



Thursday, February 18, 2010

For Immediate Release

## **York Regional Council – February 18, 2010**

### ***York Region welcomes new Community and Health Services Commissioner***

On behalf of York Regional Council, York Region Chairman and CEO Bill Fisch welcomed Adelina Urbanski to her position of York Region Community and Health Services Commissioner. Ms. Urbanski began with the Region February 1<sup>st</sup>.

Ms. Urbanski's responsibilities at York Region include overseeing the largest Regional department with 1,500 employees and the following portfolios: Housing Services including Housing York Inc., Emergency Medical Services, Employment and Financial Support, Family and Children's Services, Long Term Care and Seniors, Public Health and Strategic Service Integration, Business Services and Quality Assurance.

She joins York Region following an impressive 26-year career with the Regional Municipality of Halton, where she served most recently as Commissioner of Social and Community Services for the past 11 years.

### ***York Region approves appointments to Community Partnership Council***

York Regional Chairman and CEO Bill Fisch and Town of Markham Mayor Frank Scarpitti will join 22 other representatives as part of York Region Community Partnership Council, responsible for the Local Immigration Partnership initiative.

The Community Partnership Council will connect sectors that are critical to the successful integration of recent immigrants, including health services, local municipalities and settlement services.

Mayor Scarpitti will act as Co-Chairman for the Council, with a term to run from February 18, 2010 to March 31, 2011.

For a full list of biographies of all Community Partnership Council members, please [click here](#).

### ***York Region recognizes Earth Hour 2010***

York Regional Council today unanimously agreed to turn off all non-essential lights at Regional facilities for one hour in recognition of the World Wildlife Fund's Earth Hour on Saturday, March 27<sup>th</sup> at 8:30 p.m.

York Region will turn off all lights at our facilities where feasible and without jeopardizing safety. In particular, the Region will focus attention at two main locations:

- York Region Administrative Centre, located at 17250 Yonge Street in the Town of Newmarket
- York Region South Services Centre, located at 50 High Tech Road in the Town of Richmond Hill

Approximately 2,800 York Region employees and their families are also being encouraged to turn off the lights at home.

### ***York Region considers new options for setting speed limits***

York Regional Council will send a proposed new speed limit policy to the Region's local municipalities for comment, before reconsidering the issue later this year.

The proposed new policy recommends incorporating an injury-minimization approach to help establish speed limits. Currently, speed limits are set at the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile of existing traffic speed.

### ***Speed limit revisions approved***

York Regional Council today approved speed limit changes to the following Regional roads, after receiving requests through residents and local municipalities:

- Park Road from Black River Road to Hedge Road in the Town of Georgina will change from 70 kilometres per hour to 60 kilometres per hour
- Bayview Avenue, south of Elgin Mills Road in the Town of Richmond Hill will change from 40 kilometres per hour to 60 kilometres per hour

### ***York Region approves streetscaping enhancements in the Town of Richmond Hill***

York Regional Council today approved \$345,488 towards the Town of Richmond Hill Streetscape Plan to enhance Gamble Road between Bathurst Street and Yonge Street and 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue between Yonge Street and Linda Margaret Crescent.

The new features will include decorative ledge rocks with plants, decorative paving on boulevards, decorative street lights and road widening at both locations.

Future enhancements will also be made at the intersection of Gamble Road and Yonge Street as part of upcoming vivaNext initiatives.

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

### ***YRT to participate in Metrolinx joint procurement for new specialized transit buses***

York Regional Council approved York Region Transit's participation in a Metrolinx joint procurement program with 19 other transit agencies for the purchase of low-floor specialized transit vehicles.

Pending a Request for Proposal and future approval by York Regional Council, the joint program could potentially lead to the purchase of 11 buses for delivery in 2011 and 2012 as additional and replacement vehicles for the YRT Mobility Plus fleet.

The joint procurement process was created to meet the growing need for specialized transit buses by transit agencies across Ontario. The process, guided by Metrolinx, is intended to reduce the cost per bus for each purchasing transit agency. YRT saved approximately \$15,000 per vehicle through a Metrolinx joint procurement program in 2006 and 2008. YRT's 10-year Capital Budget includes funding for the purchase of seven buses in 2011 and four buses in 2012, at a cost of \$300,000 each.

