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Monday May 11, 2009

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GTA powerhouse meeting in Markham

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May 07, 2009 10:24 AM

BY DAVID FLEISCHER

Prominent public and private sector leaders from across the GTA are in Markham today, working on a plan to help the region through the financial downturn.

"Today is really a call of action to all three levels of government. A call of action to business and labour, and to academics to work together," said Markham Mayor Frank Scarpitti, welcoming attendees to the Greater Toronto Region Economic Summit, at the town's Seneca College Campus.

He introduced the event's co-chairpersons, Mississauga Mayor Hazel McCallion and Torstar chairperson John Honderich.

"Around the globe a perfect economic storm is taking it's toll . . . we don't see the recession from a global perspective, we see it locally," Ms McCallion said.

"This is a powerhouse, folks, we've assembled here today," she said of the labour, business and political leaders attending the event which was organized in just 10 weeks.

"We have high hopes for today. We are here to solve the things which fall within our circle of influence and control," Mr. Honderich said.

"The people who live and work on our streets are counting on us."

He and Ms McCallion emphasized the one-day summit will lead to an action plan and ongoing meetings.

"There are two words that encapsulate where we are right now: uncharted territory," said Nanos Research president Nik Nanos.

Mr. Nanos presented results of a poll taken in late April showing Ontario residents are very open to government intervention, so long as taxes don't rise.

He was followed by Toronto Board of Trade president Carol Wilding and Burlington MP Mike Wallace, chair of the GTA caucus.

"People are looking to southern Ontario to make a difference; to make the economic turnaround happen here first," he said.

Toronto Mayor David Miller is scheduled to address the crowd at lunch.

Federal Finance Minister Jim Flaherty and Premier Dalton McGuinty will visit later in the day.

Other York Region politicians attending include regional chairperson Bill Fisch, Vaughan regional councillor Joyce Frustaglio, Markham Regional Councillor Jim Jones, Richmond Hill Regional Councillor Vito Spatafora and Richmond Hill Councillor Godwin Chan.

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