



May 2009

For Immediate Release

York Regional Council – May 21, 2009

Don Gordon, General Manager of York Region Transit (YRT)/Viva to retire

York Region Transit (YRT)/Viva General Manager Don Gordon is retiring after a distinguished 30-plus year career in public service with The Regional Municipality of York and the Town of Markham.

In his role as General Manager, Mr. Gordon led the amalgamation of the local transit systems into York Region Transit and Mobility Plus Transit in 2001 and was integral to the formation of Viva rapid transit in 2005.

During his tenure, YRT/Viva attained one of the highest ridership growth rates in North America, and become a major transit player with more than 20 million riders annually.

Mr. Gordon will remain as General Manager until a successor is hired.

National Public Works Week Free Family Fun Day Open House

The Regional Municipality of York is celebrating National Public Works Week this week with a series of events, including a free Family Fun Day Open House from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday, May 23rd at the Bales Drive Operations Centre, located at 90 Bales Drive East in the Town of East Gwillimbury.

The National Public Works Week Family Fun Day Open House will feature a number of activities and displays for the whole family, including:

- Mr. Something Something's bicycle-powered music band ([see them on You Tube](#))
- Hopping into big trucks, maintenance vehicles, a fully-stocked ambulance, a fire pumper truck and the Police Save-A-Life vehicle
- Craft stations in the sign shop and at our York Region Transit and waste management displays
- Face painting and playing the *What Goes Down the Sewer* game
- Participating in the *Lather Up, Go with the Flow and 3-Times a Day* interactive activities
- Bus tours of our Material Recovery Facility and Viva maintenance facility
- Tours of our operations garage and maintenance facility

Families can also learn about various Regional services, vote for their favourite designs in our "Paint-a-Plow" contest, have a BBQ lunch for a donation to our charity and get free mulch for the garden. (Two-30 litre (2 cubic foot) bags of mulch are available to the first 50 people who arrive).

For more information and a map to the Operations Centre, please visit www.york.ca and click on the National Public Works Week link on the front page.

Town of East Gwillimbury and City of Vaughan take honours at Miller Cup challenge

The Miller Cup Challenge, an annual National Public Works week construction competition hosted each year by the Town of Richmond Hill, was held on May 20th. The Miller Cup features a skills competition between teams of employees from York Region and our nine local municipalities and an obstacle course competition between York Region's Mayors.

Bragging rights for this year's Miller Cup go to Team Vaughan on the staff side and to Town of East Gwillimbury Mayor James Young for his hybrid truck-driving skills.

English as a Second Language Week

York Region will recognize the week of December 6 to 12, 2009 as English as a Second Language Week to recognize those who have contributed and benefited from English as a Second Language learning in Ontario.

The Regional Municipality of York greets delegation from Sora, Italy

On May 21st, York Region hosted members of a delegation from the City of Vaughan's "twin" city Sora, Italy, who are visiting the area from May 19th to 28th.

Sora Deputy Mayor Maria Gabriella Paolacci and Planning Director Assessore Roberto DeDonatis visited York Regional Council as part of an effort to strengthen community relations, organize an exhibition of artisans and exchange information on the use of piazzas in public spaces as part of the City of Vaughan's Official Plan.

Hunger Awareness Day

York Region will recognize June 2, 2009 as Hunger Awareness Day to raise awareness of hunger in Canada and help reduce the need for food banks. National Hunger Awareness Day, co-ordinated by Food Banks Canada and community food banks across the country, highlights the fact more than 700,000 Canadians are assisted by food banks each month.

Easter Seals Run/Walkathon

York Regional Council received a deputation from Mike Smith, Executive Chairperson of the Easter Seals Run/Walkathon Committee, thanking York Region for our ongoing promotion and support for their 33rd annual fundraiser for disabled children, which has raised \$3.4 million to date.

This year's fundraiser, which has 400 children volunteers, is raising funds for summer camps and to purchase equipment to help disabled children live more independently.

The 2009 Easter Seals Run/Walkathon will take place on Sunday, May 31st at 8:30 a.m. at the Upper Canada Mall in the Town of Newmarket.

2009 Accessibility Plan, National Access Awareness Week and Invisible Disabilities

York Regional Council received a deputation from Donna Hardaker, a York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee Member, thanking York Region for its work to help make our Region more accessible for those with disabilities, including the 2009 Accessibility Plan and acknowledgement of National Access Awareness Week.

Access-ability: The 2009 Accessibility Plan includes 77 accessibility planning initiatives from across all regional departments, including York Regional Police and York Region Transit/Viva.

