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FINAL YORK REGION LONG TERM TOURISM DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the following:

- 1. Receipt of the presentation by Brenda McGowan, Program Manager, Tourism Development, Economic Strategy and Tourism; and**
- 2. Adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report dated September 2, 2009, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services.**

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Regional Council endorse the recommendations and directions outlined in the new York Region Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy.
2. York Region consult with the Ministry of Tourism on the creation of a new Provincial tourism zones to ensure that the geographic boundaries are in the best interest of the Region.
3. The Regional Chair and the Regional Clerk be authorized to sign the necessary agreement(s) with industry partners and other organizations, subject to review by Legal Services to support implementation of the strategy recommendations.
4. This report is circulated by the Clerks Department to the local municipalities, York Region public and private school boards, Chambers of Commerce and Board of Trade and by the tourism branch to the York Region Tourism Advisory Group for information.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to present the Final York Region Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy.

3. BACKGROUND

In June 2009, Regional Council received the Draft York Region Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy Consultation Summary report and approved the

integration of the feedback obtained during the consultation process into a final strategy document.

The consultation process consisted of 13 presentations, correspondence to 285 tourism businesses, local municipalities, Chambers of Commerce, Board of Trade, various provincial ministries, key trade associations, academia and York Region departments.

Minimal amendments required to formalize the final 10 year tourism strategy

Overall there was unanimous agreement that the guiding principles and opportunities for growth contained in the draft strategy builds upon the success of the existing program, demonstrates a commitment for improving the sustainability of tourism and sets the stage and standards for the future of York Region's tourism sector.

Five key directions define the environment in which tourism as a business will be conducted

There was significant support from the consultation sessions to strengthen the tourism attractors, to identify the major tourism sector growth opportunities and the priority lands for tourism investment.

The following insights provided through industry consultations have been incorporated either into the five key strategy directions or are being used to guide the implementation process:

1. Strengthen Strategic Marketing

- Leveraging the strengths and commitment of existing industry organizations and resources to stimulate demand and have a direct impact on the image of York Region as a leading four season tourism destination
- Assess opportunities to build clusters around high potential product segments
- Work with the Region's multi-cultural communities to encourage visiting friends and relative tourism visits and overnight stays

2. Expand Tourism Attractors

- Recognize and support further development of the natural and cultural heritage districts, features and attractions that are unique to York Region
- Recognize that the Region possesses a rich diversity of arts and cultural experiences
- Recognize the importance that festivals and events play in tourism and local communities and cultivate larger marquee events to gain economic and social benefits

- A common theme for tourism investment included further consideration of a Oak Ridges Moraine Interpretative Centre
- Recognize the lack of convention facilities for York Region to be competitive
- Address transportation infrastructure challenges to serve tourism investment
- Build upon the strength of York Region's diverse cultural communities from a tourism perspective

3. Leadership and Governance

- The importance of having realistic business plans with a commitment to achieving these goals in an accountable, timely and transparent process
- Ensure that the Regional organization is structured to effectively manage the implementation of the Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy
- Enhance accessibility to education and training for business and employees to address labour market challenges and service delivery in the hospitality and tourism industry

4. Sustainable Funding

- Ensuring sustainable funding is in place to realize the benefits from the investment in product and marketing
- Take a coordinated and multi-jurisdictional approach to sponsorship generation, grant applications and funder resources

5. Product Sector Development

- Build upon the importance of education as a key tourism objective and recognize current tourism operators that are leaders in providing learning experiences
- Work with Conservation authorities to deliver services and programs
- Stimulate growth not only of primary attractors but also secondary and tertiary attractors that have the potential to build their capacity
- Cultivate the potential to host and bid on sport events

On February 19, the Ontario Ministry of Tourism launched a new Ontario Tourism Competitiveness Study "Discovering Ontario – A Report on The Future of Tourism". The proposed creation of a possible 11 new Provincial destination marketing and management tourism zones may serve to address the delivery of key elements in the York Region Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy. Although there are uncertainties pertaining to how the Provincial Tourism Strategy will unfold, Regional Council directed staff to work with neighbouring municipalities and the Ministry of Tourism on identifying a tourism zone that would keep York Region associated in one appropriate tourism zone.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Attached is the final York Region Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy document. This strategy defines the role and scope of tourism from a Regional perspective and identifies an efficient and sustainable growth scenario for York Region's tourism infrastructure and development. This document is the blueprint for tourism development in York Region for the 10 year period 2009-2019.

The Ministry of Tourism intends to have the new Provincial tourism zones and destination marketing management organizations in place by the end of December 2009. This timeline is necessary to meet July 2010 introduction of the harmonized sales tax collection which will be used to fund the Provincial tourism organizations and zones.

