



# York Regional Council Highlights

March 31, 2005

## York Region recognizes Vaughan's need for a health care facility

Regional Council unanimously passed a resolution to support in principle a proposal from the City of Vaughan to the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care outlining the need for a health care facility in the City of Vaughan and requesting Ministry support and authorization to proceed with the necessary planning and development processes.

## National Volunteer Week in York Region proclaimed

Regional Council proclaimed April 17<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> as National Volunteer Week, in recognition of the valuable time, energy and talents donated by York Region residents to make a difference in the lives of others.

In York Region, National Volunteer Week is coordinated by the 211 Community Information and Volunteer Centre – York Region and the York Region Association for Volunteer Administration.

## York Region approves 2005 Accessibility Plan

Regional Council approved *Moving Forward: York Region's 2005 Accessibility Plan*, a document that describes how the Region will continue to identify, remove or prevent barriers to regional programs, services and facilities for people with disabilities.

*Moving Forward* outlines the initiatives each Regional department will take in 2005 to improve accessibility and enable the Region to meet the legislated requirements of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA). A copy of *Moving Forward* is available on the Region's Web site at [www.york.ca](http://www.york.ca) under "major initiatives."

## 2005 edition of YorkLink now available

Regional Council released the 2005 edition of its community services directory today. *YorkLink: A Community Services Directory* provides comprehensive information on nearly 700 community service providers and related government agencies in York Region. This includes local family support groups, seniors and youth programs, child care centres and government offices.

The printed version of *YorkLink* is distributed to community service providers, libraries, community information centres, school boards and local municipal offices throughout the Region. The on-line version at [www.york.ca](http://www.york.ca) provides the most up-to-date community services information.



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## Community Funding 2004 activity report

Regional Council passed a resolution to communicate the need for the Federal government to provide ongoing, stable funding for homelessness services in view of the fact that Supporting Community Partnership Initiatives (SCPI) funding is ending; and also to communicate to the Province of Ontario the need for increased funding for community services in York Region.

These recommendations were part of a report from the Commissioner of Community Services and Housing to Council regarding the accomplishments and successes of York Region's Community Development and Investment Fund (CDIF) Strategy in 2004, which was funded by the National Child Benefit (NCB), the Ontario Works Community Placement (CP) Performance Bonus, Homelessness Initiatives funds and the Municipal Purchase of Service fund.

In 2004, a total of 39 projects worth \$2.7-million were funded, allowing 50 agencies to provide services to 30,000 residents and their families in York Region.

It is anticipated that by 2006, much of the current funding could either disappear or be greatly reduced. This will result in a significant reduction of available funding and inevitable service reductions unless alternative sources of funding can be secured.

Both the federal and provincial governments recognize the value of leveraging the community agency capacity. Unless these levels of government continue to provide appropriate levels of funding in this sector in the next two years, the CDIF will be significantly reduced and York Region agencies will be forced to cut some services. This will add to the chronic under-funding and service gaps in community and human services experienced by the Region.

## Homelessness Initiatives – 2005 Allocations

Regional Council approved the 2005 funding allocations for the Housing Help Centre in the amount of \$92,339 and for the Homelessness Prevention Program in the amount of \$250,000. These programs continue to provide valuable service to significant numbers of vulnerable residents in York Region.

### *The Housing Help Centre*

In operation since 1994, the Housing Help Centre provides listings of accommodations for rent across York Region and acts as an information centre for housing-related issues, and serves both landlords and tenants across York Region. The Centre has also become a referral source for other York Region departments and community based agencies when assisting clients to locate housing.

In 2004, the Centre housed a total of 188 clients of which 174 remained housed for a minimum of three months. In 2004, the Centre relocated to larger accommodations in Richmond Hill after operating in Aurora for 10 years and the provider looks forward to serving a wider client base in the new facility. Total funding for 2004 was \$85,346.



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## *The Homelessness Prevention Program*

The Homelessness Prevention Program was introduced as a pilot project in September 2001 run by the Salvation Army in Newmarket to provide one-time financial assistance for individuals and families to either retain or obtain housing. An external evaluation of the pilot program showed that it was more cost effective to keep people housed than to risk having to accommodate them in an emergency shelter. For example, the average cost to house a family of four in the emergency shelter was \$6,080 (\$40/person/day x 38 days) versus \$1,367 through the Homelessness Prevention Program.

## **Rent Supplement Program activity report**

Acting on information provided in the annual Rent Supplement Program activity report from the Commissioner of Community Services and Housing, Regional Council authorized the Commissioner of Community Services and Housing to enter into Strong Communities Rent Supplement Agreements to replace existing agreements with landlords. This is subject to the prior review of Legal Services.

Rent supplement programs involve agreements for rental units primarily located in buildings owned by private sector landlords. Under agreements, the units are made available to eligible households from the social housing waiting list. The household pays rent-geared-to-income (RGI), and the Region pays the landlord the difference between the RGI-amount and the regular market rent for the unit.

