



Meeting held on
October 18, 2007

York Regional Council Highlights



The Regional Municipality of York



York Region receives "Aaa" credit rating

The Regional Municipality of York has retained its "Aaa" credit rating from Moody's Investors Service.

York Region's debt rating reflects high reserve levels, prudent far-sighted fiscal management and positive operating outcomes. The rating also takes into consideration York Region's rapid population growth, expanding assessment base and diversified economy.

York Region has maintained a "Aaa" rating with Moodys' since February 2000.

York Region recognized again as one of Canada's Top 100 Employers and Top 50 in the GTA

For the second straight year, The Regional Municipality of York has been named as one of the Top 100 companies to work for in Canada and one of the Top 50 in the Greater Toronto Area by Mediacorp Canada Inc.

The listing of "Canada's Top 100 Employers" appeared in Maclean's Magazine and in a special editorial feature in the Toronto Star.

These awards demonstrate that York Region residents and businesses continue to be well served by Regional staff and the high quality programs and services approved by York Regional Council.

York Region's 2007 Business Plan and Budget report earns peer recognition award

The Regional Municipality of York has received the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for the 2007 York Region Business Plan and Budget. This is the third consecutive year that York Region has received this distinction.

To be considered for the award, York Region had to satisfy internationally recognized guidelines for an effective budget presentation. The association assesses how well published budgets submitted for the award serve as a policy document, financial plan, operations guide and communications tool.

York Regional Council Highlights

York Regional Council to ask senior levels of government for new funding formula to address emergency shelters and seasonal homelessness

York Regional Council today approved a staff report outlining the Region's emergency shelter and seasonal homelessness services. Based on gaps in service, funding issues, rapid population growth and the changing profile of emergency shelter users, the current shelter system needs to be addressed, which requires the support of senior levels of government.

Four emergency shelters provide 75 temporary beds to homeless individuals, families and youth:

- Newmarket Youth Shelter in the Town of Newmarket
- Leeder Place in the Town of East Gwillimbury
- Porter Place in the Town of East Gwillimbury
- Sutton Youth Shelter in the Town of Georgina

The traditional profile of a shelter resident is no longer just an unemployed single male. Shelter residents include women, families and seniors. Emergency shelter usage is also increasing. In 2006, 1,682 individuals used shelter beds. In 2007, more than 2,000 people will occupy a shelter bed.

As the Region continues to grow, the numbers of households that may experience periods of homelessness will likely increase. And due to the absence of affordable housing programs funded by senior levels of government, accommodation for low-income individuals and families is particularly scarce in York Region.

As reported in *Housing by the Numbers*, a paper presented to Regional Council in April 2007, York Region has:

- The lowest rental vacancy rate in the Greater Toronto Area
- The lowest ratio of rental to owned housing units
- The highest ratio of low income households to social housing units

The provincial funding model does not support shelter development and sustainability. The per diem rate is inadequate to sustain shelter operations, let alone encourage shelter development. As an immediate measure, York Regional Council will ask senior levels of government for a new funding formula.

York Regional Council Highlights

Playground and accessibility upgrades are first target of DOOR fund

York Regional Council today committed \$500,000 of the province's \$9.7 million Developing Opportunities for Ontario Renters (DOOR) funding to the creation of a Social Housing Innovation Fund to assist housing providers with playground and accessibility upgrades.

Housing providers will be eligible to apply for funding from this new Social Housing Innovation Fund provided they contribute 50 per cent of the funds required for any playground replacement and 25 per cent of the funds required for accessibility upgrades.

It is proposed that DOOR funding of \$9.7 million be used to leverage both Regional and housing provider funding to create between 100 and 120 new units of affordable rental and transitional housing in four municipalities across the Region. Reports will be brought forward over the coming months for consideration of each proposal.

Social housing providers have limited resources to meet changing regulatory requirements and tenant needs. By providing funding from a Social Housing Innovation Fund on a cost-matching basis, the Region can help housing providers ensure children in their communities have safe places to play and that people with disabilities have the accessibility modifications they require.

York Regional Council discusses affordable housing opportunities and secondary suites

York Regional Council today received a report outlining opportunities for The Regional Municipality of York to encourage affordable housing development in York Region. A concurrent report on the status of accessory apartments in single and semi-detached housing considers in more detail the use of "secondary suites" as an affordable housing option.

