MEDT) to establish a York Region Small Business Enterprise Centre (*YRSBEC*) at the Regional Administrative Centre. A Small Business Consultant was retained in June 2003 to manage and operate the Centre.

The *YRSBEC* provides assistance in the creation and development of new and early growth stage businesses. The Centre in Newmarket complements the other Small Business Enterprise Centres in Markham, Richmond Hill and Vaughan to serve entrepreneurs and small business in the northern parts of the Region.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

4.1 Program Services

The following are some of the services offered by the York Region Small Business Enterprise Centre:

- On-site consulting services with the Small Business Consultant.

- Development and maintenance of extensive business-related resources including publications, market research statistics, websites, business planning, import, export, government forms, government programs and services.
- Facilitation of third party professional consultations on an as-need basis.
- Business registration assistance.
- Facilitation and conducting of seminars, training programs, and information sessions on topics related to business start-up operations and management.
- Hosting of *Lunch and Learn* group sessions.
- Promotion and delivery of young entrepreneurship information and programs such as *Summer Company*, *My Company*, and *Business Plan Competition*.
- Co-ordination of *Bridges to Better Business* event.
- Access to computer work stations with Internet access and business application software.
- Development and provision of networking opportunities for small business owners.
- Co-operative marketing of business services with local private and public sector partners.
- Provision of mentoring/coaching service to small business owners.
- Provision of outreach services to businesses in the area.
- Response to general enquiries related to business start-up, operations and management, and programs/services available for small business.

A copy of the York Region Small Business Enterprise Centre Brochure is attached as *Attachment 1*.

4.2 Progress To-date

4.2.1 Activities

The following are some of the activities undertaken up to the end of February 2004, compared to the original forecast targets proposed in the Business Plan for the same period:

Activities	Actual	Original Forecast Targets
General Enquiries	1,431	1,333
Consultations	117 (88 new and 29 existing)	133
Workshops/Seminars	6	3
Lunch & Learn	1	1
Salute To Business	1	1
Outreach	45	-

4.2.2 Economic Impact

- New business start-ups:12
- New business registered: 38
- Business expanded: 2
- Jobs Created:16

4.2.3 Achievements

Some of the achievements of the *YRSBEC* for the first eight months of operations include the following:

- Facilitated a new owner in getting financial and marketing assistance which has allowed her to expand across Canada and the U.S., resulting in the creation of 16 jobs.
- Worked with a partnership to get financing for a new trucking company.
- Assisted a company in getting business in China.
- Worked with a large ethnic community to assist immigrants in new business start-ups.
- Created opportunities to provide linkages with the York Region Export Development Initiative.
- *YRSBEC* website had 5,334 hits since it was launched in December 2003, and the number of hits is increasing every month. It is the third busiest of 13 Regional sites with the number of hits reaching almost 2,380 in February.

4.2.4 Advisory Committee

An Advisory Committee has been established comprising of the following members:

- Grant Simons, Royal Bank of Canada
- Irina Nisanian, Clarica
- Jim Gragtmann, Action International
- Elizabeth Brims, Small Business Consultant
- Bruce Walkinshaw, Canadian Federation of Independent Business
- Lyn Doering, MEDT

The role of the Advisory Committee is to provide a linkage between *YRSBEC* and the community. The members will provide support to the Small Business Consultant, assist with securing sponsors, provide feedback on programs and events, and help to promote the profile of the Centre to the business community. The Advisory Committee meets quarterly to discuss general mandate issues and updates, and as required to deal with specific projects and events.

4.2.5 Community Partnership, Visibility and Participation

Community partnerships, development of relationships and visibility within the business community and relevant business organizations was the area of focus during the first year of operation of the *YRSBEC*. Contacts have been established with the following community organizations:

- Local municipalities.
- Provincial and federal levels of government.
- Financial institutions.
- Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade.
- Business Improvement Associations.
- Business Resource Centres.
- Young Entrepreneur initiatives.

- Junior Achievement partnerships.
- Local training and adjustment boards.
- Private industry.
- Professional services representatives (e.g. legal and accounting professionals).
- Economic development agencies and departments.
- Educational institutions.
- Community groups such as the Rotary Club.

As part of the Centre's proactive approach, the Small Business Consultant has participated in many outreach activities, including:

- Speaking engagements.
- Participation in trade shows and trade fairs.
- Participation in seminars and workshops.
- Representation of the YRSBEC and MEDT at local events.
- Meetings with client companies.
- Liaison with municipal, provincial, federal, and other agencies involved in business entrepreneurship.

The Small Business Consultant has also met with area municipal economic development offices, Chambers of Commerce/Boards of Trade, and business associations. Presentations were made to the Newmarket Economic Development Advisory Committee (NEDAC), the East Gwillimbury Business Development Committee, Township of King Council, the Whitchurch-Stouffville Neighbourhood Employment Resource Centre, Georgina Neighbourhood Resource Centre, the Entrepreneurs Networking Group (ENG), the Business Women Networking Association, and Huron Heights Secondary School. These presentations have resulted in partnership and referral opportunities.