For more information on York Region's Accessibility Plans or to order a copy, please view the Council Highlight below or visit www.york.ca and follow the links under Services > Accessibility Planning.

Access-ability: York Region's 2009 Accessibility Plan approved by York Regional Council

York Regional Council today approved *Access-ability: York Region's 2009 Accessibility Plan*, an action plan that outlines actions that The Regional Municipality of York will take to promote "access-ability" throughout the Region's programs, services and facilities.

The 2009 plan includes 77 accessibility planning initiatives from across all regional departments, including York Regional Police and York Region Transit/Viva.

The 2009 plan was developed with advice from the York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee and builds on the work established in the Region's five previous accessibility plans: *Understanding Barriers* (2004), *Moving Forward* (2005), *Removing Barriers* (2006), *Towards Accessibility* (2007) and *Opening Doors* (2008).

Since 2003, York Region has implemented more than 500 accessibility planning initiatives. These range from the purchase of fully accessible buses to building fully accessible units within our housing properties and establishing partnerships with disability organizations.

The *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* requires all municipalities to develop annual accessibility plans.

There are an estimated 140,000 York Region residents with a disability. Ongoing population growth and an aging population will pose challenges to ensure programs and services are accessible to everyone.

You may order a copy of *Access-ability* via the Region's website at www.york.ca under services/ accessibility planning. The plan will be available in print or in alternative formats such as large print and on CD upon request.

Highway 404 Mid-block crossing

York Regional Council has approved a plan to proceed with the detailed design and contract preparation for a Highway 404 crossing between Highway 7 and 16th Avenue with the Town of Markham and the Town of Richmond Hill. Costs will be shared equally.

Subject to an agreement with the Town of Markham, the Town of Richmond Hill and the Ministry of Transportation, York Region will enter a one-time cost-sharing partnership with Markham and Richmond Hill for the long-term maintenance and replacement costs of the crossing.

The detailed design and contract preparation costs were approved as part of the Region's 2009 Roads Capital Budget, with long-term structural costs to be included for Council approval in the 2010 10-Year Roads Capital Program.

CN Banner Signs

York Region will negotiate with CN National Railway Company (CN) to permit the installation and maintenance of banner signs on CN overpasses. Under the terms of the arrangement, the Region would permit CN to post banners at their expense on overpasses on Regional roads. York Region would have the right to veto any unacceptable advertising, as per our current advertisement policy.

With an overpass policy in place, York Region will ensure minimum disruption to traffic during installation and maintenance of the signs as well as benefit from an improved aesthetic the signs would provide.

York Regional Council accepts preferred vendor for proposed energy-from-waste facility

York Regional Council today accepted Covanta Energy Corporation as the preferred vendor for the design, construction and operation of a proposed energy-from-waste facility as part of the Durham-York Residual Waste Environmental Assessment Study process.

As the preferred vendor, Covanta will execute an “Early Works” agreement with Durham Region and York Region to provide input required to complete the current Environmental Assessment process and develop design options. Along with the Early Works activities, both Regions will negotiate with Covanta to finalize the draft Design, Build and Operation agreement for consideration by Regional Council following Ministry of Environment approval of the Environmental Assessment.

For more information on the Durham-York Residual Waste Environmental Assessment Study, please visit www.durhamyorkwaste.ca or call 1-866-398-4423.

“Make the Drop” public space recycling/composting pilot program

York Regional Council today approved an expanded “Make the Drop” 2009 public space recycling and composting program with the Town of Newmarket and Town of Markham in an effort to encourage residents to divert more waste while on the go.

An upcoming promotion and education campaign will encourage residents to recycle and compost at Tom Taylor Trail and the Ray Twinney Recreation Complex in Newmarket and up to three indoor public locations to be determined in Markham.

Waste management initiatives underway

York Region will request that Waste Diversion Ontario increase its consultation with municipalities and the public on Extended Producer Responsibility options (increasing the responsibility of product and packaging producers in managing the waste they produce) related the Blue Box program.

York Region and our local municipalities strongly support shifting responsibility for product and packaging materials from municipalities to producers. To better understand the potential future options for management of Blue Box program materials, York Region is requesting more information be made available to the Region and public.

Council also approved opting into the Ministry of Environment’s proposed Used Tire Program Plan and Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Program Plan.

The Used Tire Program Plan would allow free tire haulage via Ontario Tire Stewardship. Residents would be able to drop off tires free of charge.

The Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Program Plan would provide residents with additional locations to drop off and recycle electronic waste. This would support the Region’s existing e-waste program, provide free transportation and processing of materials collected by Stewardship Ontario and provide a reimbursement of \$165 per tonne for collected waste.