A desire to work together but no consensus on tourism zone boundaries

Representatives from Durham Region, City of Mississauga, City of Brampton, Simcoe County and York Region engaged in discussions on the feasibility to work together as one of the new Provincial tourism zones. Agreement was reached on how the Provincial tourism zone would operate from a governance and roles and responsibilities perspective but there were differing views around geographic boundaries. A recommendation was put forward to the Province requesting they provide more direction and resources for the development of this new GTA/North of Toronto Provincial tourism zone that would operate in the best interest of our respective areas. Regional tourism staff will continue to work with neighbouring Regions and the Provincial tourism process and report back to Regional Council.

Going Forward

Strategy recommendations incorporated into 2010 tourism program activities

The recommendations identified in Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy reinforce that the scope and mandate of the Region's current activities need to evolve to fully capitalize on the economic, social and environmental potential from tourism. Elements of the strategic action plans have been incorporated into the 2010 work programs as specified in the York Region Tourism Marketing and the Industry Partnership Development reports, which also appear on this Committee agenda.

Highlights of the proposed new and expanded program initiatives include:

- Clustering tourism experiences into themed multi media marketing campaigns.
- Enhancements to the creative look and content of York Region Discovery Guide.
- Developing a communications strategy to engage the multicultural community.

- Based on the strategy recommendations and findings, PKF Consulting will proceed with:
 - undertaking an accommodation needs assessment for each of the nine local municipalities
 - determining the highest potential tourism investment opportunities through further analysis and feasibility studies
 - proposing a five year investment development strategy and prepare three funding investment proposals to attract potential investors and developers.
- The launch of a York Region Tourism Week with activities and celebrations to showcase the Region's experiences.
- Undertake research for the development of a York Region sport tournament program and host a York Region Sports Symposium.
- Reconstitute the Tourism Advisory Committee and reappoint representation from Regional Council with the intent to provide leadership and guidance to direct implementation of the strategy recommendations.

Relationship to Vision 2026

The Draft York Region Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy supports the Vibrant Economy, Engaged Communities and a Responsive Region and Responding to the Needs of Our Resident goals identified in Vision 2026. The Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy is aligned with Regional and Provincial strategic planning and sustainability documents and policies.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Funding to finalize and produce a final York Region Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy was included in the 2009 Economic Development and Tourism operating budget. Initiatives proposed for strategy implementation through the York Region Marketing and Industry Relations work plans have funds available either in 2009 or are included in the 2010 operating budget approval process. Regional tourism staff will investigate alternative funding resources to support implementation of strategy recommendations.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The feedback obtained through the consultation process integrates elements of the municipal and Regional policies to create efficiencies, productivity and a sustainable competitive municipal advantage. The direction provided ensures the Region's tourism strategy has a unified voice and a strategic platform to enhance business competitiveness,

improve the quality of life for residents, support labour force development and local municipality long term fiscal sustainability.

7. CONCLUSION

The consultation process to now have a final strategy reinforces that the scope and mandate of the Region's current activities need to evolve to fully capitalize on the economic, social and environmental potential from tourism. The York Region Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy provides the framework to achieve this transition through managing growth while creating an environment that encourages investment and employment opportunities through tourism industries.

The Provincial Ministry of Tourism strategy direction plays an integral role in how the business of tourism will operate from a regional perspective. Regional tourism staff will monitor their process and report back recommendations to support the development of tourism within York Region.

For more information on this report, please contact Brenda McGowan, Program Manager Tourism Development at (905) 830 4444 Ext. 1553 or Patrick Draper, Director Economic Strategy and Tourism at Ext 1503.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachment referred to in this clause was included in the agenda for the October 7, 2009 Committee meeting).



Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy

**Presentation to Planning and
Economic Development Committee**

Brenda McGowan

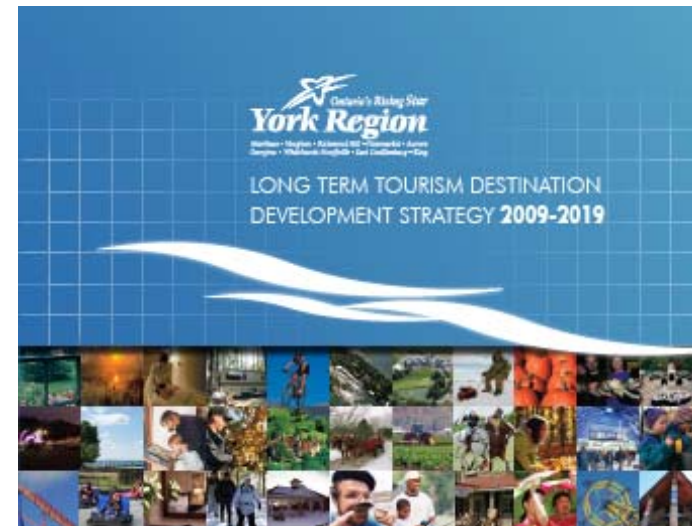
October 7, 2009

Process

- ❑ Consultations and research April – Dec 2008
- ❑ RC Reviewed Draft LTTDDS Jan 2009
- ❑ Facilitate Consultations and Outreach Feb-May 2009
- ❑ Ministry of Tourism Ontario Competitiveness Study Feb 2009
- ❑ RC Draft Strategy Consultation Summary Report June 2009
Work with neighbouring municipalities on
Provincial Strategy process and forge ahead to
formalize the regional tourism strategy
- ❑ RC Final Strategy Report Oct 2009

