



Thursday, May 20, 2010

For Immediate Release

### ***York Region receives award from Canadian Hearing Society***

York Region has received an award from the Canadian Hearing Society for making our programs and services more accessible for people who are deaf, deafened and hard of hearing through our work on the *2010 Accessibility Plan*.

The award was presented earlier this week by Ontario's Lieutenant Governor, The Honourable David Onley, to Town of Richmond Hill Regional Councillor Vito Spatafora, Chair of the Region's Accessibility Advisory Committee.

York Region Chairman and CEO Bill Fisch thanked members of the Accessibility Advisory Committee – including longstanding member Kristen Hill, who made a presentation to Council on the *2010 Accessibility Plan* – for their ongoing commitment and efforts to help create a more inclusive community.

### ***York Regional Council approves Accessing York: York Region's 2010 Accessibility Plan***

York Regional Council has approved *Accessing York: York Region's 2010 Accessibility Plan*, a plan that outlines actions The Regional Municipality of York will take to promote accessibility throughout the Region's bylaws, policies, programs, practices, services and facilities.

The 2010 plan features 71 accessibility planning initiatives from across all departments, including York Regional Police and York Region Transit/Viva.

Examples of these initiatives include:

- Installing signage in the York Region Administrative Centre
- Improving parking lots and entrances
- Identifying issues people with disabilities face during an emergency
- Approving development of the first accessible trail in the York Regional Forest
- Implementing a system in the York Regional Police 9-1-1 Call Centre to enable communication with people who are deaf, deafened or hard-of-hearing

A copy of *Accessing York* can be found at York Region's website [www.york.ca](http://www.york.ca) under Services > Accessibility Planning. The plan is available in print or alternative formats, such as large print, and on CD, upon request.

### ***York Region complies with Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Regulation***

York Regional Council received an update on the actions taken by The Regional Municipality of York to comply with the requirements of the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Regulation* under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.

Actions undertaken by York Region included adopting the policies, practices and procedures that govern the service provided to people with disabilities, along with accessible customer service training for all employees, students, volunteers and agents/contractors serving the public on York Region's behalf.

As of January, nearly 3,300 Regional employees have received accessible customer service training.

### ***York Region promotes 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Persechini Run/Walkathon fundraiser for Easter Seals***

York Regional Council received a deputation from Persechini Run/Walkathon founder Joe Persechini and Executive Chairperson of the Easter Seals Run/Walkathon Committee Mike Smith, who thanked York Region for our ongoing promotion and support of their annual fundraiser for disabled children. The event has raised \$3.5 million, to date.

The 10-kilometre run/walkathon takes place on Sunday, May 30<sup>th</sup> at 8:30 a.m. at the Upper Canada Mall in the Town of Newmarket. Registration begins at 7 a.m.

### ***York Region Greening Land Securement Strategy successes***

York Regional Council received a report outlining the successes of the Region's Greening Land Securement Strategy from 2001 to 2009. Working with Nature Conservancy Canada, The Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust and other levels of government, the Region has successfully secured 872 hectares of land on 35 properties for protection and rehabilitation. These properties were secured through conservation easements or purchase.

As part of the securement strategy, York Region works with partner groups to rehabilitate properties to their natural state, including the planting of native trees and shrubs. As part of these rehabilitation efforts, the Region recently planted more than 1,600 trees in the York Regional Forest with the help of volunteers at the annual Spring Forest Festival.

### ***Greening Strategy – Land Securement Salmon Property***

York Regional Council has approved a maximum of \$755,000 towards the purchase of 27 hectares of property in the Township of King as part of the Greening Land Securement Strategy. The funds represent 45 per cent of the total purchase, with the remainder to be fundraised by the Township of King, Nature Conservancy of Canada and the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust.

Upon successful completion of fundraising, the Region and Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust will take ownership of the land, where it will be managed as part of the York Regional Forest.

### ***Municipal Streetscape Partnership Program***

York Regional Council has approved \$310,413 for The City of Vaughan's streetscaping improvements on Keele Street between Master's Avenue and McNaughton Road in conjunction with the Municipal Streetscape Partnership Program. The program helps to fund streetscaping enhancements in local municipalities.

