

# Why the Big Pipe isn't so bad — despite what you've heard

## York Region's CEO speaks out on the controversial project

**YORK REGION'S WASTE WATER** system — the York Durham Sewerage System (YDSS) — is touted to be among the best systems in North America.

The YDSS interceptor sewer, which is planned to be built along 19th Avenue and Leslie Street in Richmond Hill, is an integral part of this expansion. It will ensure that residents and business will continue to enjoy reliable waste water services for years to come without the fear of sewage discharge (into residential basements, for example) experienced by many other municipalities with increasingly limited waste water transmission and treatment capacities.

York Region has already completed a Schedule B Environmental Assessment (EA) for this project including additional study work and field investigation required by the Ministry of the Environment. All technical work has undergone an extensive independent peer review as part of that EA.

This peer review — conducted by five independent consultants with expertise in terrestrial ecology, hydrogeology, fish habitat, water resources, engineering science and tunnelling — concurred with the region's own technical studies that 19th Avenue and Leslie Street is the best and preferred route for the YDSS interceptor.

This route received the highest score when compared to alternatives. It features the least amount of groundwater to be pumped, offers the least impact to the Oak Ridges Moraine aquifer and the least impact to residents and businesses. The preferred option — along 19th Avenue from Yonge Street to Leslie, and south on Leslie to the existing connection at Elgin Mills — comprises 5.5 kilometres of sewer constructed using earth pressure balance machines, which minimizes the need for dewatering. The remaining 1.5 kilometres down Leslie Street will be constructed using conventional open cut construction.

The preferred option has an estimated capital cost of \$57 million, which includes a 30 per

cent contingency allowance. This option remains \$11 million lower than the next comparable option, along Yonge and Elgin Mills.

The 19th Avenue interceptor is needed now as part of the wider YDSS system expansion, which includes 16th Avenue (Phase I and II), the Southeast Collector, Bathurst/Langstaff Collector, King City Sanitary Servicing and



The York Durham Sewer System is state-of-the-art

expansion to the Duffin Creek Water Pollution Control Plant.

The idea for the YDSS — a centralized sewage treatment system — dates back to 1965 when the province decided that no additional sewage treatment plants could be built on the Humber, Don and Rouge rivers.

Unlike other systems, including Toronto's, the YDSS does not combine sewage and storm water and does not permit untreated overflow into Lake Ontario. As such, the YDSS continues to serve as one of the best and most environmentally friendly systems in the entire Great Lakes region.

Twinning (or expanding) the YDSS is critical to ensuring adequate waste water treatment for current and future York Region residents and businesses. Our population, which is currently 910,000, is expected to grow to more than 1.5 million by 2031.

Growth across all municipalities of the GTA is being mandated by both the provincial and the federal governments, in order to accommodate a rapidly growing population. However, 69 per cent of

York Region's area is subject to the Greenbelt plan, which includes the Oak Ridges Moraine. This means that a majority of York Region's growth will take place in pre-identified urban centres and corridors of intensification — leaving the Moraine and much of our valued green space intact.

Moreover, York Region is using state-of-the-art technology. The

system uses gravity sewers wherever possible — systems that are used in more than 99 per cent of municipally serviced systems. The deep, larger diameter sewers that make up the "trunk" system are made up of six- to 12-inch thick concrete walls. Sewage pipes do not leak sewage out into the environment when designed and maintained properly. If leakage does occur, it is from groundwater outside of the pipe leaking into the sewer, in relatively minute quantities. Pipes are routinely inspected by closed-circuit TV cameras, in addition to regular monitoring of

flow rates.

I take pride in the fact that York Region is one of the best places to live, work and play anywhere in Canada. Our quality of life is unparalleled anywhere I have visited. We take our stewardship of the environment seriously, especially the delivery of high-quality drinking water and the effective treatment of waste water for all of our residents and businesses. The YDSS was designed with the best practices in mind, to minimize any effects on the environment, now and into the future.



BILL FISCH

Post City Magazines is proud to provide a forum for our local politicians to comment on issues. This month, we welcome Bill Fisch, who has been regional chair and CEO of York Region since 1997.