

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE- JUNE 17, 2002

VAUGHAN BUSINESS ENTERPRISE CENTRE: STATUS REPORT FOR PERIOD APRIL 1, 2001 – MARCH 31, 2002

Recommendation

The Commissioner of Economic and Technology Development and Corporate Communications recommends that this report be received for information purposes.

Structure and Objectives:

The Vaughan Business Enterprise Centre (VBEC) represents an active partnership of three levels of government. The principals in the partnership are the City of Vaughan, (COV) and the Ontario Ministry of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation (formerly the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade {MEDT}) and includes an active and continuous collaboration with the Federal government through Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC).

VBEC's main objective is to offer the residents of Vaughan a complete ENTREPRENEURSHIP Resource Centre within which to find assistance, expertise and information for the purpose of starting or expanding a small business.

Achieving Our Objectives:

I. Key Activities

VBEC receives enquiries primarily from two key groups: entrepreneurially-minded individuals who seek basic information regarding self-employment and small business owners looking for specific information dealing with day-to-day operational challenges and/or expertise that will help them grow their business.

Located in the Lord Beaverbrook House, the VBEC team is comprised of 2 experienced Senior Small Business Consultants one of whom coaches Start-up businesses and the other who specifically handles one-on-one consulting with existing small business owners wishing to expand and diversify.

VBEC also offers a service, funded through Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), aimed at assisting with Labour Market Adjustment issues in York Region. Through this service, VBEC is able to offer specific reintegration coaching to residents of both Vaughan and surrounding areas who have been subjected to displacement in their workplace and who now seek to become entrepreneurs.

The service offers support and guidance, in a group setting, on a variety of topics relevant to small business. VBEC has a team in place to deliver this service, consisting of a Consultant/Business Coach, a Workshop Coordinator and Administrative support.

Strategic alliances for VBEC include: Human Resource Development Canada, the Ontario Ministry of Consumer and Business Services, Industry Canada, triOS College of Technology, York Region Catholic School Board, York Region District School Board, Vaughan Public Libraries, Computer Aid International Ltd., and ClubLink Corporation. Additional sponsorships are actively being sought which will enhance the operations of VBEC and will add value for its clients.

Seminars, business name registrations, referrals to appropriate agencies, one-on-one consultations, networking opportunities and Business Plan reviews are some of VBEC's activities. Initiatives planned for the future include a Business Plan Challenge for York Region high school

students, MEDT programs for young entrepreneurs as well as joint seminars with RBC Financial Group and with the publisher of "Home Office Report".

Furthermore, new seminars will focus on computer technology, e-commerce, and export readiness for area businesses.

II. Milestones and Strategic Achievements

The Vaughan Business Enterprise Centre began operating on April 1, 2001, at the Beaverbrook House.

The building represents an ideal setting and location for the delivery of support services to Vaughan's entrepreneurial community. However, it was in need of considerable restorative work in order to be functional as an office. Extensive renovations began in April 2001 and continued through until the end of September 2001. The house was, however, open to the public from the very first day and remained so with the exception of two days in the month of July. Seminars and Workshops however, lapsed for a period of 3 weeks in early August due to abrupt changes in the staff directly responsible for the HRDC contract. They resumed in the third week of August and proceeded uninterrupted to date.

The successful and well-attended Official Opening and Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony for VBEC was held October 25, 2001, with significant media coverage in all local publications. More than 100 people attended including Members of Vaughan Council, as well as representation from the Ontario Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, from the offices of the Federal MP and Provincial MPP as well as a representative from the office of the MPP for the riding of Thornhill.

The establishment of VBEC was heralded in the press as an innovative and important partnership between 3 levels of government in support of entrepreneurship and as a tool to facilitate new growth and new employment opportunities in the City of Vaughan. Over the past year, VBEC has been the feature story on one episode of the Roger's Cable Community Affairs program hosted by Greg Sorbara as well as the one hosted by Tina Molinari on the same channel.

Client reaction too has been enthusiastic:

- "...the format was structured yet personalized to the attendees". A. Canale
- "...very helpful friendly staff". G. Meloche
- "...very welcoming and professional". T. Giannetti
- "...extremely good and thorough – better than I expected". P. Shiwraj

Statistics: for the period April 1, 2002 to March 29, 2002

New businesses registered	986 (with an additional 53 individuals on a waitlist from beginning of OPSEU strike to end of March)
Total Enquiries (via telephone, email, walk-in)	4,963
Seminar/Workshop Attendees	347 (August 2001 – March 2002 inclusive)
Client Consultations (new or existing business)	1,314

III. Building a Network: Community Partners

VBEC shall have been successful in the execution of its mandate when it attains those empirical results which indicate it to have served a higher number of clients in the current activity year (April 1 – March 31) than it served in the previous year. The success however, is not only in the number of clients but also in the survival rate of its clients' businesses. Through monitoring, followup coaching to identify operational challenges and tailored workshops to enhance their working knowledge of those challenging areas, VBEC delivers the full range of services from Evaluation of a Business

Concept and Concept Development to Taxation and Developing New Markets. The delivery of services at VBEC is enhanced by the additional resources that our network of collaborators brings to each of our clients.

