



Thursday, September 23, 2010

For Immediate Release

York Regional Council – September 23, 2010

York Region recognizes United Way Week

York Regional Council declared October 4 to 8, 2010 as United Way Week within The Regional Municipality of York.

United Way Week is a way to engage local communities and neighbours as supporters to help build a better life for everyone.

York Region and York Regional Police announced a \$300,000 staff fundraising goal in support of the United Way of York Region's 2010 campaign. The \$300,000 goal represents a 20 per cent increase over last year's goal of \$250,000.

York Region recognizes Character Community Week

York Regional Council declared October 23 to 29, 2010 as Character Community Week within The Regional Municipality of York.

Events will be held in collaboration with community partners and Character Council member networks across York Region under the theme of showcasing character in our community.

York Region recognizes October, 2010 as Toastmasters Month

York Regional Council declared October, 2010 as Toastmasters Month within The Regional Municipality of York.

Troy Toastmasters, the club serving York Region staff, has been active for four years. More than 35 members learn and develop communication and management skills that help them serve our residents.

Toastmasters International is a non-profit organization with an 85-year history and 250,000 members in 12,500 clubs in 106 countries.

The Regional Municipality of York obtains Provincial approval for Regional Official Plan – December 2009

The Regional Municipality of York has obtained approval from the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for the York Region Official Plan – December 2009 with modifications.

The new Regional Official Plan brings the Region's planning into conformity with key pieces of Provincial legislation, including the *Places to Grow Act, 2005*, the *Greenbelt Act, 2005*, the *Lake Simcoe Protection Act, 2008*, the *Clean Water Act, 2006*, the *Metrolinx Act, 2006* and the *Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001*.

The plan represents the outcome of the *Planning for Tomorrow* initiative, a growth management planning exercise conducted over the past five years by York Region.

The approved plan, along with background studies and reports, are available on the Region's website. Click on the Official Plan banner on the home page. Printed copies will be available in the near future from the Planning Department.

York Regional Council adapts new Regional Official Plan

York Regional Council approved adoption of Amendments 1, 2 and 3 to the York Region Official Plan – December 2009, subject to modifications and approval by the Province.

These adjustments are required to implement city-building in York Region through the new Regional Official Plan. A Regional land budget analysis indicated that additional urban land in the three white belt municipalities of the Town of Markham, the City of Vaughan and the Town of East Gwillimbury are required to accommodate forecasted growth to 2031.

Proposed Amendments 1, 2 and 3 were considered by Regional staff after circulation of the Amendments and the holding of a statutory meeting on June 16, 2010.

The Regional Municipality of York wins CPWA 2010 National Public Works Week award

The Regional Municipality of York has received the Canadian Public Works Association (CPWA) 2010 National Public Works Week award for outstanding promotion of the work that public works professionals do to enrich our community.

National Public Works Week takes place each May to celebrate the tens of thousands of men and women in North America who provide and maintain the infrastructure and services collectively known as public works.

In the 2010 National Public Works Week campaign, York Region hosted guided tours of our facilities for students, two student contests with a public works theme, a Family Fun Day Open House that attracted more than 1,500 people and successfully fundraised more than \$8,000 for Blue Door Shelters.

The CPWA award, for metro centres with a population of more than 650,000 people, was presented to York Region Chairman and CEO Bill Fisch at York Regional Council by CPWA Director Linda Petelka.

York Region has celebrated National Public Works Week since 2005, previously winning the Bruce Brunton National Public Works Week Award from the Ontario Public Works Association.

The Regional Municipality of York renews environmental certification for York Regional Forest

The Regional Municipality of York has reaffirmed its status as an environmental leader in forestry with a five-year recertification of the York Regional Forest as well-managed and sustainable by the Forest Stewardship Council. The York Regional Forest was the first publically-owned forest to be certified as sustainable in Canada in 2000, a designation that has now been renewed twice.

To become certified, the management and operation of the York Regional Forest is subject to a rigorous independent third-part audit, guided by 10 key principles that include reducing environmental impacts, ongoing forest maintenance, compliance with all applicable laws and a comprehensive and updated forest management plan. To maintain certification, the forest is audited annually and re-assessed every five years.

