



York Regional Council Highlights



Meeting held on
Thursday, January 24, 2008



The Regional Municipality of York

York Regional Council accepts energy-from-waste facility preferred site recommendation; Clarington site will move forward in Durham-York Environmental Assessment process

York Regional Council today accepted the consultants' recommendation to select Clarington 01 as the preferred location for a proposed energy-from-waste facility as part of the Durham-York Residual Waste Environmental Assessment (EA) Study process.

The preferred site, Clarington 01, is a 12-hectare site located between Courtice Road and Osbourne Road in the Municipality of Clarington. This site, owned by the Regional Municipality of Durham, is located in the Clarington Energy Park (south of Highway 401) in an area that includes commercial/industrial properties, CN Rail tracks, the Courtice Water Pollution Control Plant and the Darlington Nuclear Generating Station.

Council also approved a short-list of technology vendors for the proposed energy-from-waste facility. A Request for Proposals will be issued to these vendors later this year.

York Region has partnered with Durham Region on the Durham-York Residual Waste Environmental Assessment Study to find a way to manage garbage remaining after diversion efforts, such as re-using, recycling and composting. York Regional Council is dedicated to increasing waste diversion and has committed to diverting 65 per cent of waste from landfill by 2010.

Earlier this month, the Study consulting team presented their final preferred site recommendation at meetings of the Joint Waste Management Group, Durham Region's Works Committee and York Region's Solid Waste Committee. The recommendation was endorsed by these three groups before advancing to Durham Regional Council for approval on January 23rd and York Regional Council today.

York Region to participate in Earth Hour challenge

York Region will participate in the World Wildlife Fund's Earth Hour challenge on March 29th at 8 p.m. in an effort to raise awareness about climate change and our ability to combat global warming.

Sydney, Australia started the challenge last year by encouraging residents and businesses to turn off their lighting and all other non-essential appliances for one hour. Nearly 2.3 million Australians participated in the challenge, including 2,300 businesses, resulting in a 10-per cent reduction in electricity consumption. The savings in electricity saved 25,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide from being produced – the equivalent of taking 50,000 cars off the road.

York Region joins Markham, Newmarket, Mississauga and Brampton as communities that have indicated participation in 2008. The resolution will also be forwarded to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities with the request that a copy be made available to every municipality across Canada.

York Regional Council Highlights

York Region supports Town of Richmond Hill's efforts to secure David Dunlap Observatory and property

York Regional Council endorsed the Town of Richmond Hill's efforts to secure the culturally-significant David Dunlap Observatory, along with its lands and buildings.

The David Dunlap Observatory, located on a largely forested 78-hectare (192-acre) property in the Town of Richmond Hill is home to Canada's largest telescope. The observatory, adjacent buildings and surrounding lands were donated to the University of Toronto in 1932 by Jessie Donalda Dunlap, in memory of her husband, an amateur astronomer, on the condition that it be used for the study of astronomy.

In October 2007, the University of Toronto declared the buildings and property surplus, and initiated a process to sell the property.

York Region agreed with the Town of Richmond Hill's assessment that the buildings have great cultural significance to the community, and the Region's Significant Woodlands Study in 2005 identified 39 hectares (96 acres) of the property as significant woodlands and a natural heritage resource.

The Regional Municipality of York achieves highest Standard & Poor's Credit Rating – AAA Stable

The Regional Municipality of York will continue to benefit from favourable borrowing rates after achieving a Standard & Poor's AAA Stable credit rating.

Standard & Poor's cited York Region's strong economic outlook, operating revenue growth, high reserve levels and commitment to asset rehabilitation and replacement in its decision and accompanying analysis.

York Region uses debt financing as one of several finance tools to help pay for costs associated with major projects contained in our \$10.1 billion, 10-Year Capital Plan. To reduce the reliance on debt financing, York Region introduced several measures, including the phased elimination of Development Charge discounting beginning spring 2007.

York Region has maintained a AAA credit rating with Standard & Poor's since 2002.

The Region also possesses a AAA credit rating from Moody's Investors Service, maintained since 2000.

