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LAUNCH OF ECONOMIC PROFILE - WEB AND BROCHURE

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report, July 24, 2006, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services:

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that this report and attachments be widely circulated by Planning and Development Services staff to stakeholders including area municipalities, Chambers of Commerce, Board of Trade and the business community and the Economic Profile be posted on the York Region web site.

2. PURPOSE

This report outlines the process for the launch of the Economic Profile online and the production of an Economic Profile brochure. The Economic Profile provides information on the Region's economy, demographics, infrastructure and community and business cost factors that make York Region an attractive place to invest, work and visit. The information in the Profile will be utilized by the public and private sectors to prepare for economic investment strategies. It is also intended as a useful resource tool for the business community to improve competitiveness and profitability.

3. BACKGROUND

In December 2005, Council approved the York Region Economic Strategy. During the preparation of the Strategy, consultations with the community identified five strategic directions to guide the efforts of the Region to realize the Vibrant Economy goal as stated in *Vision 2026*. The first of these directions was the creation of an environment to share information and ideas. The production of a comprehensive economic profile was the first objective.

In 1995 *A Profile of York Region* was produced as a compendium of statistical information about the Regional Municipality of York. The Economic Profile is the Region's first collateral economic development piece. It addresses the objective in the Economic Strategy to better understand the growth and change of the Region's economy and to provide access to information on the Region and its economy.

3.1 Highlights of York Region's Economy

- York Region's economy is larger than any of Canada's Maritime Provinces with a Gross Domestic Product of \$37.5 billion.

- As of June 2004, over 89,000 business enterprises represented virtually all business sectors. This was an increase of 13% of enterprises from 2003.
- In January 2005, the supply of vacant employment land in York Region was estimated to be approximately 2,862 hectares. (7,073 acres).
- As of June 30, 2006, the Region's population was 933,357 an increase of 14,974 people from the December 2005 population figure.
- York Region is one of the fastest growing and most diverse communities in all of Canada with a population projected to reach 1.5 million by 2031.
- The Region's population is representative of people from over 120 different nationalities and cultural backgrounds who speak over 65 languages.
- The unemployment rate in York Region as of June 2005 was estimated to be 6.5%.
- As of June 30, 2006 there were 277,987 households in the Region.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Data for the Economic Profile was collected, analyzed, and compiled by Planning and Development staff and prepared in electronic format for posting on the Region's web site www.york.ca/business. It has also been condensed in a brochure, *An Economic Profile of York Region*, which will be printed in house for limited distribution. The information provides access to data on the Region's economy, business information, and linkages to area municipalities, business services and other internet business resources.

4.1 Economic Profile On Line

The Economic Profile on line centralizes, simplifies and expands upon the quality and quantity of information currently available on York Region's economic development web pages. User friendliness has been improved by organizing the data and information under the following headings:

- Key facts
- Location and Climate
- Population Growth and Labour Force
- Business Enterprise
- Infrastructure
- Quality of Place
- Costs of Doing Business
- Area Municipal Overview
- Resource Guide

The Economic Profile online is supplemented and enhanced by quick linkages to other sections of the York Region web site including links to York Region's Health Services, Planning and Development Services, Tourism and Transportation and Works web pages. These linkages direct the viewer to York Region publications such as Community Snapshots: Recent Immigrants Living in York Region, Economic Development and Review and Employment and Industry among others. Linkages also connect the web sites of the Area Municipalities, Chambers of Commerce and Board of Trade, Federal and Provincial government agencies, industry and business associations, business networking groups and the media.

The Economic Development Profile web section has been built in three phases: testing, development and live launch. Using the York Region web site graphic standards, a Web section has been created that complies effectively with the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) and the Ontarians with Disabilities ACT usability and accessibility standards. A pdf of the Economic Profile will be available and will allow for the option of a CD version.

Planning and Development Staff will be provided training and instruction for editing and maintaining the new Economic Development Web section.

4.2 Economic Profile Brochure

A twelve page, four colour brochure, *A Regional Economic Profile of York Region*, (see attachment 1) is a key highlight of the data available on the Economic Profile online. It has been designed and will be printed in house, on demand, and will be utilized as a marketing and investment tool. The brochure will be distributed to key stakeholders including the Area Municipalities, Chambers of Commerce and Board of Trade, industry and business associations and commercial realtors. In addition, a direct mailing campaign will be implemented to deliver the brochure to high level prospects in investment attraction.

Printing in house provides the flexibility to produce limited quantities of special editions of the brochure. This will allow for updates to happen more quickly so the information is current. For example, a specialized version is being prepared in partnership with the Markham Board of Trade who are hosting the 2007 Canadian Chamber of Commerce Conference. To promote and highlight York Region as a place to visit and invest, this special edition of the brochure will be distributed to delegates attending the 2006 Canadian Chamber of Commerce Conference being held in Saskatoon September 17th and 18th.

4.3 Relationship to Vision 2026

The Economic Profile online and the Economic Profile brochure support the goal of *Vision 2026*, for *A Vibrant Economy*. The Region recognizes the role of business in the Region's economy and supports business efforts in the quest to become more innovative and competitive.

The Economic Profile will act as a resource tool to attract new investment to the Region by promoting its advantages, business environment and quality of life. By providing access to data on the Region's economy, business information, linkages to area municipalities, business services and other internet business resources, the Region assists business start-ups, the expansion and diversification of existing business and export development.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Work on the Economic Profile was undertaken utilizing existing staff and budget resources. A CISP grant was received in 2005 in the amount of \$4,373 and was applied towards data acquisition. In addition, in 2006 a CISP grant was obtained in the amount of \$17,500 towards the cost of web site design and development and the design of an Economic Profile Brochure.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The Economic Profile supports the area municipalities and their business communities by providing access to data on the Region's economy, business information, linkages to area municipalities, business services and other internet business resources. The brochure, An Economic Profile of York Region, will be made available to all area municipalities.

7. CONCLUSION

As part of the implementation of the Economic Strategy the Economic Development Branch has produced a comprehensive Economic Profile of York Region. The Economic Profile will be available at: www.york.ca/business and will be updated annually. In addition an Economic Profile brochure, *A Regional Economic Profile of York Region*, will be printed in house on demand. It is recommended that the Economic Profile be received for information.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachment referred to in this clause is attached to this report.)