In March, members of the Rainforest Alliance – the Forest Stewardship Council certifier – completed an intensive audit of the York Regional Forest that included a two-day field inspection and interviews with various forest stakeholders. Following their assessment, the York Regional Forest was recommended for recertification to 2015.

The Forest Stewardship Council is an independent, non-governmental, not-for-profit organization established to promote the responsible management of the world's forests. Forest Stewardship Council certification is recognized internationally as the "gold standard" for forest management.

Building activity in York Region rebounds

While employment levels are marginally lower than they were mid-way through last year, construction activity in both residential and the industrial, commercial and institutional (ICI) sector have rebounded according to The Regional Municipality of York's *Economic and Development Mid-Year 2010 Review*. The publication assesses the competitiveness of York Region's economy as compared to its regional and national counterparts, particularly through building activity.

Following are highlights from the staff report:

- In the first half of 2010, York Region's population grew by 11,600 people to reach 1,044,300
- Unemployment in the Region fell to an estimated 8.5 per cent from 8.8 per cent this time last year; York Region's unemployment rate was lower than the Provincial (8.8 per cent) and GTA (9.5 per cent) averages and slightly higher than the Canadian average (8.0 per cent)
- Building permit activity in the Region was up 50.3 per cent compared to the first half of 2009
- With 3,438 permits, the Region ranked sixth across Canada for the number of residential units with permits issued during the first half of 2010
- The Region's estimated value of construction totalled \$1.45 billion by mid-year 2010, an increase of 47.1 per cent from mid-year 2009; ICI construction accounted for \$587 million by mid-year 2010, an increase of 36.6 per cent from mid-year 2009
- By mid-year 2010, York Region had 3,115 housing starts, an increase of 48.8 per cent from mid-year 2009, and 3,377 housing completions, a decrease of 15.6 per cent
- As of June 2010, semi-detached, town/row/attached, and apartment/condominium units accounted for 29 per cent of the Region's total housing stock
- The average price of a single detached dwelling unit increased by 16.2 per cent from \$494,605 to \$574,598

The information in this publication is used to prepare key economic policy and aids in the development of public and private sector economic investment strategies.

GTA Agricultural Action Committee presents its progress and work plan

York Regional Council received an update of the activities of the Greater Toronto Area Agricultural Action Committee along with the Committee's 2010 work plan and a summary of York Region's participation in implementing the GTA Agricultural Action Plan.

While agriculture continues to be an important sector of the GTA economy in terms of gross farm receipts produced and productivity per acre, there is an ongoing decline. The amount of farmland continues to drop, and the average age of farmers is increasing. More work remains to protect and promote agriculture within York Region as well as the GTA through all levels of government.

The 2005 action plan provides a GTA-wide framework to keep the agricultural industry competitive through 37 action items in the areas of economic development, education/marketing, land use policy, accountability and responsibility. The 2010 work plan continues to focus on promoting and identifying opportunities for GTA agriculture and local food.

York Region to request Federal Government to reinstate long-form census

York Regional Council approved a report that outlines the negative implications of the Federal Government's decision to eliminate the mandatory long-form census and agreed to request that the long-form be reinstated.

York Region and other municipalities rely on census data for planning regional services and infrastructure projects. The long-form census collects information on the labour force, incomes, mobility, housing, ethnicity, education, dwelling unit characteristics and a range of other socio-economic characteristics of the Region's residents.

York Region's plan to protect archaeological resources

The Regional Municipality of York proposes to prepare and maintain an Archaeological Management Plan that will identify, protect and conserve the Region's archaeological resources. The plan will ensure that all areas of known potential archaeological resources are conserved during land-use planning and development activities. Knowledge of locations or potential locations of resources can help prevent the accidental disinterment of remains as well as avoid costly delays at critical points in development, infrastructure projects and possible environmental assessments.

The Archaeological Management Plan stems from recommendation made by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture after the 2009 changes to the *Ontario Heritage Act* which encourages municipalities to acknowledge archaeological resources through land-use planning decisions.

The plan will be prepared in a carefully defined and phased approach to ensure that key stakeholders, First Nations and the Métis Nation are consulted at key stages in the process. The phased process is set to commence this fall with a proposed completion of winter 2012.

