



March 2006

York Regional Council Highlights



The Regional Municipality of York



Emergency Management Program

York Regional Council received a report and passed a by-law to adopt an Emergency Management Program to comply with the requirements of the Ontario *Emergency Management Act*.

The *Emergency Management Act* requires municipalities to develop and implement an emergency management program and adopt it through a By-law of Council. The By-Law must include:

1. An Emergency Plan
2. Identification and assessment of various hazards and risks to public safety that could give rise to emergencies and identification of the facilities and other elements of the infrastructure that are at risk of being affected by emergencies
3. Annual training and exercises for employees of the Region and other persons with respect to the provision of necessary services and the procedures to be followed in emergency response and recovery activities
4. Public education on risks to public safety and on public preparedness for emergencies
5. Any other element required by the standards for emergency management programs as prescribed by the *Emergency Management Act*

Work continues to enhance the Region's emergency management program components against the Framework for Community Emergency Management Program, advocated by Emergency Management Ontario.

Emergency Exercise: Operation Whiteout

York Regional Council received a report for information on the outcomes and observations documented from the November 28, 2005 emergency exercise "Operation Whiteout".

On November 28, 2005, York Region partnered with the Towns of Aurora, Newmarket and Richmond Hill to create a simulated emergency event. "Operation Whiteout" was a severe winter storm exercise that required the activation of the Regional and municipal Emergency Operation Centers (EOC) and the declaration of multiple emergencies.

The exercise was developed by a design team involving staff from York Region Emergency Management, Health Services, Community Services and Housing, York Region Police and Fire officials from four municipalities.

The *Emergency Management Act* and Ontario Regulation 380/04 require municipalities to develop and implement an emergency management program that includes annual training and exercises for employees of the Region and other persons with respect to the provision of necessary services and the procedures to be followed in emergency response and recovery activities.

York Region will continue to play a key role as a service provider and a partner to the local municipalities by assisting them in increasing their emergency management capacity through a joint emergency management process.

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York Region completes pioneering Groundwater Study

The Regional Municipality of York joined the Regions of Peel and Durham and the City of Toronto to create a map of the ground structure and distribution of groundwater throughout York Region and much of the Oak Ridges Moraine watershed. The exhaustive study reveals a healthy and sustainable water supply.

The *Groundwater Modelling of the Oak Ridges Moraine* report, which maps all of York Region and portions of Peel, Durham and the City of Toronto, represents an important first-step toward establishing a measurement model for future planning.

By establishing a model based on a long-term study of the Oak Ridges Moraine and the surrounding aquifers (underground water reservoirs), the Region and our study partners hope to gain a better understanding of water levels and water movement in the region.

Among the many findings of the study:

- Overall health of the aquifers is good
- Water-taking by wells accounts for only six per cent of overall water volume
- Water-taking levels are sustainable
- Over 90 per cent of precipitation that infiltrates the ground enters into local streams and rivers
- Aquifers are constantly being recharged, providing a sustainable water supply for the future

Data for the study was used from a number of different sources, including the Ministry of the Environment, which sampled from a large cross-section of sites over a period of decades. It is the first comprehensive groundwater model for the northern portion of the Greater Toronto Area and will become even more accurate as data is continually entered into the measurement model.

A copy of The *Groundwater Modelling of the Oak Ridges Moraine* report is available on York Region's Web site: www.york.ca

York Region Transit to continue partnership with A-Channel

York Regional Council has extended its contract with A-Channel (formerly the New VR) to provide live York Region Transit and Viva Rapid Transit updates from their Operations Centre.

The three-year extension will run until January 31, 2009, and follows a successful six-month pilot project started in August 2005.

Live transit updates are available weekday mornings between 6:35 a.m. and 8:35 a.m. on A-Channel.

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YRT and Viva ridership up again in January

York Region Transit (YRT) and Viva Rapid Transit continue to enjoy ridership gains with an increase in January 2006 of 6.6 per cent from January 2005.

More than 1.3 million passengers used either YRT or Viva in January, compared to 1.23 million passengers in January 2005.

Additionally, both YRT and Viva are prospering from the “hop on, hop off” policy implemented last year. This policy affords riders of both services a two-hour window to board and disembark buses using a single fare.

