

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE JUNE 17, 2002

CHARACTER COMMUNITY RESOLUTION

Recommendation

Regional Councillor Frustaglio recommends:

That the following resolution to designate the City of Vaughan as a Character Community be adopted:

WHEREAS the people of the City of Vaughan wish to strengthen our citizens, families and community as a whole by encouraging excellence in character;

WHEREAS we desire to build a Region where families are strong, homes and streets are safe, education is effective, business is productive, neighbours care about one another, and citizens are free to make wise choices for their lives and families;

WHEREAS our schools should be a safe atmosphere where character is exemplified, taught, and rewarded, and where learning is encouraged;

WHEREAS encouraging employees by recognizing positive character qualities has resulted in an increase in workplace morale, employee safety, and corporate profits;

WHEREAS the emphasis of positive character qualities in every sector of society can only occur as individuals commit themselves to exemplifying character in their personal lives and inspiring others to do the same;

WHEREAS there is a need for positive role models among our young people to help foster a community culture where good character is praised and encouraged;

WHEREAS people who demonstrate positive character qualities and moral choices improve the health, safety and welfare of their fellow citizens, resulting in a lower financial burden upon the taxpayers for the costs of services that protect and enhance their quality of life; and

WHEREAS, many current societal problems can be alleviated by citizens of this region by embracing positive and constructive character qualities.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the people of the City of Vaughan pledge our commitment to character and designate ourselves as a Character Community in order to formally launch a Region-wide initiative to enhance character in our schools, businesses, government, media, families, community and multi-faith groups, and we urge the leaders of each of these organizations to support and contribute to this endeavour.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to request Council's approval of the resolution designating the City of Vaughan as a Character Community.

Background - Analysis and Options

The Region of York Council passed the above noted resolution to designate York Region as a Character Community. The Region is requesting each area municipality to pass a similar resolution to designate their municipality as Character Communities.

Conclusion

In accordance with York Region's request, the above noted resolution is before Council for approval.

Attachments

York Region Council Extract

Report prepared by:

J. D. Leach
City Clerk

Respectfully submitted,

Regional Councillor Joyce Frustaglio



Clause No. 1 embodied in Report No. 1 of the Chief Administrative Officer was adopted, without amendment, by the Council of The Regional Municipality of York at its meeting on January 24, 2002.

1

CHARACTER COMMUNITY UPDATE AND RESOLUTION

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. The York Region Character Council be established and that the existing Steering Committee guide the transition and the selection of a stable leadership team.
2. Regional Council approve a resolution declaring York Region as a *Character Community*.
3. Local Area Municipalities be requested to approve a resolution to officially declare their municipality a *Character Community*.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to outline progress made in establishing York Region as a *Character Community* and to report on the success of training programs. This report also requests Council's approval of a resolution making York Region the first regional municipality in Canada to become a *Character Community*.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Defining a Character Community

Character education is a deliberate effort to cultivate virtue and civility in our communities. A *Character Community* is one in which the elected officials, community leaders, and citizens-at-large recognize the importance of good character. Everyone works together to ensure that families are strong, homes and streets are safe, education effective, business is productive, neighbours care about one another and citizens are free to make wise choices for their lives and families.

A *Character Community* works best when the entire community endorses and promotes the development of positive attributes. York Region already has a good start as both the public and the Catholic school boards are active promoters of character education. The YCDSB approach is faith-based education through the infusion of gospel values into the curriculum from Junior Kindergarten to OAC. The YRDSB approach targets 10 character attributes (i.e. respect, responsibility, honesty, empathy, fairness, initiative, courage, integrity, perseverance and optimism).

3.2 The Planning Process

On June 7, 2001 Regional Council approved the establishment of a Steering Committee to develop a proposal for a *Character Community* in York Region.

The Steering Committee is chaired by Mayor Don Cousens, with Regional Chair Bill Fisch serving as Council's ex-officio representative. Other members of the Steering Committee are leaders chosen to represent a broad range of community, school, business and media interests. They are:

Mayor Tim Jones, Aurora
Regional Councillor Tony Wong
Stephen Chait, Markham
Brian Dodd, Rogers Television
Carol Felepchuk, IBM
Dr. Avis Glaze, York Region District School Board
John Havercroft, York Region District School Board
Susan LaRosa, York Region Catholic School Board
Brenda Larson, York Region Newspaper Group
Nadia Magarelli, Weston Downs Ratepayers Association
Bob McCulloch, CAYRE
Chief Robert Middaugh, York Region Police
Karen Powell, Magna International
Liz Tobin, YRDSB student
Lois Tori, Royal Bank of Canada
Christy Wei, CWPR Marketing
Peter Wightman, YRCSB student
Alan Wells, CAO, Region of York
Susan Taylor, Region of York
Ghislaine Boulianne, Region of York

The Steering Committee has accomplished many tasks - adopting a goal and mission statement, drafting a list of attributes, exploring programs in other organizations and sponsoring training and education opportunities. For example, fifty community leaders and residents attended a training session on November 29, 2001. The training included a panel of five international experts, Q & A and a work session for the Steering Committee.

