



York Regional Council Highlights



Meeting held on
Thursday, April 24, 2008



The Regional Municipality of York

York Regional Council approves 2008 Operating Budget

York Regional Council has unanimously approved a \$1.3 billion Operating Budget as part of The Regional Municipality of York's 2008 Business Plan and Budget. Additionally, Council voted to return the entire \$13.2 million in GTA Pooling savings back to York Region taxpayers, reducing the tax levy by a full two per cent.

This community-focused budget places an emphasis on both new and enhanced service delivery to all York Region residents and businesses. The 2008 Operating Budget also places special emphasis on investing in community social services to help some of the Region's most vulnerable people by providing employment assistance, family and children's services and homelessness prevention.

The Budget will provide improved and increased levels of service in a number of important areas, including:

- York Regional Police
- York Region Transit and Viva Rapid Transit
- Public Health
- Regional Roads
- Community Services and Housing
- Emergency Medical Services (EMS)
- Water delivery and wastewater treatment
- Solid Waste Management

The 3.9 per cent tax levy increase in the Budget will have an impact of approximately \$72 for the year, or 20 cents a day, for the average York Region home with an assessment value of \$371,070.

The Budget has been reviewed by Regional committees and staff, in addition to a public workshop held February 28th. It features \$28.8 million in growth and enhancements, including:

- **\$7.9 million for tax supported capital programs:**
 - Roads – support for construction of 59 additional lane kilometres of Regional Roads
 - Transit – support for transit capital projects
 - EMS – includes purchase of two new ambulances
- **\$5.3 million for Community Services and Housing**
- Provide \$2.7 million to assist four community agencies to develop 270 affordable housing units by providing one-time funds, up to \$10,000 per unit
- Provide \$2.6 million into the Community Development Investment Fund (CDIF) for:
 - homelessness prevention
 - employment assistance
 - family and children's services
- **\$2.1 million for Public Health Services and EMS:**
 - 26 new paramedics and two operational support staff
 - Six new staff (one for Health Protection, four for Infectious Disease Control and one for Child and Family Health)
- **\$6.8 million for Capital Asset Replacement:**
 - Replace aging infrastructure, including transit vehicles
- **\$4.9 million for Transit:**
 - Six per cent increase in service hours for YRT and Viva Rapid Transit, for a total of 61,047 additional service hours
 - Conversion of the Viva Rapid Transit fleet to more environmentally friendly biodiesel

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- **\$4.5 million for York Regional Police:**
 - 67 additional sworn police officers and 35 civilian staff
 - Four new 9-1-1 call takers / dispatchers
- **\$1.8 million for Solid Waste Diversion and Disposal:**
 - Operation of the Dongara waste pelletization plant commencing in July
 - full year cost of the Green Bin Collection for all York Region municipalities
 - four per cent growth in Blue Box and Green Bin programs
 - Construct a Community Environmental Centre in the City of Vaughan

York Regional Council approved The Regional Municipality of York's \$682 million Capital Budget for 2008 in December 2007. Combined, the 2008 Capital and Operating Budget is more than \$1.98 billion.

York Regional Council remembers Robert (Bob) Scott

York Regional Council recognized the contribution of former Regional Councillor Robert (Bob) Scott, who passed away on April 5th.

Mr. Scott served three terms on York Regional Council from 1985 to 1994 as both a Regional Councillor and Acting Mayor for the Town of Newmarket. Mr. Scott also served a three-month term as Acting Mayor in 1978-79.

Town of Newmarket Mayor Tony Van Bynen also spoke fondly of Mr. Scott, praising him for his lengthy public service and for the tremendous contribution to York Regional Council, Newmarket Council and to the residents of Newmarket.

York Region recognizes Pride Week and Girl's Rights Week

York Regional Council has recognized June 16th to 22nd as Pride Week in York Region. The 8th annual celebration commemorates the contributions of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities living and working in the Region. The event is organized by the York Pride Fest Committee under the auspices of The York Region Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Community Outreach Project and is funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

York Regional Council has also recognized April 28th to May 2nd as Girl's Rights Week. Girls Incorporated of York Region, organizers of the event, is a non-profit youth organization dedicated to empowering girls and young women to seek the highest quality of life by enhancing their confidence and self esteem, while giving them the skills and tools they need in order to be productive and contributing members of society.

York Regional Council Highlights

Blue Bridge Festival in the Town of Georgina

York Regional Council received a deputation regarding the upcoming 2nd Annual Blue Bridge Festival in the Town of Georgina communities of Sutton and Jackson's Point.

