



Tuesday, September 29, 2009

For Immediate Release

York Regional Council – September 24, 2009

Town of Markham Councillor Joseph Virgilio sworn in as York Regional Councillor

York Region Chairman and CEO Bill Fisch welcomed Town of Markham Councillor Joseph Virgilio as the newest member of York Regional Council. The long-serving local Ward 6 Councillor succeeds former Regional Councillor Tony Wong, who passed away in June.

Mr. Virgilio was appointed to the Regional Councillor position by the Town of Markham following a vote at their September 15th Council meeting. A swearing-in ceremony was held at York Regional Council by the Regional Clerk.

Photo of Regional Councillor Joseph Virgilio is attached.

The Regional Municipality of York launches its 2009 United Way of York Region employee campaign

The Regional Municipality of York and York Regional Police officially launched its 2009 staff campaign in support of the United Way of York Region, with an overall fundraising goal of \$250,000.

Throughout the six-week campaign, York Region employees are encouraged to support the United Way through automatic payroll donations and by participating in numerous fundraising events.

YRT/Viva fares to remain unchanged for 2010

Despite rising insurance and operational expenses, York Regional Council has agreed to keep YRT/Viva fares unchanged for 2010. Citing the downturn in the economy, Council requested staff to find efficiencies in the system in an effort to keep costs contained. Currently fares help York Region recover 40 per cent of costs.

For a breakdown of all YRT/Viva fares, please visit www.yrt.ca and click on “Fares” in the navigation bar.

York Region receives funding to develop Immigration Settlement Strategy

In a deputation to York Regional Council, Newmarket-Aurora MP Lois Brown announced the Government of Canada will invest \$448,000 to assist The Regional Municipality of York in developing a “Made in York Region” Immigration Settlement Strategy. The announcement is part of the federal government’s Local Immigration Partnership Strategy to help co-ordinate settlement services and address funding and service gaps so that immigrants can integrate socially and economically into our communities.

Recruitment for the Community Partnership Council is expected to commence in November. The Immigration Settlement Strategy is expected to be developed by March 31, 2011.

York Region’s Sustainable Works public events provide conservation education and awareness

York Regional Council today received an update on the successful Sustainable Works public events held over the spring and summer months. The goals of the programs are to help residents understand their impact on the environment and how their contributions assist the Region’s sustainability efforts.

As a result of the public outreach initiatives, York Region has experienced significant improvements within the various programs.

For information on York Region’s sustainability programs, please visit www.york.ca

York Region takes research initiative to prepare for Green economy

The Regional Municipality of York will apply to the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities for funding to implement the Green Economy Jobs Project. This is a Toronto-area research project that will work with key business and education partners to identify our workforce and educational needs to help ensure York Region and GTA can compete globally in the emerging green sector.

Understanding the emerging green economy and its possible impact on York Region will help meet the goal in Vision 2026 of enhancing our vibrant economy by attracting and supporting businesses. The project is also a vital step in enabling York Region to meet the economic growth forecasts in Ontario's *Places to Grow* plan.

York Region investment opportunities with green industry

York Regional Council received an update on the International Investment Attraction Program along with a work plan to the end of 2010.

Attracting foreign companies that embrace environmental sustainability will enhance the image of York Region as an environmentally progressive jurisdiction and help us reach a goal of 320,000 new jobs by 2031. The program will be marketed by an umbrella partnership called "Invest in York" that includes local municipal economic development officers, Chambers of Commerce, Boards of Trade, academia and key local business service providers.

The initial geographic market for the International Investment Attraction program will be the United States, which traditionally accounts for two-thirds of all foreign direct investment in Canada. As the program advances, research will begin to identify opportunities in Europe, which accounts for one-quarter of foreign direct investment in Canada.

York Region works with partners to prevent and mitigate homelessness

York Regional Council received an update on the activities of the Region's Homelessness Partnership Initiative. York Region participates in federal homelessness initiatives in the role of Service Manager, working with other levels of government and the community to support our most vulnerable residents in order to prevent and mitigate homelessness.

Phase 2 funding of \$1,089,047 will be spent from April 1, 2009 to March 31, 2011. This is a 100-per cent federally-funded program with no regional tax levy impact. The services reduce the long-term costs associated with homelessness and improve the quality of life for York Region residents.

York Region encourages developers to build sustainable homes

York Regional Council has approved a plan to provide developers with an incentive to build more sustainable homes that use less energy and water resources, potentially resulting in lower long-term operating costs.

Developers meeting the requirements may qualify for either a 10 or 20-per cent reduction in water and wastewater servicing allocations for new development proposals delivering more sustainable, water-efficient residential development.

It is estimated there will be increased purchase costs of between three to five per cent for a green home over a conventionally-built home. However, the monthly savings in utility costs are expected to offset the increased mortgage costs for energy efficient homes.

York Region provides update on City of Vaughan tornado

York Region Chief Administrative Officer Bruce Macgregor provided an update on the Region's response to the tornado in the City of Vaughan, which included assistance from York Region Community and Health Services, Environmental Services, Transportation Services and York Regional Police. Mayor Linda Jackson gratefully acknowledged the assistance provided by the Region as well as the mutual aid fire assistance provided by the Town of Markham, the Town of Richmond Hill and King Township.

