

2

YORK SMALL BUSINESS ENTERPRISE CENTRE INTERIM REPORT

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report dated May 13, 2011 from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services.

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. This report is circulated by the Regional Clerk to local northern six municipal economic development officers and the chambers of commerce.

2. PURPOSE

To update Regional Council on the progress of the implementation of the York Small Business Enterprise Centre 2011 programs and outlines the work plan for the balance of 2011.

3. BACKGROUND

The York Small Business Enterprise Centre advances business creation, innovation and growth in the northern six municipalities

The York Small Business Enterprise Centre (York SBEC) is a member of Ontario's 47 Small Business Centres established and partially funded in partnership with the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade. The York SBEC serves the northern six municipalities and complements the services provided by the Small Business Enterprise Centres in Markham, Richmond Hill and Vaughan which are operated by those respective municipalities.

The 2011 Program objectives and initiatives were approved by Regional Council in February 2011 and are focused on creating an environment encouraging entrepreneurship, developing strategic partnerships, supporting business start ups, servicing the existing small business sector and providing leadership and resources to build and sustain the economic vitality of the Region. The traditional definition of a small business is a company of 10 or fewer employees and in business for five or less years but the challenging economic climate has resulted in an increase of medium sized companies benefiting as well from the services provided through the York SBEC program.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

The York Small Business Enterprise Centre 2011 Program identified a series of new events, increased partnerships and community involvement and diversification of the program deliverables to encourage entrepreneurship stimulate new and sustainable small and medium size business start ups and support the growth of existing businesses.

The following summarizes the York Small Business Enterprise Centre activities and results from January through April 2011.

Business consultation and advice provided to 162 clients

The Small Business Consultant continues to provide entrepreneurial and business advice and guidance through regular consultation sessions at the York Region Administration Centre and through the Town of Georgina on March 22, June 8 and October 5. In 2011, Wisdom Exchange one-on-one consultation sessions were introduced in the municipalities of Whitchurch-Stouffville and King. A series of three consultation sessions are scheduled to be held in King on March 22, May 10 and September 13 and in Whitchurch-Stouffville on June 17, Sep 16 and November 18.

Client interactions from January to April 2011 include:

- 6,403 of general information inquiries responded to
- 162 client consultations

Two hundred and fifty-six participants attended educational forums and the annual business conference

On February 4, 126 registrants attended the eighth annual York Small Business Conference themed *Business Innovation in Changing Times*. This event showcased cutting-edge philosophies such as Biomimicry, Transition Towns and green sustainable business practices with keynote speaker Claude Ouiment, of InterfaceFLOR, the worlds leading manufacturer of modular carpet.

The 2011 Program introduced the concept of six Business Development Days, a collaborative partnership with the Newmarket Chamber of Commerce's Business Knowledge Initiative to deliver a series of day long events in the northern six municipalities. The series theme focuses on various areas of business development and how technology can enable small business growth and innovation. The Business Development Days were organized in partnership with the local Economic Development Offices and Chambers of Commerce, with a goal of reaching more local businesses and addressing topics that have been identified as priorities within each community.

On May 6, 136 registrants from the business community attended the first of the series of six Business Development Days held in Newmarket. Sessions are scheduled in Georgina (May 31), East Gwillimbury (Sep 28), King (Oct 21) and Whitchurch-Stouffville (Nov 9) and Aurora (Dec 1)

Sixty-nine Summer Company inquiries result in 21 new summer business start ups

The Summer Company program is a youth initiative of the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade providing students up to \$3,000 to start and operate business over the summer months. Assistance and direction was provided to 69 inquiries resulting in 21 submissions to the Province. Successful applicants will receive two months of hands-on business training and mentoring through the Centre and with assistance from the York Small Business Advisory Group to assist with the start up and operations of their business over the summer period.

Collaboration and partnership development to assist prospective entrepreneurs intensified

A new partnership has been created with the Women's Centre of York Region as the lead agency, to run a pilot program of a virtual business incubator connecting the Women's Centre self employment program with existing resources to support small business development. The goal of this pilot is to involve approximately 30 women interested in becoming self employed and guide them through the process.

Continued support and guidance is provided to the Green Business Connections group to encourage and promote sustainable green business practices and new business start-ups.

Partnerships with the southern three municipal Small Business Enterprise Centres resulted in participation at the 9th Annual Vaughan Business Expo and a speaking engagement designed specifically to address the business development needs of the arts community through participation at the York Region Arts Council *Arts Exposed* Conference. As well, in partnership with the Vaughan and Richmond Hill Small Business Centres, the *Art of Business* seminar series has been created to provide leadership and direction on how to make a passion a profession and an avocation to ensure a profitable and sustainable Arts community.

On May 27, the 2nd Annual Import Export Conference for businesses to learn more about importing, exporting, international markets and government export funding programs was presented by the Vaughan, Markham, Richmond Hill and York Small Business Enterprise Centres.

Continued implementation of the new initiatives proposed in the 2011 Program with the hire of new Small Business Consultant

Integration and implementation of the balance of the proposed 2011 Program including creation of an Ambassador Program (a network of local leaders to enhance the existing Advisory Group capacity), development of a year round Youth in Business Entrepreneur initiative and growing the green, agriculture and creative business sectors will continue as planned as a result of Regional Council approval to hire an additional Small Business Consultant.

Relationship to Vision 2026

The York Small Business Enterprise Centre Programs directly support the Economic Vitality and Enhanced Environment agendas of Vision 2026 by assisting and encouraging the entrepreneurial spirit, supporting new business starts ups, providing leadership to expand existing businesses and contributing to the Region's economic growth and job generation.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The York Small Business Enterprise Centre Program is funded through a base funding in the amount of \$80,000 from the Ontario Ministry of Economic Development and Trade and York Region's share of the Centre's operating costs were included in the 2011 Economic Strategy budget allocation.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The York Small Business Enterprise Centre activities are implemented in partnership with the Economic Development Departments of King, Whitchurch-Stouffville, Aurora, Newmarket, East Gwillimbury and Georgina plus the Chambers of Commerce and business organizations located within the northern six municipalities. Partnerships with the Small Business Centres in Richmond Hill, Markham and Vaughan for marketing and educational business development purposes as well as for the sharing of market intelligence and best practices continue to evolve to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of services delivered to small businesses in the Region as a whole.

7. CONCLUSION

The York Small Business Enterprise Centre program is a core component of the York Region Economic Strategy for achieving the Region's Growth Management plan of additional 280,000 new jobs by 2031.

The York SBEC program stimulates, promotes and supports the entrepreneurial spirit, start-up and early growth of small business and the expansion of existing businesses to actively contribute to the economic development of the northern six municipalities.

The provision of additional staff resources to enhance the Centre's outreach activities, meet the one-on-one consultation demand, to proactively pursue new innovation and business development opportunities demonstrates the commitment to ensuring sustainable economic prosperity in the Region.

For more information on this report, please contact Brenda McGowan, Program Manager, Business Development at (905) 830-4444, Ext. 1553 or Doug Lindeblom, Director, Economic Strategy, Ext. 1503.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.