### ***YRT/Viva donates transit passes and ad space to “Retire Your Ride” program***

York Regional Council received an update on York Region Transit (YRT)/Viva’s donation of monthly transit passes and advertising space to the “Retire Your Ride” incentive program. This partnership project between the Government of Canada, non-profit environmental agency Summerhill Impact and the Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA) encourages Canadians to retire older, heavy-emission producing cars in return for cash and incentives.

Until March 2011, Canadians who retire a 1995 model year or older car are eligible to receive \$300 along with other incentives such as transit passes, bicycle discounts and autoshare memberships. The program goal is to have 50,000 vehicles donated across Canada each year. The program began in February 2009.

YRT/Viva is donating six monthly transit passes each to the first 100 program participants in York Region and will also advertise the “Retire Your Ride” program on 60 exterior bus ads and 100 transit shelter ads. The federal government will partially refund YRT/Viva’s donation costs, while the overall program is estimated to cost the Region \$33,000.

For more information, please visit [www.retireyourride.ca](http://www.retireyourride.ca)

### ***Small Business Enterprise Centre assists entrepreneurs***

York Regional Council received an update on the York Small Business Enterprise Centre, which assists entrepreneurs in the creation of new enterprises and in the development of early growth-stage businesses.

In 2009, the Centre responded to 16,500 inquiries and provided 520 consultations with start-up clients. It registered 120 new businesses, assisted 262 new business start-ups, advised on 22 business expansions and indirectly assisted in the creation of 139 new jobs.

Other 2009 achievements include:

- Total client contact increased by 37 per cent
- Event participation increased by 76 per cent
- York Small Business Television aired the third 13-episode, 30-minute series
- An E-Business series funded by the Province was hosted in all northern six municipalities
- Revenue was \$37,371 higher than budgeted
- Annual business conference attracted 150 entrepreneurs

Located in the York Region Administration Centre in Newmarket, the York Small Business Enterprise Centre serves entrepreneurs and small businesses in the Towns of Aurora, Newmarket, Whitchurch-Stouffville, East Gwillimbury, Georgina and the Township of King. It complements the services provided by three additional centres in the Towns of Markham and Richmond Hill and the City of Vaughan, which are operated independently by the local municipalities.

### ***Initiatives encourage York Region business to adopt sustainability practices***

York Regional Council received a staff report outlining sustainability initiatives for 2010 in support of York Region's commitment to build a vibrant and sustainable economy.

These initiatives include:

- Updating the Guide to Greening Your Business and distributing it to 2,000 small and medium-size York Region enterprises
- Increasing the number of sustainable business workshops to four times a year
- Conducting a survey on workshop topics from participants
- Filming workshop presentations for web broadcasting at a later date

The initiatives will assist local businesses in adopting sustainability and will provide the opportunity for sharing information and ideas and forming new linkages and networks within the business community. These linkages will be essential to sustainable procurement and will foster conditions where environmental innovation can thrive.

### ***Geomatics Branch delivered ambitious program in 2009***

The Planning and Development Department provided York Regional Council with an annual report of the key program and project activities delivered by the Geomatics Branch in 2009.

Geomatics Branch serves growth management information needs across the corporation through spatial data, analysis, applications and technology. These services are delivered to York Region staff through a desktop self-service environment to local municipalities through the YorkInfo Partnership and to members of the public through YorkExplorer via the Internet.

The YorkExplorer Internet mapping website is heavily used by regional staff and the public. Total visits to YorkExplorer increased by 62 per cent, to 227,000 visitors staying an average 17 minutes each.

Key achievements in 2009 include:

- Establishment of a new orthophotography program in participation with all local municipalities
- Mapping for the Regional Official Plan
- 3D collaboration with municipalities along the Region's centres and corridors
- Development and implementation of a strategy to use Google maps and provide Google-like mapping functionality, response and cartography design

More than 550 geospatial databases were maintained to serve critical corporate business applications, including emergency services, transit, environmental services and transportation.