Brenda Muller, Artistic Director of the Ardeleana Chamber Music Society and Director of the Blue Bridge Festival, provided an overview of the festival and extended an invitation to members of York Regional Council to attend.

The Blue Bridge Festival, June 6th to 8th, will feature 14 different events, hosted by a number of Canadian musicians, poets, songwriters and composers.

York Region to develop Management Plan for Peggy's Wood

York Regional Council has approved the hiring of North-South Environmental Inc. to prepare a management plan for Peggy's Wood in the Town of Newmarket and the Town of East Gwillimbury. The \$58,128 cost will be shared by the Town of Newmarket, the Town of East Gwillimbury and the Region.

The 18-hectare (43-acre) Peggy's Wood Nature Reserve – named for the late Margaret Dunlap Crang, known as Peggy to her family and friends – was donated to York Region by the Dunlap families via the Nature Conservancy of Canada in 2006 to ensure the protection of its biodiversity features in perpetuity. Peggy's Wood is part of a larger forested area covering 100 hectares (247 acres).

As part of the donation, York Region committed to developing a management plan to protect the area over the long term and allow some community access.

Peggy's Wood, which straddles the boundary between the Towns of East Gwillimbury and Newmarket, forms part of the largest forest ecosystem in Newmarket. The area protects the headwaters of the Holland River, provides cold water supply for sensitive aquatic habitats, enhances water quality in the area and provides refuge for a variety of animal species. The heavily forested landscape, which includes Eastern Hemlock, White Cedar and Sugar Maple, is home to a variety of animals, including white-tailed deer, wild turkeys and eight species of amphibians and reptiles.

Job Hiring Index debuts

York Regional Council received the first full year Job Hiring Index, which identifies and analyzes hiring trends in York Region for 2007.

Labour force supply is one of the major factors that impact the ability of businesses to sustain their competitive position. During the Employers Opinion Survey undertaken in 2004, employers clearly expressed that a major challenge they face is to attract and retain suitable workers for their industry. To address the hiring demands of businesses, the index collects data on job postings and monitors the trends in demand for the Region's labour market.

There were 52,491 job postings in 2007 in York Region distributed evenly throughout the year. The Town of Markham accounted for the majority of jobs posted in 2007 at 41 per cent. York Region remains a very diverse employment region with 24 industry codes being identified in the job postings.

Data collection for 2008 will enable year-over-year comparatives on quarterly, monthly and annual trends.

York Regional Council Highlights

York Regional Council approves Region's position on MOE proposed interim regulation governing phosphorus discharges into Lake Simcoe

York Regional Council approved, in principle, the Region's position on the Ministry of the Environment's (MOE) proposed interim regulation governing selected point source phosphorus discharge in the Lake Simcoe Basin.

York Region's recommendations in response to the proposed interim regulation include:

- Higher standards around the Lake Simcoe basin with regard to phosphorus discharge
- Interim phosphorus limits set at a level that can accommodate all draft approval plans
- Developing phosphorus offsetting and trading programs as part of the long-term strategy for Lake Simcoe
- Funding assistance from the province to retrofit stormwater management ponds
- Consideration of a funding model to assist municipalities for activities that may be associated with the proposed interim regulation and long-term strategy for Lake Simcoe
- Municipal consultation
- Opportunities for the Region and our local municipalities to review the actual wording of the proposed interim regulation

Staff will report back to Council on future MOE decisions pertaining to the interim regulation.

York Regional Council approves U-Pass student transit program

York Regional Council approved the implementation of a Universal Transit Pass (U-Pass) program with Greater Toronto Area post-secondary schools, in partnership with the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) and GO Transit.

The U-Pass program will provide substantial transit discounts to college and university students of participating schools that adopt the program through a student referendum.

York Region is currently pursuing a U-Pass program with York University. Based on interest, the program could also be extended to Seneca and Humber Colleges. To get the U-Pass program in operation, a student referendum with a 50 per cent or more favourable vote is required. A referendum at York University could happen as early as fall 2008.

The YRT/Viva U-Pass program would be mandatory for all full-time undergraduate students of participating schools at a cost of \$60 per month from September to April. The passes would be valid for unlimited travel during the school year at a cost of 37 per cent less than regular priced adult monthly passes. U-Passes are priced lower than regular passes because the cost is shared by the student population.

For more information about YRT/Viva services, please visit the YRT/Viva website at www.yrt.ca or call the Customer Service Centre at 1-866-MOVE-YRT (668-3978).

York Regional Council Highlights

The Regional Municipality of York approves additional safety features for Davis Drive West

The Regional Municipality of York has approved a series of safety features along Davis Drive West (formerly Highway 9) that includes the option for two new traffic signals. The new features are designed to allow more convenient access and provide enhanced security for all users of the road.