The rent supplement programs enable the Region to access more than \$2.8 million of provincial program funding to help increase the supply of much needed affordable housing to respond to the needs of 6,000 low income singles, families and seniors waiting for affordable housing in York Region. The flexible nature of this program allows the Region to target units to the most underserved applicants on the waiting list, and to high demand locations.

## **Social Housing Waiting List analysis**

Regional Council has requested that the Regional Chair send a letter to the Ontario Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing outlining York Region's affordable housing needs under the Community Rental Housing Program.

Under the *Social Housing Reform Act, 2000*, the Region is required to maintain a centralized waiting list system for rent-geared-to-income housing units.

Applicants apply to the Region's Housing Access Unit and eligible applicants are added to the waiting lists of the social housing buildings of their choice. The Region provides each housing provider with a subsidiary waiting list of applicants who have requested that housing provider's building.



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## Council approves plan for update to the State of the Environment Report (SOE)

Regional Council received and approved a report today outlining the upcoming preparation and release of the York Region State of the Environment Report (SOE) 2005, a follow-up to *Our Environment, Our Home*, York Region State of the Environment Report 2000. This report was launched in response to an April 1989 Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care *Mandatory Health Programs and Services Guidelines* requirement for a report on local environmental risk areas at least once every five years.

Internal working committees have been established to guide the development and production of the report. Information sessions for key stakeholders – including areas municipalities, conservation authorities, environmental groups and related organizations and agencies – will take place up until the end of May 2005. The SOE Report 2005 will be presented to Regional Council in November 2005.

## Biotech Cluster implementation plan goes into action

Council approved a report from the Planning and Economic Development Committee that:

- authorizes the establishment of a Community Development Corporation for the York Region Biotechnology Convergence Initiative
- appoints the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services to act on behalf of the Regional Municipality of York to apply for and proceed with the preparation of the necessary articles of incorporation and to take all other necessary steps for the incorporation of the Corporation
- authorizes the Regional Chair and Clerk to execute a Memorandum of Understanding with York University to act as Interim Contractual Party with the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade to facilitate interim provincial funding for the operations of the new Corporation
- directs staff to report back to Regional Council later this year on the composition, budget, and implementation plan of the new York Region Biotechnology Convergence Corporation

In June of 2002, the Province of Ontario announced the creation of the Biotechnology Cluster Innovation Program to provide financial assistance to communities to develop a regional scale biotechnology cluster. In April 2003, Regional Council approved participation as a member of the York Regional Biotechnology Cluster Consortium (YRBCC). The Consortium was an informal organization that was established to develop a regional biotechnology innovation plan and secure funding.

The founding partners of the Consortium were the Region, the Town of Markham, the National Research Council and York University. The consortium also includes 37 partners from local municipal government, education, academic institutions, hospitals, not-for-profit organizations, research associations and the private sector. Dr. Stan Shapson, Vice-President, Research and Innovation at York University, has acted as



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the Chair of the Consortium Steering Committee.

The YRBCC submitted a regional innovation profile and business plan to create a formal biotechnology cluster organization to the Provincial Ministry of Economic Development and Trade in June 2004.

Biotechnology and related industries will be among the fastest growing and most economically important sectors in the next ten years. York Region aims to provide a competitive and sustainable environment for new firm creation in this important sector along with its parallel strategic goals and objectives outlined in the Region's Economic Strategy.

## **Council approves plan to renew Small Business Enterprise Centre**

Regional Council authorized staff to submit a new business plan and proposal to the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade for funding assistance to continue the operation of the York Region Small Business Enterprise Centre.

York Region Small Business Enterprise Centre is an important resource to encourage new small business growth as well as provide support to existing small businesses, particularly in the northern part of the Region. The Centre in Newmarket will serve entrepreneurs and small business in the northern parts of the Region and complement the other Small Business Enterprise Centres in Markham, Richmond Hill and Vaughan.

## **Ecological footprint is smaller**

Regional Council released *York Region Ecological Footprint*, a bulletin designed to present the corrected results of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) 2004 study, "Ecological Footprints of Canadian Municipalities and Regions."

As measured in the report for FCM, York Region's ecological footprint is less than originally reported.

The *York Region Ecological Footprint* will help to explain the ecological footprint concepts and outlines a number of environmental initiatives York Region has ongoing that help to address the Region's ecological footprint. The bulletin also contains suggestions on what individuals can do to reduce their own ecological footprint.

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## Greater Golden Horseshoe outlook pegs growth even higher

Regional Council received the report, “Growth Outlook For The Greater Golden Horseshoe,” and agreed to circulate it to the local municipalities and regional agencies for their information and review.

The report provides a summary of the document entitled “The Growth Outlook for the Greater Golden Horseshoe,” released by the Province on January 18, 2005, which provides forecasted growth to 2031 for population, household and employment for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) and the Greater Toronto Area-Hamilton (GTAH).

A complete list of all infrastructure requirements to accommodate the forecasted growth will be produced by Regional Staff and presented to Committee. This list will be presented to the Province as evidence towards the amount of infrastructure investment required in order to accommodate the Province’s forecasted growth.

