

The Regional Municipality of York  
Economic Development **Action Plan**  
**2016 to 2019**





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## A Message from York Regional Council

The Economic Development Action Plan 2016 to 2019 reinforces our commitment to support business growth and innovation in The Regional Municipality of York.

York Region has a robust and diverse economy that is evolving. While manufacturing continues to be important, new employment in knowledge-based and service activities is growing. York Region is the second largest business centre in Ontario, after Toronto, and is home to one of the largest Information and Communications Technology clusters in Canada. Our Life Sciences and Business Services sectors are also expanding.

Ontario's *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* has set a target of 900,000 jobs by 2041 for York Region, which currently has 564,000 employees in 48,910 businesses.

This revised Economic Development Action Plan is an outline for our actions from 2016 to 2019 to contribute to a stronger York Region economy. The plan is aligned with the priorities of this Council as detailed in the *2015 to 2019 Strategic Plan* and in *Vision 2051*, our long-term blueprint.

This Economic Development Action Plan builds on our strengths to accelerate innovation, collaboration and partnerships. Together we will contribute to an even stronger York Region economy.



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Regional Municipality of York plays an important role in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and Ontario economy. Home to almost 1.2 million residents and over 49,000 businesses, the Region is an attractive location in which to live and invest. York Region is one of Canada’s fastest-growing large urban municipalities and is planned and expected to continue to grow in both population and employment for the foreseeable future. This growth represents significant opportunities for investment and business growth.

At the same time, there are challenges both at the macro-economic level and within the Region itself that must be faced to ensure future continued success. The Region’s economy is not immune to the impacts of globalization, fluctuating exchange rates and the demands of the millennial workforce. At the same time, rapid growth within the Region presents its own challenges with respect to things such as the efficient movement of people and goods, and affordability.

Economic vitality is a strategic priority and a cornerstone for maintaining a prosperous Region with a high quality of life. The importance of a strong economy is identified in strategic guiding documents of Regional Council, including *Vision 2051*, the *York Region Official Plan - 2010*, and the *2015 to 2019 Strategic Plan*.

Business and job growth are vital. Attracting and retaining a variety of high quality jobs across a broad range of sectors promotes economic resilience and helps ensure those living in York Region have the opportunity to work and thrive where they live.

### The Economic Development Action Plan review

In December 2012, Regional Council approved the Economic Development Action Plan, which identified innovation driven by creative people, companies and institutions as the foundation for

future economic growth and vitality. That plan was designed to align with the *2011 to 2015 Strategic Plan* and provided a sound basis for developing programs and initiatives.

With Regional Council approval early in 2015 of the *2015 to 2019 Strategic Plan*, it was timely to review the Economic Development Action Plan to ensure continued alignment with the strategic priorities of Council. A review was undertaken with the economic challenges and opportunities in mind. To frame the document in the context of actions, this revision is structured around four main program areas: Research & Analysis, Business Advisory Services, Innovation & Entrepreneur Development, and Marketing & Communications. As illustrated below, these program areas are related and directly support each other.



### **Initiatives carrying over from the 2012 Action Plan**

A number of initiatives of the 2012 Action Plan will continue into the new plan to support business growth and innovation network development. Examples include support for the new York University campus proposal in Markham Centre, advancing the objectives of the Council-approved Broadband Strategy and Advisory Task Force, continuing to develop an Innovation Network and undertaking an office attraction program. These on-going initiatives and many others support the strategic priority area of strengthening the regional economy in the *2015 to 2019 Strategic Plan* and will form an important component of the work to be undertaken through the Action Plan over the next four years.

### **Initiatives new to the Economic Development Action Plan 2016 to 2019**

Based on stakeholder feedback and Regional staff reviews, several new elements are proposed in the revised Action Plan, including “mapping” the innovation network, undertaking in-depth research and analysis of the labour force and workforce and monitoring office development and tenant activity across York Region.

While the overall direction of the 2012 Plan remains intact, the review prompted some changes in thinking around how the actions are connected. The following new approaches have been integrated in this revision:

- Taking a more holistic view of the actions and how they connect to each other, as opposed to a simple list of separate actions under individual goals - This approach overtly recognizes the importance of the many facets of Regional responsibility impacting economic vitality, including linkages regarding:

- » Transportation, workforce accessibility and office attraction
- » Transportation, major goods movement infrastructure (e.g. airports, trucking and rail) and employment uses
- » Job creation, skills development and real estate affordability
- » Quality of life, business growth and workforce retention and attraction

In many cases, initiatives related to these facets will be led by different departments or even stakeholders external to the Region.

- Recognizing that impacting the economy means reaching beyond York Region’s borders - This approach recognizes that York Region is part of the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area and an even larger economic region, and future success will depend increasingly on broader multi-jurisdictional and multi-organizational partnerships. Examples include:

- » Connecting into the larger innovation network through ventureLAB, including their larger service area north of York Region and to other Regional Innovation Centres such as MaRS in Toronto and Communitech in Waterloo
- » Supporting “Newco”, a new central foreign investment attraction agency for the entire Greater Toronto Area
- » Exploring the concept of jointly marketing a Markham-Toronto-Waterloo technology corridor comparable to the globally recognized San Francisco-San Jose corridor

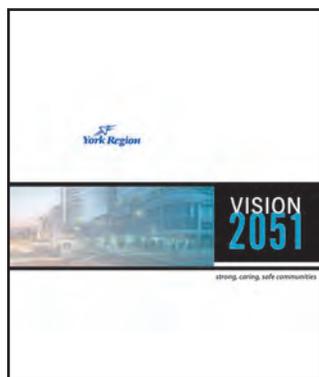
### **Implementation, monitoring and reporting**

The tables at the end of this document outline the major areas of focus and specific actions to be undertaken over the next four years. Progress on these actions will be monitored and reported at least annually to Regional Council and the community through various reports, publications and postings online.

# 1. STRATEGIC DIRECTION FOR THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN 2016 TO 2019

York Region has a number of Regional Council-approved documents that provide clear direction regarding economic development both in the long term and within the current term of Council. Significant research and consultation has been undertaken in the preparation of these strategic documents, which are outlined as follows:

## Vision 2051



*Vision 2051* was approved by Regional Council in May 2012. With respect to economic development, it sets a long-term vision for a Regional economy that:

- facilitates creativity and fosters innovation
- provides supportive infrastructure and resources for the knowledge economy
- attracts and develops a creative and skilled workforce

The vision for York Region in 2051 is articulated through eight goal areas and corresponding action areas. Alignment with those goals and actions ensure the decisions made today continue to stay the course for the future.

One of the eight goal areas entitled “An Innovation Economy” sets the vision statement for the economy and provides direction for the Economic Development Action Plan 2016 to 2019, as follows:

“In 2051, York Region’s economy is resilient and focuses on creativity and innovation with sufficient infrastructure and resources to support a knowledge economy. York Region’s diverse labour force is supported with opportunities for collaboration and continuous learning and development.”

## York Region Official Plan 2010

Adopted by Regional Council in 2010, the *Regional Official Plan* includes Section 4, “Economic Vitality”, which lays out a series of policies designed to:

- diversify the economy
- support York Region as a place in which to live, work and visit
- promote centres and corridors
- protect employment lands
- promote fiscally-sustainable development



The *Regional Official Plan* adopts the *Provincial Growth Plan* target of an additional 280,000 jobs in the Region from 2010 to 2031, a compelling and challenging target that sets the tone for all economic development initiatives.

The Province recently announced revised population and employment targets for York Region to 2041. The new employment target is 900,000 jobs by 2041. The Province continues to recognize York Region as a significant area for population and employment growth in the Province.

York Region is currently undertaking a Municipal Comprehensive Review in anticipation of updating its Official Plan, targeted for Council adoption in 2017. While many of the policies of the plan, including those involving the economy, are under review, the fundamental direction of the policies noted above are not expected to change.

## 2015 to 2019 Strategic Plan

Economic vitality is a strategic priority of York Region Council. One of four pillars of the *2015 to 2019 Strategic Plan* is to Strengthen the Region's Economy. The Strategic Plan includes six key actions that focus on economic development related activities.

The business support programs currently in place to deliver on these actions together represent more than 90 per cent of the resources of the Region's Economic Strategy division. There is strong direction in place from Council to focus resources on activities that promote the growth of business.



## 2015 to 2019 Strategic Plan

### Key Actions with an Economic Development Focus

- Implement the Economic Development Action Plan
- Facilitate Business Growth through marketing and advisory services
- Research the business and labour market to develop business support programs
- Explore business growth opportunities in Centres and Corridors
- Office Market Attraction Plan
- Host a Broadband Summit to set priorities and actions

## 2. YORK REGION ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

With a population of close to 1.2 million residents, The Regional Municipality of York is the third-largest municipality in Ontario and the sixth-largest in Canada. Home to over 49,000 businesses, York Region is Ontario's second-largest business centre, following the City of Toronto as noted in the table below.