While ridership for January 2006 stands at over 1.3 million based on fare collection, the actual boarding numbers are much higher with the hop on, hop off policy. Boarding rates for January 2006 surpassed 1.8 million passengers.

York Region Waste Management initiatives acknowledged for 2005 promotion and education campaign

The Regional Municipality of York’s Waste Management Branch has won two prestigious awards for their innovative 2005 marketing campaigns at the Association of Municipal Recycling Coordinators 2005 Promotion and Education Awards ceremony in February. Of the eight categories of awards presented, York Region won Best Campaign and Best Print Ad, and was a finalist in the category of Best Promotional Tool.

In the category of Best Campaign, York Region won for its *Think Inside the Box* program to educate and inform York Region residents about the additions to the Blue Box program. The campaign consisted of a number of full-colour ads placed in local newspapers, area clubs and restaurants, prominently illustrating what new items can be accepted in the Blue Box with an emblazoned “YES!” on all materials. Since the introduction of the campaign, Blue Box tonnage increased 13.6 per cent compared to 2004.

In the category of Best Print Ad, York Region won for its King Township Yard Waste Drop-Off newspaper advertisement. To inform King Township residents of a new yard waste drop-off site, ads were placed in local King newspapers for three consecutive weeks, resulting in a 20 per cent increase in the waste diversion rate for the Township.

In the category of Best Promotional Tool, York Region was a finalist for its *Tools to Tackle Yard Waste* promotion, which included a mailout to all residents advising them of a change to Kraft paper bags for yard waste collection. Each package contained information about grasscycling, leaf mulching and composting; a yard waste sticker for reusable containers and a coupon for 10 per cent off Kraft bags at local stores. Despite an incredibly dry summer, yard waste tonnage increased 17 per cent.

York Region will continue its waste promotion efforts this spring with a series of advertisements regarding the safe disposal of household hazardous waste.

York Regional Council Highlights

Social Housing, Recreation and Sport Project receives backing from Ontario

York Region will receive \$90,420 in project funding from the Communities in Action Fund, administered by the Ministry of Health Promotion, to implement the Social Housing, Recreation and Sport Project. The total cost of the program is \$150,700.

The Social Housing, Recreation and Sport Project will provide children of low income families in underserved social housing communities in York Region the opportunity to participate in sport and recreation programming.

Update of child care fee assistance activities in 2005

York Regional Council received a staff report outlining the extent of child care assistance provided during 2005. Highlights include:

- 22,995 licensed centre-based and 704 home-based child care spaces in York Region, with an average of 2,834 children per month subsidized by the Region within 2005 approved budget levels.
- York Region entered into Purchase of Service Agreements with operators to enable fee assistance to be paid for child care services for residents who qualify for fee assistance in accordance with provincial legislation and regional policy.
- Of the 22,995 licensed centre-based spaces, 18,640 (81 per cent) were covered by Purchase of Service Agreements with York Region in 2005 – an increase of one per cent over 2004.

While the number of spaces covered by Purchase of Service Agreements has increased, the percentage of all licensed spaces for which provincial child care fee subsidies are available has decreased from 17 per cent to 12 per cent between 1999 and 2005.

Update of family strengthening programs

York Regional Council received a staff report outlining the family strengthening programs administered by the Community Services and Housing Department.

The Department's research shows that investing in family strengthening programs are cost-effective in reducing dependency on social assistance, health and other social services.

Family strengthening programs are not duplicated services and are designed to provide families with access to parenting supports and resources, community-based programs and services and school-readiness programs.

Families who are eligible and most likely to participate are those with a low income, recent immigrants and those in need of parenting supports and services.

Barriers, such as user fees to recreation programs, transportation, lack of agency capacity to deliver no-cost services, are addressed through the family strengthening programs.

York Regional Council Highlights

York Regional Council approves 2006 accessibility plan

York Regional Council approved *Removing Barriers: York Region's 2006 Accessibility Plan*, a comprehensive plan of actions that York Region will take to identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities in Regional programs, services, facilities, by-laws, policies and procedures.