York Region will undertake a review of its own population and employment forecasts during 2005 that will be based on this new forecast. Staff will conduct a series of studies in 2005 to analyze the impact of these forecasts and will report back to Committee.

## Council approves approach for ROPA 43 implementation

Regional Council received a report, “Implementing Ropa 43 – Transit Oriented Development Guidelines and Next Steps,” from the Planning and Economic Development Committee. Council agreed to:

- direct staff to create the Regional Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Guidelines in consultation with the nine local municipalities, York Region Transit and York Region Rapid Transit representatives as a first-step in ROPA 43 implementation.
- direct staff to report on the status of the Regional TOD Guidelines to the Planning and Economic Development Committee in June 2005.
- direct staff to prepare a detailed, comprehensive and long-term workplan for ROPA 43 implementation in consultation with the nine local municipalities, York Region Transit and York Region Rapid Transit representatives.
- direct staff to present a draft workplan for ROPA 43 implementation to the Planning and Economic Development Committee in May 2005.
- direct the Regional Clerk to circulate the report to the local municipalities for information.



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## **York Region asks for eleven Justices of the Peace**

Regional Council authorized a request be made to the Attorney General of Ontario to appoint immediately 11 new Justices of the Peace for the Central East Region, and that further appointments be made promptly in the future to reflect the demand for judicial resources. Council specifically referenced the decline of Justices of the Peace from 46 to 38 between December 2003 and December 2004 in the Central East Region.

The additional Justices of the Peace will enable York Region to maintain public confidence in the administration of justice while meeting its obligations to deliver court services. Council's resolution is in keeping with the Memorandum of Understanding of July 1999 under which the Attorney General transferred court administration, prosecution and court support functions to the Region.

## **Ridership continues to increase in 2005**

York Region Transit (YRT) ridership numbers for January 2005 have increased by more than 14 per cent from the same period in 2004. YRT carried more than 1.2 million riders for the first month of 2005, compared to just over one million passengers in January 2004.

January's increase continues the upward trend from 2004, where YRT ridership was up by over 14 per cent. Overall ridership for YRT in 2004 was 13.8 million passengers.

YRT has seen ridership increases of more than 10 per cent each year since the service was formed in 2001.

## **Intelligent Transportation Systems implemented by York Region Transit (YRT)**

York Region has entered into an agreement with Transport Canada for funding of 50 per cent, up to \$250,000, to implement an intelligent transportation system for York Region Transit (YRT).

The new technology will help manage YRT's fleet of buses, through the use of computer aided dispatch and automatic vehicle location systems.

YRT will be reviewing the latest ITS technologies to establish which technology will best suit its needs. This review will also include an examination of operations to facilitate integration with Viva, the Region's new rapid transit service.



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## **Viva Marketing and Communications plan approved**

Regional Council approved Phases 2 and 3 of the Viva Marketing Communication and Public Education Plan along with expenditures for the period April to December 2005 at a cost not to exceed \$1.948 million.

The marketing communications program will communicate the benefits of the new service, educate the public on the unique system features, create interest and excitement in the new rapid transit service and turn drivers into riders.

## **Viva Rapid Transit Operating and Maintenance Contract**

Regional Council approved the awarding of a five-year contract to operate and maintain the fleet of 85 Viva rapid transit vehicles to Connex Canada. The contract, totalling \$112.5 million over five years, will be off-set significantly by revenues collected through fares.

Connex is an operations and maintenance transportation firm with over 50,000 employees worldwide. It currently operates conventional bus operations, bus rapid transit, light rail, subway, commuter rail, ferries and taxis. Connex has extensive experience maintaining the same type of Van Hool vehicles to be used in York Region. The company's European division maintained 240 Van Hool vehicles in Antwerp, Belgium.

## **2004 Water Report shows continued excellent water quality:**

York Region's water supply continues to be of excellent quality.

Two reports on water quality in 2004, the Annual Report and the Summary Report, were presented to Regional Council. The reports detail water quality testing results for microbiological, inorganic chemical and organic parameters.

The analyses show that York Region's water sampling program exceeds Ministry of the Environment (MOE) requirements, and that the Region's sample results are consistently better than drinking water standards. All samples came back clear and suitable for drinking.

The reports also noted that water taken from groundwater sources met MOE requirements. Furthermore, no Provincial Officer Orders were issued indicating that the systems met all Ministry standards.



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## **Adaptive Traffic Control System to improve traffic flow**

York Region has entered into an agreement with Transport Canada for funding of 50 per cent, up to \$250,000, to implement an adaptive traffic control system.

The new control system will work with the Region's existing centralized traffic control system to allow for traffic signal timing changes when roads are experiencing a high rate of travel.

York Region will be conducting an analysis of signalized intersections to determine which intersections will benefit most from the new technology.

## **Next York Regional Council Meeting**

The next York Regional Council meeting will be held on Thursday, April 21<sup>st</sup>, beginning at 9:30 a.m. in the Council Chambers of the York Region Administrative Centre in Newmarket.

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