**Largest Census Divisions in Ontario  
by number of Businesses (Employers)**

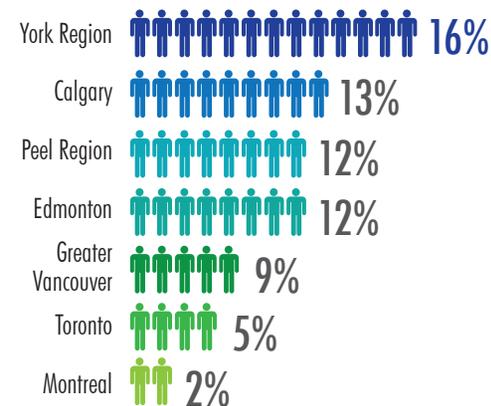
Rank	Municipality
1	City of Toronto
2	York Region
3	Peel Region
4	Ottawa
5	Halton Region
6	Waterloo Region
7	Hamilton
8	Durham Region

Source: Statistics Canada, Canada Business Patterns, December 2014

York Region is Canada's fastest-growing large municipality (see graphic opposite) and has the third-largest residential construction market in Ontario after the City of Toronto and Peel Region.

York Region's growth in both population and employment is expected to continue for the next several decades creating many opportunities for economic growth. The actions contained in the Economic Development Action Plan 2016 to 2019 recognize the strengths and challenges of the York Region economy outlined in the following pages.

### Population Growth 2006-2011 Canada's Largest Municipal Census Divisions

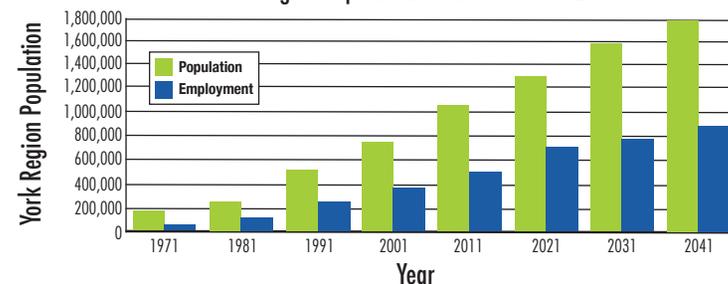


Source: Statistics Canada, 2006, 2011

### York Region's Assigned Growth to 2041 (Provincial Growth Plan Forecast)



### York Region Population Growth - 1971 to 2041



Source: Region of York Planning and Economic Development

### The importance of business clusters

The Region's economy is characterized by a number of large, diverse business clusters. Clusters are geographic groupings of similar companies that locate in proximity to each other to take advantage of expertise, labour, services and synergies. It is widely recognized that strong business clusters are essential to promoting growth from within and attracting new business investment.

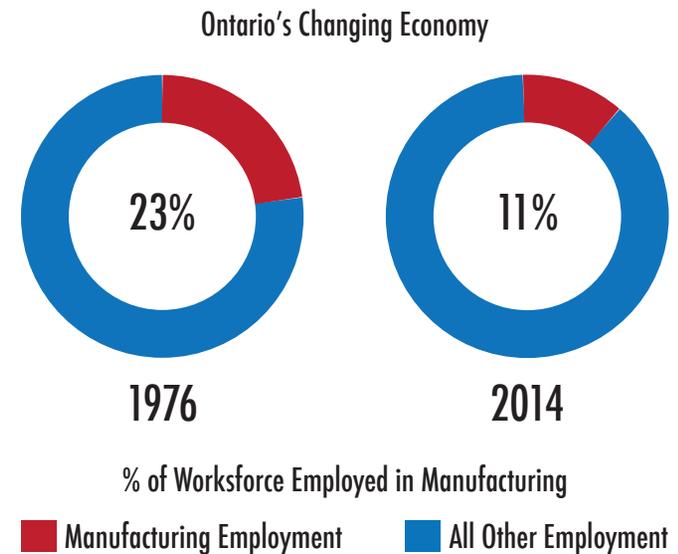
Key economic clusters represented in York Region include:

- Information and Communications Technology (ICT)
- Life Sciences
- Clean Technology
- Financial Business and Insurance Services
- Building and Construction
- Agri-Food

York Region is Canada's largest information and communications technology (ICT) industry cluster on a per capita basis with a focus on enterprise solutions. The operations of 15 Fortune 100 companies and two of the Toronto area's top five corporate Research and Development (R&D) investors are located in York Region along with global industry leaders in ICT, life sciences, clean tech, financial services and advanced manufacturing. More details on these clusters can be found in Appendix D.

### The shift from manufacturing to knowledge-based work

Over the past decade, the Canadian and Ontario economies have experienced strong growth followed by a recession and gradual recovery. While Ontario has experienced a rebound in activity since the 2008 downturn, significant structural changes have occurred as the composition of industrial development has evolved with less emphasis on goods-producing sectors such as manufacturing and more emphasis on goods-movement sectors such as wholesale trade.



Source: Ontario's Ministry of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure

Market demand has also seen a shift at the provincial level to service based sectors such as ICT, financial and business services. Over the 2006 to 2013 period, York Region lost a significant number of jobs in the manufacturing sector due to business closures and downsizing, particularly large-scale manufacturers as noted in the chart below.

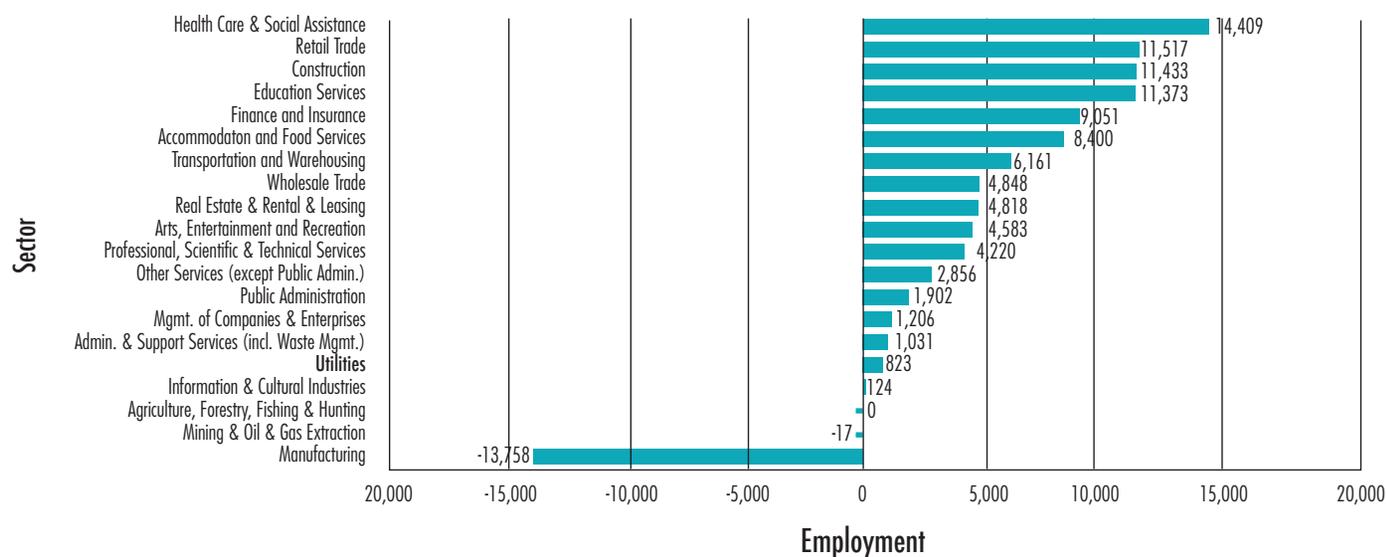
While the net decline of approximately 14,000 jobs in manufacturing employment in York Region was significant, it was similar to that experienced in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area as a whole and mirrors a long-term trend in the Ontario economy.

These structural changes in the economy are altering the character of economic activities in industrial business parks and impacting the

built form and character of employment areas. Market demand on employment lands in mid-sized to larger urban centres has also been increasingly driven by growth in the “knowledge-based” or “creative class” economy, which are largely accommodated within office developments or converted industrial spaces and typically located within prestige employment areas.

Despite these changes, manufacturing continues to be an important business activity in the Region that employs 78,000 people. Opportunities continue particularly in niche value-added manufacturing areas that utilize significant technology and involve research and development.

**York Region Change in Employment, 2006-2013**

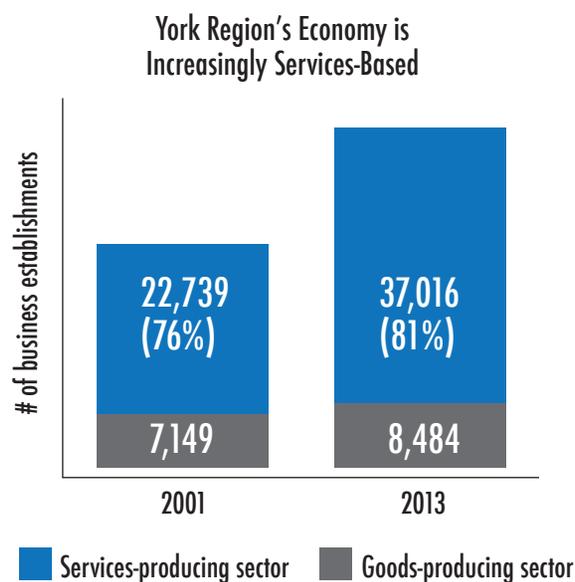


Source: Derived from York Region Employment Survey by Weston & Associates Economists Ltd.

