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2003 – 2006

PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report September 6, 2006, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services:

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that this report be received for information.

2. PURPOSE

This report summarizes and highlights major accomplishments, events and successes of the Planning and Economic Development Committee, over the three year term of the current Regional Council.

3. BACKGROUND

The Planning and Economic Development Committee is responsible for the integration of planning policies, infrastructure co-ordination, economic development, human services and geographic information systems. The Committee provides leadership in developing strategies to advance the goals of Vision 2026. Initiatives are result driven, to achieve comprehensive action plans and continuous improvement in the area of growth management planning. Services consist of 6 business areas; Economic Development, Community Planning, Geomatics, Human Services Planning, Infrastructure Planning and Long Range Strategic Planning. The Committee has continued to take a collaborative approach with the achievement of common goals in a proactive, effective and efficient manner, as guided by the corporate mission.

The 2003-2006 current Regional Council term has continued to plan for the rapid population and employment growth for the next 25 years. Through a comprehensive review of the Region's Growth Management Strategy, York Region is embarking on an extensive public information and engagement process to collect feedback on the Region's Sustainable Development Initiatives. The results of this consultation process will help York Region move forward as a sustainable Region as part of the future Growth Management workplan.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

4.1 2003-2006 Planning and Economic Development Committee Accomplishments

The following sections summarize the activities and successes of the Planning and Economic Development Committee over the past three years as it relates to activities associated with planning and economic development.

4.2 2003-2006 Awards

It is noteworthy that York Region has received a number of significant awards, including:

- *Focus on Our Environment: State of the Environment Report 2005* received the 2006 Canadian Institute of Planners Awards for Planning Excellence in the category of Environmental Planning.
- In 2006, the Ontario Chapter of Urban and Regional Information Systems Association (URISA) awarded York Region a Silver Award for Best Municipal GIS Challenge.
- In 2006, URISA the Ontario Chapter awarded York Region a Silver Award for Best Web GIS Challenge.
- *The Draft Economic Strategy* received the 2005 Canadian Institute of Planners Awards for Planning Excellence in the Economic Development category.
- *Housing and Our Economy, Remaining Competitive*, received the 2005 Canadian Institute of Planners Awards for Planning Excellence in the Housing category.
- 2005 ESRI Ontario User Conference, Excellence Award for YorkExplorer Internet mapping site.
- The York Region Export Development Initiative received the Ontario Chamber of Commerce 2004 Outstanding Business Achievement Award in the Community Export Development Award category.
- Received the 2003 Ontario Provincial Planners Institute Award for Excellence in Planning in the category of Communication/Public Education for Vision 2026: Creating strong, Caring Safe, Communities.
- The 2003 Visitors Guide received the Economic Developers Council of Ontario Award recognizing excellence in marketing and product development in the category of tourism publications.
- Received the 2003- URISA (Ontario Chapter) Map Gallery Silver Award for the *West Nile Virus – York Region Bird and Mosquito Surveillance Program 2001/2002 map.*

4.3 2003-2006 Initiatives

Regional Official Plan Amendments

Continued to examine the Regions growth management approach through major Regional Official Plan Amendment and create an updated York Region Urban Structure Plan for

the next 25 years to support provincial initiatives such as Place to Grow and the Greenbelt Protection Act.

Sustainable Growth Management Initiatives

On Friday, March 3, 2006, York Region hosted the "Towards a Sustainable Region" Symposium to identify key issues and develop an action plan for sustainable growth management in York Region. The results of the symposium have served as a basis for discussions at five public open houses throughout the Region in March and April 2006. The Sustainable Development Initiative and upcoming Sustainability Strategy will provide a framework for making decisions about growth management and municipal responsibilities that better integrate the principles of economic vitality, natural environment and healthy communities.

Towards Sustainability in York Region (TSYR) Advisory Group

The Towards Sustainability in York Region (TSYR) Advisory Group was established to provide advice on how to make our Regional Official Plan and Infrastructure Strategy more sustainable. The advisory group members consisted of representatives from the environmental and development industries and the Region's Conservation Authorities. The group has made over 60 recommendations to the Region, including Seven Key Recommendations for short term implementation. Regional staff will integrate this advice, along with that from the Sustainability Symposium and public open houses, into the Region's Sustainability Strategy.

