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For Immediate Release

York Regional Council – April 23, 2009

York Regional Council supports application for infrastructure stimulus program for “shovel-ready” infrastructure projects

York Regional Council has supported an application to the joint federal-provincial infrastructure stimulus fund for new infrastructure and renewal infrastructure projects in York Region totalling more than \$223 million.

New infrastructure projects worth \$168.5 million include:

- A Community Environmental Centre in the Town of Richmond Hill
- A Community Environmental Centre at the Town of Georgina waste transfer station
- An Emergency Medical Services operations centre at Bales Drive in the Town of East Gwillimbury
- Extension of the York Durham Sewage System in the Queensville area in the Town of East Gwillimbury
- A watermain extension along Bloomington Road from Bathurst Street to Bayview Avenue
- A Source Separated Organics facility with Dufferin County
- Road widening of 9th Line from Major Mackenzie Drive to Stouffville Road

Renewal projects worth \$54.5 million include:

- Several road resurfacing projects
- A bridge/culvert replacement on Teston Road, east of Pine Valley Drive in the City of Vaughan
- Refurbishing transit terminals
- Rehabilitation and replacement of bus stops and shelters for improved accessibility
- Intersection and bridge improvements at 16th Avenue and Ressor Road in the Town of Markham
- Upgrades to the Waste Management Centre in the Town of East Gwillimbury

The program will fund two-thirds of the costs for eligible infrastructure projects (approximately \$148.7 million) and requires York Region to fund the remaining one-third of the cost (approximately \$74.3 million).

To be eligible, projects cannot be already under construction or scheduled for construction in 2009 or 2010 and must be brought forward from those planned for 2011 or later. Projects must be completed by March 31st, 2011.

The infrastructure stimulus fund will accelerate the construction of a number of shovel-ready projects, create employment and reduce Regional costs for capital projects that are approved under the program.

Two publications showcase York Region's economic strength

The Regional Municipality of York has released two publications that highlight York Region's overall economic strengths during the previous year and the Region's current position of stability despite the current economic climate.

The *Economic & Development Review 2008* and the *2009 Economic Profile of York Region* showcase important fiscal data, such as job and employment conditions, construction activity and the investment climate. They are used by York Regional Council, staff and stakeholders in the private and public sectors as baseline information in the creation of economic investment strategies.

Copies will be circulated to area municipalities, chambers of commerce, boards of trade, other business groups and key stakeholders. The reports are available in PDF format at www.york.ca. To obtain printed copies of these publications, please call York Region's Planning and Development Services Department at 905 895-1231 or toll-free at 1-877-464-9675. Ask for Ext. 1550 for the *Economic and Development Review 2008* or Ext. 1503 for the *2009 Economic Profile of York Region*.

York Region promotes local tourism opportunities

York Regional Council received a review of the 2008 York Region Tourism Marketing Program, comprised of marketing efforts, relationships with the tourism industry and tourism initiatives.

York Region promotes family fun, festival and events, arts and culture, distinctive get-aways, winery tours and golf in various online, print and direct mail campaigns. York Region publishes:

- a comprehensive tourism website, www.yorktourism.com
- the Discovery Guide
- a semi-annual magazine called In Your Backyard
- a York Region golf guide
- a brochure and a guide for meeting and conference planners

These tourism program activities are funded as follows:

- \$116,483 from advertising partnerships
- \$300,000 from the funding from Tourism Toronto for destination marketing
- \$25,000 funding from Tourism Toronto to support summer promotions

Export development program supports strong economic performance

York Regional Council received a 2008 annual report and 2009 marketing plan for the Export Development Program. In 2006, the year that most current data is available, York Region businesses exported more than \$6.7 billion worth of products to the United States, \$1.2 billion to other countries and \$2 billion to confidential locations from 6,859 exporters. Exports from York Region exceeded the exports of the provinces of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. The Region's exports represent 4.9 per cent of Ontario's total product exports and 2.2 per cent of Canada's total exports.

Export advisors contracted by York Region provide businesses with access to education and information, assessment of export readiness, research and market intelligence, contacts and networks and advice of export business growth in global markets.

In 2009, two export advisors will deliver business development consultations, export opportunity assessments, on-site consultations for export marketing plans and workshops for businesses.

Small business development program assists entrepreneurs

York Regional Council received an update on the York Small Business Enterprise Centre, which provides assistance in the creation of new enterprises and in the development of early growth-stage businesses.

York Region's small businesses account for approximately 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.