Taking action to identify and remove barriers is important to people across York Region. In a recent survey, 97 per cent of residents said it was important for programs, services and facilities to be fully accessible to residents with disabilities.

Removing Barriers includes 71 initiatives aimed at enhancing accessibility in every Regional department, as well as in York Regional Police and York Region Transit. The plan was developed with advice from the York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee and builds on the work established in the Region's two previous accessibility plans, *Understanding Barriers* (2004) and *Moving Forward* (2005).

All municipalities must develop an annual accessibility plan under the requirements of the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*.

A copy of *Removing Barriers* is available on the Region's Web site at www.york.ca under "What's New." The plan will also be available in printed copy or in alternative formats such as large print and on CD upon request.

Report summarizes Rent Supplement Program activities for 2005

York Regional Council received a staff report outlining the activities of the Region's Rent Supplement Program activity for 2005.

Rent Supplement Programs involve agreements for rental units primarily located in buildings owned by private sector landlords. The units under agreements are made available to eligible households from the social housing waiting list. The household pays rent-geared-to-income (RGI), and the Region pays the landlord the difference between the RGI amount and the regular market rent for the unit.

Rent Supplement Programs were initiated by the Province and then transferred to the Region. There are two types of Rent Supplement Programs: Commercial and Strong Communities. Up to 495 rent supplement units are delivered under these programs. There are currently 27 landlords participating in rent supplement programs under 47 agreements.

The Rent Supplement Programs are an effective means of increasing the supply of affordable housing in the Region. In particular, the Strong Communities Rent Supplement Program enables the Region to secure more than \$2.8 million in provincial funding annually to assist low income and special needs households. The Rent Supplement Programs are vital to increasing the Region's capacity to respond to the needs of the almost 5,500 singles, families and seniors waiting for rent geared to income housing.

York Regional Council Highlights

2005 homelessness prevention initiatives

York Regional Council received a staff report outlining the results of the 2005 homelessness prevention initiatives – namely the Homelessness Prevention Program, the Provincial Rent Bank Program and the Emergency Energy Program.

The Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP) is designed to provide assistance to low-income individuals and families who are not in receipt of Ontario Works (OW) or Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) assistance and who are at risk of losing their homes. The program stabilized housing for 147 households in 2005.

The Provincial Rent Bank funding assists low income households or those on OW or ODSP with a maximum of up to two months of rental arrears in order to prevent eviction. In 2005, expenditures totalling \$282,408 stabilized 162 households through HPP and 90 households through OW, funded 100 per cent by the Province.

The Emergency Energy funding supports low income households with all energy-related emergencies, up to a maximum of two months assistance. In 2005, expenditures totalling \$80,070 assisted 80 households with energy related emergencies, subsequently stabilizing their housing, funded 100 per cent by the Province.

Approved 2006 Budget Allocations

Program	Provincial Funding	Regional Funding	Total Budget
Homelessness Prevention Program	\$ 65,939	\$184,061	\$250,000
Provincial Rent Bank	\$319,567	0	\$319,567
Emergency Energy Fund	\$125,070	0	\$125,070
Totals	\$510,576	\$184,061	\$694,637

These services address several of the priorities identified in York Region's *Community Plan to Address Homelessness (Update 2003)* by providing supports to the homeless and at-risk population of York Region.

While these programs cannot resolve the complex issues that lead to homelessness, they do provide short term, concrete actions to improve the condition of some of the Region's most vulnerable residents. Without continued provincial funding of the Rent Bank however, significantly more York Region households could lose their homes and be forced into the already overstrained emergency shelter system.

Smoke-Free Ontario Campaign programs

York Regional Council received a staff report outlining the activities of the Smoke-Free Ontario Campaign and the *Smoke-Free Ontario Act* in creating a smoke-free Ontario. These strategies aim to reduce the effects of second-hand smoke, restrict the access to tobacco products by youth and assist those who want to quit smoking.

York Regional Council approved the receipt and expenditure of grants totalling \$326,194 from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) for the Smoke-Free Ontario Campaign initiatives outlined in the report, and an initial grant of \$153,923 from MOHLTC for 2006 Tobacco Inspection and Enforcement activities. These grants are 100 per cent funded by MOHLTC.