Many factors influence housing costs. By leveraging resources and strongly advocating for meaningful, stable funding and participation by other governments at all levels, the Region can have an important impact on housing affordability. York Region will update our Housing Directions Study and Housing Supply Strategy in 2008 with information from the 2006 census.

The second report on secondary suites provides an overview of existing legislation and policies governing second suites in York Region and our local municipalities. It identifies a rationale for promoting second suites and barriers to implementation. Regional and provincial policy consistently promotes permitting second suites because they are one of the most straightforward and cost effective ways to increase the supply of affordable housing units. Currently, the Towns of Newmarket and East Gwillimbury have bylaws permitting second suites.

York Regional Council Highlights

York Regional Council selects municipal partner projects for Regional funding in 2007 and 2008

York Regional Council today approved the selection of local municipal and stakeholder projects eligible for Regional funding in 2007 and 2008 under the Pedestrian and Cycling Municipal Partnership Program.

The Towns of Newmarket, Markham and East Gwillimbury will receive funding in 2007, which marks the first year of the program. In 2008, funding will continue for projects in these towns and projects in the Town of Aurora and the City of Vaughan will also receive funding. Regional Council elected to share the available funding in 2008 to all eligible projects, resulting in each project receiving a 32 per cent Regional contribution.

Projects were ranked on how they met the program's goals of encouraging commuter walking and cycling, reducing traffic congestion and benefiting Regional communities.

York Regional Council approves draft walking and cycling plan

York Regional Council today received the draft Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan and approved a final round of consultations, including two Open Houses and a project website for members of the public to review and comment on the draft plan.

Two final consultation sessions will be held as follows:

Tuesday, Oct. 23rd	York Region Administrative Centre 17250 Yonge Street Town of Newmarket	5 p.m. to 8 p.m. Seminar Room
Thursday, Oct. 25th	McConaghy Seniors Centre 10100 Yonge Street Town of Richmond Hill	5 p.m. to 8 p.m.

The draft Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan presents a continuous system of sidewalks along Regional and local roads as well as a network of cycling facilities such as bicycle lanes on roads and bicycle paths across York Region. Both are integrated with public transit services that connect communities.

The draft plan is available online. A link to the Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan website is available on the home page of the York Region website: www.york.ca

York Regional Council Highlights

York Region economy continues upward momentum

York Regional Council today approved the release of the Region's "Economic and Development Review – Mid-Year 2007," which provides information on regional development activity as well as economic and demographic trends.

York Region's economic outlook for 2007 and early 2008 is very positive. The Region continues to be a hub of business investment and housing development in Ontario. The review is a semi-annual report and analysis of several key economic and demographic indicators for York Region.

To obtain copies please call York Region's Planning and Development Services Department at (905) 895-1231, ext. 1550 or toll-free at 1-877-464-9675, or send your request via email to strategicplanning@york.ca

York Region allocates \$360,000 to two streetscaping projects in 2008

York Regional Council has allocated \$360,305 through the Municipal Streetscape Partnership Program (MSPP) for streetscaping improvements to Woodbine Avenue and Ravenshoe Road in the Town of Georgina, and to Leslie Street and Mount Albert Road in the Town of East Gwillimbury. Work on both projects is slated for 2008.

The Town of Georgina will receive \$253,055 to create an entrance feature for the community of Keswick that includes a median with a stone monument, crosswalk and new lighting. The Town of East Gwillimbury will receive \$107,250 to create a civic square with landscaped median, on-street parking, decorative lighting, a transit shelter and crosswalk.

Funds for both projects will be included in the 2008 Capital Budget. York Region has budgeted \$3 million for streetscaping in 2008, which includes \$1 million available for the MSPP.

Health Connection public information line enhancement project

York Regional Council approved a 12-week Health Connection enhancement project funded by a \$13,000 grant from the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario. The project will explore the development of a web-based service to accompany the existing Health Connection telephone health service.

Health Connection provides confidential public health information, education, counselling and links to community resources via telephone. It operates during regular business hours, Monday to Friday. In 2006, Health Connection staff responded to 39,626 telephone calls. During the same year, web traffic to the York Region website, www.york.ca, totalled 11,954,478 hits, data that shows a large population could access Health Connection through a web-based service.