Centres and Corridors Strategy

Adopted and approved the Regional Centres and Corridors Regional Official Plan Amendment (ROPA 43), which established the principles and policies to guide development in the four Regional centres, along Yonge Street and Highway 7 corridors. The policies set out criteria for establishing key development areas, urban design guidelines and development densities that will promote transit ridership and pedestrian friendly urban environments. An enhanced set of implementation tools are also set out in the policies. The policies are supported by Transit Oriented Development guidelines which guide building height, mass, and design to create pedestrian friendly development that also promotes transit ridership.

Servicing Capacity Protocol

Working jointly with Transportation and Works staff and local municipalities, a servicing capacity protocol was established for the allocation of servicing capacity to accommodate development proposals until 2010/11 when the Dufferin Creek Treatment Plant expansion is expected to be completed. A clearer set of principles for assigning future allocation municipalities has been established along with best practices to ensure the provision of infrastructure is kept in step with development. The development of standard conditions of draft plan approval for plans of subdivisions and condominiums has allowed the processing of these applications while maintaining the broader community goals established in the Official Plans while recognizing the servicing capacity availability.

GTA Urban Boundary Expansions and Community Secondary Plans

Reviewed, approved and commented on a number of urban boundary expansions and community secondary plans including Box Grove, North Leslie, West Gormley, Sharon, Nobleton, South Aurora, Vellore Village, Keswick, Thornhill Centre, Milliken, Seaton and the Pickering Airport. Protected Regional interests through participation at Ontario Municipal Board hearings by ensuring timely approval and adequate supply of residential and employment lands.

GTA Agricultural Action Plan

In September 2005, Regional Council endorsed the GTA Agricultural Action Plan which identifies how to keep the GTA agricultural industry competitive in the face of economic land use and environmental pressures. The Action Plan provides strategic direction to advance and implement key agricultural interests

Human Services Employment Project

In 2003, *York Region It's All Here!* Initiative, developed a recruitment package to brand and market York Region as a great place to live, learn, work, and play. High quality, made-in-York Region promotional materials have made available to any employer in York Region at minimal cost. Of special note, a series of brochures highlights the benefits of choosing a career in human services in York Region.

Social Services Funding Report

In 2004, the Social Services Funding Report recommended that the province:

- Repatriate York Region property tax dollars being sent to Toronto for social services.
- Adopt principles of adequacy, affordability, equity, stability, flexibility, accountability as the cornerstone of new fiscal allocation system for human services.
- Review current funding allocations and measure against per capita or per user allocation model.
- Initiate a base foundation funding allocation system for social services funding.

Inclusivity Action Plan

The Human Services Planning Coalition launched its *Inclusivity Action Plan* (IAP) with community partners and stakeholders. The IAP is a community plan to invest in York Region's capacity to welcome and integrate immigrants and to create social capital for a vibrant economy, a highly skilled labour force and an enviable quality of life. A Steering Committee and six working groups have been established to implement the plan. On June 8, 2006, the Steering Committee of the IAP showcased the progress made over the last year in making York Region more ethno-culturally inclusive.

Policy and Priorities Action Group

The Policy and Priorities Action Group of HSPC, a jointly funded partnership between the Region, York Region's three hospitals, the school boards and the community retained Counsel Public Affairs as strategic counsel. The government relations strategy builds a case for the under-funding of human services and focuses on specific program priorities.

Research Partnership Projects

Partner with York University to facilitate the transfer of leading edge academic research to human service providers and policy makers referred to as *The Knowledge Broker Model: Knowledge Mobilization for the Social Sciences and Humanities*. York University, in partnership with the University of Victoria, has been awarded \$660,000 over three years to fund a pilot. York University has confirmed its commitment to partner with HSPC to maximize the exchange of knowledge between York Region service providers and York University researchers.

Infrastructure in York Region: A GIS Analysis of Human Services. This project is designed to use geographic information system (GIS) to develop an inventory of human services in York Region, assess their availability and identify gaps in service provision. HSPC sector representatives will be included in a team of multidisciplinary researchers.

The Economic Strategy

The Economic Strategy was adopted by Regional Council in 2005. Undertaken in-house by existing staff, development of the Economic Strategy involved extensive research and consultation, and engaged members of Regional Council, the area municipalities, Regional staff, and other economic partners. The Draft Economic Strategy received the 2005 Canadian Institute of Planners Awards for Planning Excellence in the Economic Development category.