York Regional Council has recommended two locations for traffic signals:

- At the intersection of Keele Street and Davis Drive West
- At the entrance to Cardinal Golf Club, between Jane Street and Keele Street

The signals at Keele Street are contingent upon funding from the Township of King. The signals at Cardinal Golf Club are contingent upon funding from the golf course.

As part of the overall safety improvements, York Regional Council has also approved the following for Davis Drive West:

- "Intersection ahead" signs to be installed at the north and south approaches of Jane Street, Keele Street and Dufferin Street
- Flashing amber beacons for the sign at Dufferin Street
- Centreline "rumble strips" from Glenview Heights Lane to 580 metres east of the south leg of Dufferin Street
- A speed reduction from 80 km/h to 60 km/h between Bathurst Street and Eagle Street
- New pavement markings to assist in reducing speeds
- A request to the Ministry of Transportation to modify the south-east ramp from Highway 400 to Davis Drive West

The safety improvements are part of a number of new features added to the roadway since the Region conducted an analysis in October and November 2007. Other safety features approved in December 2007 included:

- Regular use of York Regional Police patrols on the roadway, including monitoring by aircraft
- The use of speed indicator signs to inform drivers of their speeds
- Increased signage, indicating penalties for speeding
- Re-naming Highway 9 to Davis Drive West to reflect this is not a provincial roadway

As part of the overview of safety features on Davis Drive West, York Regional Council will also reconsider our traffic signal warrant policy for Regional roads. This review will focus on access to Regional roads in the more rural areas of York Region. The review is anticipated to be brought for Regional Council consideration in June.

If York Region's signal warrant policy is modified, the Region will consider reimbursing the cost of the Keele Street signals to the Township of King, should they move forward with funding their installation.

York Regional Council Highlights

York Region to recognize National Public Works Week from May 18th to 24th

York Region will recognize National Public Works Week from May 18th to 24th.

National Public Works Week recognizes the valuable contributions that public works professionals in Transportation Services and Environmental Services make to their communities.

York Region will mark the occasion with a number of events, including:

- A Family Fun Day open house at the Waste Management Centre on Garfield Wright Drive and the Operations Centre on Bales Drive East in The Town of East Gwillimbury
- A series of facility tours for schools across the Region
- A “paint a plow” contest for schools
- A series of presentations to schools about opportunities for employment in public works fields
- Participation in the annual Miller Cup municipal skills competition

The Family Fun Day will take place on Saturday, May 24th from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission is free. Activities and displays include:

- Vehicles and equipment
- Facility tours
- YRT interactive display and Viva information (including a free ride through the bus wash)
- Forestry display
- *Water for Tomorrow* display
- Solid Waste Management video and interactive display
- Traffic signal demonstration
- Water and wastewater display
- Vintage Police cars
- EMS display
- CPR demonstrations
- Charity BBQ

For more information, please click on the National Public Works Week and EMS Week link on the front page of www.york.ca

New Community Health Fair Toolkit

York Regional Council endorsed a new community health fair toolkit. The Healthy Lifestyles division of the York Region Public Health branch will provide interested communities with a resource to host successful health fairs.

A health fair is a community-based event used to raise awareness about health problems and their risk factors and provide educational information and resources promoting healthy lifestyle. Health fairs have shown to be an effective method of increasing awareness of health-related services in the community.

The new health fair toolkit will empower community members to deliver health fairs that meet their specific needs and help meet the demand for health fairs within all interested communities. To access the new toolkit, please contact York Region *Health Connection* at 1-800-361-5653 or visit www.york.ca

York Regional Council Highlights

York Region to begin 2008 West Nile virus control activities

York Regional Council approved the 2008 West Nile virus Control Plan for The Regional Municipality of York. Activities including larviciding; public education; mosquito, bird and human surveillance will begin in May.

West Nile virus (WNV) is a mosquito-borne virus spread to humans by the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes become infected when feeding on an infected bird. The disease can also be passed on from the infected female mosquito to her eggs and subsequent larvae produced. In 2007, there was one confirmed human case of West Nile virus, one West Nile virus-positive bird and no West Nile virus-positive mosquito pools in York Region.

York Region experienced lower levels of WNV activity last season compared to previous years. Research shows that higher temperatures and lower levels of precipitation may cause mosquito breeding sites to dry up, resulting in a lower number of infectious mosquitoes.

The risk of being bitten by an infected mosquito and becoming seriously ill as a result of WNV is low. Approximately four out of five people infected by West Nile virus do not show any symptoms of illness. Symptoms of WNV illness consist of fever, muscle weakness, stiff neck, confusion, severe headache and a sudden sensitivity to light. For a very rare few, the virus causes serious neurological illness, including encephalitis (inflammation of the brain).