York Regional Council Highlights

Smoking in cars carrying children resolution

York Regional Council today passed a resolution to further protect the health of children by requesting the provincial Ministry of Health Promotion to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act banning smoking in vehicles carrying children.

The World Health Organization and Health Canada agree that second-hand smoke causes cancer and is responsible for more than 1,000 deaths in non-smoking Canadians each year. Children exposed to second-hand smoke are at a higher risk for illnesses, including asthma, bronchitis and pneumonia and experience increased incidences of cancer and heart disease in adulthood.

California and South Australia recently joined several United States jurisdictions banning smoking in cars carrying children.

Diversion rates on the rise in York Region

York Regional Council received a report today showing that York Region residents took the Green Bin and Blue Box programs by storm last month, diverting 65 per cent of our total waste from landfill during the final two weeks of September. Thanks to the Region-wide introduction of the Green Bin program this fall, it is clear that York Region residents are on board and excited to get green.

From September 16th to 30th, the average diversion rate of York Region's nine municipalities increased by 24.7 per cent compared with averages for the first eight months of 2007. The spike in diversion is attributed to the launch of the Green Bin program in the northern six municipalities this fall, joining the Town of Markham and Richmond Hill and the City of Vaughan in organic collection.

Current diversion rates are based on curb-side collection prior to removal of improperly sorted waste, and the plastic bags used within the Green Bin. York Region's 2006 waste diversion rate was 40 per cent, up from 25 per cent in 2004. York Region should exceed a 50-per cent diversion rate by the end of this year.

York Region and Town of Markham join forces on portal project

York Regional Council today approved a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a portal project The Regional Municipality of York will develop with the Town of Markham. Once completed, the results of the RFP will be distributed to the local municipalities to accommodate their subsequent participation. The joint portal will provide a single point of online access by Regional taxpayers to all Regional and local government information and transaction services.

York Regional Council Highlights

YRT/Viva fare change, effective January 1, 2008

York Regional Council today approved a YRT/Viva fare change, effective January 1, 2008. The fare change will offset increasing service delivery costs as well as support ongoing growth and improvement of YRT/Viva services.

Last month, Regional Council asked transit staff to re-evaluate proposed ticket and pass increases for seniors, students and children. Today's decision held the line on the following categories:

- Student Tickets and Monthly Passes
- Senior/Child Tickets and Monthly Passes
- Ride to GO Tickets and Monthly Stickers

The approved YRT/Viva fare change takes into account a number of different factors, including current service contractor rates, gas prices, consistency with other GTA transit system fares, cost recovery targets and the opportunity to discount fares for regular transit customers.

Construction of new Viva stations and Richmond Hill Centre Terminal improvements

York Regional Council today approved the construction of seven new Viva stations and capital enhancements at the YRT/Viva Richmond Hill Centre Terminal. These capital improvements will allow Viva service to be extended to the community of Cornell in the Town of Markham and serve the developing community in northern Richmond Hill.

New Viva stations will be located along Highway 7 at Wootten Way (one in each direction), Highway 48 (one in each direction) and one at Church Street (proposed name Markham Stouffville Hospital), extending Viva service to the growing community of Cornell for the first time and providing easy access to Markham Stouffville Hospital.

Two new Viva stations will also be built on Yonge Street at Jefferson Sideroad to serve the needs of the growing residential community in that area. Service to these new Viva stations will begin in 2008.

Regional Council also approved customer enhancements to the YRT/Viva Richmond Hill Centre Terminal, including ceiling mounted heaters for winter heating and enhanced shelter wind shields. These enhancements will complement the Richmond Hill Centre Terminal – Langstaff GO Station Pedestrian Link bridge that integrates GO Transit and YRT/Viva service at this important regional transit hub. Construction of the pedestrian link is nearing completion and it will be open to passengers in early 2008.

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The next Regional Council meeting will be held Thursday, November 15, 2007 at 9:30 a.m.

The contents of this summary are for information purposes only. Actual text of Council resolutions and official copies of reports to Council can be obtained from the York Region website at www.york.ca under Regional Government.