The York Export Alliance

The York Export Alliance was established in 2005 in partnership with the federal and provincial governments, area municipalities, Chambers of Commerce/Board of Trade, export agencies and industry associations. The Alliance provides a forum for the exchange of information on export opportunities and the co-ordination of trade initiatives. Six events attracting about 300 participants have been organized by the Alliance partners. The York Region Export Development Initiative received the Ontario Chamber of Commerce 2004 Outstanding Business Achievement Award in the Community Export Development Award category.

The YORKbiotech Regional Innovation Network

The YORKbiotech Regional Innovation Network established in partnership with area municipalities, hospitals, educational institutions, industry associations, and private sector partners was incorporated as a not-for-profit community development corporation in 2005. The mission of YORKbiotech is to act as a catalyst, to harness the wealth of intellectual and technical resources to promote economic success and growth of the biotechnology and related industries as a key component of regional economic development.

York Region Small Business Enterprise Centre

The York Region Small Business Enterprise Centre (YRSBEC) was established in 2003 to assist entrepreneurs in the creation of new enterprises and the development of early stage growth businesses. The Newmarket Centre serves the northern part of the Region and complements the other three Small Business Enterprise Centres in Markham, Richmond

Hill and Vaughan. Since its establishment, the Centre has been providing valuable service to entrepreneurs and the small business community. The number of clients served has increased over the years, from 700 general enquiries and 75 consultations in 2003 to over 5,300 enquiries and 240 consultations in 2005.

Premier-Ranked Tourist Destination Project

In October 2005, with the financial support of the Government of Canada (Service Canada) and the provincial Ministry of Tourism, the Region has commenced work on an extensive research project to thoroughly inventory and assess the Region's tourism industry. The Premier Ranked Tourist Destination project will provide an objective appraisal of the Region's competitive position in the tourism marketplace, make recommendations for future growth and sustainability and identify new benchmarks to measure the Region's tourism performance over time.

Emergency Marketing and Recovery Plan

On May 22, 2003, Regional Council approved the allocation of an additional \$250,000 to implement a Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) Emergency Marketing and Recovery Plan. Staff engaged industry partners and Municipalities to undertake immediate and long-term marketing strategies activities to address the potential loss of business and to restore consumer confidence within the key target market segments.

In 2004 combined funding from the Town of Markham (\$30,000), Industry Stakeholders (\$30,000) and York Region (\$40,000); leveraged \$100,000 in Provincial funding to yield an additional \$200,000 to continue recovery efforts.

The Meet n Play & Stay n Play represent a strategic two phase collaborative effort structured to drive new business, recapture lost business, build economic recovery and re-establish York Region as a top of mind destination for leisure and business travellers.

Tourism Toronto Partnership

York Region Tourism has formalized a partnership with Tourism Toronto to secure funding to augment York Region's tourism marketing program:

- In 2005, York received \$250,000 in funding
- In 2006, York will receive \$550,000 in funding
- In 2006 Tourism is negotiating a 3 year funding program representing \$300,000 annually in 2007, 2008 and 2009

Funding for this partnership is made available through a 3% Destination Marketing Fee (DMF) charged to overnight guests at most downtown Toronto and GTA hotels. This DMF was established to market Toronto and the surrounding GTA globally and to promote tourism visitation and increase associated revenues.

Regional Tourism Advisory Group

In March 2004, the Region established a Regional Tourism Advisory Group, to provide strategic policy direction and recommendations for local tourism industry issues.

Enterprise GIS Information Infrastructure

Between 2003 and 2006, the Geomatics Branch worked toward establishing a robust Enterprise GIS Information Infrastructure, to help improve corporate operations and integrate GIS seamlessly into regional business processes. The benefits of this infrastructure are extended through data-sharing agreements, training and technology transfer to local municipalities in the Region through the YorkInfo partnership, which now includes all nine local municipalities and both Conservation Authorities.