York Region Chairman recognizes staff retirements

York Region Chairman and CEO Bill Fisch congratulated York Region Transit General Manager Don Gordon on his retirement after nine years of service with the Region and more than 30 years working in the public sector. The Chairman and several members of Regional Council commended Mr. Gordon on his effective leadership which resulted in amalgamating transit services across the Region and growing the service from seven million riders in 2000 to more than 20 million riders in 2009.

Chairman Fisch also acknowledged that Community and Health Services Commissioner Joann Simmons has announced her intention to retire at the end of November. Ms Simmons has been with York Region for 21 years, capping a public service career spanning 33 years.

York Region completes Agricultural/Rural Review Study as input to Regional Official Plan update

York Regional Council confirmed a Land Evaluation Area Review (LEAR), an Agricultural/Rural Review Study that is required as part of a Greenbelt conformity exercise. This review is a component of the current Regional Official Plan update.

Review of this study will proceed at the same time as review of the Draft York Region Official Plan. Comments submitted on the LEAR Study as part of the background information will be reported in November at the same time as the balance of the Draft Official Plan document.

York Region's newly-created agency development fund invests \$313,700 in nine projects

To support and assist new and developing community service agencies in building their capacity to provide services to York Region residents, York Regional Council has approved the allocation of \$313,768 to nine projects as part of the New Agency Development Fund in 2009. The Fund will invest \$500,000 in 2009 to help build the capacity of new and emerging community-based social services agencies across York Region. The remaining \$186,232 will benefit new agencies receiving New Agency Development Fund support through professional development seminars and activities.

Participating agencies must be less than five years old and be a not-for-profit charitable organization delivering social services to residents in York Region. The new agencies must also focus on one or more of the following priorities:

- Homelessness programs and services
- Family and children's strengthening programs and services
- Programs supporting individuals seeking employment
- Programs that complement Regional Public Health priorities

York Region proposes Ontario Building Code foster greater green building design

York Regional Council will ask the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to enhance the sustainability, energy and water efficiency requirements of the Ontario Building Code for higher density development and ground related buildings.

York Region has ensured the draft Regional Official Plan contain progressive policies to mandate green buildings to a LEED or equivalent alternative standard across the Region. While provincial policy supports sustainable community development and green buildings, the Ontario Building Code is a minimum standard for building construction. Builders cannot be mandated to go beyond the minimum standards, which is an obstacle for York Region to implement its green building initiatives.

York Region provides comments on Simcoe strategy

York Regional Council endorsed comments made in response to the Environmental Bill of Rights Registry posting on *Places to Grow – Simcoe Area: A Strategic Vision for Growth, June 2009*.

Regional Council has asked the Province to:

- Implement the *Growth Plan* equitably
- Assess the impact on the GTA regions, including York Region
- Commit to transportation capacity improvements
- Clarify how the principles in the Simcoe Growth Vision will address the *Lake Simcoe Protection Plan*
- Require that the construction and/or operation of all existing water and proposed wastewater treatment facilities in the Lake Simcoe Watershed be held to the same high standard of environmental responsibility and performance as those in York Region

York Regional Council authorizes measures to respond to anticipated pandemic influenza

York Regional Council received a report outlining priority public health response measures to the anticipated pandemic H1N1 influenza activity in York Region this autumn. The response includes operating up to five immunization clinics and three influenza assessment centres. The purpose of the assessment centres is to provide surge capacity when the primary care system is overwhelmed to ensure residents have rapid access to antiviral medication, if indicated.

Regional Council authorized estimated expenditures of approximately \$6.7 million for a public health pandemic response. In addition, Regional Council authorized the addition of one senior staff position, an Associate Medical Officer of Health, to enhance communicable disease crisis management.

Regional Council has legislative duties and responsibilities as the Board of Health under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*.

York Region to recognize October as Toastmasters Month

York Region will recognize October 2009 as Toastmasters Month. Toastmasters is an international, non-profit educational organization that operates clubs worldwide for the purpose of helping members improve their communication, public speaking and leadership skills.

York Region to recognize November 15th to 22nd as Restorative Justice Week

York Region will recognize November 15 to 22, 2009 as Restorative Justice Week. Restorative Justice Week is promoted by Correctional Service of Canada and focuses on a non-adversarial, non-retributive approach to justice that emphasizes healing in victims, meaningful accountability of offenders, and the involvement of citizens in creating healthier, safer communities.

Next meeting of York Regional Council

York Regional Council will meet on Thursday, October 22nd at 9:30 a.m. at the York Region Administrative Centre Council Chambers, located at 17250 Yonge Street in the Town of Newmarket.

- 30 -

Compiled by: Barbara Moss, Corporate Communications, York Region
Phone: 905 830-4444 / toll-free 1-877-464-9675, Ext. 1237
Cell: 905 505-5775 / Email: barbara.moss@york.ca