York Region to launch *Take-Back* your plastic bags program

York Regional Council approved a report detailing the official launch of the Plastic Bag *Take-Back* Program in York Region.

A launch event at the York Region Administrative Centre on April 16th officially kicked off the program that encourages residents to reduce waste by recycling disposable plastic bags at participating grocery and retail stores and switching to reusable shopping bags.

The *Take-Back* program goal is to reduce plastic bag use in Ontario by 50 per cent over the next five years. Reducing plastic bag use will help York Region achieve our goal of 65 per cent waste diversion by 2010.

York Region is supporting the *Take-Back* program through a promotional campaign, including local newspaper advertisements, flyer and poster distribution and a dedicated webpage.

Canadians use approximately six billion plastic bags each year. In Ontario, 2.5 billion plastic bags are used annually, with an estimated 100 million used in York Region. Empty plastic bags do not biodegrade in landfills, but can be recycled into plastic products for outdoor chairs and decks. The use of reusable bags is the most effective way to reduce the amount of landfilled plastic bags and supports the 3Rs hierarchy of Reduce, Reuse and Recycle.

York Regional Council Highlights

York Region programs provide low income families and children with access to quality Family Strengthening Programs

York Regional Council received a report outlining how more than 5,600 children and their families received services through the Family Strengthening Program during 2007.

Family Strengthening Programs are delivered at no cost to low income families and are designed to support and strengthen families and child development. They include:

- All Our Kids Early Child Development and Parenting Programs
- Ontario Works/Social Housing Summer Day Camp
- Family Child Care Provider Training
- Positive Leisure Activities for Youth
- After School Programs in Social Housing Sites
- Youth Leadership Camp

These programs offer families access to community-based activities by removing barriers such as user fees and transportation costs and by helping agencies establish programs in low income and immigrant communities.

York Region works in collaboration with children's mental health agencies, municipal recreation departments, resource centres, child care agencies and York Region Early Years Centres. Funding is administered and programs are monitored and evaluated through Purchase of Service Agreements.

Research shows that investing in Family Strengthening Programs reduces dependency on social assistance, health and other social services. It recognizes the importance of the family structure to the economic and social well being of the parent and to child development.

2007 rent-geared-to-income waiting list activities reported to York Regional Council

In 2007, York Region processed approximately 1,800 new applications for rent-geared-to-income housing. At the same time, approximately 1,200 applications were cancelled, primarily due to the applicants failing to respond to the annual information update request.

In addition, there are approximately 5,600 households, representing approximately 11,000 people on the waiting list. The waiting list is subdivided into three general categories: seniors, families and non-senior singles/couples.

Waiting lists for housing in the Region's central and northern municipalities are typically much shorter, with many applicants offered housing within three to five years. The waiting time for those seeking housing in the Region's southern municipalities is much longer.

Most seniors can typically expect to wait approximately four to six years for housing in buildings reserved for seniors.

Although the centralized waiting list has stabilized over the past few years to approximately 5,600 households, fewer than 10 per cent are housed each year.

York Regional Council Highlights

York Regional Council receives update on York Region employment lands

York Regional Council approved a staff report outlining the current status of the Region's employment land supply.

Employment lands are defined as areas designated in an Official Plan for clusters of business and economic activities, including, but not limited to, manufacturing, offices and associated retail and ancillary uses. Following are some highlights:

- The total supply of vacant employment land in York Region is approximately 2,894 net hectares, representing 39 per cent of total employment land in York Region
- The City of Vaughan possesses the largest supply of vacant employment land at 1,269 net hectares
- The Town of Newmarket has the smallest supply at 60 net hectares
- Aurora, Newmarket and Richmond Hill are approaching the point where all vacant employment land will be used up
- York Region's employment lands are occupied primarily by single storey industrial structures

York Region is committed to preserving strategically significant lands for employment uses to ensure long-term economic development, employment for a growing population and the sustainability of the Region's fiscal health.

Local urbanization strategies to be guided by Regional framework

York Regional Council endorsed *Enhancing York Region's Urban Structure: A Guide to Developing Area Municipal Intensification Strategies*, a framework for collaboration with local municipalities to guide the completion of their local intensification strategies.

Together, York Region and local municipalities aim to meet the 40 per cent intensification target set by Ontario's *Places to Grow Act*.

The guide provides a long-term, consistent and sustainable approach for meeting this target within the Region's planned urban structure of centers and corridors.