## Business establishments in York Region – goods-producing vs. services

York Region continues to exhibit overall business growth, with the losses in manufacturing being more than off-set by the growth in service-based employment. More than four out of five jobs in the Region are service-based, as illustrated in the following graphic.

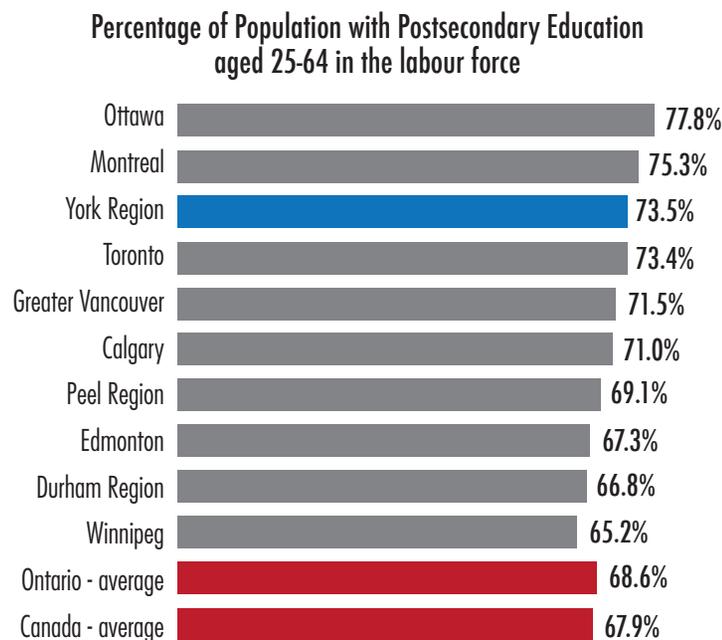
While many of these services are population-related (healthcare, education), a significant share of these are business services representing activities such as technology support, financial services, research and development. The strength of the Region's business clusters is based in the significant business services support, provided by a highly-skilled workforce.



Source: Statistics Canada, Canada Business Patterns, 2014

## The importance of a skilled workforce

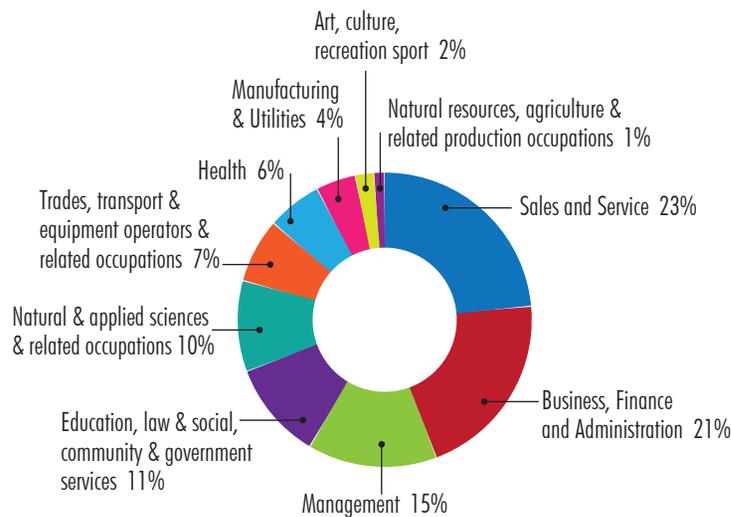
The education level of a workforce is a strong indicator of skills and is a primary consideration for companies looking to locate or expand their operations. York Region has one of the most highly educated and diverse workforces in North America. As noted in the following chart, 73 per cent of York Region's labour force has a post-secondary education – one of the most educated workforces among Canada's largest municipalities and well above the averages of the United States, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, and the European Union. York Region also has the highest rate of university enrollment in the Province of Ontario by 18 year-olds – 56 per cent vs. 35 per cent province-wide in 2011.



Source: Statistics Canada, National Household Survey, 2011

The vast majority of York Region's labor force is in skilled services and knowledge-based occupations as illustrated in the following chart. However, there is to some extent, a degree of skills underutilization particularly among 15 - 24 year olds and internationally educated immigrants.

**York Region Labour Force by Occupational Category**



Source: Statistics Canada, National Household Survey, 2011

While the labour force is highly skilled, there is also to an extent a mis-match between where workers live and where they can find employment. York Region has the second lowest live-work ratio (percentage of working residents that actually work in York Region) among the regions in the GTA. This is impacted by many factors including the availability of high-skilled jobs locally and the

affordability of housing and availability of rental housing within York Region for lower paid workers.

Efforts are required at both ends of the employment scale to increase local live/work opportunities for York Region residents. This ultimately will assist in growing the business base by increasing the accessibility of labour.

### **Strength of the market for attracting new investment**

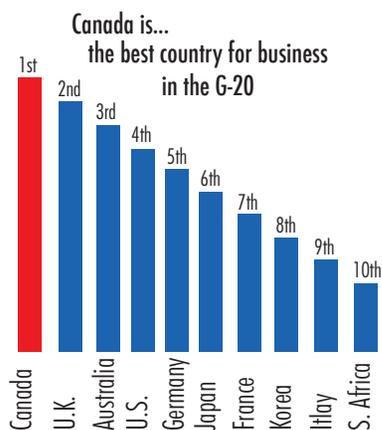
Foreign-owned companies are an important part of the Regional economy, providing significant jobs and investment growth in the Region's key sectors. Close to one in 10 jobs in York Region are within foreign-owned companies. Five of the 10 largest private sector employers in York Region are subsidiaries or operations of foreign companies.

Driven by the local presence of multinationals such as IBM, AMD, Huawei, Allstate, Toshiba, Oracle, SAP, Bank of China, UPS, AC Nielsen, Ceridian, Teva and Johnson & Johnson, the knowledge based sectors of Information and Communications Technology, Financial and Business Services and Life Sciences clusters jointly account for 65 per cent of total foreign employment in York Region.

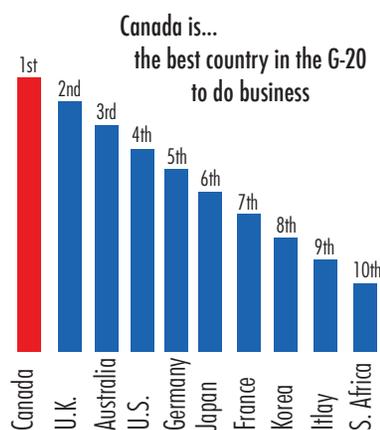
International businesses in York Region typically employ significantly more employees than the average. Fifty-five per cent (55 per cent) of the foreign-owned companies operating in York Region are considered medium or large (more than 20 employees) compared to only 16 per cent within the general business community in York Region. Median employment of foreign businesses in York Region is 28 employees per business, significantly higher than the median employment for all businesses in York Region.

York Region is well positioned to continue to attract investment from abroad. Key contributing factors in attracting new or expansion investments from foreign companies in York Region include GTA location and accessibility, industry clustering, workforce characteristics, real estate cost, availability and quality of life. York Region's attractiveness to foreign investment is supported by the national and provincial picture.

Canada is the best country in the G-20 to do business, according to both Forbes and Bloomberg.



Source: Forbes Publishing, December 2014



Bloomberg Rankings, 2014

Ontario continues to be a top destination for foreign direct investment in North America. A 2015 report by fDi Intelligence, a division of the Financial Times, shows that Ontario continues to attract more foreign capital investment than its provincial and state counterparts.

Ontario outperformed other Canadian provinces and U.S. states in 2014 in several key areas, including:

- Leading for the second year in a row for foreign capital investment, receiving US \$7.1 billion.
- Moving up two places to rank third when it comes to foreign direct investment (FDI) job creation, with 13,055 jobs
- Ranking first for foreign capital investment in the automotive and life sciences sectors.
- Ranking second for the number of FDI jobs in the financial services sector.

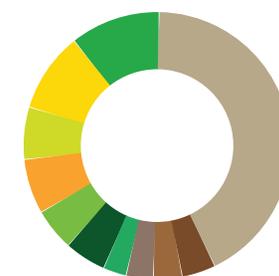
### FDI into North America by Project

State/Province	Projects 2014	% change
California	270	26
New York	196	22
Texas	122	-11
Ontario	113	16
Massachusetts	70	15
Florida	68	-9
Illinois	58	12
Georgia	57	0
Michigan	57	27
Quebec	54	10
South Carolina	54	10
Other	718	-1
Total	1837	7

Source: FDI Markets

### FDI into North America in 2014

Capital Investment \$bn



% North America market share	Capital Investment (\$bn)	
12	Ontario	7
10	California	6
6	Texas	4
6	South Carolina	4
4	Virginia	3
4	New York	3
4	Tennessee	2
4	Quebec	2
3	Louisiana	2
3	Illinois	2
43	Other	27

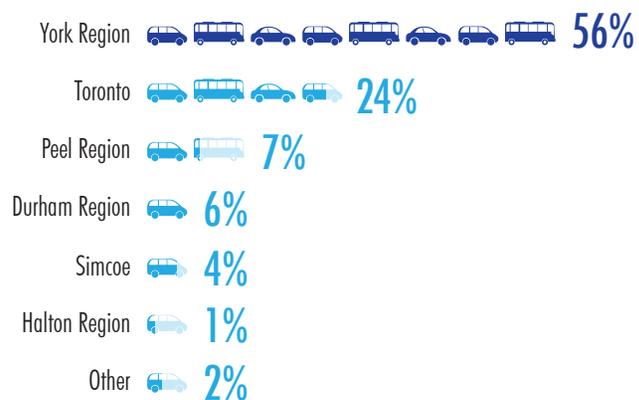
Source: FDI Markets

## The importance of access and connectivity

York Region offers central access to the Toronto area's 230,000 businesses and 6.3 million consumers. The Region serves as a major GTA and Ontario highways corridor, including Highways 404/DVP, 400, 427 and 407. Future highway projects including the 427 and 404 extensions, GTA West, and Bradford Bypass will all serve to improve the movement of goods, people and labour, enhancing the Region's attractiveness for investment.