The Keele Street streetscaping improvements will include:

- Pavement and planters at the gateway intersection of Keele Street and McNaughton Road
- Enhanced crosswalks on Keele Street at McNaughton Road and at Master's Avenue
- Decorative paving on all medians

York Region allocates \$1 million annually toward the Municipal Streetscaping Partnership Program.

### ***Roads Capital Construction Program Update***

York Regional Council received an update on the Region's 2010 Roads Capital Budget Program. Highlights of the \$247 million program include road construction on:

- Woodbine Avenue from Ravenshoe Road to Morton Road in the Town of Georgina
- Langstaff Road from Highway 50 to Highway 27 in the City of Vaughan
- Gamble Road/19<sup>th</sup> Avenue from Bathurst Street to Bayview Avenue in the Town of Richmond Hill
- Warden Avenue from 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue to Major Mackenzie Drive in the Town of Markham
- Stouffville Road from Highway 404 to McCowan Road in the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville

### ***York Regional Council approves process to develop new housing stock for Housing York Inc.***

York Regional Council has approved a process to identify and select potential affordable housing projects, using \$35.3 million in *York Region Investing in Ontario* funding. The new housing will be owned and operated by Housing York Inc.

In 2008, the Region received \$52.7 million under the *Investing in Ontario Act, 2008* from the Government of Ontario to fund regional infrastructure projects. Last year, a portion of these funds was used to acquire a 140-unit mixed-use apartment building in the Town of Richmond Hill to provide seniors, families and non-senior singles with rental affordability options.

By 2012, the Region will have developed more than 440 affordable housing units that are owned and operated by Housing York Inc., and assisted in the development of 299 community-led affordable housing units, owned by private and non-profit providers.

### ***York Regional Council receives update on homelessness prevention initiatives***

York Regional Council received an update on three programs that assist individuals and families who face homelessness in York Region: the *Homelessness Prevention Program*, the *Rent Bank Program* and the *Emergency Energy Fund*.

The programs provide assistance to low income individuals and families who are not receiving assistance through either Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support Program. In 2009, the three homelessness programs served 383 households and 1,016 individuals.

Delivered through two agencies in York Region – the Salvation Army-Northridge Community Church and Jewish Family & Child – the programs provide funds for rent, mortgage and utilities in arrears, first and last month's rent, identification replacement, urgent medical needs, energy-related emergencies and other expenses that can strain a household budget and push low income residents into homelessness.

### ***Sustainability progress report***

York Regional Council has reviewed *Vision 2026: Sustainability Progress Report 2009*, which updates the Region's *Vision 2026* document and the *York Region Sustainability Strategy*. In 2009, York Region continued to make gains in sustainability through waste diversion, housing diversity, green development, accessibility, transit and trip reduction initiatives.

York Region continues to look for opportunities to improve sustainability by:

- Establishing a corporate greenhouse gas emission target
- Addressing the rent-geared-to-income housing wait list
- Establishing a sustainable procurement and purchase of service protocol
- Increasing corporate waste diversion
- Encouraging a shift to a more electronically-based work environment

### ***Proposed amendments to the York Region Official Plan indicate more urban land is needed***

York Regional Council approved three separate amendments to the York Region Official Plan, calling for additional urban land designations from existing white belt areas to meet 2031 growth forecasts. The employment forecast was reduced from 799,000 to 780,000 jobs by 2031.

The amendments will authorize urban boundary expansions in the following communities:

- Town of East Gwillimbury: 577 hectares
- Town of Markham: 1,010 hectares
- City of Vaughan: 886 hectares

Proposed amendments will be released for public review and comment, with a public meeting held on Wednesday, June 16<sup>th</sup> at the Planning and Development Committee.

### ***York Region's economy surviving the economic recession relatively well***

York Region's economy has survived the economic recession relatively well compared to other Canadian jurisdictions, according to the Region's *2009 Economic and Development Review*. The review provides a high-level assessment of York Region's economy and construction activity, with indicators that are vital in assessing and responding to economic trends across York Region.

The report will be helpful for effective decision-making, devising strategies and attracting new or relocating businesses within the Region. Copies can be downloaded from [www.york.ca](http://www.york.ca) under Publications.

### ***New look for York Region Transit street furniture on the way***

The Regional Municipality of York has approved a new look for York Region Transit (YRT) street furniture to update the appearance of transit stops Region-wide and offer more features for customers.