Enthusiastic support from a broad representation of local area municipalities, business, media, community, education and ratepayers interests over the past seven months has convinced the Steering Committee that York Region would embrace and welcome a region-wide *Character Community* initiative.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

4.1 Education and Training

The first step in becoming a *Character Community* is education – what does it mean, what is required and how can it be done.

Over 100 community, business, institutional and government leaders have been invited to training sessions to be held on January 24-25, 2002. The training will define character attributes and identify character-building activities that can be initiated by the participants in their own organizations.

This community training builds on local media support from the Metro-land newspaper and Rogers television. It also builds on longstanding support from the York Region District School Board, York Region Catholic School Board and York Regional Police.

In addition, a contingent of four Steering Committee members will be representing York Region at a Character Cities Conference in Oklahoma City on Jan. 31-Feb 1, 2002.

4.2 Character Council

The panel of experts on November 29 shared the view that successful *Character Community* programs start with local government's support, but to become really successful, must be embraced by the broader community. With the initial start-up championed by Steering Committee Chair Mayor Don Cousens, now is an opportune time to pass the project on to the community. It is, therefore recommended, that a York Region Character Council be established. The core membership of the Steering Committee should guide the transition and the selection of a stable leadership team.

4.3 Character Community Resolution

To officially recognize York Region as a *Character Community*, Regional Council and the Councils of each are encouraged to approve a resolution.

It is therefore recommended that Regional Council approve the resolution in attachment 1 which declares York Region as a *Character Community*. It is further recommended, that Local Area Municipalities be requested to approve a similar resolution.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Character Community Steering Committee received start-up funding of \$25,000 in 2001. Funding sources for the activities of the Character Council, such as HRDC and the Trillium Foundation, are currently being pursued. Until such funding is secured an additional \$10,000 is required in 2002 to begin the production of educational and promotional material.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The Steering Committee was chaired and led by Markham Mayor Don Cousens with Aurora Mayor Tim Jones and Markham Regional Councillor Tony Wong providing significant support. Regional Chair Bill Fisch was Council's ex-officio representative.

While a region-wide *Character Community* initiative can promote efforts through a broad base, it is at the local level that the program will really find its drivers. It is therefore recommended that each Local Area Municipality be requested to approve a resolution to officially declare their municipality as a *Character Community* (see attachment 1).

7. CONCLUSION

It is evident from the support received by all sectors of the broad and diverse community that the *Character Community* initiative is welcomed in York Region. With the approval of the resolution outlined in attachment 1, York Region becomes the first regional municipality in Canada to become a *Character Community*.

A celebration of this event, unveiling of a logo and announcement of attributes, partners and future activities is planned for Tuesday, February 12th at 11:00 a.m. in the Great Hall of the Regional Administrative Centre.

(Please refer to Minute No. 16 for the revised attachment.)

Minute No. 16 was adopted by the Council of The Regional Municipality of York at its meeting on January 24, 2002.

16 MOTION

Character Community

It was moved by Mayor Cousens, seconded by Mayor Jones, that Council adopt the recommendations contained in Report No. 1 of the Chief Administrative Officer, and adopt the following resolution to designate York Region as a Character Community:

WHEREAS the people of York Region wish to strengthen our citizens, families and community as a whole by encouraging excellence in character; and

WHEREAS we desire to build a Region where families are strong, homes and streets are safe, education is effective, business is productive, neighbours care about one another, and citizens are free to make wise choices for their lives and families; and

WHEREAS our schools should be a safe atmosphere where character is exemplified, taught, and rewarded, and where learning is encouraged; and

WHEREAS encouraging employees by recognizing positive character qualities has resulted in an increase in workplace morale, employee safety, and corporate profits; and

WHEREAS the emphasis of positive character qualities in every sector of society can only occur as individuals commit themselves to exemplifying character in their personal lives and inspiring others to do the same; and

WHEREAS there is a need for positive role models among our young people to help foster a community culture where good character is praised and encouraged; and

WHEREAS people who demonstrate positive character qualities and moral choices improve the health, safety and welfare of their fellow citizens, resulting in a lower financial burden upon the taxpayers for the costs of services that protect and enhance their quality of life; and

WHEREAS, many current societal problems can be alleviated by citizens of this Region by embracing positive and constructive character qualities.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the people of York Region pledge our commitment to character and designate ourselves as a Character Community in order to formally launch a Region-wide initiative to enhance character in our schools, businesses, government, media, families, community and multi-faith groups, and we urge the leaders of each of these organizations to support and contribute to this endeavour.

Carried.