4.3 Proposed Program for 2004

4.3.1 Funding Agreement with Ontario Government

In March, a Business Plan was submitted to the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade for continued funding to operate the Small Business Enterprise Centre in 2004. The initial response from the Ministry was very favourable, and it is anticipated that funding support is forthcoming.

4.3.2 Small Business Assistant

A Small Business Assistant will be required to assist with general inquiries, walk-in traffic and administrative duties. This will enable the Small Business Consultant to focus his efforts on personal consultations, securing partnerships and sponsorships, expanding services to the northern municipalities, participating in community outreach activities, organizing seminars/workshops and presentations, and delivering the youth programs and initiatives mandated by the Province.

It is recommended that an application be submitted to Human Resources and Skills Development for funding assistance to engage a Small Business Assistant under the Job Creation Partnership Program. Through this program, the Assistant will be provided with

training and valuable hands-on work experience which will offer excellent prospects for long term employment opportunities.

4.3.3 Service Targets

Based on the activities to-date, the following are the updated service targets for 2004:

- General Enquiries: 2,800.
- Consultations: 205 new business, and 51 existing business.
- Events: 4 workshops, 6 seminars, 80 outreach activities, 1 *Bridges to Business*.
- Economic Impact: 240 new business start-ups, 24 business expansions, 35 jobs created.

4.3.4 Seminars/Workshops and Special Events

It is proposed that seminars/workshops and special events be offered by the *YRSBEC* on the following topics during 2004:

- Web Marketing Basics
- Insurance Forum for Business
- Flight School for New Businesses
- Rules and Regulations: Business Law
- How to Write a Business Plan
- Business Taxes: GST/PST
- Basic Salesmanship
- Bridges to Business Event & Trade Show
- Business Accounting Basics
- Computerized Accounting for Small Business

4.3.5 Other Activities

- Youth initiatives: The *YRSBEC* will be launching three youth initiatives this year. The *Summer Company*, *My Company* and *Business Plan Competition* programs are initiated by the Ontario Government designed to help youth develop entrepreneurial skills and build their own business.
- Aboriginal Outreach: In addition to offering entrepreneurship programs to the Chippewas of Georgina Island in partnership with MEDT, it is proposed that an Aboriginal Trade Fair be held in 2004.
- Other activities: *YRSBEC* is part of a pilot project launched by the Small Business Enterprise Centres of York Region to introduce computerized accounting and on-line business plan writing to local small businesses

4.3.6 Partnerships and Sponsorships

The Advisory Committee will continue to meet on a quarterly basis to discuss general issues and updates, and as required to deal with special projects and events. The Committee members will work with the Region and the Small Business Consultant to pursue additional partnerships and secure sponsorships opportunities.

The *YRSBEC* will be partnering with the Markham, Richmond Hill and Vaughan Small Business Enterprise Centres and Intuit Canada to launch a pilot project for the evaluation

of small business accounting software. In-kind support will be sponsored by Intuit Canada.

Other joint venture opportunities include the Business Insurance Forum being planned in partnership with Job Skills and Clarica, and the Business Plan Competition to be held jointly with the Vaughan and Barrie Small Business Enterprise Centres.

4.4 Relationship to *Vision 2026*

Facilitating small business start-ups and supporting small business growth will be essential to attaining the Vibrant Economy goal as established in *Vision 2026*.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Region's share of the operating budget for the Small Business Enterprise Centre has been included in the approved Economic Development Budget for 2004.

The total net cost to the Region for the Small Business Enterprise Centre is \$927.00 for 2004. Under the terms of the Agreement, the Region will receive funding for the amount of \$45,000 per year from the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade. An additional \$5,000 is currently available from the Ministry if matching funding is obtained through cash contribution from sponsorships. Funding is also available from the Ontario Government for the youth initiatives and the Bridges to Business event. Financial support for the youth initiative is based on a participation basis at a rate of approximately \$1,000 per student. In addition, revenue from seminars, sponsorships and the Business Week event will be used to offset some of the Centre's operating costs.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The York Region Small Business Enterprise Centre complements the activities of the existing centres located in Markham, Richmond Hill and Vaughan to serve clients mainly from the northern municipalities. Increased entrepreneurial activities and business growth in the Region will benefit all the local municipalities.

7. CONCLUSION

It is evident from the response of the community that the Small Business Enterprise Centre program is an effective tool in facilitating small business start-ups and supporting business growth in the area. Staff is recommending that the Region continue its support for the initiative, and that an application be submitted to Human Resources and Skills Development for funding assistance to engage a Small Business Assistant for the Centre.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(A copy of the attachment referred to in the foregoing has been forwarded to each Member of Council with the May 5, 2004 Planning and Economic Development Committee agenda and a copy thereof is on file in the Office of the Regional Clerk.)