Businesses require access to labour and the labour force is very mobile. Almost half of York Region residents leave the Region every day to go to work while only 56% of jobs in the Region are filled by York Region residents as noted in the following chart.

### Where York Region's Workforce Commutes from



Source: Statistics Canada, National Household Survey, 2011

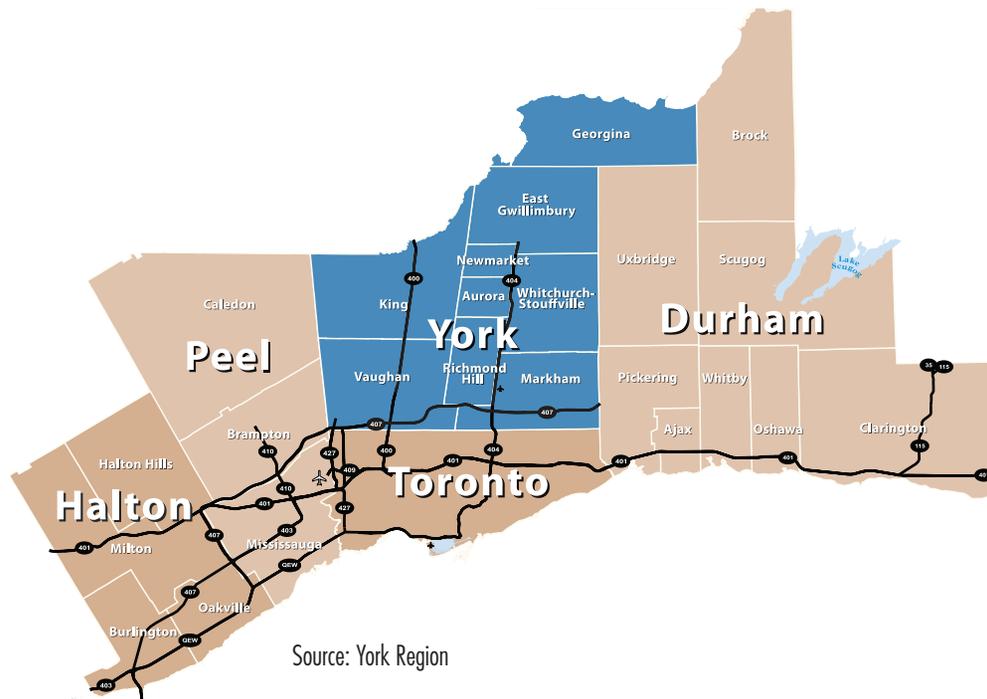
In addition, more and more workers are working from home, at multiple locations, or in hotelling style shared work station arrangements. These trends in workforce accommodation have

implications not only for the type of space businesses must provide, but also for the infrastructure such as high-speed broadband across the Region that is needed to sustain and grow business activity.

A significant investment in transit infrastructure has also helped shape York Region's growth along its Centres and Corridors. This concentration of mixed employment and residential uses is leading to the emergence of vibrant urban downtowns. An emerging concept under consideration is "mobility as a service", where a suite of transportation options is facilitated and linked by technology, maximizing the efficiencies of these major investments. These locations are necessary to continue to attract and retain the knowledge-based workforce looking for lifestyle, amenities and an easy trip to work. Increasingly, employers are being driven in their location decision-making by the demands of a workforce seeking this lifestyle.

Continued investment in the Viva bus rapid transit corridors, regional electrified two-way all day GO train service, a subway extension of the Spadina line to the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre to open in 2017 and the prospect of a second subway extension along the Yonge line to Richmond Hill/Langstaff will all serve to increase workforce accessibility for existing and future employers.

Toronto Pearson International Airport and the CN intermodal facility in the City of Vaughan create a strong goods movement hub. As the shifting economy results in goods production moving more and more towards goods movement, this area in particular will play an increasing goods shipment role in the GTA. The prospect of a future major airport being added immediately to the east of the Region in north Pickering will serve to enhance the Region's attractiveness as a location for goods production and movement, as well as for business investments that rely on foreign travel connections.



### Innovation and commercialization

Global productivity and innovation benchmarks for Canada from the World Economic Forum (WEF), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development and the International Monetary Fund all suggest Canada’s global innovation standing continues to drop.

The WEF ranks Canada only 26th for business innovation. The OECD places business investment on research and development at 22nd among OECD countries. The IMF estimates Canadian business productivity as 17th among OECD countries.

According to the Conference Board of Canada which assisted the WEF in gathering information about Canada: “Too often, Canada fails to commercialize its good ideas into marketable products and services or capture the value from growth... More needs to be done — all levels of government, all sizes of business, and all types of educational institutions have an important role to play.” It will continue to be important to focus on activities that promote innovation and leads to commercial activity and business growth.

### Competitiveness Ranking 2015 Company Spending on Research and Development

Rank	Economy	Rank	Economy
1	Switzerland	14	Austria
2	Japan	15	Denmark
3	United States	16	France
4	Finland	17	United Kingdom
5	Israel	18	Netherlands
6	Germany	19	Ireland
7	Sweden	20	Norway
8	Malaysia	21	Korea, Rep.
9	Qatar	22	United Arab Emirates
10	Belgium	23	China
11	Singapore	24	Indonesia
12	Luxembourg	25	Iceland
13	Taiwan	26	Canada

Source: World Economic Forum, 2015

## The importance of quality of life

Traditionally, location decisions of companies, and in particular large employers, have been driven primarily by factors such as labor costs, land costs, and access to supplies, materials and markets. Increasingly, however, quality of life for employees is becoming a critical factor, especially for knowledge-based industries such as information and communications technology, financial services, life sciences and creative industries that are part of the New Economy. In the New Economy, knowledge, rather than natural resources, is the raw material of business. An increasing number of companies are now seeking locations that will attract and retain key talent and a well-educated work force. Thus, communities offering quality of life and lifestyle amenities could have a competitive advantage.

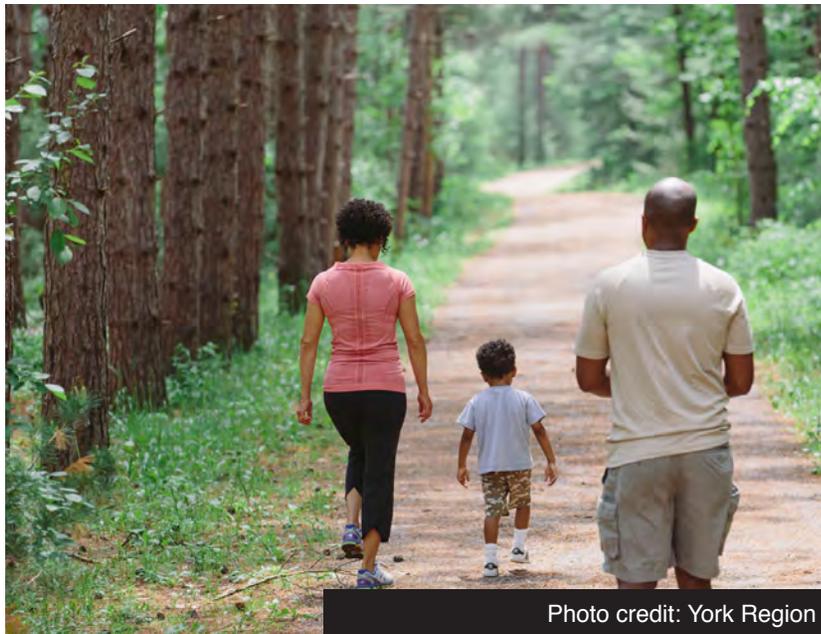


Photo credit: York Region

York Region continues to attract people at a faster rate than most Canadian cities, which in itself is a testament to the attractiveness of this Region. This strong demand is having an impact on the cost of real estate, both in terms of housing and commercial office space.

York Region presents a wide variety of housing options, a strong education and healthcare network and an evolving culture that make it an appealing place to live. The Region's vast and varied geography offers a wide range of natural outdoor experiences in close proximity to the urban areas. York Region is home to world-class attractions including Canada's Wonderland and the McMichael Canadian Art Collection. An established tourism and arts community and growing diverse population create an ever-increasing level of cultural activities and experiences.

