

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE – SEPTEMBER 15, 2003

CITY OF VAUGHAN HEALTHY COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

Recommendation

The Mayor recommends:

- 1) THAT this report be received;
- 2) THAT a staff committee, led by the Commissioner of Community Services, be formed to investigate and recommend a process to initiate the Healthy Community Initiative; and
- 3) THAT Staff prepare Terms of Reference for the Healthy Community Committee and bring a report back to Council in early 2004.

Background

For a community to be healthy, the social, environmental and economic determinants of health, such as income, housing, clean air, recreation, arts, tourism, sports and social supports needs to be sufficient for all residents to have a high quality of life. Municipal governments are the principal foundation builders of those amenities that contribute to and enhance the economic, social and cultural wealth of a community. Collectively, municipal and regional governments, community agencies and educational institutions, build the infrastructure that allows our residents to live, learn, recreate and work within our community.

Research has shown that cities with active arts and culture programs, higher education centers, diverse dining and entertainment amenities and a vibrant social life, become magnets for creative, educated people and therefore magnets for business investment. A healthy community produces creative, energetic, productive and entrepreneurial citizens and reduces demand for government spending in healthcare, law enforcement and social programs.

The City of Vaughan is fortunate to have world-class tourist attractions, extensive parkland and trail systems, robust community festivals and active multicultural groups. With such strengths, there are tremendous opportunities to build a healthy community rich in arts, culture, recreation and tourism. Through the Healthy Community Initiative, Vaughan can encourage city-wide participation and multi-sectoral involvement in community building. Beginning with City Staff and Council, the Committee would examine municipal policies and programs that lead to building healthy communities. With this foundation established, the Healthy Community Initiative can be extended into the community, engaging special interest groups, ratepayers, etc.

Other municipalities, like Markham and Aurora, and York Region have been proactive by becoming Character Communities. A Character Community is one in which elected officials, community leaders in the education, business, faith community, law enforcement and media sectors, and citizens-at-large recognize and promote the importance of good character. Vaughan's Healthy Community Initiative would be in alignment with the Character Community Initiative.

The City of Vaughan has cemented its position in the GTA as a place that welcomes growth and investment. Now is the time to add those elements that build our social and cultural heritage and character. Quality of place attracts people and investment.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Di Biase
Mayor