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MEMORANDUM

Strategic Initiatives Office
Office of the Chief Administrative Officer

Date: December 17, 2009

To: EDAC

From: Anthony Ierullo

Re: Business Retention and Expansion Strategy

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the memorandum and attached report be received for information and forwarded to Council in their entirety;

That Council adopt the Draft Town of Aurora Business Retention and Expansion Strategy; and,

That staff prepare a detailed business retention and expansion workplan for 2010 subject to Council's adoption of the Draft Town of Aurora Business Retention and Expansion Strategy.

BACKGROUND

As you know, the Town of Aurora engaged the consulting firm of Millier Dickenson Blais to prepare a Business Retention and Expansion Strategy. Over the past several months, staff have been working with the consultants towards the completion of the attached draft Town of Aurora Business Retention and Expansion Strategy. The draft strategy provides:

- an introduction to business retention and expansion;
- an economic overview of the Town of Aurora;
- an assessment of Aurora's business retention and expansion needs;
- a best practice review of business retention and expansion programs; and,
- a series of recommended actions.

A complete copy of the draft Business Retention and Expansion Strategy Report has been attached to this memorandum for the Committee's review and consideration. However, a summary of the key recommendations has been included below for the benefit of the Committee.

Summary of Key Recommendations
The final BR&E Report outlines a number of recommendations aimed at establishing a business retention and expansion program in Aurora. The recommendations have been

developed within the context of the related public consultation, S.W.O.T. analysis and best practice review and are briefly described below:

1. Undertaking a Full BR&E Survey
   The Report identifies the need to more fully understand the opportunities and challenges facing businesses in Aurora. The public consultation phase of this project provided a partial indication of the needs of local business. However, there is a need to further explore opportunities to interact with the wider business community across business sectors.

   Over the short term, Millier Dickinson Blais is recommending that the Town explore partnership opportunities with the Aurora Chamber of Commerce to jointly implement a BR&E program. As a longer term solution, the firm is recommending that the Town consider the appointment of a Business Retention and Expansion Officer to maintain ongoing contact with key employers.

2. Better Use of Networking and the Chamber of Commerce
   The results of the public consultation identified the need for enhanced networking opportunities for local business. Millier Dickinson Blais is recommending that the Town work with the Aurora Chamber of Commerce to better leverage existing networking events to cross promote both Town and Chamber initiatives. This may also include exploring networking events that target underserved sectors.

   The consultants are also recommending that the Town play a role in connecting local businesses to regional networks and other organizations across the GTA.

3. Providing Business and Innovation Support
   The public consultation revealed that members of the business community believe that there is a lack of new business start up services in Aurora. The consultants are recommending that the Town more extensively signpost the services provided by the York Region Small Business Enterprise Centre and the new Aurora Economic Development website.

   Millier Dickinson Blais is also recommending a public consultation and marketing program targeting businesses and residents operating in the professional, scientific and technical sector to assist and encourage new business development. In addition, the Report identifies the need for enhanced innovation and research capabilities in Aurora and recommends that the Town explore public-private partnerships and online incubator services to address the issue.

4. Improving the Supply of Office and Incubation Space
   One of the consistent messages coming from the consultation was Aurora's lack of affordable and appropriate office space for small business. To address this concern, the consultants are proposing a number of initiatives including an examination of planning policies and tools that encourage small scale office and opportunities to partner with the private sector to provide incubation space.
5. Developing a Concierge Service
   The Report recommends the establishment of a concierge service modeled after the City of Toronto's Gold Star Service.

NEXT STEPS

An appropriate next step would be to forward the memorandum and accompanying report to Council for consideration. Upon Council adoption, staff may be directed to prepare a 2010 business retention and expansion workplan.

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