Some independent recognition of York Region's quality of life include:

- In 2015, *Money Sense* magazine identified 47 neighbourhoods located in York Region among its ranking of the top 100 neighbourhoods in the GTA offering the best value in real estate.
- In 2014, the Fraser Institute identified five secondary schools located in York Region among its ranking of the top 10 schools in Ontario based on objective, publically-available data such as average scores on province-wide tests.
- In 2015, the Mowat Centre, an independent public policy think tank of the University of Toronto, declared York Region the best place or the least hard place to live in Canada. The research compared 95 regions across Canada using Canadian Community Health Survey and measured factors such as median household income, education, obesity rates and mental health.

These independent rankings speak to the positive directions being undertaken by governments, institutions and businesses in York Region to create a sense of place and healthy vibrant communities.

Maintaining York Region's position as a desirable place to live, work and invest is critical to future economic success. Recognizing and addressing growth-related challenges around congestion, rising real estate costs, and commercialization while capitalizing on the Region's central accessibility, strong industry clusters and highly skilled workforce will help make the Region a better place. Actions must be taken to impact what happens on the ground and to convey what is happening in a positive and constructive way.



### 3. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN 2016 TO 2019

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Taking into account input received from the review process and from dialogue with businesses, partners and stakeholders through on-going delivery of programs, the following summarizes the findings, direction and recommended actions for the next four years.

#### **The knowledge, collaboration and communication imperatives**

Municipal boundaries are useful as delineators of areas for the delivery of municipal services. However, they are poor delineators for economic activity. Businesses don't relate to municipal boundaries, they relate to markets. Markets for traded clusters, or clusters that generate products and services sold outside the Region, are rarely contained within one municipal boundary, and often extend across regions, countries and continents. Advancement in technologies that support the Internet as a business tool allows even the smallest companies to market and sell around the world.

The Martin Prosperity Institute in their 2009 report "Ontario in the Creative Age" goes so far as to suggest economic regions now extend well beyond traditional regional boundaries to mega-regions that encompass very large geographic areas with multiple city anchors. It is not uncommon for companies, particularly those that operate at an international scale, to refer to their location in the GTA as their "Toronto" location, whether their facility is located in Toronto, Mississauga or Markham. This is very often the case in corporate press releases and news announcements. It is very common for on-line companies to market themselves as location agnostic, so as not to appear small or remote.

This poses a challenge for municipal economic development offices that are charged with supporting, growing and attracting businesses within their own municipal boundaries. The competition is less likely to be the municipality next door, and more likely to be a jurisdiction around the globe. The factors affecting business decision-making are complex and tied to many elements that are often beyond municipal control.

This environment demands that municipalities develop and undertake economic development initiatives using several important principles that are referred to here as the knowledge, collaboration and communication imperatives.

#### **Knowledge imperative**

- An understanding of the growth sectors and businesses in the community and future trends
- An understanding of the key location decision-making criteria for growth businesses and how they evolve
- An understanding of the business-supportive assets and strengths that exist in and around the community that will promote business retention, expansion and attraction

#### **Collaboration imperative**

- An awareness of who within the Region and within the community needs to be engaged to lead or assist
- A platform for information sharing and collaboration

### Communication imperative

- Delivery of branded and focused communications around activities and results within both the business community and programs that impact the economy

### AREAS OF PROGRAM FOCUS

To address the knowledge, collaboration and communication imperatives, the Economic Development Action Plan 2016 to 2019 has been developed around the following program areas:

- Research and Analysis
- Business Advisory Services
- Innovation and Entrepreneur Development
- Marketing and Communications

These program areas translate into cycles of:

- Exploration to create focus
- An understanding of businesses and their needs
- Connecting businesses into a network that promotes innovation and growth
- Sharing success stories with audiences to generate interest and excitement both within and outside York Region

Primary to the success of this cycle is directly connecting with businesses to ensure activities support growth and to help create business ambassadorship, community pride and a 'buzz' about York Region as a place to do business.



### A. RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

#### Economic research supports Regional programs

Generating and obtaining data on York Region's economy, clusters and businesses and analyzing performance relative to other jurisdictions within Ontario and across Canada is important for developing programs, monitoring progress, and developing messaging. Economic research and analysis is required to support many of the Region's programs and initiatives beyond economic development, including areas such as planning, transportation, transit, environmental services, finance, social services and policing.

Going forward, a greater emphasis will be placed on data acquisition and analysis in partnership with other Regional branches and departments to create economies of scale and provide an economic perspective across the various disciplines.

Special studies have helped to generate a better understanding of the Region's strengths and gaps, and serve as a basis for developing solutions. The Post-Secondary Investment Attraction Strategy, Broadband Strategy, and Office Market Analysis and Marketing Plan are all examples from the 2012 Action Plan that were necessary to create a common basis for taking action and making decisions designed to impact positively on the Region's economy.

### **Research activities will be focused**

In addition to maintaining much of the ongoing business and sector research undertaken by Economic Strategy and other divisions (e.g. Employment Survey, Employment and Industry Review, Growth and Development Review, international business presence, job hiring data), the revised Action Plan identifies a need to focus research efforts over the next four years in the areas of:

- the Region's work force and labour force
- office development and tenant activity
- the connection between transportation and transit access and business location decision making

Tools such as geographic information systems (GIS) will increasingly support our research and analysis. GIS provides opportunities for deeper analysis of large amounts of data, while at the same time

providing a flexible, user-friendly internal and external platform. GIS will be critical in helping shape the next generation of analytical and marketing tools.

## **B. BUSINESS ADVISORY SERVICES**

### **Connecting with business a priority**

Connecting directly with high-potential businesses in targeted growth sectors will continue to be a focus. This foundational activity is aimed at directly influencing business decision-making that leads to growth. It is important for developing an understanding of business needs and decision-making criteria, and generating important knowledge about business connections and clusters. This knowledge also supports the development of key messages and success stories that help build brand and serve as content for communications. Successful businesses can serve as more formal testimonials and brand ambassadors with more direct involvement in promoting the Region. All of this knowledge is important in supporting broader collaborative efforts within and beyond the Region.

Business advisory services will continue to focus direct outreach efforts on high-growth potential businesses in the information and communications technology (ICT) field. The York Region ICT cluster is significant in the global context, particularly when considered in the GTA context. ICT serves as an integral component of other important York Region clusters, including financial services, life sciences and advanced manufacturing.



Photo credit: York Region

### **Supporting a new GTA foreign investment attraction agency**

At present, business advisory staff reach out to both existing businesses in the Region as well as businesses located both domestically and internationally that are potential candidates for relocation or expansion into the Region. However, there is a major effort underway to create a new, larger, more robust and effective foreign investment attraction agency for the entire Greater Toronto Area with the support of senior levels of government. While the final decision to launch is pending conclusion of details and formal approvals by all the participating parties, it is anticipated that a new agency, currently referred to as “Newco” will likely be operational early in 2016. This revised Action Plan recognizes the potential change that would shift the responsibility for foreign direct investment attraction outreach to “Newco”. Under this revised collaborative relationship, the Region’s business advisory

staff would continue working with existing businesses, while also allocating dedicated resources to sharing data, knowledge, insights and opportunities with “Newco” in support of its foreign outreach efforts. Business advisory staff would also provide support to “Newco” as required to assist with servicing clients.

Business advisory staff will continue to reach out to potential domestic investors not currently located in the Region, and also respond to location and investment inquiries, utilizing external partners and support local municipal efforts regarding business retention, expansion and attraction.

## **C. INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEUR DEVELOPMENT**

### **A formal innovation network exists in Ontario**

Municipalities have a role to play directly in supporting the formal innovation network that exists in Ontario. Communities that host Small Business Enterprise Centres or Regional Innovation Centres as part of the Ontario Network of Entrepreneurs (ONE) provide substantive funding to support the operation of these facilities. The network includes 18 Regional Innovation Centres and 57 Small Business Enterprise Centres (SBEC). The province provides core funding to maintain operations and basic programming at each Regional Innovation Centre and SBEC, with the expectation that each will find matching funding from other sources. York Region participates directly in the ONE initiative by operating a Small Business Enterprise Centre on behalf of the northern six municipalities, and directly supports ventureLAB, the Region’s recognized Regional Innovation Centre.

### **York Small Business Enterprise Centre supports small business growth**

The York Small Business Enterprise Centre is one of four SBECs operating in York Region, and one of 57 such centres across the province. The YSBEC provides business advisory services to the northern six communities (Aurora, King Township, Whitchurch-Stouffville, Georgina, Newmarket and East Gwillimbury) of York Region. These services are delivered in collaboration with the Ontario Ministry of Economic Development Employment and Infrastructure (MEDEI) through events, workshops and seminars as well as specialized programs such as the Summer Company and Starter Company programs. Since its inception in the early 2000s, YSBEC has helped in the creation of hundreds of businesses and jobs, while helping create awareness about entrepreneurship opportunities, particularly with youth in recent years.

### **ventureLAB supports commercialization**

ventureLAB is the Region's provincially recognized Regional Innovation Centre (RIC) and the primary delivery partner of innovation services. York Region provides ventureLAB with \$100,000 in annual operating funding, holds a seat on the ventureLAB Board of Directors as a founding member, and actively partners with ventureLAB in program development and delivery.