Content

- ❑ Proposed as a 10 year tourism strategy 2009-2019
- ❑ Goal to expand tourism spend from \$284M to \$1.1B
- ❑ Five strategic directions with implementation recommendations
 - ❑ Strengthen Strategic Marketing
 - ❑ Expand Tourism Attractors
 - ❑ Leadership and Governance
 - ❑ Sustainable Funding
 - ❑ Product Sector Development



2010 Implementation

Strengthen Strategic Marketing

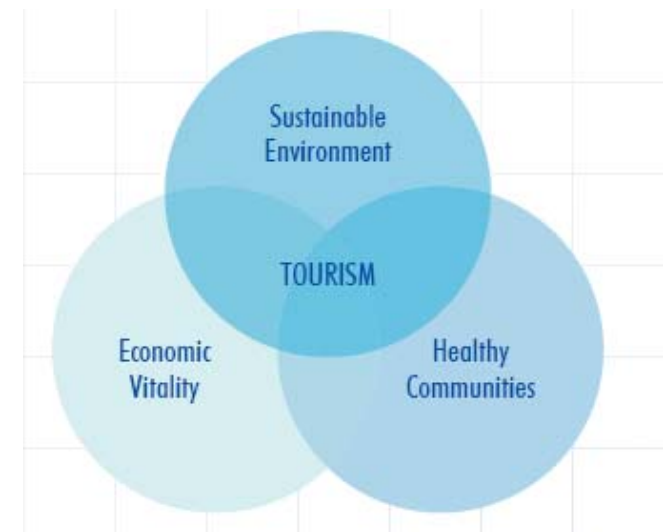
- ❑ Clustering tourism experiences into themed multi-media marketing campaigns
- ❑ Enhancements to the York Region Discovery Guide
- ❑ Continue to enhance www.yorktourism.com as the lead information portal
- ❑ Develop a communications strategy to engage the multicultural community
- ❑ Launch of Tourism Week celebrations throughout York Region
- ❑ Facilitate intercept surveys and research initiatives



2010 Implementation

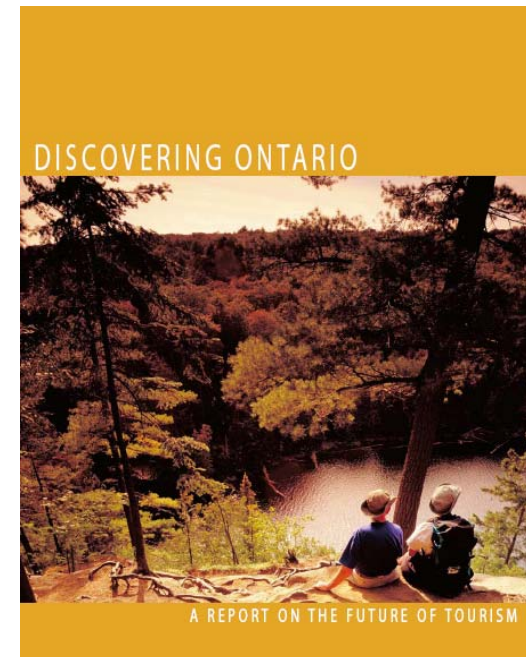
Expand Tourism Attractors

- ❑ Undertake a municipal accommodation needs assessment
- ❑ Determine highest potential tourism investment opportunities
- ❑ Create a five year investment development strategy
- ❑ Prepare three funding investment proposals to attract potential developers



2010 Implementation Leadership and Governance

- ❑ Reconstitute the York Region Tourism Advisory Group
- ❑ Reappoint Regional Council representation
- ❑ Work with neighbouring Regions to direct the Ministry of Tourism's Provincial tourism strategy process



2010 Implementation Sustainable Funding

- ❑ Increase advertising sales and sponsorship revenues
- ❑ Facilitate tourism industry educational programs to enhance grant and funding proposal skills
- ❑ Investigate private and public sector funding opportunities



2010 Implementation Product Sector Development

- ❑ Develop Sport Tournament Strategy and host a York Region Sport Symposium
- ❑ Conduct a tourism industry Investment Readiness Workshop
- ❑ Promote service excellence through new online York Region Customer Service Training Toolkit
- ❑ Collaborate with industry partners to develop innovative packages, programs and promotions



Report Recommendations

- ❑ Regional Council endorse the recommendations and directions outlined in the new York Region Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy.
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