York Regional Council Highlights

Public invited to discuss growth planning issues

York Regional Council received a staff report outlining the activities of the Region in undertaking a Growth Management Review, including a series of public open houses called "Planning For Tomorrow."

The public is invited to learn about growth issues in York Region, discuss them and provide feedback by attending one of the remaining three open houses in York Region in April (see chart below).

The open houses encourage a broad public discussion on the major growth management decisions that face York Region, including:

- Managing significant population and employment growth
- Addressing traffic congestion
- Ensuring that both Human Services and infrastructure keep pace with growth
- Protecting our natural heritage as a legacy for existing and future residents
- Maintaining our high quality of life

The format for the open houses includes displays from 5 - 7 p.m., presentations from 7 - 7:30 p.m., and a discussion from 7:30 - 9 p.m. Following are the dates and locations.

Date	Meeting Room Location	Street Address
Tuesday, March 21	Training Room, York Region South Services Centre	50 High Tech Rd., Richmond Hill
Thursday, March 23	Canada Room, Town of Markham Civic Centre	101 Town Centre Blvd., Markham
Tuesday, April 4	Council Chambers, Vaughan Civic Centre	2141 Major Mackenzie Dr., Vaughan
Thursday, April 6	Committee Room, 2 nd Floor, Georgina Civic Centre	26557 Civic Centre Road, Keswick
Wed., April 12	Seminar Room, York Region Administrative Centre	17250 Yonge St., Newmarket

The results of these Growth Management discussions will be reported in a document entitled, "What Was Heard" and will lead to a Regional Official Plan Amendment in late 2007.

York Region's Web site – www.york.ca – provides information on these meetings and issues as well as opportunities to submit online feedback. Click on the "Planning for Tomorrow" icon on the main page, or email your comments or questions to futureyork@york.ca

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Transportation Master Plan Update

York Regional Council received a staff report outlining the steps now being taken to update the 2002 Transportation Master Plan (TMP) Study, including the selection and awarding of a contract to a consulting firm to complete the assignment.

The TMP is a 30 year planning framework which will build on the previous Master Plan and recent reports to Council concerning the growth plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and required provincial funding for York Region's 30-year infrastructure projects.

The 2002 TMP outlined a rapid transit investment strategy to complement the maturing urban area road system. The update will allow the Region to address future transportation needs in an effective and integrated manner considering new Provincial initiatives and further growth in the Region, and serve as the basis for the transportation component of the Development Charges By-Law and 10-Year Capital Plan updates.

Four proposals for this project were evaluated in accordance with Regional Purchasing policy, by-laws and practices. The proposal submitted by Marshall Macklin Monaghan Limited received the highest score in the consultant selection evaluation, and will carry out the Transportation Master Plan update.

York Region Tourism Program Update

York Regional Council received a staff report outlining the Region's tourism initiatives from November 2005 to February 2006 and a preliminary snapshot of York Region and Ontario's tourism performance and travel trends.

The 2006 Tourism Marketing plan sets out goals of the tourism program – to attract tourist visits, generate overnight stays, increase revenues and strengthen urban and rural communities – by supporting the development, growth and sustainability of the tourism industry.

The Marketing Program targets three consumer market segments including:

- Leisure
- Travel Trade
- Corporate/Convention/ Conference/SMERF(Social Military Educational Religious and Fraternal Organizations) / Sport Tourism

The tourism program also incorporates Research, Industry and Partnership components.

The Region's tourism program identifies the most critical tourism markets and works to maximize potential while developing new business opportunities and identifying partnerships to diversify the market base. Staff work collaboratively with members of local councils and staff of the local municipalities to ensure that the Region's marketing program is "in sync" with local tourism objectives, to eliminate overlapping efforts and channel collective resources in today's competitive climate.

Council Highlights compiled by Ken Turriff, Office of the CAO, Corporate Communications
Phone: 1-877-464-9675 ext. 1226, E-mail: ken.turriff@york.ca

The next Regional Council Meeting will be held Thursday, April 27, 2006 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 Web site at www.york.ca under Regional Government.