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GTA AGRICULTURAL ACTION PLAN STATUS UPDATE

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report, July 22, 2005, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. The Region commend the Province for the funding provided to initiate the work on the Agricultural Action Plan including the establishment of the GTA Agricultural Action Committee.
2. The GTA Agricultural Action Plan, the GTA Agricultural Action Committee, the Terms of Reference and the Implementation Plan for the GTA Agricultural Action Committee be endorsed.
3. Regional staff report on a regular basis on the progress in implementing the GTA Agricultural Action Plan.
4. The Regional Clerk circulate this report to the Provincial Minister of Agriculture and Food and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the status of the GTA Agricultural Action Plan.

3. BACKGROUND

On January 22, 2004, Regional Council endorsed in principle the Proposed GTA Agricultural Action Plan and the formation of a GTA Agricultural Action Committee. Over the past year the GTA Agricultural Working Group, a sub-committee of the Regional Planning Commissioners of Ontario, finalized the Action Plan, which staff presented to Council on March 15, 2005.

The GTA Agricultural Action Plan was developed through a partnership among the Regions of Halton, Peel, Durham and York, the City of Toronto, GTA Federations of Agriculture and the Province. The overall goal of the Action Plan is to identify

implementable actions to keep GTA agricultural industry competitive given the economic and land use pressures faced by farmers.

The Action Plan will be championed by the GTA Agricultural Action Committee (GTA-AAC). The launch of the Action Plan by the GTA-AAC is scheduled for September 6, 2005 (*see attached announcement*).

4. ANALYSIS

4.1 GTA Agriculture Action Committee

Members for the Action Committee have been appointed and consist of representatives from the four Regional municipalities, GTA Federations of Agriculture, Dairy Farmers of Canada, Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and Toronto Food Policy Council, (*see Attachment 1*).

The Terms of Reference for the GTA-AAC defines the role of the Committee as:

- Providing a coordinating function for agriculture issues in the GTA.
- Sharing information and resources to raise awareness of issues.
- Acting as liaison with all levels of government, and providing advice and guidance on the development and funding of programs.
- Encouraging innovation and diversification within the industry.
- Combining resources and efforts to achieve a sustainable, long-term agricultural industry within the GTA.

Refer to *Attachment 2* for Terms of Reference.

The GTA Agricultural Action Committee Implementation Plan outlines a three year approach for the management of the Actions Plan's action items. The Implementation Plan recommends a dedicated Executive Director with administrative support, and outlines a three year work plan and associated budget (*see Attachment 3*).

4.1.1 Provincial Initiatives

On March 1, 2005 the Province's Greenbelt Plan came into effect. The policies of the Greenbelt Plan speak to preserving our greenspaces, environmental lands and agricultural areas. In June 2005 the Provincial government announced that the "government is helping to foster economic prosperity by investing in agricultural initiatives along the Greenbelt." The Province provided the municipalities of York, Durham, Halton and Peel a one-time seed funding of \$800,000 to assist with the cost of implementing the recommendations of the Action Plan.

On March 1, 2005 the Province's 5-year review of the Provincial Policy Statements (PPS) came into effect. The PPS speaks to the importance of protecting prime

agricultural areas for long-term use for agriculture. The GTA Agriculture Action Plan is consistent with the policies of the PPS.

On February 16, 2005 the Province released the draft Places to Grow Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. The Draft Growth Plan provides more detailed strategies and policy directions that identify a natural system and agricultural system, enhance the conservation of these valuable resources and connect with the Greenbelt Plan. The GTA Agricultural Action Plan is consistent with the Province's direction set out in the Draft Places to Grow.

4.1.1.1 Next Steps

- The official launch of the Action Plan by the GTA Agricultural Action Committee is scheduled for September 6, 2005 at the Chesslawn Vineyards and Winery in Bolton. The launch includes press releases, invitations to the GTA MPs and MPPs and will result in an event to celebrate the unique partnerships between the GTA Regions, Provincial and Federal Ministries and Federations of Agriculture.
- Prior to the launch the inaugural meeting of the GTA-AAC will be held at the Albion-Bolton community Centre in the Town of Caledon
- Review the 37 action items in the Action Plan and identify priority items (eg. 9 priority items would be manageable).
- Establish timelines and terms of references for each priority item.

4.2 Relationship to Vision 2026

Enhanced Environmental, Heritage and Culture goal area of Vision 2026 identifies "Sustaining Our Agricultural Base" as an action area. The GTA Agricultural Action Plan is a key strategic initiative to meet the objectives of this Vision 2026 goal.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Province has provided a one-time seed funding of \$800,000. The funding will support the initial Plan Implementation. As part of the Implementation Plan it is recommended that the Regions and the Federations consider contributing to the Plan Implementation (eg. \$10,000 to \$20,000 per year per Region and \$5,000 to \$10,000 from each GTA Federation). This will be considered through the 2006 Budget and Business Plan process. In addition, in kind contributions for space costs should be secured from one of the partnering agencies/organizations involved with the Committee. The GTA-AAC will review and endorse the allocation of the \$800,000 and the additional contributions by the Region's and the GTA Federations.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Local staff across the GTA have participated in the development of the Action Plan and their continued support is needed to implement certain action items within the Plan.

7. CONCLUSION

The goal of the GTA-AAC is to ensure the implementation of the actions identified in the Action Plan and provide advice to the GTA Regional Municipalities, the Federations of Agriculture and the Agricultural Industry on GTA agricultural and rural matters.

Support service will be provided to the GTA-AAC through the GTA Agricultural Working Group.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

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