Located in Newmarket, the York Small Business Enterprise Centre serves entrepreneurs and small businesses in the Towns of Aurora, Newmarket, Whitchurch-Stouffville, East Gwillimbury, Georgina and the Township of King. They complement the services provided by the other three centres in Markham, Richmond Hill and Vaughan, which are operated independently by the local municipalities.

The goal of the York Small Business Enterprise Centre is to advance business creation, innovation and growth to support the economy. The economic impact is monitored by the number of businesses registered, new business start-ups, business expansions and jobs created.

York Regional Council approves new Sustainable Home Incentive Program

York Regional Council endorsed a new program to promote more sustainable residential development (up to three-storeys) by providing servicing allocation incentives between 10 and 20 per cent. The new Sustainable Home Incentive Program will:

- Encourage the construction of more energy efficient homes
- Reduce water consumption

Regional Council authorized staff to develop an implementation guide in consultation with the local municipalities and representatives of the building industry.

Council also requested staff to explore comprehensive water conservation programs and incentives in partnership with local municipalities. Opportunities could include innovative storm water management practices, inflow and infiltration reduction, peak water demand management, enhanced retrofitting programs and enhanced leak reduction programs.

Regional Council authorized the amendment of the eligibility criteria of the Sustainable Development Through LEED Highrise Program to include multi-unit residential developments with a minimum building height of four storeys, replacing the existing five-storey minimum.

York Region approves \$1.9 million in YRT/Viva improvements

York Regional Council today approved YRT/Viva's annual service plan containing \$1.9 million in transit improvements and adjustments for 2009. YRT/Viva Service Plan09 contains 32 Region-wide initiatives to grow and improve services for residents in York Region.

Highlights of Plan09 include:

- A 4.4 per cent increase in annual service hours
- Increased Viva service frequency on Yonge Street and Highway 7
- Improved service to existing and new developing areas in all nine municipalities
- Increased high school special buses
- Increased Dial-a-Ride services in the Towns of Richmond Hill, Markham, Aurora, Newmarket and Georgina
- Increased travel options for persons with disabilities through the YRT/Viva Travel Training Program

For more information, please visit www.yrt.ca/whats-ahead

The Regional Municipality of York to introduce bylaw for Transit/HOV and bicycle lanes

York Region will introduce a new bylaw to support Transit/High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes and dedicated bicycle lanes.

The bylaw is in advance of new lanes opening this June on Dufferin Street between Steeles Avenue and Glen Shields Boulevard/Draper Boulevard in the City of Vaughan. The bylaw will allow for traffic enforcement and use of these dedicated lanes by transit, vehicles with two or more people and cyclists.

Miller Transit ranked first in YRT/Viva contractors report card program

York Regional Council received a report summarizing the YRT/Viva contractor operations and maintenance report card program for the last two quarters of 2008. Overall expectations were met on a report card of 22 performance measures.

Miller Transit (service in Markham and Richmond Hill area) ranked first among three YRT contractors, followed by Tokmakjian (Vaughan and Richmond Hill area) and finally First Student (Newmarket, King, Aurora, East Gwillimbury area). Categories include preventative maintenance inspections, ongoing bus operator training, on-time departures and customer complaints.

Veolia, the contracted operator for Viva services, is not ranked with YRT service contractors. Veolia exceeded or met the benchmark in most categories but fell below benchmark in several categories, including operating ahead of schedule, interior cleaning and in-service vehicle damage observations.

The report card program enables staff to monitor contractor performance, address issues and award compensation. Staff will continue to work with contractors on measures to improve performance.

Approach to update Regional Official Plan approved

York Regional Council has endorsed an outline of the Regional Official Plan Update for completion in June 2009. The *Planning Act* requires that at least every five years, Council must revise the *Regional Official Plan*. Since the *Regional Official Plan* was approved in the mid-1990's, there have been new Provincial planning initiatives (*Greenbelt Act, Drinking Water Source Protection Act, Places to Grow Act, Metrolinx* and *Draft Lake Simcoe Protection Plan*) that have fundamentally changed the way planning occurs in south-central Ontario.

The Regional Municipality of York to pursue urban boundary expansion while connecting and strengthening the Regional Greenlands System

To conform with the Provincial Growth Plan that calls for York Region's population to grow to 1.5 million people and jobs to reach 799,000 by 2031, York Regional Council has authorized staff to consult further with local municipalities and proceed with an urban boundary expansion into the Whitebelt.

Regional Council also endorsed policy directions to connect and strengthen the Regional Greenlands System that was created in 1993 to identify and protect the Region's green spaces. Since then, the Provincial Oak Ridges Moraine and Greenbelt plans have expanded the system.

Region staff will complete this work in conjunction with the update of the *Regional Official Plan*.