The guide identifies the key strategic areas best suited to accommodate intensification. By locating the highest densities in areas served by the Region's public and rapid transit network, more people can enjoy easy access to public transit.

The guide includes an urban capacity study, a description of the attributes of sustainable compact communities, an outline for engagement and awareness, next steps to implementing the area municipal strategies and an outline for developing a Regional intensification monitoring system.

The draft intensification strategy will be refined through ongoing consultation with local municipalities.

York Regional Council Highlights

Newmarket Official Plan is an innovative and progressive policy document

York Regional Council approved the new Town of Newmarket Official Plan.

With modifications, the new Newmarket Official Plan will be compliant with Provincial and Regional policy and considered to represent good planning.

The new Town of Newmarket Official Plan establishes primary land-use categories including, Residential Areas, Urban Centres, Commercial, Business Parks, Major Institutional Areas, Parks and Open Space System and Natural Heritage System. The new plan acknowledges Newmarket's role in protecting and enhancing significant natural corridors and existing communities while acknowledging its evolving role as a maturing urban centre.

The plan is the first official plan in York Region to be adopted under the new Provincial *Places to Grow Act* and is a significant step forward in implementing the Growth Plan in Newmarket.

York Region defines its commitment to sustainable water and wastewater infrastructure and practices

York Regional Council adopted the *Water and Wastewater Sustainability Strategy*, a comprehensive framework to oversee The Regional Municipality of York's water and wastewater resources on a long-term, environmentally-conscious basis.

The *York Region Water and Wastewater Sustainability Strategy* builds upon the strong foundation established by York Region's award-winning water conservation program *Water for Tomorrow*. This strategy will further guide York Region in delivering high quality water and wastewater services to our growing communities, while protecting our water supply and effectively managing our water and wastewater infrastructure.

Water for Tomorrow, York Region's water efficiency program, has saved 47 billion litres of water over the past decade. Its innovative water conservation initiatives currently save 20 million litres per day, which is enough water to supply 84,000 people.

The new *Water and Wastewater Sustainability Strategy* incorporates *Water for Tomorrow* and focuses on 10 themes, providing guiding principles for each. The principles describe the commitments York Region has made to ensure policies and practices to deliver water and wastewater services are sustainable from three perspectives: the economy, liveable communities and the environment.

The development of the *Water and Wastewater Sustainability Strategy* included a review of best practices world-wide, a detailed look at the present regulatory requirements and a review of current York Region policies, programs and practices.

The strategy represents an ongoing, long-term commitment to servicing in York Region. An implementation schedule will incorporate sustainability principles throughout the Water and Wastewater Master Plan. It will also address all water and wastewater sustainability strategy actions and performance targets, along with ongoing measures for monitoring and controlling performance.

York Regional Council Highlights

York Regional Council approves master plan to develop and promote pedestrian and cycling networks

York Regional Council endorsed the final Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan, a blueprint to develop walking and cycling infrastructure. The plan will also promote alternate forms of travel, such as combining walking and cycling with public transit, to help The Regional Municipality of York reach our sustainable transportation objectives.

A total of \$44 million will be invested over 10 years for implementation of the infrastructure, programs and services. York Region's portion will be approximately \$33 million with the remaining portion to be from local municipalities and the Province.

The plan describes how York Region will work with local municipalities to connect local pedestrian and cycling systems into a regional-scale network. It presents a continuous system of sidewalks along Regional roads as well as a network of cycling facilities, including bicycle lanes on roads and bicycle paths across York Region. Both are integrated with public transit services that connect communities.

A 10-year implementation plan identifies a mix of on and off-road facilities, including:

- 460 kilometres of bicycle lanes and paved shoulders
- 60 kilometres of new multi-use trails
- New bicycle route signs on 125 kilometres of roads where the travel lane is shared by motorists and cyclists
- 60 kilometres of new sidewalks

Other implementation highlights include:

- Integrating walking and cycling infrastructure with public transit through bicycle rack installations at YRT/Viva stops and bicycle carriers on transit vehicles
- Public education, promotional and outreach materials such as a York Region cycling map

York Region approves Streetscaping enhancements in the City of Vaughan

York Regional Council has approved \$62,835 towards the City of Vaughan's Maple Streetscape Plan to enhance portions of Keele Street, Major Mackenzie Drive and Teston Road.

The Streetscaping enhancements in the historic Village of Maple will provide walking connections to residential areas, commercial areas and transit, and provide funds for paving, planting and purchasing outdoor furniture.

The funds are part of the Region's annual \$1 million Municipal Streetscape Partnership Program.

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The next Regional Council meeting will be held Thursday, May 15, 2008 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 may be obtained from the York Region website at www.york.ca under Regional Government.