The purpose of Regional Innovation Centres like ventureLAB is to support the commercialization of ideas with a focus on business-driven research and results. The Ontario Network of Entrepreneurs is designed to connect innovators, technology-based businesses, entrepreneurs and researchers with services and programs to help them innovate, gain a competitive advantage and scale to reach global

markets. The Regional Innovation Centres act as entry points for entrepreneurs from startups and existing businesses, who are seeking commercialization assistance.

ventureLAB was created to directly support the development and delivery of support programs and business advisory services that target technology-based entrepreneurs who are starting and growing global enterprises. ventureLAB is a key delivery partner with York Region and will play a critical role with innovation initiatives that will help drive Regional economic growth and job creation.

### **Mapping the broader innovation network supports entrepreneurial activity**

At the same time, there are a host of individuals, organizations and assets that operate in and around the Region that support entrepreneurial activity, but are not necessarily linked directly into the formal provincial network. This causes some challenges such as having multiple unconnected entry points for entrepreneurs seeking help – where should entrepreneurs go first and where is the best place for them to obtain the service and assistance they need? The fact is there is no one place or organization that can provide every service or answer. There is a need to understand the participants in the innovation network, where the entry points for entrepreneurs exist, and identify paths that simplify the search for answers and support – a 'map' of the innovation ecosystem.

The revised Action Plan also addresses several other challenges and opportunities to advance a York Region innovation network, as follows.

## **Celebrating the innovation culture in York Region**

For all the strengths of its traded clusters, when it comes to innovation, York Region lacks profile. There is limited awareness internally and externally of just how much local talent there is; how many globally successful companies have been built here and the breadth of innovation that has characterized the Region for decades. The result is when entrepreneurs think “innovation,” they often think Toronto or Waterloo.

Moreover, and more worrisome, the Region’s clusters do not have the same “density of connections” characteristic of strong regional economies. In an era of accelerated technological change, lack of connectedness is a competitive disadvantage. There are limited knowledge flows amongst companies in the same sector; limited knowledge flows between sectors and clusters and limited knowledge flows between disruptive startups (those with disruptive technologies/processes) and established enterprises. Startups need established enterprises and established enterprises need startups.

The good news is York Region has the depth and breadth of established enterprises in the traded clusters that are the envy of most jurisdictions. Work needs to be done to leverage these assets and create awareness and ‘buzz’ that will resonate with innovators. The revised Action Plan incorporates research, outreach and awareness building to create the necessary profile and promote a greater density of connections.

Innovation culture has spawned the portal concept, a centralized resource that aggregates events, maker spaces, incubators, community assets, etc as a necessary tool. Portals have been embraced by economic development organizations in industrial economies as a marvelous opportunity to promote their city or region, and position

themselves as cool, cutting edge and desirable business destinations. The innovation portal has become, in effect, the trend. The story of growth and momentum of York Region’s startup ecosystem needs to be captured. Developing a portal is part of a comprehensive innovation strategy aimed squarely at building that density of connections and can be leveraged to help tell the story.

Collecting the stories from the start-up and entrepreneur community involves engaging the many players in the innovation ecosystem. York Region relies on the leadership of ventureLAB and the participation of stakeholders like Seneca College, York University, Start-up York and others to help identify and facilitate the necessary connections.

## **The Region continues to make strategic investments through the Innovation Network Development Fund**

York Region is approached regularly to provide financial assistance to parties that are developing innovation network assets such as innovation hubs. In response, the Region’s Economic Strategy section has budgeted \$35,000 per year, from 2015 to 2018, to help build capacity in the Regional innovation network and for the development of innovation hubs and initiatives. This funding is in addition to the \$100,000 provided annually to ventureLAB.

The fund’s purpose is to foster the early stages of development and growth of innovation hubs and projects that are linked to the Region’s key priority sectors, including: ICT, Healthcare, Fintech, CleanTech and Advanced Manufacturing. Proposals that service these sectors or are multi-sectoral will have a greater likelihood of being supported. The Region invites submissions annually for innovation hubs and projects. Proposals can originate from any York Region municipality or non-profit organization that normally operates within

the boundaries of York Region and provides services to York Region companies or entrepreneurs. The applicant can partner with a for-profit entity, as long as the lead applicant is a non-profit organization. The proposal's core innovation activities need to be located within York Region, or if virtual, in nature, these activities need to be focused on serving the Region. Eligible innovation activities include those that produce new or improved strategies, capabilities, products, services or processes.

The early version of this fund has been utilized to support early start-up and business planning for initiatives such as the CreateIT Now accelerator at Southlake Regional Health Centre in Newmarket, the Water Centre at Clearwater Farm in Georgina, and Seneca's Helix incubator in King Township.

Other jurisdictions such as the City of Toronto and the City of Kitchener have allocated significant funding to address innovation network development needs. While the impetus and direction of these jurisdictions may not precisely match the needs in York Region, a review of best practices in this regard is warranted. Going forward the total funding provided to support the innovation network including ventureLAB and other network and connectivity initiatives will be reviewed to evaluate effectiveness and allocate resources to maximize success.

### **Creating spaces that promote collective thinking and technology adoptions**

Grass roots innovation and entrepreneurship can also be fostered by creating public spaces that promote collective thinking and technology adoption. Libraries across York Region have come together with the assistance of Economic Strategy to help advance

the concept of public maker spaces within library branches, where library programs supported by 3D printers can be offered to anyone. Many of the libraries have already invested in equipment, space and programming, and by working together they can offer support and best practices to each other. Supporting pilot projects and virtual connections between these locations would create another visible and accessible layer in the innovation network, and this is recognized in the revised Action Plan.

### **Innovation investments continue to be a focus**

Attracting post-secondary investments and greater broadband connectivity were identified as major transformational goals in the 2012 Action Plan. The importance of these initiatives has increased with the announcement of a new university campus and the development of an ORION point of presence at Southlake Regional Health Centre in the Town of Newmarket.

### **Post-secondary institutions continue to be a focus of work in the 2016 to 2019 Action Plan**

The work from the 2012 Action Plan now must evolve as both York University and Seneca College gear up for a major expansion into the Region. The doors of the new campus in Markham Centre are not expected to open until 2020. However, much work needs to be done to prepare for the campus to be completed, and the Region has a role well beyond its funding for the project.

As York University decides on the details of its programs for the new campus, York Region can assist in identifying and connecting York University to related businesses that would have an interest in co-op programming and research. While the initial campus proposal does

not have a heavy research focus, early connections to the business community may influence the degree and rate of research being introduced at the campus. Research-focused university campuses inevitably start as teaching institutions which evolve with research specialties over time. It is critical to facilitate early research adoption and development at the new campus to maximize economic spin-off benefits that arise from this activity. University campuses are often the location for innovation accelerators and start-up communities, and the pending arrival of the campus needs to form part of the messaging developed to promote the increased density of connections referenced earlier.



The new campus could influence urban development in anticipation of its arrival. Interest in condominium development is already accelerating in the area as a result of the campus announcement, and retail and other service uses will likely be affected similarly. The campus will help in the creation of a vibrant mixed-use City Centre

in Markham.

Beyond the new university campus, the Seneca College Helix campus accelerator has already established intake sessions at both the Markham and King Campuses, and there are aspirations to undertake other similar initiatives that promote business innovation. Seneca College has plans for expansion that need to be recognized in the development of the innovation network.

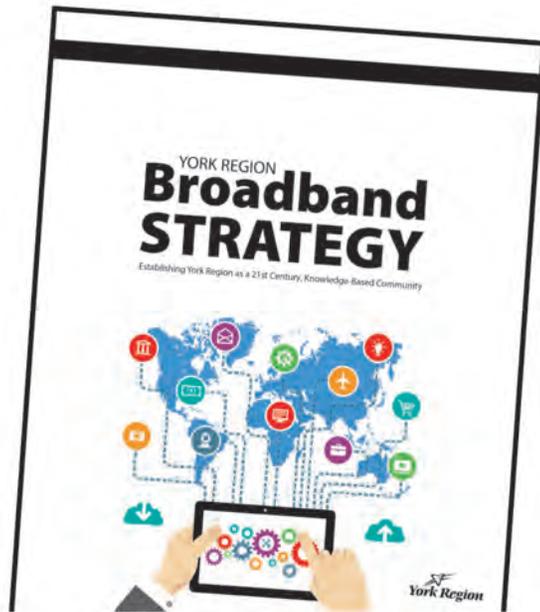
As well, there are other smaller post-secondary institution assets scattered across the Region that may generate opportunities for program and research expansions, and these will remain on the radar through the revised Action Plan.

### Realizing the Broadband Strategy vision requires partnerships

Broadband and connectivity is a priority in the Economic Development Action Plan 2016 to 2019. The approval of the Broadband Strategy vision and priority objectives (illustrated below) under the 2012 Action Plan establishes a range of activities that York Region and various partners can pursue.