York Regional Council appoints Municipal Energy Conservation Officer

York Regional Council today appointed Michael Lithgow, York Region's Manager of Corporate Energy Services, as the Municipal Energy Conservation Officer for The Regional Municipality of York.

Municipal energy conservation officers provide leadership in planning and coordinating electricity conservation within municipalities and the community.

York Regional Council endorses Ontario's proposed Lake Simcoe Protection Plan

York Regional Council today endorsed comments and feedback from York Region and local municipal staff and other groups on the Government of Ontario's proposed Lake Simcoe Protection Plan under the *Lake Simcoe Protection Act, 2008*.

The proposed plan supports many of the environmental initiatives already approved by York Regional Council as part of the Oak Ridges Moraine, Greenbelt and Growth Plans.

York Region has supported the protection and study of Lake Simcoe for many years through annual funding to the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority and participating in the Lake Simcoe Environmental Management Strategy.

York Region endorses nutrition toolkit for schools

York Regional Council today endorsed the Nutrition Tools for Schools toolkit as a valuable resource to help schools in their efforts to create healthy nutrition environments. Regional Council also recommended adoption of the toolkit as a province-wide resource and basis for future development of nutrition-related legislation and regulations.

Led by York Region staff in collaboration with public health dietitians from seven other health units (Algoma, Hamilton, North Bay-Parry Sound, Simcoe-Muskoka, Sudbury and District and Timiskaming), Nutrition Tools for Schools outlines a step-by-step process to guide schools and provide practical tools to make healthy eating environments a reality. The program engages the entire school community in promoting consistent messages about healthy eating throughout the school day.

The toolkit consists of five main components, including a leader's handbook, 17 action guides and a food standard guide. Food standards in the guide align with Ministry of Health and Long Term Care policies and guidelines and Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide.

York Region begins 2009 West Nile virus control activities

The Regional Municipality of York will begin implementing the 2009 West Nile virus control plan in May, including larviciding, monitoring and public education.

In 2008, there was one confirmed human case of West Nile virus in York Region. Two birds and two mosquito pools tested positive for the virus.

With the continued presence of West Nile virus confirmed, the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care has acknowledged the virus is established in Ontario. As a result, municipalities in Ontario will no longer conduct a West Nile virus dead bird surveillance program. York Region will no longer pick up dead birds or ask residents to report dead bird sightings.

The province will coordinate a communications strategy with GTA jurisdictions to advise residents why the bird surveillance program is discontinued and what to do if they find a dead bird.

York Region working to improve tobacco cessation services

York Regional Council endorsed a communication to the Ontario Minister of Health Promotion requesting an extension of the Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy to provide funding for increased tobacco cessation counseling services and low-cost nicotine replacement therapy.

Studies show that increased access to intensive or group counselling, combined with access to low or no cost nicotine replacement therapy, can increase significantly an individual's ability to quit smoking.

Approximately 17 per cent of York Region adults are smokers. Smoking is the No. 1 cause of premature, preventable death in Canada, estimated to cost the health care system \$1.3 billion per year.

The Regional Municipality of York recognizes Girls' Rights Week, National Public Works Week, National Access Awareness Week and Gay Pride Week

York Regional Council recognized the following:

May 4th to 8th as Girls' Rights Week

Girls' Rights Week promotes awareness of the rights of girls and young women in York Region while acknowledging their contribution as productive and contributing members of society. Girls Incorporated of York Region, the organizers of the event, is a non-profit youth organization dedicated to empowering girls and young women to seek the highest quality of life by enhancing their confidence and self esteem.

May 17th to 23rd as National Public Works Week

Activities throughout the week will celebrate the contributions made by staff from our Transportation Services and Environmental Services departments to the health, safety, comfort and quality of life of our residents.

This year, the National Public Works Week will feature:

- An Open House/Family Fun Day at our Bales Drive Operations Centre on Saturday, May 23rd
- The Miller Cup Public Works Challenge for politicians and staff
- The popular Paint-a-Plow contest between local schools
- A series of school tours of Regional facilities

The 2009 theme is "Revitalize Reinvest Renew." For more information, please visit www.york.ca

May 24th to 30th as National Access Awareness Week

National Access Awareness Week was established in 1988 in response to a request from Rick Hansen following his Man in Motion World Tour to promote better access to education, leisure services, transportation, housing and employment for people with disabilities.

June 7th to 14th as Gay Pride Week

The 9th annual celebration commemorates the contributions of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities living and working in the Region. The event is organized by the York Pride Fest Committee under the auspices of The York Region Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Community Outreach Project.

Next meeting of York Regional Council

York Regional Council will meet on Thursday, May 21st 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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