Both Standard & Poor's and Moody's have taken into consideration York Region's rapid population growth, expanding assessment base and diversified economy as part of their rating.

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2008 Draft Operating Business Plan and Budget tabled at York Regional Council

The Regional Municipality of York's draft \$1.3 billion Operating Business Plan and Budget for 2008 was tabled at York Regional Council and includes numerous growth and service enhancements, including for York Regional Police, Transit, Water/Wastewater and Solid Waste management.

Options for this year's GTA Pooling savings of \$13.3 million include reducing the tax levy increase by up to two per cent, spending on capital asset replacement, program spending or a combination of all.

The draft 2008 budget proposes a six per cent tax levy increase representing a \$109 increase for taxpayers owning a home with an average assessed value of \$371,000.

The proposed tax levy increase is a result of additional costs to pay for existing services. York Region's budgetary pressures include the following:

\$20.8 million for Base Budget:

- Salaries and Benefits
- Contracted Services

\$1.4 million for Mandatory/Legislated Costs:

- GTA Pooling (\$66.2 million in GTA Pooling payments to the Province of Ontario for 2008)
- Social/Non Profit Housing
- Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC)
- Staffing of Court Services

\$9.2 million for Growth-Related Costs:

- Additional York Regional Police officers and support
- Transit (Viva/YRT) service expansion
- Additional Public Health staffing
- Additional Paramedics for York Region Emergency Medical Services (EMS)
- Additional Transit fare enforcement officers
- Growth of Solid Waste Management services

\$7 million for Annualizations (full-year program costs from 2007):

- York Regional Police staffing
- Source Separated Organics (Green Bin) program

\$19.4 million for Program Enhancements:

- Additional York Regional Police officers and support
- Contributions to capital and capital asset replacement
- Increased Community Development Investment funding
- Construction of a Community Environmental Centre in the City of Vaughan
- Additional Emergency 9-1-1 call takers

The 2008 Operating Business Plan and Budget will be forwarded for consideration to the Region's Standing Committees in February.

Additionally, a workshop will be held Thursday, February 28th to solicit input from the public on the draft Operating Budget and examine options for allocating the \$13.3 million in GTA Pooling savings for 2008. The workshop will be held in the Seminar Room of the York Region Administrative Centre in the Town of Newmarket, and begins at 9:30 a.m.

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Following consideration at Standing Committees and the public workshop, the draft 2008 Operating Business Plan and Budget will be forwarded to York Region's Finance and Administration Committee on Thursday, March 6th, with anticipated approval by Regional Council on Thursday, March 27th.

GTA Pooling is money collected by York, Peel and Halton Regions to assist the City of Toronto pay for its Social Housing and Social Assistance programs. GTA Pooling has cost The Regional Municipality of York more than \$825 million since the Provincial Government began the program in 1998.

The Province has announced the program will be phased out completely by 2013 with the Region's payments reduced by \$13.3 million annually. This year, the Region is required to pay the Province approximately \$66.2 million in GTA Pooling with \$132.2 million in payments remaining until the program is fully phased out. By 2013, GTA Pooling will have cost York Region more than \$1.02 billion in total.

York Regional Council approved a \$682 million Capital Business Plan and Budget for 2008 in December 2007.

York Region to apply for grant for Source Separated Organics in Vessel Facility project

York Regional Council has approved a \$10 million application under the Municipal Infrastructure Investment Initiative for a Source Separated Organics in Vessel Facility project.

The new facility – designed to provide a local solution to processing organic waste from the Green Bin program – has been proposed jointly by York Region and the County of Dufferin. It is in the process of receiving construction bids, with estimated costs of \$20 million.

The Government of Ontario announced in 2007 that \$300 million in infrastructure funding was available for priority projects in Ontario communities. The funding is a one-time commitment and will cover up to half of the project cost.

Should the construction bid process not yield any qualified solutions, York Region will apply for \$7 million in funding for a social housing project at the Vaughan Civic Centre.