Name of Partner	Type of Collaboration	Purpose of Collaboration
Vaughan Chamber of Commerce	Membership, event support, client referrals	Community awareness about services available at VBEC; marketing vehicle for VBEC (exposure to Vaughan's small business community); opportunity to build financial sponsorships from Corporate community; new contacts can be offered as "business-to-business services" available to VBEC clients.
Vaughan Public Library Network	Information Outlets as support for entrepreneurs in Vaughan community; Resource cross-referencing; Joint seminars/information sessions	Universal access to information about entrepreneurship, government programs and services for small business and goodwill enhancement within Vaughan community
York Region District Catholic Board of Education	Development of framework for collaboration currently ongoing.	Preliminary efforts will concentrate on offering high school students opportunity to participate in Summer Company program (in partnership with MEDT), and in Business Plan Competition 2002 (also in conjunction with MEDT)
York Region Community Service Delivery Network: a network of HRDC funded agencies who work to provide Labour Market Adjustment programs and services to displaced workers in York Region	Continuous professional development of VBEC team through networking with agencies with similar objectives and clients	<p>Benchmarking exercises reveal strengths and weaknesses of each York Region agency and identify opportunities for strategic partnering amongst agencies to eliminate overlap and maximize limited resources.</p> <p>Sharing Best Practices leads to overall improvement and upgrading of VBEC's strengths, its ties in the service delivery community and its database of resources: all are desirable as they enhance service to the local business community</p> <p>VBEC has also hosted one of the meetings of all partner agencies in York Region: this provided opportunity to "sell" VBEC to other agencies involved in labour market adjustment initiatives in York Region.</p>
MEDT-funded agency network	Continuous professional development of VBEC's Senior Small Business Consultants	MEDT's semi-annual Conferences for Senior Small Consultants give VBEC staff

	through attendance at conferences that have province-wide representation.	access to colleagues from across the province to share challenges, build alliances, share best practices and problem-solving for mutual challenges. MEDT provides opportunities for program development, and revenue enhancement, for VBEC through continuous exposure to their policy development process (our input helps shape future revenue-generating, provincially-funded projects).
Private Sector	Alliances that offer a competitive advantage to VBEC clients	For example: A Dale Carnegie Franchisee was a guest speaker for a free seminar on a variety of issues relating to entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship. Vaughan Citizen, Vaughan Weekly, Your Business Magazine: FREE copies available.

IV. Obtaining Funding through Partnerships

The Vaughan Business Enterprise Centre is funded primarily through its government partners: Federal (HRDC), Provincial (MEDT) and Municipal (City of Vaughan).

Level of Government	Funding Ministry/Agency Program	Level of Funding (\$) April 1, 2001 – March 31, 2002
Federal	HRDC	\$160,000
Provincial	MEDT (now known as Ontario Ministry of Opportunity, Innovation and Enterprise)	\$55,000 + \$20,000 one-time relocation contribution
Municipal	City of Vaughan Economic and Technology Development Department: Business Development Division budget	\$20,000 contribution to renovation of Beaverbrook House (April – Dec 2001) \$35,000 in kind contribution of support services (April – Dec 2001) Two (2) Senior Small Business Consultants (contract) \$110,000

Conclusion

Evidence of the value of a structure such as VBEC, for a vibrant and growing community such as Vaughan, manifested itself from the first few weeks of operation. The choice of the Beaverbrook House has been very effective, given the high visibility, its easy access to public transit and its proximity to the Vaughan Civic Centre. Clients and visitors alike feel at ease with the layout of the Centre and are pleased with the level of services and resources that VBEC has to offer.

Moreover, the increasing number of clients served, month over month, is a testament to the value of a structure such as the Vaughan Business Enterprise Centre within Vaughan and York Region.

As VBEC continues to build its reputation for excellence, referrals from our Community Partnerships are frequent and diverse. Local financial institutions and business professionals, City of Vaughan offices, Vaughan Public Libraries, constituency offices of local government representatives, as well as recent clients each contribute to VBEC's growing client base, to its expanding resource library and to its diversified range of services.

In 2002, VBEC will continue to grow: in the number of clients it serves, in the variety of programs and services, in the range of business resources it maintains and in the strength of its network of partners within the Greater Toronto Area.

Staff will continue to provide semi-annual updates of VBEC's activities.

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Respectfully submitted,

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Commissioner of Economic and Technology Development
And Corporate Communications