



York Regional Council Highlights

October 21, 2004

Mid-year review reports strong population and employment growth

York Region's population and employment growth remained strong during the first six months of this year, according to the Regional Municipality of York's *Economic & Development Review Mid-Year 2004*, adopted by Regional Council.

The *Review* is a semi-annual document that reports briefly on and analyzes a few key economic and demographic indicators for York Region.

Highlights of the *Economic & Development Review Mid-Year 2004* include:

- York Region was home to 872,900 people as of June 30, 2004. Compared to December 31, 2003, this represents an increase of 17,900 persons.
- There were 4,385 building permits issued for new residential units in York Region during the first half of 2004.
- The Region is producing an increasingly diverse mix of housing including apartments, townhouses and row housing, as well as semi detached and single family.
- The Region's total estimated construction value for the first six months of 2004 was \$1.13 billion.
- Although residential building permit values were down slightly, industrial, commercial and institutional (ICI) construction values are up resulting in a more balanced residential/ ICI ratio.
- In the first six months of 2004, York Region's residential construction was valued at \$783.9 million.
- The unemployment rate as of June 2004 was estimated to be 6.4% in York Region, lower than the GTA rate of 7.4%.

The *Economic & Development Review Mid-Year 2004* will be printed and distributed widely to York Region area municipalities, Chambers of Commerce, Boards of Trade, other business groups, libraries and other stakeholders. It will also be available on the Region's Web site at www.york.ca

New model will allow staff to better serve Ontario Works participants

Regional Council received a report from the Community Services and Housing Committee regarding a new Mental Health Resources Model initiative being introduced in the Social Assistance Division. The model includes three components: a mental health resource team, community mental health providers liaison and staff training.

Through full implementation of this model, it is expected that Ontario Works participants will achieve improved access to appropriate mental health services, increased participation in community mental health programs, and enhanced access to employment options and opportunities.

A full one-year post implementation evaluation of the new Mental Health Resource Model will be completed in the fall of 2005.



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Work plan to address growth management implications

Regional Council approved a recommendation that staff proceed with a work plan related to the ongoing regional and provincial initiatives dealing with growth management and urban development.

The work plan will include a number of separate tasks in determining the amount of growth the Region will accommodate over the next 27 years, and where and how this growth will occur. The review will include:

- Updated population forecasts for the Region and its nine area municipalities to 2026.
- A land supply/demand exercise to determine how much land will be required to accommodate the future population and employment growth.
- An inventory of vacant employment land to be used as input into the need for additional employment lands outside of existing urban envelope areas.
- A fiscal impact analysis exercise to assess the costs of infrastructure and services required by growth.
- An extensive communications program to inform the public of the social, economic and environmental benefits of compact development required to implement the desired growth patterns.

These key work plan elements complement existing strategies in place and will provide further direction for managing growth in the Region over the next 25 years. A series of staff reports will be brought to Planning and Economic Development Committee and Regional Council on each of the work plan components over the next several months.

Increase in base funding for Early Learning and Child Care

Regional Council has authorized the Region to accept and expend Early Learning and Child Care funding through an increased base funding of \$1.85 million from the Province. This is comprised of \$1.43 million in a provincial subsidy and a Regional cost-share of \$0.42 million.

Council has also approved the hiring of five temporary full-time employees to enable York Region to assess, allocate, process and monitor the additional funding and achieve increased service level targets by December 31, 2004.

There are currently wait lists of 1,396 for child care fee assistance, 91 for Early Intervention Services (EIS), as well as a shortfall of \$7 million in wage subsidy funding to child care operators. This increase in base funding will enable York Region to provide child care fee assistance to an additional 236 children, 0 to 5 years of age; provide EIS to an additional 60 children with special needs; and provide wage subsidy funding to an increased number of child care operators.



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Region to allocate provincial funding for child care health and safety and expansion

Regional Council has authorized the Region to receive and allocate one-time provincial child care funding totalling \$1.362 million to address health and safety improvements, purchase new equipment, and/or create additional licensed child care spaces.

In order to access this funding, non-profit child care operators will be required to provide a detailed funding request. Available dollars for health and safety improvements or the purchase of new equipment will be allocated to a maximum of \$100 per license space. Funding to create additional licensed child care spaces will be allocated on a case-by-case basis, as supported by a Ministry Licensing Program Advisor, to a maximum of \$50,000 per agency.

This is the second implementation phase of the provincial government's multilateral framework, five-year initiative. As part of the first phase, York Region received \$753,000 in child care funds in spring 2004 to implement health and safety improvements.

York Rapid Transit Plan Ambassador Program

The York Rapid Transit Plan (YRTP) will establish an Ambassador Program to actively promote rapid transit to York Region residents, the Government of Ontario and the Government of Canada.

The program proposes using local champions to raise the profile of YRTP and motivate a new generation of transit riders. The program will comprise one piece of an overall government relations and outreach/communications strategy.

