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2005 ACHIEVEMENTS GREENING AND SECUREMENT STRATEGIES

The Transportation and Works Committee recommends:

- 1. The presentation by Sandra Malcic, Regional Greening Co-ordinator be received; and**
- 2. The recommendation contained in the following report, April 26, 2006, from the Commissioner of Transportation and Works and the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services be adopted:**

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. The attached *Greening Strategy* brochure be endorsed for distribution to promote awareness of the Region's commitment to the natural environment and this proactive Strategy to protect and enhance our natural heritage system.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an update on the activities and achievements of the Greening and Securement Strategies in 2005, and to receive endorsement of the *Greening Strategy* brochure (*Attachment 1*).

3. BACKGROUND

Since 2001, and the adoption of the Greening Strategy, the Region has demonstrated significant success through the implementation of the Regional Greening Strategy, and the Greenlands Property Securement Strategy. Projects implemented under the Greening Strategy have a variety of focuses including the following:

- Tree planting public open spaces with community and school groups, and private rural land through subsidized tree planting programs.
- Forest education programs.
- Environmental land planning and management, data collection and dissemination.
- Securement of priority natural lands.

The following are examples of some of the significant achievements that have been accomplished since inception of the Greening Strategy.

- Over half a million trees and shrubs have been planted through naturalization initiatives and urban tree planting programs.
- Nature's Classroom, the Region's Forest Education program, has provided education to over 5,000 Regional residents.
- The York Regional Forest was the first publicly-owned forest in Canada to be certified as sustainably management by the Forest Stewardship Council, and international body who sets standards for sustainable forest management.
- Two hundred and thirty five (235) hectares (580 acres) of lands have been secured through conservation easements, purchases and other opportunities.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

4.1 2005 Greening Achievements

In 2005, the Greening Strategy was involved in more than 50 projects and initiatives. The Region leads a number of Greening Strategy initiatives and, to maximize value of shared resources, successfully partnerships with other agencies to implement additional projects. Some notable 2005 achievements include:

- The completion of a York Region Significant Woodlands Study to enhance Greening Strategy implementation, assist the Region in administering the Forest Conservation By-law and provide sound science for a future Regional Official Plan amendment to protect forest resources.
- The Adopt-A-Stream Crossing Program, which provides for habitat improvements where Regional Roads cross valley and stream corridors, was significantly enhanced through a new partnership with the Environmental Earth Angels and \$130,000 of new project funding from the Trillium Foundation.
- Sixteen (16) hectares (40 acres) of land within the York Regional Forest (2004 Calandra property acquisition lands) were reforested using a combination of professional planting undertaken through the Federal Forest 20/20 Program at no cost to the Region and a community tree planting event involving the entire student body (~400 JK to Grade 8 students) of the Ballantrae Public School.
- A new partnership was established with Ontario Streams to assist with the creation of 25 hectares (60 acres) of new wetlands within the Region over the next five years.
- York Region staff were active participants on the Provincial Committee established by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario and the Minister of Finance to improve delivery of the Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program in Ontario.

These initiatives, in addition to a number of other Greening Strategy initiatives and accomplishments, are outlined in *Attachment 2*.

4.2 Public Promotion of Greening Strategy Successes

Since the adoption of the Greening Strategy, York Region has been very successful in publicizing our Greening Achievements through update brochures in 2003 and 2005. The Region's website has also been enhanced with substantial promotion of our commitment to the natural environment on the Greening page.

The release of a new Greening Strategy brochure (*Attachment 1*) in 2006 will increase public awareness of the Region's commitment to a healthy natural environment and healthy communities. Increased public awareness and interest in the Strategy will facilitate enhanced program delivery and participation in the years to come.

The brochure is intended to provide a current description of the Greening Strategy and is not intended to replace the bi-annual Greening Achievements Brochures. Rather, this brochure will describe the Region's long-term commitment to the environment, the Greening Strategy and the value to our residents.

4.3 Relationship to Vision 2026

The Greening and Securement Strategies continue to support Vision 2026 and such key goal statements as:

"In 2026, York Region residents will continue to value and embrace the Region's unique natural heritage (land, air, water) and cultural heritage (sites and buildings important to our history, faiths and cultures)."

"In 2026, York Region will have grown at a pace that supports healthy communities, economic vitality, sustainable natural environment and effective human services."

The strategies strengthen the Region's commitment to focus on Vision 2026 action areas including:

- Protecting sensitive features such as forests, watersheds, the Oak Ridges Moraine and Lake Simcoe.
- Promoting a permanent linked Greenlands systems.
- Continuing to develop and build strategies for a green region, such as the York Regional Forest Management Plan, the Greening Strategy, the Greenlands Property Securement Strategy.
- Taking a leadership role in the development and implementation of environmental strategies and conservation activities.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

York Region has committed to an annual \$1.4 million contribution to the Greening Securement Reserve. As such, the approved budget contains the funds necessary to

undertake all of the greening tasks identified for 2006. Specifically, the \$1.4 million annual allocation covers all program and partnership implementation costs and staff time with significant contributions to the Greening Securement Reserve for property acquisition. The current balance in the Greening Securement Reserve has built to approximately \$4 million as of December 2005. Operational dollars across a number of other departments and branches also assist in the delivery of Greening Strategy programs and initiatives. At this time no new funds are required to continue with the successful delivery of our Greening initiatives.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Local municipalities are important partners in the Greening and Securement Strategies and are consulted on a number of implementation items. Local municipal staff is also members of the Land Securement Working Group. As well, through Vision 2026, the people of York Region have reiterated the importance of the Region's natural heritage.

7. CONCLUSION

The Greening Strategy continues to demonstrate the Region's leadership and commitment to the natural environment. This proactive Strategy exemplifies the Region's actions in environmental protection, rehabilitation and enhancement. The broad suite of Greening Strategy programs help to address the Region's environmental policies and objectives as articulated in the Regional Official Plan and Vision 2026. Implementation of this Strategy has resulted in York Region being recognized as a leader in the environmental field.

In addition to substantial gains in the protection and enhancement of the natural heritage system (tree planting and land securement), the Region has demonstrated its long term commitment to the environment, public education and outreach, and monitoring. Continued improvements to the delivery and communication of the Region's Greening Strategy and environmental initiatives will continue to build public confidence, environmental awareness and improve the quality of life for both current and future residents.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

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