The York Region geospatial infrastructure now includes the following:

- A new business model, with three service groups: Information Management, Business Solutions, and Products and Partnerships.
- GIS server infrastructure, and geodatabase software, which provide secure and reliable data access.
- 150 data layers (including roads, parcels, address points and orthophotography) modelled against business processes to maximize utility, with a scheduled data maintenance program, and metadata discoverable locally and externally through York Region's internet site and the federal GeoConnections portal.
- GIS service programs and negotiated service level agreements for operational departments.
- An automated request database to help process GIS service requests and track service usage.
- A self-service environment to allow all staff quick access to maps, either through the desktop or through internet mapping.
- GIS desktop software and training for 150 intensive GIS users across the corporation
- Password-protected internet mapping tailored to different business functions for other staff to use.
- Public accessibility and functionality through publicly-accessible YorkExplorer views, as well as published on-line maps on the Region's internet mapping site.
- Web Mapping Services built to nationally recognized standards that can be consumed by other mapping applications.
- Regular GIS co-ordination and technical meetings for managers and staff from YorkInfo partners that improve co-ordination and co-operation between partner agencies.

Over the past 3 years, the Geomatics Branch has also contributed significantly to major projects from all departments. For example, Geomatics products and applications have had a major impact in the following projects:

- Oak Ridges Conformity Exercise (Planning Department)
- West Nile Virus Surveillance Program (Health Department)
- GPS asset collection for transit stops (Transit)
- GPS asset collection for street trees and street lights (Forestry and Heritage Resources, and Road Operations)
- Environmental indicators calculated for State of the Environment Report (Health & Planning Departments)
- REOC and Pandemic Preparedness (Emergency Operations)

- Subway Planning (Planning, RapidCo and Finance)
- Data updates provided regularly for third party software (Trapeze transit scheduling, Transview wheeltrans scheduling, Grey Island AVL, Marvylis Ambulance Placement, Versatech Police Dispatch, etc.)

Environmental Assessments (EA's)

Infrastructure Planning staff provided ongoing transportation planning, modelling/forecasting support to all major road capital improvement projects.

Approved a number Environmental Assessments:

- Yonge Street (south) Transitway Individual Environmental Assessment (IEA) (2006)
- Highway 404 Crossing north of Highway 7 Class EA (2005)
- Highway 50 from Steeles Ave to Rutherford Road Class EA (2005)
- Woodbine Ave Bypass (Major Mackenzie to 19th Avenue) Class EA
- York / Peel Boundary Area Transportation Study
- Short Term Road Network in the York/Peel Boundary Area Class EA
- Langstaff Road from Highway 50 to Highway 27 Class EA

Submitted Environmental Assessments to the Ministry of the Environment:

- Highway 7 Corridor and Vaughan N-S Link transit EA
- Markham N-S Link Transit EA
- Markham Bypass to Morningside Avenue EA

On-going EA's with approved Terms of Reference (ToR):

- Pine Valley Drive IEA Terms of Reference
- North Yonge Street Transitway IEA ToR

Infrastructure Planning Data Collection

Completed the Cordon Count Program in 2004, as well as 2006. The Transportation Tomorrow Survey (TTS) phase 1 has been completed in 2006.

Master Plan Studies

- Commenced work on the Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan expected to be completed in 2007
- Transportation Master Plan Update has been initiated and is expected to be completed in 2008

Transportation Demand Management (TDM)

- GTA and Hamilton Smart Commute Initiative has been implemented and in operation
- Smart Commute 404-7 TMA began operations in 2005
- Smart Commute North Toronto Vaughan has expanded into Vaughan
- Smart Commute Central York will begin operations in 2006

Travel Demand Modelling

- Test and implementation of new 4-stage strategic travel demand model

- Deployment of Dynameq, micro-simulation modelling tool for traffic impact analysis and assessment of road improvement alternatives
- Partner in GTA Travel Demand Model Study with MTO, Toronto and Peel

Capital Road Planning

- Priority Setting Program for 10-Year Capital Road Projects (annual)
- Highway 427 Arterial Extension Detailed Design – on-going

Stakeholder Consultation

- Active Transportation Workshop
- Symposium on Sustainable Transportation

External Agency Studies

Participated, reviewed and commented on adjacent municipal, provincial and federal studies such as Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing's Seaton Development Plan, Greater Toronto Airport Authorities' Pickering Airport Plan, Toronto's Don Valley Corridor Transportation Study, Peel Region's Goods Movement Study, Transport Canada's Transit Investment Cost & Benefit Study, TTC's Spadina Subway Extension EA, Highway 427 Extension EA, and many more.

York Rapid Transit

Provide on-going transportation planning direction, modelling/forecasting support and assistance for all aspects of implementation of Viva Rapid Transit.