New Whitchurch-Stouffville Emergency Medical Services (EMS)/Fire Station on the way

York Regional Council has approved the construction and development of a new EMS Paramedic Response Station/Fire Headquarters in the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville. The new facility will be constructed in partnership with Whitchurch-Stouffville on Weldon Road and will replace an existing EMS/Fire Station located on Main Street.

The EMS station, estimated at a cost of \$650,000, will be approximately 1,900 square feet, including a one-bay ambulance garage. It will also contain a work space, lounge, kitchen, washrooms, locker rooms and utility areas.

York Regional Council Highlights

York Region joins forces with the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario to take on sudden cardiac arrest

The Regional Municipality of York and its Emergency Medical Services (EMS) branch is working together with the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario to install additional Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) in public places across York Region.

The Ministry of Health Promotion last spring announced a \$3 million donation to the Heart and Stroke Foundation for the placement of 1,000 life-saving AEDs in priority public sites across Ontario. To be eligible to receive AEDs, municipalities are responsible for submitting applications to the Heart & Stroke Foundation. York Region EMS was approached by the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario to take the lead in rolling out this initiative to York Region municipalities.

To date, eight York Region municipalities have responded with applications for a total of 59 sites requiring 63 AEDs. Based on the current number of AEDs requested by the municipalities, it is estimated that York Region will receive approximately \$220,500 in grant funding from the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario towards the purchase of AED equipment. If additional applications are submitted, additional grant funds may be available.

Since 2003, York Region EMS has been promoting heart-healthy communities through the Heart Alive public access defibrillator program. Heart Alive currently monitors and maintains 31 Regional Public Access Defibrillation sites with a total of 65 AEDs.

Approximately 40,000 cardiac arrests occur in Canada every year with 80 per cent occurring outside a hospital setting. Defibrillation improves survival rates by up to 30 per cent if delivered in the first few minutes.

Street Tree Inventory update

York Regional Council received a report detailing the status of York Region's street trees. Management of these street trees involves planting and maintaining trees along Regional roadways to ensure a healthy urban forest.

Among the report's findings:

- The current street tree population is 26,549, which includes trees planted by York Region or others on behalf of the Region
- There are 79 separate species of trees planted as part of the street tree program, with Norway Maple (16.4 per cent), Green Ash (12.4 per cent) and Ivory Silk Lilac (8 per cent) the most common
- Approximately 82 per cent of street trees are less than 12 years old
- The value or replacement cost of the current urban forest is approximately \$12 million
- Using tree growth modelling, the value of the urban forest in 2027 will be approximately \$50 million
- The urban tree canopy covers 1.82 hectares (4.5 acres), and is anticipated to cover 42 hectares (104 acres) by 2027 and 115 hectares (284 acres) by 2047
- The most recent survey found that 80 per cent of street trees were in satisfactory to good condition, showing a steady increase in tree health over the past four years

York Regional Council Highlights

Viva Phase 2 vehicle procurement

York Regional Council authorized staff to release a Request for Proposal for the purchase of up to 51 Viva Phase 2 Rapid Transit Vehicles (RTVs), including an option to purchase further RTVs over the next five years.

The Region requires 51 buses over the next five years to service an anticipated growth in riders and the construction of Viva Phase 2. The total estimated cost is \$63.75 million, which will be paid for through York Region's Capital Budget, the federal government's GTA transit infrastructure initiative, entitled FLOW and funds from the provincial government's MoveOntario 2020 program.

Viva Proof-of-Payment Fare System works

York Regional Council today received two reports demonstrating the positive performance of the Viva Proof-of-Payment (POP) system and YRT/Viva Fare Enforcement staff. Audit results show that ticket and validation equipment are working well to keep transit riders moving, and the Fare Enforcement team is providing valuable support to the system and preparing to grow as ridership increases.

Viva rapid transit service operates on an honour fare payment system called Proof-of-Payment (POP). This system requires passengers to pre-purchase fares before boarding, validate tickets if applicable and retain fares as POP in the event of a random fare enforcement inspection. This increases the speed of service as customers can board at multiple doors, without any interaction with the bus driver.