Regional Council approves final report of the Aging Workforce Study

Over the next 10 years, an estimated 100,000 to 150,000 baby boomers in The Regional Municipality of York workforce will retire. Focused on this fact, the Aging Workforce Study is designed to provide a better understanding of the Region's aging workforce and its impact on the local economy. The program elements include actions to assist employers in their efforts to maintain an effective and adequately-skilled labour supply to meet the needs of the workforce to 2025. This 18-month study will conclude in December, 2010.

Community and Health Services Department sets directions for Regional human services with multi-year plan

To better address crucial needs and issues impacting on social and health services provided by The Regional Municipality of York, York Regional Council today approved *Investing in Our Communities: A Multi-Year Plan for the Community and Health Services Department 2010-2015*.

The Multi-Year Plan seeks to better integrate the planning and delivery of services within the Region's Community and Health Services Department, which serves residents through a range of housing, health and community programs that are primarily guided by provincial and federal legislation and policy.

York Region's population will continue to grow, age and diversify in terms of cultural, ethno-racial and socio-economic characteristics. The Multi-Year Plan is a new planning tool to help ensure the Region's human services are able to adapt to changing policies and emerging needs.

The Multi-Year Plan has a five-year planning horizon, during which time it will be updated. The plan will be formally reviewed in 2015. It can be viewed online at www.york.ca

Recommendations to manage fiscal pressures caused by human services operating costs

York Regional Council received a staff report outlining a study commissioned by The Regional Municipality of York to provide policy recommendations on human services planning priorities based on the long-term costs associated with continued rapid growth, more cultural diversity and an aging population.

The study, *Economic Analysis of Human Service Costs to 2031 - Recommendations for Enhancing Human Services Planning in The Regional Municipality of York*, was prepared by Carleton University. It provided four broad recommendations:

- The growing and evolving human service needs of York Region can be best met through collaborative planning
- Investing early and strategically will be key to addressing growth pressures
- Partnering to provide alternative service delivery, enhancing access to services, focusing on prevention, and capitalizing on opportunities presented through urban intensification can serve as key strategies for improving the management and delivery of services
- An enhanced focus on the collection, analysis and sharing of meaningful and current data can serve to improve the responsiveness of human services

The study found that the operating costs for human services provided by The Regional Municipality of York are conservatively estimated to increase from \$465 million in 2006 to \$1.11 billion in 2031. The Regional human services include Emergency Medical Services, long-term care and seniors community programs, public health, community services, housing, police services and transit.

In addition, transit operating costs are projected to increase from \$98.8 million in 2006 to \$591 million in 2031, based on ridership projections.

Other human services will see their operating costs increase from \$2 billion in 2006 to an estimated \$5 billion by 2031. These estimates include hospitals, schools boards, Seneca College, community services funded through the United Way of York Region, and local municipal culture, libraries and recreation – which represent only a sampling of all external human services' operating costs.

Building sustainable communities requires dialogue to better understand the emerging issues and opportunities and to manage the fiscal pressures that will be faced by the Region and the broader human services sector.

Regional Council will request the Human Services Planning Board of York Region to consider the results and recommendations of this report, which can be found online at www.york.ca/hspb

Fare Integration Pilot Project update

York Regional Council received an update on the Fare Integration Pilot Project between York Region and the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) that started on August 22. The benefits of shared Viva and TTC service and the fare integration between Downsview subway station and York University include:

- New revenue opportunity for YRT/Viva
- Optimum use of spare capacity on the underutilized Viva Orange service
- Reduces overcrowding on TTC buses
- Reduces the need for TTC to increase fleet and service levels
- New access to late evening and Sunday service on Viva Orange for TTC customers

As a result of this initiative, YRT/Viva could receive an estimated annual payment of \$70,000 based on an estimated increase in TTC ridership of 140,000 passengers. YRT/Viva will not incur any additional operating costs due to the shared-service concept.

The pilot project is set to operate until January 1, 2011. Prior to the completion of the project term, YRT/Viva staff will review the pilot project to determine the viability of an extension into 2011.

York Region enacts bylaw to allow for implementation of Driver Certification Program

York Regional Council passed a bylaw which endorses an application by York Region Transit (YRT) to the Ministry of Transportation for the implementation of the Driver Training Program.