To realize this vision, York Region and its local municipal partners need to work with the private sector to help realize the following objectives:

- Encourage investments that will provide higher connectivity speeds to 100 per cent of the homes and businesses within York Region
- Create an environment that facilitates open, competitive and innovative services and applications
- Maximize the efficient investment of both public and private sector funding to improve connectivity throughout York Region



### Broadband Strategy Overview: Vision and Priorities

<b>Broadband Strategy Vision:</b> To establish York Region as a Gigabit Region, recognized for its leadership in fostering an eco-system of collaboration and business innovation within a connected lifestyle community		
<b>Education &amp; Advocacy Priorities</b>	<b>Municipal Process Priorities</b>	<b>Infrastructure Investment Priorities</b>
Government Engagement	Harmonize Municipal Access Agreements	ORION PoP at Southlake & York Region Research and Education Network
Development Industry Engagement	Development Approval Process	Community WiFi Network
Property Management Engagement	Wireless Communications Toolkit	Low-Cost Internet for Social Housing
	Regional Conduit Network	Regional Wide Area Network Connectivity
Council endorsed the Vision and priority objectives presented in the Broadband Strategy		

### Mobilizing stakeholders is key

The education and advocacy activities of the Broadband Strategy focus on engaging public and private sector stakeholders in opportunities and potential uses of high-speed connectivity that are designed to help attract and enable broadband investment in the Region. The Broadband and Innovation Summit is an example of how the Region can mobilize a variety of stakeholders to gather and better understand the business growth opportunities that present themselves with better connectivity.

Under the Municipal Process activities, leveraging and harmonizing municipal processes and investment can enable private sector investments in connectivity infrastructure. Under the Infrastructure Investment activities, the focus is on ensuring public and private sector investments are directed where they will be most effective in improving connectivity to efficiently meet current and future needs.

### High Speed Connectivity promotes economic growth

Enhanced broadband connectivity can help influence investment and business growth, while serving to enhance the live/work, access and lifestyle needs of the communities in the Region. Examples include:

- The ORION connection provides, for the first time in York Region, a 10 Gigabit service to the municipal, utility, school and healthcare (MUSH) sector and businesses undertaking research through those institutions. This high speed backbone can serve as an anchor for expanding connections that could support initiatives such as a “maker space” network between the libraries, or virtual connections between the innovation hubs in the Region, all in support of advancing the innovation network.

- Focusing connectivity investments in the Region's Centres and Corridors can help attract technology and research based office users, facilitate next-generation driverless vehicles in the bus rapid transit system, and create the opportunity for wi-fi mesh networks that allow seamless connectivity access in the emerging City Centres and on transit, serving the densest population and employment areas of the Region.
- Improving connectivity to rural communities to support the significant agri-business and home-based business base located there, helping to support a competitive business environment.

The approach to improving connectivity in the Region starts first with promoting private investment, where a large industry with both large and smaller players already focuses its efforts and resources. Public-private partnerships can sometimes assist in advancing private investment sooner to locations experiencing hurdles particularly in rural locations. Finally, public sector investment such as ORION will continue to play an important role, particularly as the Region welcomes a new university campus that could serve as a future point of presence that further extends the high speed network.

## D. MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

### **Web and social media presence will continue to build awareness**

Building on the existing suite of channels and materials developed to date, the Action Plan recognizes the need to continue awareness building of York Region as a location of choice for business investment as well as an attractive lifestyle choice. Most inquiries of any kind today start with a search of the Internet; whether looking for a local restaurant or investigating potential locations for a company's next investment, research shows the Internet is the place where

the search begins. This demands that any economic development program have at its core a dedicated, easy to find, navigable website, supported by a communications and social media program that attracts interest and drives traffic to the website.

Economic Strategy has developed the investinyork.ca website, supported by dedicated LinkedIn and Twitter channels. Growth in followers on social media has been strong and continues to grow, and annual traffic to the website exceeds 75,000 visitors annually. This virtual marketing system is supported by the production of various on-line materials such as a semi-annual economic development newsletter that highlights some of the stories that strengthen the message around the Region's growth, success, and innovation. The suite of materials also includes limited production of print materials that mirror the on-line publications for use in face-to-face meetings. While the primary purpose of this strategy is to market York Region, the Region has recently secured its first business investment originating through a contact initiated on its LinkedIn channel.

The power of the system lies in the regular, fresh content posted daily on LinkedIn and Twitter identifying the tremendous activity and success of the significant business community in York Region. This material is fed to the social media channels from the on-going research on the economy and businesses used to identify potential growth companies for business advisory staff follow up.

Going forward, the research and the resulting stories can also be used to identify potential business ambassadors and testimonial candidates, as well as potential connections to link into the start-up culture development initiative. In addition, video is becoming increasingly important as a medium, and work is underway to develop video content for virtual distribution.



### An Office Attraction Campaign will focus on Centres and Corridors

Our marketing and awareness building efforts need to be focused on office attraction. The Office Market Analysis and Marketing Plan report identified the need to undertake an office attraction campaign. York Region is investing heavily in city building designed to support intensification and mixed-use development, with an emphasis on concentrating office jobs in Centres and Corridors. Work is now underway to have an agency help develop an office attraction strategy and campaign for delivery starting in 2016.

The target for this work will primarily be office tenants, with their workforce as a secondary target. Office location influencers such as the real estate brokerage community form a third target, and office developers a fourth. All four groups are key to the growth and development of office space, but each has different views and needs, which potentially require different messaging and delivery channels, all under one coordinated brand.

The Office Attraction Strategy is comprised of a formal marketing campaign informed through a foundational strategy and campaign development project in the first year, followed by delivery of an annual campaign based on that foundational work. The Strategy will be informed by on-going research on office development and tenant activity in York Region, utilizing internally-generated and third-party data, as well as regular contact with the development and brokerage industry to obtain insights. Insights will be actively sought through on-going contact with York Region office tenants as part of the delivery of regular business advisory services.





### **Elevating the Region's profile requires a next level public relations initiative**

York Region is at an important point in its evolution as a significant economic entity in the Ontario, Canadian and global context. Going forward, elevating the profile of the Region will require efforts that could include more formalized public relations campaigns to ensure the stories that are uncovered every day make mainstream media in print and online. This is particularly important for promoting Centres and Corridors and the innovation network. Successful, recognizable jurisdictions achieve their profile through funded professional campaigns, not by chance. Such campaigns are typically supported by ambassadors, both political and from the community who share a common vision and are able to garner the attention of other businesses, potential investors and the media. The Action Plan includes the development of a higher order public relations campaign and the engagement of ambassadors as a consideration for development and funding in consultation with Corporate Communications and other relevant departments and external partners.

### **Tourism, arts and culture is essential to creating complete, attractive communities**

Economic Strategy also partners directly with the York Region Arts Council (YRAC) on the delivery of tourism, arts and cultural development and promotion activities. YRAC maintains and develops [yorkscene.ca](http://yorkscene.ca), York Region's online resource for the tourism industry and visitors to the Region, and maintains dedicated social media channels to drive traffic to [yorkscene.ca](http://yorkscene.ca). Annual visits to the website are approaching 100,000 and growing steadily. On the arts front, YRAC is developing programming to support artists as businesses through the Artrepreneur Program and partners with the York Region Small Business Enterprise Centre on the delivery of this program to the arts community. On the cultural front, YRAC has expanded its portfolio to create the York Region Festival Alliance with three-year Trillium funding to help coordinate and grow the network of festivals across the Region. The Region also supports agri-tourism through the development and delivery of the York Farm Fresh Guide and Map as part of the annual publication called, *Yorkscene, York Region's Discovery Guide*.

This focus on tourism, arts and culture is not simply about attracting visitors to the Region. A vibrant community with a wide array of experiences is essential to create an attractive place for those who live, work and invest here. The Region is blessed with numerous communities with active, attractive, historic main streets, and is seeing the emergence of sophisticated city centres that offer a true urban live/work experience. Attracting and maintaining a high quality workforce and the businesses that depend on that workforce is closely connected to the lifestyle and amenities available in communities. The revised Action Plan recognizes this link.

## 4. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN 2016 TO 2019 - PROGRAM TABLES

The Economic Development Action Plan 2016 to 2019 is comprised of a set of inter-related activities to be delivered over the next four years. These activities are designed to address the opportunities and challenges articulated through the Action Plan review process. They also take into account the body of work that carries over from the 2012 Action Plan.

The activities identified are those that will be led or co-led by the Economic Strategy division. Where there is a formal co-lead relationship, the other Division/Department/Partners are identified. The Economic Strategy division will also be involved in supporting work undertaken by others, and this work is also identified in the tables indicating others as the lead.

### The Program covers four main areas

The revised Action Plan work has been divided into four program areas:

- Research and Analysis
- Business Advisory Services
- Innovation and Entrepreneur Development
- Marketing and Communications

Much of the core program work of the Economic Strategy division such as Business Advisory Services and Marketing and Communications is on-going, and is reflected as such across the four years of the Action Plan. The balance of the work identified in the Action Plan is primarily project-based and is undertaken to support strategy direction and core program development. The linkages and relationships of this project work to core programs are identified within the plan.



**Metrics, monitoring and reporting are key to remaining on track**

The impact and success of the Action Plan will be measured through key performance indicators for each work stream, identified within the table or through the annual Performance Plan of the Planning and Economic Development Branch. Progress on core programs will be monitored on an on-going basis, and project-based work will be monitored as per each individual project plan. In cases where Planning and Economic Development is not the lead, measurements and key performance indicators will fall under the lead department or agencies responsibility.

