

King reaps benefits of York's N6

By Mark Pavilons

King's membership in the N6 --York's Northern 6 municipalities-- is paying dividends. And this collaboration continues and exemplifies the concept of strength in numbers.

King council received an information report from CAO Susan Plamondon recently.

"In terms of our influence in the broader context of the region and the GTA, and indeed the province, we believe it is safe to say that we have developed a positive brand that recognizes the benefits of collaboration and partnership without compromising our individual community identities," she wrote in her report.

A focus to promote and market the N6 in the past year has seen some positive results. Each member municipality takes a lead on specific initiatives and the entire group shares resources through this unique partnership.

"We believe that speaking together on issues of common concern strengthens our individuals messages. The CAOs continue to find the benefits and opportunities associated with our collaborative approach with respect to service delivery co-ordination of effort, joint review of emerging issues, sharing of information, policies, procedures and resources."

It's all about leveraging networks and associations and to that end, the N6 union has been working well since its inception in 2011.

From marketing to waste collection, employee benefits, fire and emergency services, staff training, insurance costs, broadband access, the N6 municipalities share resources and knowledge to everyone's benefit.

Plamondon noted that feedback from all levels of employees across the N6 indicated they're impressed by the quality of programs and overall benefit that networking opportunities provide.

"Creating relationships between peers across the municipalities has facilitated best practice and knowledge sharing, further partnering and has created an informal support and problem-solving network," Plamondon wrote. "Additionally, these programs have had a positive impact on internal and external customer service levels."

The group has identified future opportunities to work together. They hope to take a collaborate approach to York Region's university and post-secondary institution project, as well as the 2015 reviews of the Greenbelt, Oak Ridges Moraine and NEC plans.

In addition, the CAOs held a special meeting in the spring of 2013 to look at how to take the N6 to the next level of success.

Future tangible results may come from "cost avoidance." Through combined efforts in master planning, fire services and facility planning, other opportunities may arise.

To that end, it's been suggested that each municipality create an N6 reserve fund to help cover the costs of extra efforts.

The group hopes to share results more broadly to demonstrate value. They have identified a need to assess new service delivery models, to see if there is potential for savings. They may look at hiring external resources (staff, consultants) to help them drive new initiatives.