



Thursday, February 17, 2011

For Immediate Release

York Regional Council – February 17, 2011

York Region recognizes March as Red Cross Month

York Regional Council will recognize March as Red Cross Month.

The Canadian Red Cross responds to emergencies in York Region, across Canada and internationally. They also provide humanitarian aid, first aid and emergency preparedness education.

The Regional Municipality of York initiates work on Climate Change Adaptation Strategy

York Regional Council approved an updated work plan for the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy that will allow The Regional Municipality of York to better cope with the impacts of climate change.

York Region has experienced the effects of climate change in the form of intensive storms, heat waves, flooding and a tornado in the City of Vaughan.

The strategy focuses on essential systems that may be vulnerable to climate change, including:

- Roads, bridges, power, water, wastewater, storm water, waste and telecommunications
- Health care and emergency response capabilities
- Streams, forests and other natural heritage features

The Climate Change Adaptation Strategy work plan explores best management practices and risk management successes in other jurisdictions, as well as impacts the Region has already experienced and is likely to experience in the future.

A draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy will be presented to York Regional Council later this year.

2010 York Region Business Directory now available

The 2010 York Region Business Directory is now available, free of charge, in one of three formats:

- A searchable online directory hosted on www.york.ca under Business > Business Directory
- In Microsoft Excel and Access formats hosted on www.investinyork.ca under Info Centre > Reports and Publications
- On CD-ROM

This directory is an important resource for marketing, finding local trades and suppliers, job searches and locating products and services across York Region.

To obtain a copy on CD-ROM, please contact 1-877-464-9675, extension 1535.

Export development promotes York Region as an attractive place for business investments

York Regional Council approved preliminary guidelines to merge the Export Development Program and the Investment Attraction Program as a more effective means of promoting York Region businesses on a global scale.

Since 2000, the Export Development Program has successfully worked with York Region companies to reach global markets and promote exports. The Investment Attraction Program has expanded the Region's international business networks by creating awareness in U.S. markets, reaching out to hundreds of potential prospects and facilitating job generation across York Region.

The York Small Business Enterprise Centre supports business creation, innovation and growth in the northern six municipalities

York Regional Council received the 2010 Annual Report of the York Small Business Enterprise Centre and approved the Centre's 2011 program initiatives.

The York Small Business Enterprise Centre serves entrepreneurs and small businesses in the Region's northern six municipalities (Aurora, East Gwillimbury, Georgina, King, Newmarket and Whitchurch-Stouffville) that have 10 or fewer employees and have been in business for five years or less.

The Centre has provided assistance to almost 1,100 entrepreneurs, resulting in 329 new business start-ups, 98 business expansions and created 633 jobs. More than 1,660 existing business owners and prospective entrepreneurs attended educational forums and workshops, a Green Business entrepreneur network was established while 34 youth created and operated successful companies.

York Region's small businesses account for more than 85 per cent of businesses in York Region and are significant contributors to the Region's economy with a major impact on jobs, investment, trade, innovation and prosperity. More than 2,000 new small businesses are started each year.

Smoke Free Outdoor Recreational Spaces report to be shared with municipalities for review

York Regional Council today approved circulation of the *Smoke Free Outdoor Recreational Spaces* report to local municipalities to consider implementation of a smoke-free bylaw in outdoor recreational spaces.

Research shows that smoking in outdoor spaces contributes to various health and environmental problems. This report provides an overview of the importance of smoke-free outdoor spaces and outlines the benefits of smoke-free recreation and sports initiatives undertaken locally and nationally.

Ontario municipalities have the ability to prohibit or regulate smoking of tobacco in any public space or work space. A growing number of municipalities prohibit smoking in outdoor public spaces, and The Regional Municipality of York is currently exploring smoke-free options for Regional premises and outdoor spaces.

Outdoor recreational spaces that could be made smoke-free include public playgrounds, playing fields, walking trails, transit stops, public sector doorways and outdoor patios without a roof.

Accessing York: York Region's 2010 Accessibility Plan makes progress in 2010

Accessing York: York Region's 2010 Accessibility Plan provides an update on the Region's 2010 Accessibility Plan implementation, as required under the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA)*. York Region will share the report with the York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee and The Regional Municipality of York Police Services Board for their information.

The 2010 Accessibility Plan outlines 94 initiatives aimed at removing and preventing barriers to accessibility for people with disabilities. Fifty-four per cent of these initiatives are complete, 14 per cent are underway and 32 per cent are planned.

Since the approval of the plan in May 2010, York Region has been recognized by the Canadian Hearing Society on eliminating barriers for people who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing. In September 2010, the first accessible trail in the York Regional Forest was opened, increasing the accessibility of the forest trail for people with all types of disabilities.

Homelessness Partnering Strategy Call for Proposals

As part of the Government of Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy, York Region will issue a Call for Proposals in June to solicit bids for homelessness services from community agencies. Submitted bids will be considered by York Regional Council this fall.

The Government of Canada began funding the Homelessness Partnering Strategy with the Region in 1999. As the agent responsible for administering the program locally, York Region will distribute \$1.6 million in federal homeless funding over the next three years (April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2014) to community service agencies that submit successful bids.

York Region to build affordable housing in Town of Georgina

York Regional Council has authorized construction of a 92-unit apartment building in the Keswick community of the Town of Georgina, subject to successful negotiations with the building's current owners. Funding for the apartments will be provided to the Region through the provincial government's *Investing in Ontario Act, 2008* initiative to create more affordable housing.

York Region will also recommend to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing that the property receive capital funding through the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing program, should new funds become available.

York Regional Council endorses Long-term Water Conservation Strategy

York Regional Council endorsed the creation of a Long-term Water Conservation Strategy, shaping the Region's water conservation initiatives over the next 40 years.

Between 1998 and 2006, York Region invested \$10 million in water conservation initiatives through the *Water for Tomorrow* program, resulting in daily savings of 20.3 million litres of water. To supply that same amount of water to residents and businesses, it is estimated York Region would have spent \$40 million to build new infrastructure. Reducing the use of treated water by residents and businesses will save on future capital costs of building new infrastructure, energy required to treat the water and ensure an adequate supply for future needs.

York Regional Council endorses Inflow and Infiltration Strategy

York Regional Council today endorsed a comprehensive strategy for the reduction of water inflow and infiltration into the Region's sanitary sewage system. The strategy also meets requirements of the Southeast Collector Trunk Sewer Individual Environmental Assessment and the Intra-basin Transfer initiative.

As systems age, infrastructure can deteriorate and groundwater enters the system, consuming additional sewer capacity and potentially overloading the system. York Region will help to reduce this by implementing the following items under the reduction strategy:

- Creating a compliance, monitoring and reporting program
- Forming a stakeholder advisory committee
- A review of best-in-class inflow and infiltrations reduction strategies
- A performance management plan to be developed and submitted to the Ministry of the Environment

Transit fare subsidy proposal for a pilot project

York Regional Council has approved development of a proposal for a pilot project to offer discounted transit passes to Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program recipients and a select number of transit tickets to residents with low incomes.

In 2008, York Region successfully implemented a discount fare program for residents who were at risk of becoming, or who were homeless. In 2010, York Regional Council asked staff to explore options for a transit subsidy to support the needs of low income earners.

Details and implementation of the pilot will be reported to York Regional Council this fall for endorsement. Currently, more than 6,000 low income residents use transit in York Region.

Next meeting of York Regional Council

York Regional Council will meet on Thursday, March 24 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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