YRT/Viva customer survey results show high service satisfaction

York Regional Council received a report on the results of the 2008 York Region Transit (YRT)/Viva Customer Satisfaction Survey. Results show that nine out of 10 Viva riders and seven out of 10 YRT riders rate service good, very good or excellent.

Highlights of 2008 survey results include:

Category	YRT (% satisfaction)	Viva (% satisfaction)
Condition of vehicles	86	95
Drivers drive safely	87	87
Knowledgeable drivers	84	89
Friendly and helpful drivers	78	84
Route coverage area	75	80

YRT/Viva conducts a system-wide Customer Satisfaction Survey every two years to gauge public satisfaction of services and identify areas of potential improvement. In 2008, a total of 7,040 surveys were administered by a third-party agency, Advitek Inc. Environics Research Group was hired to analyze the results.

Vivanext communication activities for 2009

York Region will issue of a contract to York Consortium 2002 for \$900,000 to promote, educate and increase awareness of VivaNext. Funds were approved as part of the 2009 Business Plan and Budget.

VivaNext is the long-term plan for Viva which includes the construction of dedicated bus-only rapidways down the centre of major corridors, as well as work on the Spadina and Yonge TTC subway extensions.

Communications activities include:

- Online messaging through the new www.vivanext.com website and blog, as well as social media outlets Twitter, Facebook and YouTube
- Mass media advertising in newspapers, transit shelters and other locations
- Newsletters, promotional materials and public presentations

Affordable housing projects moving forward

Construction has begun on four new affordable housing projects in York Region that will open 270 new units for residents. The \$25.9 million in funding for the new units is being provided through the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program. The four projects include:

- East Markham Non-Profit Homes – 120 units (Town of Markham)
- Hesperus Fellowship Village – 60 units (City of Vaughan)
- Reena – 60 units (City of Vaughan)
- Mount Albert United Church Senior Citizens Foundation – 30 units (Town of East Gwillimbury)

As part of the program, York Region is contributing:

- Conditional grants equal to the development charges for each project
- A total of \$2.7 million to assist with construction costs and development fees
- An annual total of \$1 million for rent supplements to families living in the new affordable housing

York Region purchased 58 community services through newly-enhanced community fund

In 2008, The Regional Municipality of York successfully purchased the services of 58 projects from social service agencies across the Region through the Community Development and Investment Fund (CDIF). Through this \$3.5 million funding strategy, York Region helped approximately 50,000 low-income residents throughout the Region.

Projects that received CDIF funding in 2008 addressed at least one of these three priority areas:

- Child and family supports
- Homelessness outreach and homelessness prevention programs
- Employment skill development

Through the 2008 CDIF investments:

- Families and Schools Together linked 60 families with 227 individuals, including children, to meet, have a meal and discuss school programs with staff from local elementary schools
- Seneca College helped unemployed individuals build the essential skills needed for employment in their chosen field
- A community drop-in program for homeless and at-risk youth provided a supportive and recreational environment, counselling services and access to nutritional supplies

Under the CDIF strategy, York Region manages community funding initiatives that include both provincial and regional funds in a manner that enhances efficiencies and optimizes services to vulnerable residents.

Accessibility standards to make the Region more inclusive and welcoming of people with disabilities

York Regional Council received an update on the proposed standards for the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, (AODA)*, including an outline of Regional plans for implementing the requirements of these standards and the financial requirements.

In addition to the Customer Service Regulation, which, on January 1, 2008, was Ontario's first accessibility standard to come into effect, Ontario is developing four proposed standards, including:

- The Accessible Transportation Standard
- The Accessible Built Environment Standard
- The Accessible Information and Communications Standard
- The Employment Accessibility Standard

The proposed Accessible Information and Communications Standard and the proposed Employment Accessibility Standard are expected to come into effect this year.

Using financial estimates from the Government of Ontario, implementing accessibility standards may represent between \$13.5 million to \$40.5 million in the Region's 2009 Operating Budget. Actual costs will be assessed when these standards are passed into law.

Implementing the standards under the AODA will allow the Region to integrate accessibility planning into business practices and processes uniformly across all departments.

Special meeting of York Regional Council

A special meeting of York Regional Council will be held on Thursday, May 28th at 9:30 a.m. at the York Region Administrative Centre Council Chambers, located at 17250 Yonge Street in the Town of Newmarket, to consider updates on the Regional Official Plan, the Water and Wastewater Master Plan and the Transportation Master Plan.

Next regular meeting of York Regional Council

York Regional Council will meet on Thursday, June 25th 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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