Use of Kraft bags for yard waste collection

York Region will be notifying its local municipalities that yard waste will no longer be accepted at Regional facilities in plastic bags, effective January 1, 2005.

An education campaign will be undertaken to advise the public that yard waste will only be accepted in paper bags, such as Kraft bags.

Plastic bags are petroleum-based and cannot be recycled, and must therefore be sent to landfill. To help reduce the amount of material going to landfill, the Region has made the move to paper bags which can be recycled and composted.



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York Region Transit ridership continues to increase

York Region Transit (YRT) ridership was up 12.2 per cent for the period ending August 2004.

This number does not include riders from the Yonge and Bayview routes transferred to YRT last September. With these riders, YRT has actually posted a 47.5 per cent increase, with a total of nearly 8.8 million riders to date this year.

Forest Conservation By-law

York Regional Council has approved in principle, the criteria laid out in the draft Forest Conservation By-law. When passed, the new Forest Conservation By-law will replace the existing Tree By-law.

Among the by-law's proposals:

- Restrict the Region's jurisdiction to woodlands greater than one hectare (currently 0.2 hectares) in accordance with the *Municipal Act*.
- Expand the Region's tree protection abilities and powers through agreements with local municipalities to protect smaller woodlands.
- Provide personal exemptions of up to five cords of wood per 12-month period, and for building permits involving the clearing of less than one hectare of forest.
- Provide more effective administrative instruments, including a permit system for tree-cutting activities.

Staff will report back to Council following a 60-day review period of the proposed by-law, with comments from the public.

Red light camera program

Regional Council has endorsed the use of red light cameras to improve the safety of Regional road intersections. The endorsement will allow staff to examine which of York Region's intersections would be best served by the cameras, with a proposal to purchase four cameras to rotate through 12-16 intersections.

The cameras cost approximately \$250,000 each, with total estimated operating costs of \$380,000 per year. These costs would not be recovered through fines. Purchase of the cameras is contingent upon approval of the 2005 Budget.

In 1998, the Province authorized the use of red light cameras as part of a pilot project. The pilot determined that red light cameras greatly reduced T-bone collisions that often result in traffic fatalities at intersections.



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Salt Management Plan endorsed

In an effort to reduce the amount of salt used for winter road maintenance, Regional Council has endorsed a Salt Management Plan.

In 2001, Environment Canada identified road salt as a risk to wildlife, local ecosystems and groundwater. Accordingly, the Federal Government has asked municipalities to initiate salt management plans to reduce its use on roadways.

In 2002, the Region examined alternative technologies to its reliance on salt, and launched a pilot project to apply a salt-brine solution to roads before snowstorms. The use of salt-brine has shown to reduce reliance on salt, while maintaining high road safety standards. It was adopted as part of the winter maintenance program in 2003.

As part of its Winter Maintenance program, the Region has also adopted:

- A Road Weather Information System (RWIS), consisting of five weather stations in key parts of the Region, to update temperature, pavement condition, salt concentration and precipitation.
- A Global Positioning System (GPS) to monitor road coverage by vehicles and track the application rate of both salt and sand.
- Drive-through salt and sand storage sheds to reduce the amount of these materials exposed to the environment.
- Spreader controls on vehicles to more precisely spread both sand and salt.

Council enacts Solid Waste Management By-law

As a result of new legislation in the State of Michigan, Regional Council has enacted a solid waste management by-law to ban 12 specific types of waste from disposal at the Region's transfer station in Georgina. These include:

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| -Used deposit beverage containers | -Whole motor vehicle tires |
| -Used oil | -Lead acid batteries |
| -Yard clippings | -Medical waste |
| -Low-level radioactive waste | -Hazardous waste |
| -Liquid waste | -Sewage |
| -PCBs (Polychlorinated Biphenyls) | -Asbestos |

The Region has also made a request for all of the local municipalities to amend their by-laws governing the collection of solid waste to reflect the prohibition of these 12 types of waste.

Removal of these waste types should lessen the impact of the Michigan restrictions on the Region's waste management system.



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Child Care Worker & Early Childhood Education Appreciation Day

Regional Council adopted a resolution that recognizes Wednesday, October 27, 2004 as Child Care Worker & Early Childhood Education Appreciation Day, which is being celebrated across Ontario.

The Day is in recognition of the influence, dedication and commitment of child care workers to children, their families and quality of life of the community.

Region supports conference and appoints member to Regional Road Watch Committee

Regional Council passed a motion in support of the Regional Road Watch Conference to be held in 2005. Council also appointed Vaughan Regional Councillor Linda Jackson as a Regional representative to the Regional Road Watch Committee.

The Regional Road Watch Committee is comprised of representatives from each of the area municipalities, The Regional Municipality of York and York Regional Police. Road watch is a community-based initiative that gives residents and visitors an opportunity to report dangerous and aggressive drivers to the police. The Road Watch Program targets dangerous, aggressive driving through awareness, education and enforcement.

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The contents of this summary are intended to be 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 Council.