Water & Wastewater Master Planning

- Initiated the Water and Wastewater Master Plan Update
- Transitioned Water and Wastewater Planning from the Transportation and Works Department to the Planning and Development Services Department in 2005.

4.4 2003-2006 Publications

Annual Average Daily Traffic Reports

Lists average daily traffic for all Regional roads for the current and previous years.

2004 Cordon Count Bulletin

Identifies growth in traffic across a number of corridors throughout the Region.

Economic and Development Review and Mid-Year Review

Produced twice a year, the Economic and Development Review provides a number of key economic indicators and development statistics, such as population growth, migration data, employment and labour market conditions, residential and commercial property market information and recent development trends. Major planning activities are also highlighted.

Employment and Industry

Annual report highlighting employment growth trends by industry sector and by area municipality. Detailed employment analysis is also provided for high growth areas within each area municipality, highlighting changing employment patterns and emerging industry sectors.

Keynote Conference and Meeting Planner

The *KeyNote Conference & Meeting Planner* is an annual regional publication designed to position York Region as a prime destination for meetings conventions and company functions. The Planner was produced in partnership with 19 tourism stakeholders on a total cost recovery basis.

Take a Hike Trail Guide

The guide developed in collaboration with area municipalities, Conservation Authorities, Hiking and Trail Organizations and HeartyParty.com to promote physical activity and healthy lifestyles.

Touring York Region

Touring York Region promotional brochure engages industry partners in a cooperative initiative to build awareness and generate revenues from the motor coach group and packaged tour market segments.

2004 Transportation Fact Book

Provide key transportation facts for York Region in a user friendly format.

Visitors Guide

The *Visitors Guide* is the only regional publication of its kind, produced annually and is the key consumer piece designed to promote travel to and within the Region. It provides comprehensive information regarding the Region's Municipalities, Attractions, Accommodations, Arts, Theatre, Dining, Shopping, Golfing, Marinas, Nature, Event listings and more. The Guide is an important component of the Region's tourism program and new milestones have been achieved each year such as increased industry participation, production, distribution and increased generation of advertising revenues.

York Region Business Directory

The York Region Business Directory contains information on over 17,000 businesses, effectively promoting the York Region business community to the general public. The dataset has continued to grow, with the number of businesses increasing 4.8% annually between 1998 and 2005. As of 2005, there were an estimated 28,000 businesses employing 450,000 people in the Region. Recent employment growth in a number of industry sectors has contributed to the diversification of an already broad-based economy. This diversification helps to insulate our economy from sector shifts in the business cycle.

York Region Vacant Residential Unit Supply Inventory

This report provides a preliminary supply/demand analysis of vacant residential unit potential at the regional scale and is current to June 30, 2005. The inventory is a key component of the Region's Growth Management work in assessing the adequacy of the supply of residential lands in the Region.

Vision 2026 and Annual Reports

The Vision 2026 document was developed as a result of citizen consensus responses on how York Region should grow over the next several decades. Each year an Annual Report on Indicators of Progress is published that details progress and success to date in the implementation of the Region's 25-year strategic plan.

4.5 Relationship to Vision 2026

The activities and initiatives of the Planning and Economic Development Committee support all of the goals of Vision 2026.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There is no financial implication associated with this report; however, the following table illustrates the Planning and Development Services Department budget, which has remained relatively consistent between 2003 and 2006 given the full agenda put forward each year.

Table 1
Financial Summary

(\$000's)	2003 Actuals	2004 Actuals	2005* Actuals	2006* Budget	% Change 2003/2006
Gross Expenditures	4,855	4,424	5,775	6,273	29%
Revenues	1,150	1,073	1,225	1,788	55%
Net Expenditures	3,705	3,351	4,550	4,485	21% (7% avg. per annum)
<i>* 2005-2006 numbers include the Infrastructure Planning branch previously a part of Transportation and Works department</i>					

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Regional staff has to date and will continue to work closely with local area municipal staff to ensure efficient and effective support of policies that are supportive of the strategic goals of local municipalities.

7. CONCLUSION

The 2003-2006 Planning and Economic Development Committee and Council has continued to build on past successes and position the Region for a future that is committed to service excellence. Significant progress has been made in the overall strategy of growth management to successfully implement plans for the future to balance

the needs of a growing and aging population with environmental issues, economic prosperity and the delivery of infrastructure and human services.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.