A recent audit of Viva fare equipment revealed that ticket machines and validators, despite high traffic use and complex design, are working effectively more than 99 per cent of the time during Viva operations. Equipment difficulties encountered by such things as coin and ticket jams, coins being inserted in credit card slots, tickets being pulled while still printing or vandalism are quickly attended to and repaired by maintenance staff.

An audit of YRT/Viva Fare Enforcement strategies and practices shows they are effective. The current Fare Enforcement team of 17 staff provides seven-day-a-week, 20-hour-a-day service coverage. Additional growth over the next few years will help maintain a high level of customer service as Viva ridership increases. Pending budget approval, four additional fare enforcement staff will be hired in 2008 to assist in minimizing fare evasion and enhancing security and safety.

Passengers who fail to provide a valid fare upon inspection can receive a fine of \$150 or a criminal charge. Repeat offenders are now subject to fines up to \$5,000. Ongoing York Region Transit/Viva communication campaigns in 2008 will continue to educate the public on the POP system and Fare Enforcement. YRT/Viva Fare Enforcement blitzes are planned to improve areas of increased fare evasion.

York Regional Council Highlights

YRT/Viva 2007 Marketing and Communication Update

York Regional Council received a report reviewing the 2007 YRT/Viva Marketing and Communication activities.

All facets of the 2007 Marketing and Communications Plan reflect three key principles: information, educating and engaging.

Highlights of the 2007 activities include:

Mall presence:

From May to September and November to December, YRT/Viva staff engaged the public at a number of malls throughout York Region. This allowed staff to meet with riders and potential riders, build brand awareness and enlist support through memorable and fun activities.

Business Benefits Program:

This program offers bulk monthly pass discount to businesses, lunch 'n' learn sessions on transit for their employees and electronic communication opportunities to register on the YRT website for automatic transit news and updates. More than 40 local businesses were approached with this program in 2007 and more than 10 have expressed interest in the program.

Youth On Board Program (YO!) Expanding for 2007/08:

This program recruits two students from participating high schools to act as transit ambassadors for YRT/Viva. This is a peer-to-peer transit education program. A pilot program between January and June proved to be successful and was appreciated by students, principals and teachers. A survey among students indicated that more than 90 per cent would like to see the program continue. Based on the pilot's success, the program will be introduced on a staged basis into all 42 high schools in York Region by February 2008. Currently, 34 schools are already on board.

Public Engagement Events:

YRT/Viva staff have attended more than 100 community events to engage the public.

YRT/Viva was also the recipient of several marketing awards in 2007 for excellence in marketing and communications, including:

- The *Summit Creative Awards*, which recognize and celebrate creative accomplishments internationally. YRT/Viva won for its student campaign 'Connect' which messaged ways students can connect on public transit. This campaign won a total of five *Summit Creative Awards* in several categories.
- The *AdWheel Award* from the American Public Transit Association (APTA). This association awarded YRT/Viva first place in the 28th Annual *AdWheel Award* competition recognizing YRT/Viva's light pole banner outdoor advertising campaigns.

York Regional Council Highlights

Ride your bike to YRT/Viva

York Regional Council today received a report determining that installed bike racks are being used throughout the YRT/Viva transit system. Council authorized the reallocation of under-used bike racks to areas of higher uses, and endorsed the use of vehicle-mounted bike racks.

The installation of vehicle-mounted bike racks on transit buses is included in the 2008 Draft Business Plan and Budget. If approved, YRT staff will proceed with an initial installation in spring 2008.

Smart Commute Initiative transferred to GTTA

York Regional Council today authorised the transfer of the Smart Commute Initiative to the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority (GTТА). Discussions with provincial staff suggested the objectives of the Smart Commute Initiative are a good fit with a number of provincial or GTТА programs, including transportation demand management and promoting the use of transit, carpooling, bicycling and other sustainable modes of travel.

The Smart Commute Initiative – a joint municipal project of the Regional Municipalities of York, Durham, Peel and Halton and the cities of Toronto, Hamilton and Mississauga – delivers transportation demand management (TDM) programs and services across the GTA and Hamilton. Three transportation management associations operate in York Region. They are Smart Commute 404-7 (Markham, Richmond Hill), Smart Commute Central York (Newmarket, Aurora) and Smart Commute North Toronto-Vaughan.