Progress on all core and project-based work will be reported internally through appropriate committees on a quarterly basis, and a full review will be provided to Committee and Council through an Economic Development Action Plan Annual Report delivered after the end of the first quarter of each year.

As programs are developed and delivered, adjustments to the plan may be required. As part of the annual reporting to Council, any recommended adjustments to the programs in the Action Plan will be identified and any corresponding budgetary adjustments will be dealt with through the regular budget review process.

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN 2016 TO 2019

## RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS PROGRAM:

Action Area	Activity	Timing	Lead/Partners	Reporting/Outcomes
Office Attraction Strategy	Collect and analyze data and information on GTA and York Region office development and tenant activity	On-going	Planning and Economic Development (PED)/Transportation	Economic Development Annual Report to Council
	Analyze the connection between transportation investments and business location and growth	2016	Transportation/PED	Transportation Services
Workforce/Labour Force Development	Monitor office user trends and preferences through business advisory activities	On-going	PED	Report internally quarterly Economic Development Annual Report to Council
	Monitor and analyze hiring trends of York Region employers	On-going	PED	Economic Development Annual Report to Council
	Analyze workforce/labour force attributes of York Region residents	2016	PED/Community Health Services Human Services Planning Board	Internal report by Q4, 2016
	Monitor source location of workforce for select York Region companies	2017	PED	Updated select employer survey completed 2017
	Undertake Employment Survey of York Region businesses	Annual	PED Local Municipalities	Report to Council annually
	Support efforts to find and sustain employment related to education, skill level and ability for York Region residents	On-going	Community Health Services/ Human Services Planning Board PED	Community Health Services
Business Advisory Support	Undertake analysis of foreign owned companies in York Region	Annual	PED	Economic Development Annual Report to Council
	Identify high growth potential York Region companies in key sectors for outreach	On-going	PED	Economic Development Annual Report to Council
Marketing Message Development	Monitor news feeds for relevant York Region business stories	On-going	PED/Corporate Communications	One story per business day
Sector/Cluster Development	Undertake key sector research to identify key growth clusters to inform business advisory, innovation network and marketing/communications efforts	On-going	PED	Economic Development Annual Report to Council
	Support agri-business research initiatives in partnership with relevant organizations and industry associations	Annual/as required	PED, York Agriculture Advisory Liaison Group/York Federation of Agriculture/GHFFA	Report to Council annually

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN 2016 TO 2019

## BUSINESS ADVISORY SERVICES PROGRAM:

Action Area	Activity	Timing	Lead/Partners	Reporting/Outcomes
Business Retention and Expansion	Undertake outreach to potential high-growth companies in key sectors	On-going	Planning and Economic Development (PED)	200 companies/year
Business Attraction	Undertake outreach to domestic target locations and companies for potential investment in York Region	On-going	PED	100 companies/year
	Support GTA/"Newco" foreign investment attraction efforts through information and client support	On-going	PED	"Newco" activities and results to be reported annually to Council
Entrepreneur support - SBEC	Undertake consultative support services in northern York Region for start-ups and business with <10 employees	On-going	PED	400 clients/year
	Investigate the expansion of the Artrepreneur program to support business formation and growth in the arts community	2016	PED/York Region Arts Council	30 clients/year
Entrepreneur support - ventureLAB	Undertake consultative support services for start-up and growth companies	On-going		50 York Region clients/year
Workforce Development	Support the delivery of the bi-annual Gateway Conference to bring together businesses with internationally educated professionals	2017, 2019	Community Health Services/PED	Community and Health Services
	Support the activities of the Employers Leadership Council	On-going	Workforce Planning Board/ PED	Four meetings per year
Sector/Cluster Development	Manage the York Agricultural Advisory Committee in support of agri-business development initiatives	On-going	PED/York Agricultural Advisory Liaison Group/Ontario Federation of Agriculture	Four meetings per year
	Undertake a review and develop a plan for revitalizing York Farm Fresh as an independent entity	2016	PED/York Agricultural Advisory Liaison Group/Ontario Federation of Agriculture	Report by Q4 2016

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN 2016 TO 2019

## INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEUR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM:

Action Area	Activity	Timing	Lead/Partners	Reporting/Outcomes
Broadband Connectivity	Supports the activities of the Broadband Advisory Task Force	2016 - 2017	Planning and Economic Development (PED)	Minimum 4 meetings per year
	Supports the delivery of objectives in the Broadband Strategy	On-going	PED/Operating Departments/Municipalities/Stakeholders/ISP's	Report to Broadband Advisory Task Force and Council annually on Region wide access Planning Policy Language (2016) Regional Wireless Connectivity Policy (2016) Report on Regional "Smart Cities" opportunity (2016/17)
	Oversee the completion of the York Telecom Network review	2016	PED/Finance	Report to Council with recommended approach by Q4/2016
	Support the utilization of the Ontario Research Innovation Optical Network	On-going	PED/Ontario Research Innovation Optical Network	Report to Broadband Advisory Task Force and Council annually
	Support efforts to extend high-speed connectivity into underserved locations	On-going	PED/Finance/Municipalities/ISP's/Federal and Provincial governments	Report to Broadband Advisory Task Force and Council annually
	Deliver a Broadband and Innovation Summit	Annual	PED	1/year
	Support opportunities to develop connectivity initiatives and pilot projects in Region Centres and Corridors	On-going	PED/Operating Departments/Municipalities/ISP's	Report to Broadband Advisory Task Force and Council annually
Post-Secondary Investment	Support the finalization of agreements and plans for the new York University campus in Markham for a 2020 Opening	2016 - 2019	PED/Finance/Markham/York University	Report to Council annually

Action Area	Activity	Timing	Lead/Partners	Reporting/Outcomes
Post-secondary investment	Identify potential business and research connections for the new York University campus through research and business advisory outreach	On-going	PED/York University/Seneca College	Report to Council annually
	Support the development of campus business incubators/accelerators	On-going	PED/York University/Seneca College	Report to Council annually
	Investigate the development and expansion of post-secondary assets in York Region	On-going	PED Post-Secondary institutions	Report to Council annually
	Monitor opportunities for introducing new post-secondary assets to York Region	On-going	Planning and Economic Development (PED)	Report to Council annually
	Support educational/training and employment supports to enhance career progression at all stages of life	On-going	Community Health Services/ Human Services Planning Board	Community and Health Services
Innovation Network Development	Undertake an exercise to map the innovation network participants and assets in York Region	2016	PED/ventureLAB/Start-up York	Complete first map of Q4 2016
	Support an “innovation culture” in York Region through the development of an Innovation Portal	2017	PED/GIS/ventureLAB/ Start-up York	Portal launch by Q4 2017
	Seed innovation initiatives and hub development through the Innovation Network Development Fund	Annual	PED	Support at least one initiative per year
	Support the development of the Makerspace Network in York Region	On-going	PED/ventureLAB/Libraries/ Municipalities	Economic Development Annual Report to Council
	Support the development of farming/ food innovation initiatives (eg incubators/ accelerators)	On-going	PED/YAALG York Federation of Agriculture GHFFA	Report to Council annually
	Support the Region’s waterTAP initiative around water innovation initiatives	On-going	Environmental Services/PED	Environmental Services

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN 2016 TO 2019

## MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAM:

Action Area	Activity	Timing	Lead/Partners	Reporting/Outcomes
Office Attraction Strategy	Develop an outreach strategy and campaign through the services of an advertising agency	2016	Planning and Economic Development (PED) Transportation/Transit	Launch of Strategy and Campaign by Q2 of 2016
	Deliver, monitor and review/adjust the office attraction campaign	On-going	PED/Transportation/Transit	Report to Council annually
Business Retention, Expansion and Attraction support	Maintain and evolve on-line channels for promoting York Region as a place to invest, work and live, including a website and social media channels dedicated to the business community	On-going	PED/Corporate Communications	Increasing on-line following
	Develop new video content to enhance the audience experience and promote targeted sectors and growth oriented businesses	2016 - 2017	PED/Corporate Communications	20 new videos by Q4 2017
	Investigate a more robust, formal public relations strategy and program to generate national attention to York Region as a place to invest	2016 - 2017	PED/Corporate Communications	Internal report with recommendations by Q2 2017
Innovation Network Development	Develop a marketing and communications plan to raise awareness of the York Region innovation network and serve as a basis for developing a Start-Up Portal	2016	PED/ventureLAB	Plan complete by Q4 2016
Tourism, Arts & Culture Promotion	Maintain and evolve the lifestyle promotion of York Region through web, social media and event channels (eg yorkscene.com)	On-going	PED/York Region Arts Council/ Central Counties Tourism	Increasing on-line following
Agri-business Promotion	Support education/awareness building around agri-business in York Region and the Greater Golden Horseshoe	On-going	PED, York Agriculture Advisory Liaison Group/York Federation of Agriculture/GHFFA	Report to Council annually
Agri-tourism Promotion	Support agri-business and agri-tourism marketing initiatives (eg through yorkscene.com/Discovery Guide)	Annual	PED, York Agriculture Advisory Liaison Group/York Federation of Agriculture	Annual publication and on-line support



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