With the new look in place, the project will move forward with the release of a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the supply, installation, maintenance and advertising opportunities for a 15-year term.

New YRT street furniture could begin appearing throughout the Region as early as fall 2011. Updated furniture elements include transit shelters, benches, bike racks, waste/recycling receptacles, newspaper and publication boxes, schedule display cases and community information kiosks.

It is expected the supply and maintenance of the street furniture program will be delivered at no cost to the Region as advertising opportunities will offset costs. For more information on the street furniture project and to view the approved designs, please visit [www.yrt.ca/facilities/streetfurniture.asp](http://www.yrt.ca/facilities/streetfurniture.asp)

### ***Consultant Selected for design, construction and operation of SSO Facility***

York Regional Council approved the award of a contract to GHD Inc. in the amount of \$2.27 million to oversee the design, construction and operation phase of the joint York Region and County of Dufferin Source Separated Organics facility.

GHD Inc. will provide day-to-day project oversight on behalf of York Region and Dufferin County, including project management, technical advising, contract administration and construction oversight.

York Region and Dufferin County are partnering on the construction of a joint facility to process organics generated through the Green Bin program. The planned facility will have an initial treatment capacity of 50,000 tonnes per year, with the potential for future expansion to 100,000 tonnes per year.

### ***York Region extends School Board recycling agreement***

York Regional Council has authorized a five-year contract extension with the York Region District School Board and York Catholic District School Board for the delivery of recyclable materials to York Region's Waste Management Centre in the Town of East Gwillimbury. The contract runs to June 30, 2015.

The two York Region school boards can deliver Blue Box materials free of charge in return for Regional advertising space in school publications to raise student awareness and participation.

School board Blue Box collection amounts to approximately 1,400 tonnes each year.

### ***Review of H1N1 Response***

York Regional Council received a report on York Region's response to the H1N1 influenza virus outbreak last year and lessons learned.

York Region experienced the first wave of H1N1 from April to August 2009. A total of 532 cases were confirmed, with 40 requiring hospitalization and no deaths. During the second wave between September and December 2009, 361 cases were confirmed, 134 required hospitalization and three deaths occurred.

During the second wave of H1N1, York Region operated five mass immunization clinics, administering 106,161 doses of the H1N1 vaccine. A total of 472 patients were seen at two assessment centres.

Survey results from March 2010 show 93 per cent of residents were satisfied with their experience at York Region's clinics.

York Region has conducted debriefings with H1N1 stakeholders to establish lessons learned and future recommendations. Suggestions include improving the efficiency of the vaccine ordering process, selecting larger clinic space for improved crowd management, better synchronized messaging from the federal, provincial and local governments and investing in staff scheduling software and training.

Total costs for York Region's H1N1 response was \$5.9 million, with approximately \$4.7 million funded by the province and \$1.15 million funded through tax levy.

### ***YRT/Viva ridership soars in 2010***

The Regional Municipality of York is witnessing impressive gains in 2010 York Region Transit (YRT)/Viva ridership. Year-over-year growth from 2009 to 2010 shows an average gain of 7.5 per cent from January to March.

YRT/Viva experienced significant ridership gains in each of the first three months of 2010, with February and March posting the highest ridership in the history of YRT/Viva for those respective months.

More than 120 YRT/Viva routes keep residents connected within York Region, as well as with connecting services in the City of Toronto and the Region of Peel. More than 18 million riders used YRT/Viva services in 2009.

### ***Development Charge Bylaw Draft Background Study approved***

York Regional Council today approved a background study as part of its proposed amendment of the Region-wide Development Charge (DC) Bylaw for roads, water and wastewater. Development Charges are one-time fees charged for developing a property.

The background study determined that an estimated \$8.9 billion in additional infrastructure will be required to service new residential and commercial / industrial property development through to 2031.

The proposed increases are necessary to ensure that the growth-related capital costs are borne by the development that creates a need for these services.

A staff report will go June 10<sup>th</sup> Finance and Administration Committee recommending revised DC rates and a timetable for the enactment of the DC bylaw amendment.

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

York Regional Council will meet on Thursday, June 24<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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**Compiled by:** *Michael Kemp, Corporate Communications, York Region*  
*Phone: 905 830-4444 Ext. 1232 / Cell: 905 251-6419*  
*Email: [michael.kemp@york.ca](mailto:michael.kemp@york.ca)*