As part of the changeover, York Region will transfer the Smart Commute assets, liabilities and service contracts. The transfer is estimated to save York Region \$180,000 per year in administrative costs, with similar savings for the other participating communities.

Status update of Green Lane

York Regional Council received a report outlining the Region's intention to maintain Green Lane as a critical, high capacity, urban arterial road. Green Lane will continue to allow for a higher traffic capacity and faster movement of goods than standard arterial roads, while accommodating appropriately staged growth.

York Region will advocate also for the construction of the Bradford Bypass.

York Regional Council Highlights

Approved discussion paper and workplan to restore and protect natural heritage

York Regional Council today endorsed the “Final Natural Heritage Strategic Directions Paper” and approved a workplan for actions to be taken on eight Natural Heritage Action Areas.

Protecting and restoring protected areas in the Oak Ridges Moraine and the Greenbelt is a priority. York Region’s existing Greenlands system needs to be incorporated into the provincial Greenbelt Plan and a linked system of green areas and corridors as well as a Regional trail network will be created.

The discussion paper identifies eight Action Areas to ensure a comprehensive strategy for protecting and enhancing York Region’s natural heritage.

- Action 1:* Update our Natural Heritage System
- Action 2:* Incorporate the Greenbelt Plan into the Regional Official Plan
- Action 3:* Make Connections in New Communities
- Action 4:* Restore and Strengthen the Natural Heritage System
- Action 5:* Adopt a New Approach to Infrastructure
- Action 6:* Establish a Regional Trail Network
- Action 7:* Advance the Greening Strategy
- Action 8:* Continued Awareness and Dialogue

Regional staff will work in consultation with Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority and local municipalities to update a draft natural heritage system for release in Spring 2008 for public review and comment.

How York Region can adapt or prepare for the potential effects of climate change

York Regional Council received a report regarding the upcoming Climate Change Workshop, including a summary discussion paper on the topic.

A Climate Change Workshop, planned for this spring, will bring together staff from departments across the Region, our partner area municipalities, conservation authorities, provincial representatives as well as our local utilities, emergency responders, hospital and school board representatives. The group will explore climate change issues, implications for York Region and actions we can take..

Over the last five to 10 years storms have become more frequent and intense, summer heat waves have lasted longer, smog days have increased, and periods of drought have affected water tables and lake levels. The effects of these storms, droughts and heat waves have affected us in a variety of ways. Many Ontario communities have experienced significant physical damage, economic loss and disruption as a result of violent storms.

The workshop will explore potential impacts of climate change on our:

- Water and wastewater systems
- Transportation systems
- Energy systems
- Public health and health care systems
- Emergency response capabilities

Feedback will also help identify adaptation strategies to help us become a more resilient Region. A follow-up report on what was heard at the workshop will be prepared for Council.

York Regional Council Highlights

Province proposes boundaries for future development

York Regional Council received a report regarding the current status of the Government of Ontario's initiative to establish a boundary for future development of more compact, vibrant, transit-supportive communities.

The Growth Plan calls for 40 per cent of all future residential development to occur within the *built-up area* by the year 2015. The *built-up area* is defined as "all land within the built boundary."

Protocols for radiocommunication and broadcasting antenna installations to be revised

York Regional Council received a report outlining Industry Canada's revised procedures for the installation of radiocommunication and broadcasting antenna systems. Proponents of new installations are required to consult with local municipalities, adjacent landowners and the general public.

Seven of York Region's nine local municipalities have approval protocols modelled after the Region's, which was adopted in 2002. Industry Canada has since revised its procedures twice, including the latest that came into effect on January 1st.

Industry Canada's procedures are generally more extensive than York Region's protocol, which describes site selection criteria and the local approvals process in more detail. York Region will consult with Industry Canada and local municipalities and recommend revisions for Council's approval.

Next meeting of York Regional Council

The next meeting of York Regional Council is scheduled for Thursday, February 21st at 9:30 a.m. The meeting will take place in Council Chambers, located at 17250 Yonge Street, Newmarket.

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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.