***York Regional Council reviews Export Development Program's 2009 Annual Plan and 2010 Marketing Plan***

York Regional Council received the 2009 annual report for the Export Development Program along with a marketing plan for 2010. The Export Development Program advises York Region businesses in their goal to reach global markets. The program strongly uses on-site export business consultations to better inform companies of export opportunities.

Highlights of 2009 accomplishments include:

- 2,406 contacts made from a list of 7,716 York Region companies
- 70 per cent of site consultations were with companies involved in goods and services
- 509 client referrals were made to 23 partner organizations

In 2010, program additions will include:

- Four sector-focused workshops
- A global market research workshop
- A collaboration with manufacturing sector revitalization, a key factor of the export program
- Global research training for new exporters

Regional staff anticipate economic growth in 2010 as a result of exporters seeking alternatives to the U.S. market.

***Greater Toronto Marketing Alliance service agreement for 2010 authorized***

York Regional Council authorized staff to renew the agreement with the Greater Toronto Marketing Alliance (GTMA) for services in 2010. The Region contributes \$100,000 annually to the program from the approved budget of the Planning and Development Department.

The GTMA's primary function is international marketing of the Greater Toronto Area, acting as "one region-one voice" on behalf of the GTA and its 29 regions and municipalities. It serves as the key point of contact for potential investors exploring business opportunities in the GTA, including direct foreign investment.

Data for 2008 indicates that the largest group of leads and prospects (58 per cent) came from companies in the Information and Communication Technologies sector. In addition, half of the total prospects came from Europe, while an additional 40 per cent came from North America.

### ***YorkInfo Partnership facilitates growth management with new 3D modelling***

York Regional Council received a report of the activities and achievements of the YorkInfo Partnership in 2009. The YorkInfo Partnership is made up of local municipal and educational organizations that share geospatial data to create information infrastructure and applications at reduced costs for all partners.

A principal achievement in 2009 was the development of 3D models and visualizations. This new technology will reduce efforts and costs by communicating current and future scenarios for urban growth within Regional centres and corridors.

To pilot implementation of the 3D modelling technology, York Region partnered with the Towns of Richmond Hill, Aurora and Newmarket. The initiative will now be discussed with the Town of Markham and the City of Vaughan for possible implementation this year.

### ***York Region outperforms national/provincial economies in 2009***

York Regional Council received the Employment and Industry Report 2009, which analyses economic and employment trends within The Regional Municipality of York.

The 2009 report indicates York Region employment growth has outperformed national and provincial economies. Between 2008 and 2009, regional employment grew by 0.2 per cent, creating an estimated 1,000 jobs. Additional highlights include:

- Services sector was the fastest growing sector
- York Region has grown at an average annual employment growth rate of 3.5 per cent between 1998 and 2009 and generated 138,200 new jobs
- Service-oriented jobs accounted for 76 per cent of total employment
- Health care and social assistance, F.I.R.E (finance, insurance and real estate) and business services have all seen growth of more than 80 per cent over the last 11 years
- Despite a decline of 0.3 per cent between 2008 and 2009, the manufacturing sector remains the largest in the Region

### ***2009 York Region Investment Report shows high return on investment***

York Regional Council today received the 2009 Investment Report which shows more than \$62.6 million in investment earnings, representing a 5.14 per cent return from The Regional Municipality of York's general fund portfolio.

York Region earned more than \$56.4 million in 2008, representing nearly \$120 million in investment income for 2008 and 2009 combined. This investment income is rolled back into the Region's reserves fund and in turn reinvested.

Reserves are put aside for a variety of purposes, including capital asset replacement and repair of such items as water and sewage pipes, Regional roads, transit vehicles and Regional housing units.

York Region's investment policy is guided by low to moderate risk investments that are constantly monitored and managed by Regional finance staff. York Region's investments include government issued bonds, debentures and debt.

### ***Next meeting of York Regional Council***

York Regional Council will meet on Thursday, March 25<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 a.m. at the York Region Administrative Centre Council Chambers, located at 17250 Yonge Street in the Town of Newmarket.

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