The bylaw enables YRT to implement its Driver Certification Program, including the execution of Ministry-required training, testing and the issuances of restricted licenses to Transportation Services and York Regional Police (YRP). YRT's Manager of Operations will oversee the Driver Certification Program and appoint qualified individuals as signing authorities to deliver the training.

There are no significant costs associated with the implementation of the Driver Certification Program as the Ministry of Transportation will not charge the Region for materials required to administer this program.

Expansion of Public Health Dental Services to low-income children

York Regional Council has approved an increase to the Region's 2010 approved capital budget and additional operating expenditures to implement the Low-Income Dental Program for children. The increase will be offset by 100 per cent provincial funding and will have no tax levy impact.

The expansion of low-income dental services to children is the next phase of Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy. York Region will expand dental screening, preventative care and early dental treatment for children and increase oral health awareness.

The capital costs, one-time operating costs and ongoing operating costs for 2010 is \$845,122.

Approximately 32,500 York Region children and youth could be eligible for dental services under the Low-Income Dental Program.

York Region EMS vehicles to be equipped with traffic signal pre-emption technology

Following a 2009 Emergency Medical Services Traffic Signal Pre-emption Pilot Project, York Regional Council approved the updated Traffic Control Signal Pre-emption policy to include EMS vehicles.

The EMS traffic signal pre-emption pilot project measured intersection safety and response impacts and found that traffic signal pre-emption:

- Improves intersection operations
- Reduces EMS response times
- Has no measurable impact on other road users

EMS vehicles in York Region will be equipped with the technology to request and receive green indications as they travel along the roadway, thereby improving their on-time arrival and route efficiency.

The approved 2010 capital budget for EMS includes \$170,000 to equip 50 EMS vehicles with traffic control signal pre-emption technology.

The Regional Municipality of York to purchase real-time traffic information

The Regional Municipality of York has entered a three-year agreement with Intellione Inc. for \$220,000 to purchase real-time traveller information to assist efforts in traffic management.

Intellione Inc., in partnership with Rogers Communications, will provide speed information on the Region's road network using Global Positioning System (GPS) tracking. This information will be used for traveller information services, traffic management and prioritization of capital works.

Right turns on red lights prohibited on Warden Avenue from Enterprise Boulevard

The Regional Municipality of York has prohibited right turns on red lights for motorists turning onto Warden Avenue from Enterprise Boulevard in the Town of Markham. This is a safety measure to accommodate the new vivaNext right-of-way now under construction along Enterprise Boulevard between Warden Avenue and Birchmount Road.

As part of the vivaNext right-of-way construction, the traffic signals at Warden Avenue and Enterprise Boulevard will be reconstructed with priority signals for buses. Prohibiting right turns onto Warden Avenue from Enterprise Boulevard will help to ensure the safe passage of buses through the intersection.

Municipal Performance Measurement Program 2009 results available to public

York Regional Council received The Regional Municipality of York's 2009 results from the Municipal Performance Measurement Program.

Part of the Ontario Government's mandatory requirements for municipalities, the measurement program is designed to strengthen local accountability by keeping citizens informed of municipal service levels and costs. York Region has integrated performance measurement into its planning and budgeting process.

York Region's performance was measured in 31 areas. The results will be available on www.york.ca beginning Thursday, September 30.

York Region receives budget award for sixth consecutive year

The Regional Municipality of York has received the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award from the Government Finance Officers Association for the 2010 budget. This is the sixth consecutive year the Region has received this award.

To receive the budget award, York Region satisfied nationally-recognized guidelines for effective budget presentation. These guidelines are designed to assess how well a municipality's budget serves as a policy document, financial plan, operations guide and communications tool.

Status of York Region's infrastructure stimulus fund projects

York Regional Council received a status update of York Region's 17 infrastructure projects approved through the Government of Canada's Infrastructure Stimulus Fund program.

Substantial progress has been made on all York Region's projects with four projects completed and another four projects more than 90 per cent completed. By the end of the year, 12 of the Region's 17 projects will be completed.

The cost of these 17 projects is estimated at \$79 million, of which the Region will receive \$26.3 million or one-third funding from each of the federal and provincial governments. York Region is responsible for the remaining \$26.3 million of project costs.

Next regular meeting of York Regional Council

York Regional Council will meet on Thursday, November 25 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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